

Social Media and Indian General Election 2014

Abstract

Since the rise of the Internet in the early 1990s, the world's networked population has grown from the low millions to the low billions. Over the same period, social media have become a fact of life for civil society worldwide, involving many actors -- regular citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers, governments.

The use of social media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement for many Indians. In a modern democracy, social networking sites have been used by governments to involve citizens in decision-making, and by civil society to engage people in specific issues. However social networking sites can also be used to broaden political participation by helping citizens to communicate with their representatives and with each other. As the FT reports, India's growing internet penetration means that social media has become an important tool in election campaigns. Arguably the 2014 elections have been very different from the previous ones; never before have elections created so much buzz especially among the youngsters.

This study is an analysis of social media and politics and its impact in the 2014 Indian Lok Sabha election. It is an attempt to know how the BJP and the other major political parties created a buzz through social media in Indian Parliamentary 2014 election.

Keywords: Social Media, Indian General Election 2014, BJP, Indian National Congress, AAP

Introduction

There were days when elections were fought on rallies, posters, slogans and freebies. And people responded to these traditional election tools used by politicians and the political parties of all times.

But with changing times and technological advances, both political parties as well as politicians have learned the art of modern technologies to woo voters; or at least make an impression that they keep abreast with latest communication tools of the Internet age.

The transition from traditional methods to electronic (including online) is no doubt a completely new phenomenon having its roots in last few elections throughout the country. Times have changed; and so have our political parties and politicians. Contemporary politicians seem to be using all methods to prove their hegemony in online world.

Aim of the Study

1. It aims to analysis the rise and use of social media on politics and its impact on Indian general election 2014
2. It aims to study the social media strategies used by the three major political parties BJP , congress and AAP in Indian General election 2014

The new media technologies have given a new dimension to the political campaign. Many political parties have created their own websites, blogs and Facebook/twitter accounts. They are regularly watching and reading their new media content. The content is also updated regularly. Some of the political leaders respond to the queries 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.

Social media outlets are essential to politicians and political parties, enabling them to gain support, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly social media 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

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themselves, creating an environment perfect for politicians to utilize. The emerging social media and its public and political influence have begun to transform the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and in turn are permitting a new arena of grassroots politics. Voters no longer make decisions solely based on information available through traditional media and instead seek out additional knowledge and in some cases additional means of activism, using their computers and mobile devices. Some of the studies have also found that mass media use and social media use is positively correlated to an individual's voting behaviour. Essentially, the more 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 and as research points out, is reaching individuals who are more likely to be motivated to actively participate in the political process.

Social Media and Indian General Election 2014

India's 2014 election is being called a social media Election because it is the largest democratic election in the world to date and so much of it took place online.

During the last general election in 2009, social media usage in India was minuscule. While according to CNN news report India's 2014 election, "Social media has become the new election battleground for India's nationwide parliamentary elections,"

No wonder, social media platforms, technology firms, e-commerce portals and telecom operators used this opportunity to connect with others. Political leaders, candidates, journalists, and citizens used the social media platforms extensively to discover election content, converse with other in real time, and express their views.

A bevy of politicians, who, at first sight, seem antiquated and traditional in their flowing kurtas and Gandhi caps are turning to social networking sites to engage Internet-savvy first time voters. Having an official YouTube channel or an active Facebook page

is now as important as holding mass rallies and plastering candidates' faces on billboards.

Some borrowed strategies employed by U.S. President Barack Obama's 2012 presidential campaign, with the use of Thunderclap, an online platform which helps to make content viral.

Digital Overview of India

Source: Internet Live Stats

(www.InternetLiveStats.com),

IAMAI (the Iris Knowledge Foundation and Internet and Mobile Association of India)

Some important facts to be considered:

1. Total Population of India – 1,255,777,000
Urban 31%
Rural 69%
2. Population of voters is 800 million i.e. 70 % of population
3. India has the largest youth population in the world. Nearly 40 per cent of the Indian population is aged 13 to 35 years (defined as youth in the National Youth Policy)
(150 million populations between the ages of 18-23 were newly eligible to vote, two out of three people in India are under the age of 35, and there was an unprecedented voter turnout at 66.4 percent (compared to 57.5 percent in the 2012 U.S. elections).
4. India has the third largest Internet user's base across the world of more than 243 million.
19 % is the penetration of population with internet.
(India's Internet penetration rate, according to Internet Live Stats, also grew an unprecedented 14 percent from last year and is currently estimated to be at 243 million or roughly 19 percent of India's population.)
5. Top Social Media Platforms(Approx)

Social Media Users	170 millions	13 % of Total Population
-Facebook	160 millions	94%
-Twitter	120 millions	66%
-Google Plus	140 millions	81%
-Linkendln	90 millions	53%

Social Media Strategies Used by three Major Political Parties of India in General Election 2014

Party Strategy	BJP	Congress	AAP
Facebook Pages	-Ek hi vikalp Modi -Vote for change -I support Narendra Modi -Narendra Modi for PM -Mission 272 +	-Congress Party -Indian Youth Congress -Indian National Congress - Congress India -Youth for Congress -NSUI	-Aam Aadmi Party -AAP for Hope -India Against Congress -Arvind Kejriwal for Hope -IITian AAP
Twitter	#abkibarmodisarkar #mission272+ #Imodi #BJP2014 #BharatiyaJantaParty #VoteforNamo	#VoteforRG #VoteforRahulGandhi #Voteforcongress #IndiaCongressParty #Congress2014 #CongressAgainstCorruption	#VoteforAAP #ArvindKejriwalforchange #AAPPopularity #Thunderclap #AAPforhope #Indiaagainstcorruption
Blogging	bjporg.blogspot.com	www.aiccblogspot.com	www.aamaadmiparty.org/blog
Google 3D	yes	no	no
Google Hangout	yes	yes	yes
Youtube	www.youtube.com/user/BJP4India	www.youtube.com/user/congresspartyIndia	www.youtube.com/AAP

Websites	www.bjp.org www.bjpdelhi.org www.narendramodi.in	www.inc.inaalindiacongress.com	www.aamaadmiparty.org www.arvindkejriwal.co.in
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Bharatiya Janta Party after stunning defeats in 2004 and 2009 respectively has evolved as a stronger and accomplished political party. The party has learnt the lesson of resilience the hard way and has incorporated social media as an essential component in their election campaign mix. Over the years, BJP has become one of the pioneers in tapping the new age media to the best of its potential. Right from having an interactive website, to dedicated volunteers dashboards, mobile apps, Google hangouts, Facebook Page, Twitter handle, Youtube Page, Whatsapp, integrated offline-online campaigns. If we had noticed, these elections were fought equally if not more, in the cyber space using social technologies. Narendra Modi, popularly known as NaMo, is perhaps one of the most tech-savvy politicians in the world and certainly the most active in India, has emerged as an undisputed leader as he could sense the potential of social media platform and the 'Gen Y' of India.

He stormed the social media by being most active, and has very capably demonstrated how to use big data to "drive donations, enroll volunteers, and improve the effectiveness of everything from door knocks...to social media".

Modi's popularity carried the BJP victory with 282 seats out of the 543 seats in parliament, the biggest win by any party in India in 40 years. Through its use of social media, the BJP was able to sway many young voters. And while official numbers on the youth vote have yet not tallied, the BJP clearly won the contest for India's young voters. For BJP, getting young votes meant harnessing the power of social media.

Activist-turned-politician Arvind Kejriwal and his **Aam Aadmi Party**, which made its debut in Delhi assembly elections, used social media to draw swathes of supporters. Aam Aadmi Party has been in the limelight since December 2013, portrayed as having mildly controversial political mottos by Indian media. The leader of the party, Mr. Arvind Kejriwal, established the Aam Aadmi Parti in November 2012 and was elected CM of Delhi in the very first election fought by them in 2013.

The social media campaigns by the anti-corruption Aam Admi Party (AAP), made an impressive showing in the 2013 Delhi assembly elections. It taken to Social Media as much as it has taken to Indian Politics.

Indian National Congress India's oldest party was slow to start on social media. Even though it had members like Sashi Tharoor who were very popular on social media, it was far behind BJP & AAP in adopting the platforms of today. When INC woke up, it was too late. Not to mention, the party has been facing a lot of flak for its policies and governing style for quite a while now. With a not-so-good presence on Social Media, Congress has been unable to create any buzz on social media.

Among major political parties in India, BJP has the biggest charisma in social media. They

started using the social media even before 2009 general election, which they lost. Many senior BJP leaders like Sushma Swaraj, Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, Narendra Modi and many more are on social networking sites. Narendra Modi is one of the most famous politicians on social media. He joined Facebook and Twitter in 2009 and became the first politician to use Google Plus. Narendra Modi with approximately 1.3 million plus followers on Facebook page and 3.42 million plus followers on Twitter. He also has a You Tube channel which has reached the 15,000 mark of subscribers and has more than 1500 videos.

So, all-in-all Social media turned out to be an extensive platform for electoral candidates to reach to a large number of voters, especially NaMo, who leveraged social media like no politician had ever done in India before. He has set an example for the existing and upcoming parties and will continue to do so for a better India.

The Methodology

The approach to the study is quite straightforward. The present study is in the nature of qualitative and deep understanding about the particular case, its features and its impact. The study analyzed the different social media tools Facebook, twitter, social blogs, search engines, and micro-blogs used by three major political parties BJP, AAP, INC in disseminating and mobilizing in political participation in Indian General Election 2014.

Conclusion

The Present study was focused on the role of social media in politics and its role in Indian general election. It shows that social media is the pioneering platform for politicians to build a strong bond with their voters and the same has also become a medium to cease any boundaries between the two.

It aims to identify the various social media tools used by the political parties in the election campaign. It mainly covers the brief analysis of the use of social media strategies used by the BJP and other two major political parties Congress and AAP. BJP enjoyed a higher positive momentum through social media. The present study was focus on the use of Social Media by Political Party (BJP) in Lok Sabha election – 2014 in India.

Bharatiya Janta Party has left no stone unturned in reaching out to the new and existing voters' population through digital and social media platforms. The key highlight of BJP's social media strategy is the seamless integration across various platforms with consistent communication and messaging. The party has been phenomenal in terms of the usage of different social media platforms to the best of their capabilities. Overall, the party's approach towards the digital and social media has been outstanding and impressive.

This social media was incredibly successful in reaching the younger population while helping all population to organize and promote action. The last

parliament general election is the witness of the effect of its use and adoption and effects.

So we can say that Social media is not just about frivolous 'likes' and 'posts'. There are the people who are helping enhance discussions. For Future elections the medium will be the heavily-invested area for a political party.

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