Influence of Social Media as a Tool of Political Marketing in General Elections

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Abstract — Social media is emerging as a substantial promotion tool during elections by the political parties to connect and express their vision, to influence voters, to achieve its objective to help them increase their visibility or to gain majority. The perception of Indian people towards the modern marketing tools in politics remains unexplored. Social media is not only the current generation's line of communications technologies but it has also changed daily activities and connected people in a manner never before possible. In the same manner, social media has also transformed politics in India and globally. Social Media marketing have created a new dimension in online advertising and political marketing resulting in easy access for the parties and political leaders or institutions to keep in touch with the people understanding their needs, wants and behavior. In this paper, the influence of social media on voter's behavior and how political marketing takes new dimensions is discussed. We discuss the influencing factors of social media from the perspective of voters. We also focused whether the impact is positive or negative. An online survey through questionnaires to know the impact of social media on politics was conducted. For visual representation of data, table has been used as a descriptive analysis tools. Chi Square test has applied to test the hypothesis. The purpose of writing this research paper is to analyze the voter's behavior related with decision making while they vote. The findings indicate that political parties possessing a well-managed social media team can gain well in elections. There are also wide opportunities for the marketing stream focusing in social media management in such promotional work related with elections, political parties and politicians.

Keywords— Social media marketing, Voters behavior, Online advertising, Political parties, Political marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st Century, Social media have become an essential space of public communication. Every organization which provides products and services irrespective of whether it is big or small have recognized the privilege of social media to reach the customers. Marketing activities had been highly traditional earlier, but due to the increasing number of users in Internet there is a positive trend towards digital marketing. This trend has been catalyzed to a great extent by social media and the business marketing strategies. Increasing active users in social media has provided new opportunities to marketing strategists to target an emerging section of society that is heavily influenced by social media. Social media is a novel platform and a tool to help countries and its societies to create, express, share their thoughts and ideas without barriers. In the recent years, Political parties in India have also taken up this space understanding the success stories of corporates reaching the customers more easily and quickly.

The term 'Political Marketing' was first coined by Kelly in 1956. Political marketing can be described as a process by which political candidates, events and ideas directed at the voters and gain their support understanding the voters' behavior. Wring (1997) defines political marketing as "the party or candidate's use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes". D Eisenhower, 34th President of USA was the first to apply political marketing into practical terms in the election campaign of 1952.In the world's largest democratic country, elections are considered to be the festivals of democracy.

The marketing events in political elections begin from wall campaigns, public meetings and even door to door campaigns. Since all these are routine events, marketing in the election process takes a reform. Internet has showcased their democratizing potential by creating access to information and lowering the barrier of public participation in sharing their opinion. Low cost of managing social media helped the political parties to design new strategies for the political candidates through new methods of campaign. The impact of social media in Indian was first highlighted during the Mumbai Terrorist attacks in 2008 when timely information was shared through Twitter. In 2009, on the eve of national elections, social media was used in India for online voter registration and transparency campaigns started. It was

the first time political parties tried to reach out to voters through social networking websites. In the past two decades, one of the most vital developments associated to internet has been the occurrence of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. Social media cites Arab Spring Movement that began in late 2010 that changed the political scenario in many countries all over the world. The contribution of the social media and democracy to the events of the Arab Spring has led to idea that open access and a free Internet can eventually turn out to be a good medium. The social media has changed the traditional marketing landscape significantly since its emergence.

The successful presidential campaign of Barack Obama in US proved social media to be an integral part of the campaigning event. Various platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter specifically were used to retrieve the opinions and views of the Obama on important issues to his followers. The tools used were successful to a great extent and kept the followers updated. Some analysts even attribute the victory of Obama to this digital marketing strategy. Similarly, social media became the successful tool for the British elections during year 2010. Later in year 2011, this tool entered the Dutch politics also, where political parties used social media platforms for campaigning during their general elections. These developments interestingly points out that how social media is gaining significant place in political campaigning in global scenario. Among major political parties in India, BJP has the greatest charisma in social media. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections pioneered the first-use of social media as a major campaigning tool that not only drew eyeballs but also kept the public glued through frequent updates.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by India's current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, was the first party to concertedly deploy social media to campaign for its own programme from the 2014 elections, in the years since most other parties, including the Indian National Congress (INC), Aam Aadmi Party and many others have created IT cells to coordinate and aggressively campaign for their program me and vision for the 2019 elections. The movement led by Anna Hazare for installing the Lokpal Bill gained the support of youth all over India through Social Media. Social media has also credited with helping in the rise of a new political movement in Delhi. Aam Aadmi Party and its candidate, Arvind Kejriwal, won a surprise victory in Delhi against major political parties. The debates on the pros and cons of social media are basis on its ability to bring together the individuals who share common beliefs and opinions. It showcases the ability that allows users from various parts of the country to discuss over various causes and concerns. The main concern is that there is no guarantee regarding authenticity of content delivered through the social media channel. Social media platforms are an instant medium of communication where users can particularly spread what they want to hear and when they want to hear irrespective of the truth and the authentic facts. As social media participation is gradually rising, there should be a responsibility of clarity, balance and integration. Social media can also be subject to significant abuse. Some politicians have been accused of boosting their apparent popularity on social media with legions of followers who don't exist and of using social media to smear their opponents. Worse, social media have been used to fan violence against religious and ethnic groups.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

DR. MOLOY GHOSHAL (2018)

This research was conducted to find out the voters opinion about the impact of social media buzz put by different political parties on this media. For data collection purpose, a convenient sampling technique was employed. The finding indicates that a political party can win greater number of general election seats in an election if it has a well-developed social media team to promote it and attack the opponent with more and more viral posts. The research paper provides evidence of social media buzz impact on election seat conversion.

MD SAFIULLAH , PRAMOD PATHAK, AND ANKITA ANSHUL (2016)

The study was conducted to examine whether the use of Twitter had an effect on the 2014 General elections outcome. For this research, a total of 8,877,275 social media buzz for 100 days from January 01, 2014 to April 09, 2014 of 12 Indian political parties has been considered. The result indicates that social media buzz has a positive and significant impact on the outcome of General elections 2014.

MALIK & NEHA (2014)

This research studies whether political campaigns that are more social media savvy finally garner more votes. The sample size for this study was 150 Indian citizens who were above the 18 years' age who agreed to take part in the quantitative element of this research investigation.

The survey finds that the major portion of the active users on social networking websites became heavily reliant on social media for seeking updates regarding

political leaders. Moreover, they consider it is very important for a political leader to have a profile on these social networking sites. The scope of use of social media in Indian politics is extensive if utilized strategically. Lastly, although twitter has most number of registered users in India, as per the survey response Twitter is the site, which is never used even once a month by most of the respondents.

AINDRILA BISWAS, NIKHIL INGLE AND MOUSUMI ROY (2014)

This research examined that whether getting influence by social media young voter will cast their vote in election. From the findings it is clear that social media play a significant impact on voting behavior of young voters. Social media is replacing the traditional media but in remote areas traditional media still has significant impact in creating awareness among people. Social media provides platform to the people to get connected to parties they favor.

It became an important marketing tool to reach to target audience in minimum time and within less cost. Online banners adds and other form of advertising has a significant impact on young voter specially students which not only influence them but also help in shaping their behavior. There is significant relationship with aged of people. People use social media platform to keep track of political development, technology play a vital role in giving first-hand information that to in less time.

STEFAN STIEGLITZ AND LINH DANG-XUAN (2012)

This research paper analyses the impact of social media communication and public discourse in the society. The study observed the increasing relevance of and the need for analyzing political discussions on different social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and weblogs. They proposed a framework for social media analytics in political context. More specifically, various approaches of data tracking and data analysis as well as corresponding analysis methods that might help gain a deeper insight into political discussions in social media was outlined.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Technological advancements have opened new doors in political participation. It has become a very significant medium of communication, participation and communication but still there is an ambiguity among researchers and the campaign managers that whether, high engagement with social media leads to voting for a particular party or not.

The past few elections across the globe have witnessed high usage of social media, resulting in spreading the ideas and victory of candidates which captured the attention of researchers. The purpose of this study is to understand the role social media plays in decision making of voters while they vote.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Primary objective of this study is to find out the influence of social media in decision making of voters in the elections .Secondary objectives include analyzing the overview of Social media as a tool of political marketing, understanding the prospects of Social media in political marketing and to figure out the factors affecting voters in social media.

V. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H1 : There is no significant relationship between gender and influence of social media in voting behavior

H2 : There is no significant relationship between education and influence of social media in voting behavior

H3 : There is no significant relationship between age and influence of social media in voting behavior

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design is used here and the data collected is mainly primary and some secondary sources like journals and magazines are also used. The methodology adopted is an online survey through Google form which consists of 20 questions. Random sampling technique is used to collect data from the sample size comprising 100 voters who are active in social media platforms. The statistical tools such as mean analysis, rank analysis, chi square test and Likert scale was used for analyzing the data.

VII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Descriptive statistics about the respondents

Gender	Frequency
Male	57
Female	43
Age	Frequency
18-25	54
25-30	24
30-40	12
40-45	6
Above 45	4
Educational Qualification	Frequency
Primary	1

10th	2
12th	11
Graduation	70
Post-Graduation	16

Table 1 provides information about the respondents' age, gender and educational qualification. There are 57 male respondents. Most of the respondents come under the age group of 18-25. Majority of the respondents are graduates.

Table 2: Perception Of Respondents Towards Social Media

Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating Average	Mean Score
In the absence of social media, one will not be updated to the current scenario of the nation	20%	50%	25%	5%	0%	3.85	
People tend to believe everything spread through social media	20%	35%	30%	15%	0%	3.6	
Voters would be more interested if the political parties could gift them something through social media	10%	35%	25%	25%	5%	3.2	3.25
Higher number of followers in account indicates the higher votes	0%	10%	45%	45%	0%	2.65	

On the basis of the Likert scale, if we use 3 as scale value, the value higher than considered as positive response and the value below is considered negative response. Here the value is greater than 3. So we can conclude that people have a positive response towards social media.

Table 3 : Effectiveness Of Social Media Tools In The Voting Behavior Of Respondents

Item	Rank							Weight	Rank
Video blogs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6.64	5
Twitter Hashtag Campaign	4	0	8	20	8	8	2	6.78	4
Opinion polls	2	24	2	0	10	6	6	7.71	3
Trolls	32	4	4	6	0	2	2	10.64	1
Personalized Messages	2	2	8	8	14	8	8	5.86	6
Live Streaming	4	10	14	4	4	10	4	7.86	2

Table 3 depicts weighted mean score of different social media tools on basis of its effectiveness with rank. Here, the most effective tool in social media is trolls. Live streaming stands 2nd and opinion polls 3rd. Twitter campaign, Video advertisements and Personalized messages stand 4th, 5thand 6th ranks respectively.

Table No 4: Relationship Between Gender and Influence of Social Media in Voting Behavior

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	31	47	57
Female	18	25	43
Total	49	51	100

O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
31	27.93	3.07	9.4249	0.3374
18	21.07	-3.07	9.4249	0.4473
26	29.07	-3.07	9.4249	0.3242
25	21.93	3.07	9.4249	0.42917
Total				1.53867

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between gender and influence of social media in voting behaviour

H1: There is a significant relationship between gender and influence of social media in voting behaviour

$$x^2 = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 1.53867$$

= 1.53867

Degree of freedom=(r-1) (c-1) = 1, Level of significance=5%, Table value =3.841

The calculated value is less than table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. So the study indicates that there is no significant relationship between gender and influence of social media in voting behavior. The findings state that gender does not play a major role in voting behavior influenced by social media.

Table No 5: Relationship Between Education Level And Influence Of Social Media In Voting Behavior

Education	Yes	No	Total
Higher Secondary	8	6	14
Graduate	26	44	70
PG and Above	11	5	16
Total	45	55	100

O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
29	26.46	2.54	6.4516	0.2438
9	11.76	-2.76	7.6176	0.6223
11	10.78	0.22	7.6176	0.6223
25	27.54	-2.54	7.6176	0.6223
15	12.24	2.76	7.6176	0.6223
11	11.22	-0.22	7.6176	0.0043
Total				**1.7567**

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between age and influence of social media in voting behavior

H1: There is a significant relationship between age and influence of social media in voting behavior

$$x^2 = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 1.7567$$

Degree of freedom=(r-1)(c-1)= 2, Level of significance=5%, Table value =5.991

The calculated value is less than table value.

Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. So the study indicates that there is no significant relationship between age and influence of social media in voting behavior. As per the study, age is not a influencing factor in voting behavior for the social media participants.

FINDINGS

- Among social networking sites, Facebook is the most used social networking site by the respondents (85%). Instagram is followed by 83% and Twitter users are 37%. Facebook is considered as the most suitable social networking site to reach candidates by the majority. It is followed by Twitter and Instagram. YouTube is preferred by the least.
- Trolls are considered the most effective tool in social media by the respondents. Among the respondents, twitter participation is related with education level.
- Respondents with graduation and above tend to participate higher in twitter. 70% of the respondent states that in absence of social media nobody will be updated with the current scenario of the nation. Majority of the respondents say that people tends to believe everything spread through social media.
- The results of chi-square test at 5 percent significant level states that there is no significant relationship between gender and influence of social media in voting behavior.
- The results of chi-square test at 5 percent significant level states that there is no significant relationship between age and influence of social media in voting behaviour.
- The results of chi square test at 5 percent significant level states that there is significant relationship between education level and influence of social media in voting behaviour

SUGGESTIONS

- The study says that Facebook is the most used social networking site followed by Instagram. In the coming years, Instagram can be used as effective tool of social media. So, Social media marketing organizations should make use of Instagram because audio visual elements can influence the consumers more.
- Twitter participation is higher with educated people. Twitter is not much familiar among less educated people. Even though Hashtag campaigns and opinions of celebrities in Twitter are highly discussed in Television channels and Newspaper but those responses cannot represent all the people. The actual response of the people cannot be determined with Twitter since there is upper-class segmentation. So, political analysts and journalists should not make decisions on the basis of Twitter response.

- Social media have enabled people to lead movements against the social issues. A large majority of the respondents agree that without social media they won't be aware of many social issues. As a positive response, this has raised public response against various social issues. Respondents also agree that people tend to believe all the news spread through social media. So, the government must take necessary and sudden action in this case to avoid long term consequences.

- Trolls are the most effective tool of social media. Due to its creativity, it is popular than any other tools and it is being marketed easily. Trolls can be manipulated and are sometimes dangerous than fake news. So, the Government should take the same measures implemented in the case of spread of fake news to avoid problems created through social media trolls.

CONCLUSION

As previous studies have shown, in the last few years' social media have become an important political communication channel. It enables political institutions and voters to directly interact with each other. The Indian political scenario is different from the other democracies of other countries due to numerous cultural, economic and demographic factors that affect. Due to this reason, political marketing can have different forms in India. This study will provide an insight to politicians, political analysts, journalists, academicians, marketing strategists and electoral candidates regarding social media usage. Finally it can be concluded that social media has an unleashed potential which can change the face of the political communication in coming years.

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