



SOCIAL MEDIA AND INDIAN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT In Indian election system social media has become a vital tool to collect votes. This new form of media which is also known as digital platform plays a pivotal role in gluing voters mostly it appeals the younger generation of our country. Social Media is a platform which helps political parties and candidates simultaneously to reach out to large number of audience in a short span of time. Unlike old forms of media, social networking sites allow politicians to bond with their voters directly. This new form of media entertain political candidates as well as their associated parties to share their ideas, opinions, goals even the party manifestoes with the voters to directly involve them with the campaign. The purpose of research is to study the role of Social Networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube etc. It will further talk about how social media has changed the political communication and changed the parameters of election process.

KEYWORDS : Political communication, social media, politics and social networking sites.

INTRODUCTION

Over past two decades, one of the most fundamental developments related to digital media has been the ascend of social networking sites like Facebook, Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. In the late 1990's the proliferation of social media has successfully attracted billions of users worldwide who not only exchanged conversations but it became an everyday chorus of work. It was a revolution which not only changed traditional marketing, political warfare, and interpersonal communication but changed the world order. Social Media has emerged as a potential method of political communication, it has provided a direct medium for politicians and party workers to communicate and interact with public. The recent Indian elections (2014 & 2019) are a testimony to the powerful intrusion of Social media. Even the US presidential elections explain a success story of Social Media. In Indian Election 2014, Narendra Modi became the first social media Prime Minister which not only helped him to win over the largest mandate but simultaneously made him most popular and followed politician across globe. Social media played a central role in Barack Obama Presidential campaigns and paved a way for many other politicians to use this platform for their political gains. Barack Obama harnessed the power of Social Media and used it efficiently in his election campaigns. Social Networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were used to spread the views, opinions, thoughts of Obama on important issues onto his epigones and adherents (Tumasjan, Welpe, Sander & Sprenger, 2012). The new media was used to a greater extent to win over the electorates and keep the supporters and followers informed. Several analysts even attributed this victory of Obama to his online presence which also includes his strategies and social media usage (Tumasjan et al. 2012). Similarly, in 2010 British elections social media became the prodder to win over the elections and was considered to be the first social media elections. In the year 2011, social media penetrated into Dutch politics and was enormously used by political parties for election campaigning. Social media was not only used by the politicians alone but was used to raise money for political purposes by Activism groups over the years (Safranek, 2012). Social media is gaining a significant position in political campaigning around the globe, seeing this trend Indian Politicians have also used this digital platform to reach out to wider audience cum potential voters which the 2014 & 2019 elections are a witness.

Overview Of Existing Review

Rahul (2016) in the study 'New Media in Indian Political Campaigning System' described the new media as an effective tool for election campaigning. Author examined the fundamentals of new media as a tool of information which not only educates people but keeps them informed about political warfare. Study concludes that new media played a foundational role in lending political awareness to people who hardly were well versed with political arena. New media has served and acted as a bridge between masses and their leaders.

Rajput (2014) in the paper titled 'Social media and politics in India' studied twitter accounts of Indian political leaders. In this paper

researcher examined verified twitter accounts of Indian politicians, and found the social networking site twitter is widely used by them but at the same time cannot be considered as a substitute to traditional media. The author analyzed how prominent and high profile political parties like Congress, BJP as well as AamAdmi Party are gaining popularity by connecting to the people especially with young potential population of India, which is the youth of this country. This study also suggests that political leaders must use this new media effectively and wisely while posting or updating anything new as it would lead them into controversy and denial.

Rekha (2015) studied the influence of social media during India's 2014 parliament elections with special reference of Thrissur district in Kerala. Researcher in the paper stated that this is the first time when political parties have strategized and planned well about their election campaigns with wide use and proliferation of social networking sites. This research was merely based on quantitative analysis. With an approximately sample size of 60 this survey was conducted within Thrissur district Survey that included smart phone users. The sample also collected data from the people who use two different social networks. This research illustrated that the influence of social media was determinate during the 2014 elections.

Vinay, Kumar and Hosurmath's (2014) in the study, the role social media play in Indian politics and how it has affected Indian polity. In this study social media users ranging between 15 - 45 were taken as a sample size. The researchers found that social media does affect the politics and vote percentage but it is yet to touch that position where it can wholly roll elections. Social media has undoubtedly influenced people to larger extent but it still has loopholes to circumfuse.

Pande (2015) reviewed the role of social media in political communication in the 2015 general elections of Delhi. The author adopted a diverse approach to analyze several political case studies that played an incredible role in Delhi elections. During the study, researcher came to know social media holds a very important role in shaping the elections. Study revealed that it was because of the social media political party and the new entrant like AAP sweep the elections. Social media played a pivotal role in the foundation of political leaders like Arvind Kejriwal. AAP widely used social media in their election campaigns and interacted with people directly on various social media platforms.

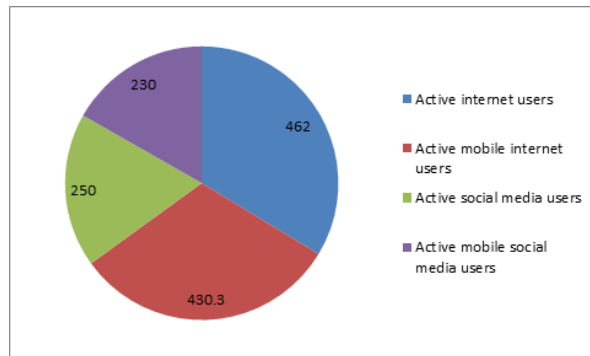
Vasundara and Ravi (2014) deliberated about electronic democracy, online media and Indian politics. Author used a case study to examine online campaigning and found in the study that behavioral voting patterns youth and post election made it self-explanatory that voting campaigns have a positive impact. Also, online campaigns have been successful in educating youngsters with the essential information needed prior to elections.

Indian Politics And Social Media

Social media is the biggest shift since the industrial revolution" Eric Qualman. Social media is such a powerful medium which took less

than nine months to reach 100 million users on Facebook while it took 38 years for radio, 14 years for Television to reach half of the target. With the second largest population, India has the largest number of social media users ranging in between 326 to 350 million , and it is expected to reach 450 approximately in 2023 (Statista).

Digital Population In India As Of January 2018 (in Millions)



Source: Statista data platform <https://www.statista.com/>

As far as presence of social media in Indian Politics is concerned, it is much engrossed and used by Indian politicians from a simple MLA to the Prime Minister of the country. It has not only occupied political fields and political commitments but it also has brought limelight into the personal lives of Political Leaders. In 2011 when Lokpal Bill was passed, it was social media that helped prominent leaders like Anna Hazare to win over the anti corruption bill. Shashi Tharoor was the first political leader from India who debuted on social networking sites starting from micro blogging site like Twitter. Then the string was followed by Narendra Modi and within short span of time he surpassed the number of followers of tharoor with a huge number. Narendra Modi is currently the most followed politician in India and among top most leaders of world too. Social media sites have tremendously grown in Indian political space and politicians have their websites and applications where people can log in and directly share and exchange ideas and thoughts. Indian leaders are not only active on these new forms but voice their opinions, thoughts, ideas, disagreements and day today happenings. From top most leadership to common members of legislation are accessible to people just a click or button away. This new forms of media bridged the gap between leaders and citizens of the country. Wide use of social media usage has landed India as one of the countries who voraciously use social media and given the population it has become the most occupied country with social media interactions. Elections in the year 2014 introduced a new paradigm into the world of Indian politics. It showed new and unique strategies to reach out to people and became a success and made Narendra Modi the first social media prime minister of India. Leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Shashi Tharoor, and Arvind Kejriwal not only became youth icons but social media stars obviously not like Narendra Modi but it made them visible and in good books of people. They used every social media platforms to exchange verbal communication. Social media made Indian polity a different arena which not only entertains commercials, blogs, tweets and facebook posts but made leaders techno savvy people. Through social media even the uneducated and unequipped politicians interacted with public, showcased their thoughts and ideas. Social media introduced to such a phase of politics which is seemingly interesting as well as glorifying. It can mend not only opinions but the negative images people harbor.

Narendra Modi And Social Media

Narendra Modi, the existing prime minister of India is the most followed leader in the history of Indian politics. He not only surpassed leaders like tharoor but trendsetter Bollywood celebrities as well. He is among the top most leaders of world followed on twitter. Before announcing his maiden as a prime ministerial candidate he took social media by storm. From selfies to jingles he ruled social media in India. He targeted not only the youth of this country but every person who was eagerly waiting for a new government over INC (Indian National Congress). People went crazy over his new charming and enthusiastic appearance on social media. Being an RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang) pracharak to a recomposed leader, his image makeover gave hopes to tired and hopeless Indians who were in awe of a new leader. He is called the undisputed king on twitter mincing top leadership of

India and giving them sleepless nights every passing day. Being the most followed bjp leader, Narendra Modi is revered and appreciated for flamboyant social media appearances as well as speeches. His physical image got completely a new makeover. People were not only impressed with his new look attired in designer clothes, spooky accessories and holdings books and laptop but the way he spew venom against corruption, scams ,sanitation and female subjugation. He remains active online if not offline, address every issue which struck peace and harmony. Online he not only managed to work on his image makeover but changed perceptions and opinions of people about him. His party managed to win the two largest elections of the country both 2014 and 2019 with a huge margin over the dynastical political party like congress. They defeated congress not only in the numbers but in all social media forms where congress could have surpassed them. Today the social media scenario is bjp has edge over all the other political parties and to which the credit mostly goes to Narendra Modi. He successfully made bjp the most popular and talked political party. He with his flamboyancy attitude and oration belittled the political space congress made throughout these years. His speeches became talk of the town. Social media was flooded with memes and pictures of him mocking congress leadership particularly focusing on Rahul Gandhi who became the centre of every joke he splintered. Modi was the new king of Indian democracy, a face people eagerly wanted at the helm of affairs. What happened after he got the biggest majority of his career didn't stop him from being active on social media. He immersed into the social media and remain active than ever before. Informing people with girl education, sanitation, foreign policies even the big decisions like demonetization. He remained with the public through out, it not only paved a way for 2019 elections but also made him most charming and active politician on social media platforms. He rules the new media even now. Social media has helped him to win over the people hearts as well as votes.

Evolution Of Social Media In Indian Elections

The 2014 general election was one of a kind in the history of the Indian political system. 2014 marked the first and biggest social media elections in the country. It not only was the largest election in terms of vote percentage but simultaneously marked BJP as a political part securing a record win over other dominant political parties like INC. The 2014 election was a landmark and one of few instances when a non-coalition government other than INC was about to rule at the centre. The 16th Indian electoral process that lasted for a month with a voter turnout 66.4% became the highest turnout ever. This year marked two great epiphanies viz a viz a non coalition government at the centre and tremendous power of social media. This year paved a way for social media and political communication can go hand in hand. The traditional forms of election campaigning like going door to door visiting every nook and corner has been shuttled by the invasion of social media. It successfully eradicated the old forms of politics where people and leaders alike faced misery and difficulties. Even the recent election 2019 explains a story about the successful innings of social media. Every political party today makes sure to engage online with public not only to be in good books but to be highlighted and in the constant limelight. These two elections have been record breaking in the annals of Indian history and made Narendra Modi the most celebrated and popular leader in Indian politics.

CONCLUSION

Social media has proved itself as powerful political communicator tool. It not only influences lives but the political games and warfare. In today's age and time one simply cannot disregard its contribution and arrival. It has introduced us to such a world where global news, global politics, local news is just a click away. Its inclusion has made it one of most important and much needed too, so it is for politics whether local or international. It successfully has bridged the gap between the high class and low class politics. There is no rich, poor, simple, and complex when it comes to social media. It is for general not for particular. This effective tool has made our lives easy and comfortable. Our queries can be solved. People can interact to their revered leaders they always imagined about. Social media gives an individual his own opinion; he can think whom to choose whom to discard. Social media has given the power of acceptance and refusal. It gives a better understanding and knowledge when it comes to decision making process. Leaders know their audience their people; they don't hesitate to share their thoughts, opinions and manifestoes as well. They use social media to know ongoing trends and opinions about politics or even about them. They know how their image is being portrayed in the new form of media. They are conscious too about their social media stints. The aura of

social media is not ending anytime soon, it is here to stay longer or maybe forever. It has impacted the learning and marketing strategies of politicians. They know how and when to use it. It has become an important source of news and information. Today the political world thrives on social media, every politician makes sure to target and reach almost to everyone. Replying to peoples comments, liking the posts has made them closer to public than ever before. This media has certainly influenced people with political knowledge and political rivalry between parties. Social media has made people political polyglots.

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