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Social Media is as a Tool for Political Campaign

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Abstract

Role of media is very important in all cornars of life.In present scenerio it plays very important role inpoletics .It is well known that media is consider as fifth piller of drmocracy. In the early years of indipendance,political Communication in India was restricted to treditional modes of pramotion such as political rallies,circulation of pamphlets,interpersonal skills of politicians,etc.

As the new age media is taking the centre stage, the dependence of actors, who are political in nature, on traditional mediums of poletical communication to contempory modes has been marked due to growing internet penetration and increasing social media usage. Since then, social media has been viewed as a potent communication tool in the sphere of polls and political campaigns.

With the emergence of the ICT the manner in which the political parties used to communicate previously with the electoral voters has changed drastically thereby providing a bridge to fill the gap.

Political parties using this platform can now reach almost every part of the world and are not only restricted to Indian geography.

In political domain, the social media has played a very cruical role and has emerged as a backstage leader in promotional activities and public relation campaigns not only in India but around the whole globe. Digital and social media and their various strategies have become the part and parcel of the overall political campaign.

As per the statistics available, the state level as well as national level political parties are spending a considerable amoutn of their time and available resources in the world of digitial marketing to leave an everlasting impression on the public.

The aim of the research paper is to highlight the role of social and digital media in the field of political campaigns in India.Keenly observing the pivotal role which is being played by social and digital media in the recent session of lok Sabha and State Assembly elections.

Keywords: PoliticalCampaign,Digital,Media,Marketing, Voters.

Introduction

The one way communication model's,with the development of technology, pattern which is followed by an individual for interaction and communication has been changed. The world is becoming smaller day by day as the communication and information is travelling faster. This results in the change in behavioural aspect of an individual there by affecting how the world communications. This is in reference to the use of digital and social media networks operating around us. The role of internet and how it facilitates the communication thorough social media has drastically change the mindset of the people. Before the advent of internet and social media, the people were restricted to interacting with their known fellow members. In the recent past, the communication media used to be mails, land line phones, and personal in person talk.

In this new age, we use text messages and video messages to communicate using our digital devices. We send emails and use all multimedia gadgets like speakers, headphones, etc . for communication purpose. It has redefined how we communicate now in this new world and the scope has widened by the use of social media sites. It has affected and altered the very fundamental rules of communication.The oneway communication models as per the report submitted by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), there are 180 million internet users in India and of which 66% of the users are in direct contact with their known or unknown persons through social media sites.

The propagation of social networking sites (SNS) and their incursion in the day to day life of an individual has affected the socieities and how they manage their social network in this modern world.The social

networking sites started off as a mere online activity and now it has impacted a very significant internet users across the globe.The research paper presented intends to evaluate the neo patterns of communciation which have emerged though the use of digital and social media and how it has mobilize the modern society and its impact on the political process. Purpose of this study to highlight the corilation between the new age

Aim of the Sudy

The present paper would evaluate the new communication patterns that have emerged and helped in the social mobilization and increasing participation in the political processes in the recent past particularly through the use of social media. It also endeavors to analyze the recent trends regarding the usage of social media tools in political campaigning and channelizing the popular sentiments by the political parties. The purpose of the present study is to highlight the correlation between the new age i.e., the 21st century communication patterns initiated by the social media tools and its impact on the political domain of India.

Research Methodology

The present study is analytical in nature and it is based on doctrinal research. Researcher used secondary data to support her logic and exponents. Somebooks of eminent writers, articles, .websites etc. related to this topic were studies. Researcher further screened the gathered information and selected the effective information that can be added in paper.

Hypothesis

Role of social and digital media and its importance.It plays very vital role in election campaign in 21st century. It motivated the public especiallythe young generation.Highlightthe role of social and digital media in the field of political campaigns in India. Role of mediain promotional activities and public relation campaigns. The most important role of digital and social media is found in the influence which it can have in organizing the political campaign.

1. Social and digital media has bridged the divide between candidates and voters by emerging as a virtual platform for discussing political issues.
2. The dependence of political parties on social media tools during the recent election has revolutionized the role of traditional forms of media.
3. The exponential growth and popularity of social media can be viewed as the dawnof the era of digital democracy.

Understanding the Meaning and Features of Social Media

Today, most of us are familiar with social media as mode of interacting or communicating with people across the globe without any geographical limitations or boundaries. In the era of social media our networks are much larger than they have ever been. Social media facilitates instant dissemination of knowledge, experiences, ideas, and opinions among the users through new age media such as Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. Social networking sites (hereinafter referred to as 'SNS') have become a global consumer phenomenon and has emerged as

one of the strongest platform of communicating with audiences across the globe. But before assessing the impact of growth of social media in various fields it is important to understand the meaning and origin of this mode of communication.

Communication pattern initiated by the social media as tools and its ramification onthepolitics in India The research paper presented intends to evaluate the neo patterns of communication which have emerged though the use of digital and social media and how it has mobilize the modern society and its impact on the political process. It is evident thatsocial media can be defined as "computer mediated technology that allow individuals, companies, Governments, NGO's and other organizations to view, creates, shares information, ideas and other forms of expressions via virtual communication and network."

It has following characteristics[1].

1. Social media services are (currently) Web 2.0 Internet-based applications,
2. User-generated content is the lifeblood of social media,
3. Individuals and groups create user-specific profiles for a site or app designed and maintained by a social media service, and
4. It facilitates the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as "Forms of electronic communication (such as web sites) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, etc.[2] Social media are those forms of publishing that are based on a dynamic interaction, a conversation, between the author and active readers, in contrast with traditional broadcast media where the 'audience' is a passive 'consumer' of 'content'.

As per the statistics available, it is quite evident that there is a fundamental shift of internet towards a technology which is user driven viz., emails, blogs, news bulletins, social networks, audio and video sharing sites, etc. It has revolutionise the contents which are user generated, impacted global community, and started to post the conusmer opinions and views about the subject matter. This shft has infused a forcefull will on the people and their use of internet. Some of the leading web portals like facebook, Myspace, whatsapp, youtube, twitter, etc. have moved into the picture and are leading the social networking arena. These sites are now redefining the working of internet and changing the features accordingly so that the user are able to publish opinions and views, able to connect, community building, producing and sharing contents.

Howeverthis is important to note that the social networking sites as aform of media is not a new phenomina its roots stretched to the invent of internate. Technology underwent rapid changes. Social Network Revolution has led the Scientists and engineers, after the invention of super computers way back in 1940s, to thing of ways to develop networking between these computers. This concept / idea lead to the birth of what we now see as Internet. However,

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much later, the development of social media also started and the first everknow such platform was provided by sixdegrees.com. This site allowed the user to upload and build a profile and connect with others as a firend. But due to the monotonus nature of the first innings of social media, the users started to loose their interest. Soon after, in late 90s, with the advent of the concept of blogging, which was an instant messaging platform, the users got something new to experiement with. As per the statictics available, by the early 2000, more than 100 million users have access to internet and it proved to be quite common among the people for their online social engagement.

Use of Social Media in Political Campaigns

In politics, the scope and role of digital and social media is becoming increasingly vital and ineviable as a staretgic marketing tool. It has contributed in the recent past in the field of politics and have successfully driven collective action in many of the social movements with supreme goals. It is now considered as a tool of choice by almost all the political parties of India. Following hihglights the areas where the social media has been used by the potcial parties and during the political campigns:

Building Relationships

The relationship between the political parties and their citizens which is non social and traditional in nature has become insignificant and ineffective during the political campaigns and fails to drive collective action. Here the role of digital and social media is very important and it nurtres the very relationship between the political structure and the voters to establish credit and build trust based relationships. This action in turn results in the increase of voter's participation in the political scenario and collective actions.

Campaing Organisation and Communication

In literature and in practice, the most important role of digital and social media is found in the influence which it can have in organizing the political campaign. It is now considered as the new age communication tool. All political parties have their own social networking portals where various communities are created and operated. It has now become today's norm. For example, the campaign strategy which Barack Obama used was not only meant for communication purpose, but it had a network of communities under a single virtual community in which each and every member felt a sense of belongingness and participated with full enthusiasm in the political campiagn

Political Engagement

The term political enagament defines a level at which a person or a constituency can be mobalised and also inspired to involve themselves and participate in the various process of politics. The literature so far available in this field, describes the social capital term as a connection between the people and also among the people from within the organisations or institutions which is solely based on the identity or objectives which are shared in nature. It can therefore be argued that the degree or level of social captial that a political party or a candidate posses among the voters is determinant of its social connectedness.

Political Crowd Sourcing

Crowd sourcing in political domain, is the act of any task completion through or by efforts put in by the community(s) in a public domain. It involves the participation of public in problem solving or task achievement thereby increasing their sense of belongingness.Crowd-sourcing allows people of different skills, talent and information to add value tasks and solve problems in the public arena by showcasing what they have to offer freely for different type of motivations.

Impact of Social Media on Indian Politics and Political Campaigns

The process adopted for doing politics and the tactics implemented during its campaign has begun to transform with the emergence of social media and its influence on the public and politics. The politics that is happening in India is rapidly changing and its dependency over the digital and social media to connect and communicate with the people cannot be overlooked. India has a rich cultural diversity and a significant large proportion i.e., 34% of the entire population comprises the present youth. Hence the best possible way to make its reach to today's youth is the massive use of digital and social media which plays an important role in everybody's life today.

Using the tools of digital and social media, the political parties are influencing the mass on the grass root level. Today's voter makes their decision based on the inputs provided by digital and social media and they no longer are influenced by the various means of traditional media. However, all of these are still in trend, but increasingly in urban India, political parties are becoming tech savvy as this is the only way to reach out eloquent youths. Recent studies show that it is only through the social media, that bottom-up communication has found its way into political circles in many countries where electorates are more empowered to express and enforce their political views.

It has been observed that the political system and structure is affected by the momentum gained by the efforts of the electorate using the tools of social media. Further, it is an interesting and influencing fact that the minority groups and previous ostracized groups are playing significant role in today's politics and the credit is solely on the use of digital and social media. There has been an increased participation of young adults in the main political stream and it is directly influenced by their use of social media. The structural pattern of daily life of an individual has been altered by the use of new technology and tools. They are no longer considered as just a bystander but are actively involved in the process of politics through social media.

So considering this very fact, it is not wrong to perceive that the future elections would be fight in and around the fabric of social media. This has been substantiated by a research conducted by IRIS Knowledge Foundation and the Internet and Mobile Association of India, which claims that results in over 150 constituencies, could be decided by Facebook

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users, making them the newest vote-bank with the power to shape Indian politics.[3] India's status as per the world ranking is mid-way mark in the adoption of digital and social media. Most of the political parties are in the process of accepting the digital and social media as a means of connecting with the people. The introduction of technology, therefore, into the sphere of election campaigning has following effects:

Political Mobilization

Social Media has emerged as a vibrant tool in mobilizing the popular sentiment and encouraging participation in political and civic activities- ranging from joining online petition and social groups, posting short messages on Twitter, expressing supports through blogs and uploading videos on YouTube. Across the globe it has been a global consumer phenomenon. Since the social media provides ample opportunity to participate directly in the process of politics and make necessary changes to its course hence it is concluded that the citizens of the contemporary societies are no longer considered as a mere passive audience. For the advancement of their public relation activities, the political parties are now taking help of digital and social media and most of the political parties in India have their official social networking sites and groups like face book, twitter, etc. They post political updates, press releases and news about their campaign. Taking into consideration the recent trend of social media its growth seems to be continuous in nature. The social media outlets are becoming essential for political parties and individual politicians which enable them for gaining support of the people and group, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly it allows the highly motivated people to create a context more easily in which the barely motivated people can be effective without having to become activists themselves,[4] creating an environment perfect for politicians to utilize.[5]

Change in Traditional Campaigning Mechanism

As we all know that, campaigning plays a crucial role during elections. It showcases the party profile, their goals in near future and what the public can expect from them. In short, it has a direct effect on how the elections would turn out to be. Thus, this brings the political parties or rather the field of politics to the concept of online campaigning through the use of social media which is by far very less explored in India. The new mode of media has rapidly grown in importance as a forum for political activism in its different forms. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube provide new ways to stimulate citizen engagement in political life, where elections and electoral campaigns have a central role. Till lately, the campaign strategies of political parties in India centred on public rallies, pasting of wall posters, television and radio advertising, erection of banners etc. But with the proliferation of the Internet and smart-phones, the methods of political campaigning have dramatically altered. The advent of the internet has prompted politicians to look at the potential of the online medium. A major part of an election campaign, nowadays, is done through electronic media such as SMS, Blogs, Emails, SEO

and SMO projects, Banner Advertisements, Phone Calls, Mailers, Brochures/Flyers and different Websites. With the outbreak of new technologies, election candidates are looking for new ways to reach out to their followers and prospective voters. Digital media strategies are now an integral part of the overall political campaign briefs, and political parties are spending an increasing amount of time and resources to mobilize voters. It would not be incorrect to say that the utilization of the new media communication tools and strategies has given a new facet and gain to the Indian political parties. However, the gradual switch from traditional media to social media is something that must be taken into account by all political campaigns because if taken advantage of, social media opens up the possibility for politicians to structure their campaign to address constituents with different beliefs on a more personal base.

Change in Voting Behavior

Digital media is changing the way political parties interact with voters bridging the gap like never before. Given today's era of increasing social media usage, and growing internet penetration due to increased usage of smart-phones on the one hand and saturation of traditional mediums on the other, digital media offers the perfect platform for political parties to reach audiences worldwide. The use of digital and social media increases the reach of communication and accentuates its potent role in influencing voters and their behavior. Some of the studies have also found that mass media use and social media use is positively correlated to an individual's voting behavior. Essentially, the more they look to mass media and social media for information, the more likely citizens are to vote. Ultimately social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration in a cost-effective and impactful fashion reaching individuals who are more likely to be motivated to actively participate in the political process.

Change in Communication Pattern

Personal communication via social media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. It allows politicians to communicate faster and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the intermediate role of mass media. Reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated online as well as support and participation for offline events. Messages posted to personal networks are multiplied when shared, which allow new audiences to be reached. All major Indian political parties have their online presence through social media networks like Facebook and Twitter. Politicians, political parties and voters use social media as a means for disclosure-they post photographs, personal information and leave public messages to their friends in a cyber space/ the benefit of this is that social media removes the barrier between professional and consumer, showing the latter how the former works and allowing the latter to actually contribute immediately to the work of the former. This breaking down of previously existing barriers enables strengthened relationships between voters or

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advocates and politicians who utilize social media in an effort to reach their voter base.

Digitalisation of Political Campaigns in India: A Case Study

Digital marketing is proving to be a veritable boon to politicians and political parties in India. To expand their vote bank beyond traditional boundaries, the erstwhile traditional political campaigners are now looking towards the new technologies and tools. There has been a competition and a mad rush to capitalize on the today's available technology and innovations thus setting many new benchmarks in the field of politics. Politicians are finding it very convenient to use the social media platform to spread their policies to the mass, to communicate with the people, and for advancing their political campaign. The new source of technology and tools available in the field of social media are letting the political parties to gain more mileage. The political parties are establishing separate departments and teams to look after their social media coverage and in this process are regularly watching, reading, and accordingly updating their social media contents. Some of the political parties even have an interacting platform where they interact online to the queries and questions of the public and cadres. They are enthusiastically using the tools for the election campaigns. This paradigm shift has significantly helped them in reaching the voters. Political parties and leaders are enjoying the communication development and travel in the cyber world. A large part of new media is based on computer mediated communication which when looked into, shows that it can cause many changes in the way people communicate with one another and it can influence communication patterns and social networks. In order to understand the impact of social media tools on political campaigning in India, the 16[th]LokSabha Election, 2014 and Delhi Legislative Assembly Election, 2015 are critically analyzed below:

Lok Sabha Election 2014

During the first decade of the 21st century, Indian elections faced vibrant new media campaigns in different levels. Compared to the LokSabha Elections, 2009and assembly elections have experienced extraordinary campaigns through the new media. In the year 2014, various social media platforms in India emerged as frontrunner in terms of Marketing and PR communications especially in the arena of politics, an area which has traditionally been predominantly dependent of modes of promotion such as television, print, radio, rallies etc. Taking a leaf from Barack Obama's presidential campaigns, political parties in India are using tools to crunch the insurmountable amounts of information social media generates- what's known as big data analytics.

The 16[th]LokSabha election saw a new face of election campaigning in India when NarendraModi and his team heavily relied on social media tools to manage his election campaign. It helped them raise funds and determine efficient ad placement, exponentially increasing the campaign's reach. The BJP had data on each of the 543 constituencies. They knew how many mobile and Internet users were present in each constituency. Alongside, they used analytics to understand which polling booths had voted for the BJP in the previous elections. For each polling booth data analytics was used to segregate voters into blocks to determine who were pro or against the BJP. They first used deep analytics to understand group communication behaviour and then used appropriate technology to communicate with them. Social media data was used to target voters and market their candidates. The 18 month long campaign was backed up by meticulous research done over the span of 3 to 4 years. They got voter feedback and addressed voter concerns and issues in real time. It bridged the gap between the candidate and the average voter. With millions of people feeding them real time data, analytics saw to it that status updates on social media would reflect the opinions of voters. Modi used voice broadcasting to target mobile only voters. Understanding the voter's preferences also helped in placing ads where there is a higher chance of them being seen and clicked on. Modi's team carefully monitored social media conversations where BJP was being discussed and promptly responded to concerns voiced. The campaign spread over internet and mobile with numerous social media campaigns to bring together BJP volunteers on the ground. With the advanced use of analytics the Modi campaign targeted 810 million voters, 543 constituencies across 1.13 million polling booths. It was through digital media, that he could convey his messages clearly to a large population. Various digital platforms like 'I support NarendraModi', 'Chai peCharcha' etc. were launched to boost up the campaign. Through Social media, he made the citizens of India aware of their voting rights. He understood the importance of youth for elections. He, therefore, tried to connect to and engage the massive population of youth through social media. In addition, 13 million people made 75 million interactions regarding NarendraModi during the elections. It shows that how social media platforms played a major role in election campaigning.

Delhi Legislative Assembly Election, 2015

The victory of the AamAadmi Party (AAP) in February wasn't just the most telling litmus test of anti-incumbency in India's capital, it also played out as a compelling example of engagement and persuasion via social media. Much of the election was fought on Facebook and Twitter. Delhi had 13 million registered voters in that election, out of which 12.15 million were online.[6] This made digital platforms the largest canvassing tool for parties and the most effective engagement tool for party workers. Moreover, it didn't drain their campaign budgets like traditional media did. Political campaigning through social media is certainly a game-changer. During the Delhi elections in 2015, the power of social media was clearly felt. AAP used the modern way of campaigning and reached out to public. They were using the tool in a way no one has ever thought of. Most of their leaders made their presence felt on Facebook and Twitter. From ArvindKejriwal to their grassroots workers, everyone leveraged social media to ensure that they are reaching out to larger audience.

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Undoubtedly, these are striking examples of India's first technology driven elections with such large scale usage of technology, open-access Internet platforms to connect, build conversations, share, mobilize opinion, and citizen action. India has the third largest Internet user's base across the world of more than 243 million Internet users[7] with a majority comprising of youth. This includes more than 100 million active users on various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. No wonder, social media platforms, technology firms, e-commerce portals and telecom operators are using this opportunity to connect with others. Political leaders, candidates, journalists, and citizens have been using the social media platforms extensively to discover election content, converse with other in real time, and express their views. With the success of BJP in General Election, 2014 and AAP in Delhi Legislative Election, 2015 in using social media platforms to decide the course of their political campaigns, other parties are driven to update their social media campaign's initiative. In the light of the above discussion, it would not be incorrect to argue that any future political campaign that do not utilize social media platforms or take use of data analytics while designing and making campaign decisions runs the risk of being left behind at the polling booth.

Conclusion

Over a couple of years, the status of media has transformed from being a mere tool for disseminating information into a platform for discussing various issues. With the advent of social media revolution, the one-dimensional communication pattern of traditional media has now been converted into multidimensional. The ease of access, low-cost & borderless communication etc. has made social media, a virtual platform for conducting open debates, wherein personal opinions are featuring in mainstream media and are regulated only by the norms of civic decency. The social platforms have become powerful and intimidating tools. People are utilizing these tools for voicing their opinions over various personal, social, political, and economic issues etc. The status of media in recent times has taken a shift from being a monologue medium to a medium wherein dialogues for public advocacy are exchanged over the cyber space. In a short span of time, the road to digital democratization has emerged in India and is gradually being accepted as the fifth pillar of our democracy. For the very first time in India, the news is getting predominance over the medium used to convey it. However, the use of Internet and mobile technologies for political campaigning has also posed new questions in front of the election commission, related to tracking expenditure on new media.[8] It would not be incorrect to conclude that the flowers of the social media revolution in India are still in bloom and the time to bear its fruits is yet to come. Therefore, it is too early to predict the extent of the impact of Social media on Indian Election system because it is still new to the Indian Politics. If it used as acampaign tool, it might not be very effective in the long term. But if used effectively for active citizen engagement and as a platform to share and express socio-economic & political issues, social media being a natural progression for a democracy such as India will definitely show positive results in future.

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