

Role of social media in Indian politics: A Review

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Abstract

In the early 1990s, the rise of the internet contributed to the growth of the world's networked population. The networked population has more access to information, more opportunities to speak and a stronger capacity to act together. Social media is becoming an event for civil society throughout the world with a big number of players – ordinary individuals, activists, NGOs, telecommunications companies, software suppliers, and governments in general. Social media is a very valuable instrument for the communication of information in today's digital world. The way political parties communicate with voters that bridge the divide is evolving in digital media. Due to the increasing use of social media and the rising Internet penetration, as smartphone use has risen and conventional media are saturated, digital media is a fantastic platform for political parties to reach audiences globally. Using digital and social media boosts communication efforts and enables lobbying to be targeted and tailored to the needs of marketers. This study will evaluate the influence of social media in the administration of political campaigns. This study focuses mostly on the effect of researchers on social media policy on their role, relevance, and opportunities. The study also examines how social media affects the behavior of voters and political groups investing in social media in different elections for electoral management.

Keywords: Social Media, India, Politics, etc.

Introduction

The way young voters study and follow the political aspects of social media and social networking has brought about a significant changes¹.

¹ Hermida, A. (2017). Herkese Söyle. Sosyal Medya'da Neden Paylaşımında Bulunuruz. (Çev. Ahmet A. Sabancı). İstanbul: Kafka, Epsilon Yayınev

This meditation on politics and political communication²; political online or online campaigns in literary politics³.

In the Indian political system, social media is becoming increasingly popular. Social media are widely used by political parties since the Indian election committee observes conventional media and media carefully. For many years, political parties have been trying to contact voters completely in modern social media culture through the social media. However, as the popularity of social media or the social media sites grew in mid-2000, campaigns began to build on its potential to reach more people.

Social media also provides a new means for people to look for, share and raise awareness of information. The transformation of road movements into big cities in India always plays an important role. Social activist Anna Hazare utilized social media in New Delhi in the same fashion during 2012 anti-corruption movement. Politics utilize social media to contact their electorate and either protest or vote. Politicians utilize social media. So, for all political parties, social activists, and individual leaders the usage of social networking technology made it fantastically simple.

Social media and voting

"It is reported that the social media is a tool of networking and communication which is used in five ways"⁴: to help and organize the philanthropically aspects of questions and problems, "innovative social causes; contravention stories ignored by outdated media; to activate people for social, political and other related campaigns". Different and diverse TV channels are developing in the current day and more rapid electronic media. The influence of social media on campaigns to increase the reach of the news to more voters. "The results of the elections can either be seen through social media activity. However, many firms use data from social networks sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and other platforms to detect election results"⁵.

Social Media and Politics

² Bimber, B. and Richard, D. (2003). *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³ Barberá, P. (2015). *TweetingFromLeftto Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than an EchoChamber?* *PsychologicalScience*, 1-12.

⁴ Kugelman, M. (2012). *Social media in Pakistan: Catalyst for communication not change*. NOREF Report.

⁵ Eijaz, A., (2013) *Impact of New Media on Dynamics of Pakistan Politics*. *Journal of PoliticalStudies*, Vol. 20, Issue - 1, 113-130

Since its beginning, the debate over how the Internet affects politics has gotten a lot of attention. Scientists looked at the interactive potentials of the Internet in this field in the 1990s⁶. The Internet has been hailed as a means of achieving direct democracy's aim⁷.

With the introduction of public Internet use, the scope of study in this field has grown even further. The argument about how the Internet has a significant impact on policy has grown⁸, and its impact, as noted by⁹ the author; is no longer a destiny, but rather a fact of observation. The impact of the Internet on policy today might be based on more empirical evidence¹⁰. The Internet, according to the researchers, can improve civic involvement by connecting affinity groups¹¹ help students to become more aware of specific policy problems for people and improve their ability to compare several viewpoints¹². The Internet, according to the researchers, can improve civic involvement by connecting affinity groups¹³ Enabling citizens to gain awareness about specific political issues and enhance their capacity to compare various viewpoints. "Others were fascinated by the Internet's potential to facilitate self-expression and the dissemination of personal and local needs.¹⁴ As an adversary, the Internet was hailed for fostering new forms of political involvement.¹⁵, as a tool for improving people's connections to political institutions and as a new forum for policy debate"¹⁶.

In a nutshell, the debate may be summarized as follows: "many scholars argue that the Internet is creating a new political arena that prevents democracies from strengthening, while others argue

⁶ Bimber, B. (1998). The Internet and Political Mobilization: Research Note on the 1996 Election Season. *Social Science Computer Review*, 16(4), 391–401.

⁷ Slaton, C. D. (1992). *Televote: Expanding Citizen Participation in the Quantum Age*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

⁸ Chadwick, A., & Howard, P. N. (Eds.). (2009). *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. London: Routledge

⁹ Castells, M., & Sey, A. (2004). The Internet and the Political Process. In M. Castells (Ed.), *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (pp. 363–381). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publication.

¹⁰ Hardy, B. W., & Sheufele, D. A. (2005). Examining Differential Gains From Internet Use: Comparing the Moderating Role of Talk and Online Interactions. *Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 71–84.

¹¹ Diani, M. (2001). Social Movement Networks: Virtual and Real. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(3), 386–401.

¹² Howard, P. N. (2005). Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597(1), 153–170. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1177/0002716204270139>

¹³ Diani, M. (2001). Social Movement Networks: Virtual and Real. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(3), 386–401.

¹⁴ della Porta, D., & Mosca, L. (2005). Global-Net for Global Movements? A Network of Networks for a Movement of Movements. *Journal of Public Policy*, 25(1), 165–190. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X05000255>

¹⁵ Wright, S. (2004). Informing, Communicating and ICTs in Contemporary Anti-Capitalism Movements. In W. van de Donk, B. D. Loader, P. G. Nixon, & D. Rucht (Eds.), *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements* (1st ed., pp. 77–93). London: Routledge.

¹⁶ Price, V., & Cappella, J. N. (2002). Online Deliberation and Its Influence: The Electronic Dialogue Project in Campaign 2000. *IT & Society*, 1(1), 303–329.

that the Internet is a place where "politics as usual" may be practiced".¹⁷ "We can therefore conclude that the use of digital linkages in politics has neither altered the democracy of cyber-optimists, nor has it resulted in dramatic transformation of political institutions or massive political integration of Internet users".

Implications for Ethics, Political Communication, and Security

"Social media has made Indian politics inclusive by allowing those who were previously excluded from politics due to geography or demography to participate in direct politics". It has also allowed for an unprecedented diversity of viewpoints and public commitment. Despite this, the 2019 general election shows new lower standards in public discussion, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation, and the frequent failure to follow ethical principles of political communication. "Ethics in political communication is a difficult issue"¹⁸, the rise of digital technology has complicated matters further by weakening traditional ethical constraints among all actors — politicians, journalists, the media, and public opinion".

Both the BJP and the Congress focused on communal issues in the run-up to the 2019 general elections, a distinct element of the rise in polarising and controversial material. In certain online areas, such as regional languages and privately owned WhatsApp group chat lines, social media has enabled a combative and intimate type of populist politics to grow. In the paper the author looks¹⁹ at "the role of the Hindu right wing in instilling majority belligerence online in the form of hate speech and extreme speech, as well as in the daily routine of online political communication and involvement in India. Both parties and their officials have also circulated a great number of fake news and misinformation, making it extremely difficult for fact-checking organizations and vigilant citizens to deal with each case and convey the truth"²⁰.

"Although name-calling, fake news, and other low-level debates and unethical political communication have always existed, social media has undoubtedly exacerbated these concerns to a new level". Political discourse in the country has reportedly reached new lows, with

¹⁷ Margolis, M., & Resnick, D. (2000). *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace 'Revolution'*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage

¹⁸ Denton, Robert R Jr (ed) (1991): *Ethical Dimensions of Political Communication*, New York: Praeger.

¹⁹ Udupa, Sahana (2018): "Gaali Cultures: The Politics of Abusive Exchange on Social Media," *New Media & Society*, Vol 20, No 4, pp 1506–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817698776>.

²⁰ Rao, Anuradha (2019): "Taming the Misuse of Social Media: Lessons from the Indian Elections," *Institute of South Asian Studies Newsletter: South Asia*, Vol 27, pp 18–19. https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Newsletter-South-Asia-27_250719.pdf.

misinformation, insults, and mudslinging even among seasoned and senior political leaders, according to observers²¹.

"The Balakot airstrikes and Varthaman's subsequent release were widely discussed on social media". The BJP quickly capitalised on its reelection campaign promise to include a national security component. Pulwama's politicisation dominated social media and public opinion, and was a major role in the BJP's resounding election victory²².

Following the Pulwama event and the Balakot air attack, "another dangerous tendency was the spreading of images of violence by prominent people", common people, and media outlets in order to contribute to the present rambling and rumorous atmosphere²³. With polarised material, incorrect, and deceptive social media posts, Pulwama's political campaign has already exacerbated jingoist nationalism and sectarian tensions, whether intentionally or not. On social media, Muslims and Kashmiris have been demonized, and Kashmiris have been bullied, assaulted, and assaulted in many parts of the nation. According to media reports, many of these harassment operations were carried out using WhatsApp and Facebook groups²⁴. "Another risk element was the targeting and trolling of more moderate voices or those who disagreed with government action". The word gained popularity among Hindu right-wing adherents, who used it to criticise and identify anybody who disagreed with their viewpoint as a traitor before resorting to aggressive trolling and other forms of online harassment²⁵.

Rumours and incorrect information regarding Pulwama/Balakot belong to a category that can have long-term societal consequences and a proclivity to promote societal instability²⁶. According to these concerns, an unrestricted approach to social media created uncontrolled, minority-focused

²¹ Misra, Satish (2019): "India Elections 2019: How Top Leaders Have Contributed to Falling Standards of Electoral Discourse," Observer Research Foundation, 9 May, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-elections-2019-how-top-leaders-contributed-falling-standards-electoral-discourse-50611/>.

²² Bera, Sayantan (2019): "BJP Poll Campaign was a Perfect Ambush: Yogendra Yadav," Livemint, 19 May, <https://www.livemint.com/elections/lok-sabha-elections/bjp-poll-campaign-was-a-perfect-ambush-yogendra-yadav-1558283953036.html>.

²³ Siyech, Mohammed Sinan (2019): "The Pulwama Attack's After Effects: Fake News and Rumours," RSIS Commentary, 4 March, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/the-pulwama-attacks-after-effects-fake-news-and-rumours/#.XaSmaS17H-Y>.

²⁴ Purohit, Kunal (2019): "WhatsApp Rumours Have Led to 30 Deaths in India. In this Social Media Disinformation Age, the Only Question Is: Who's Next?" South China Morning Post, 25 February, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/society/article/2187612/whatsapp-rumours-have-led-30-deaths-india-social-media>.

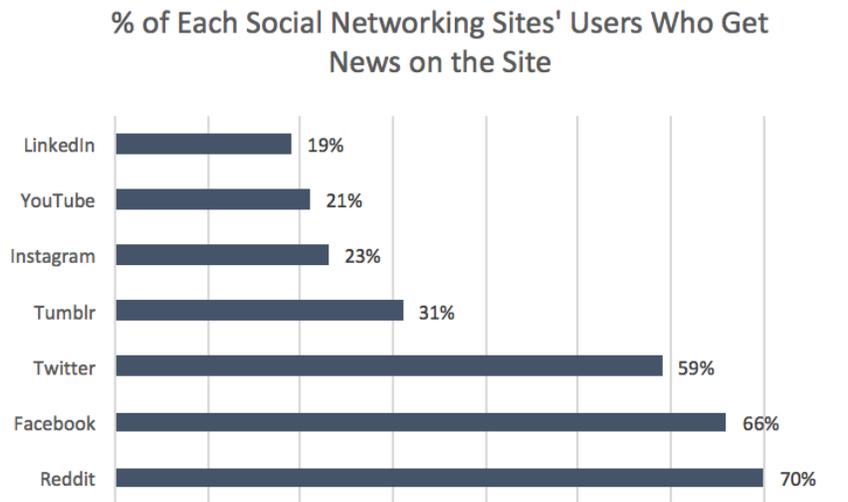
²⁵ Madan, Aman (2019): "India's Not-So-Free Media," Diplomat, 23 January, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/indias-not-so-free-media/>.

²⁶ Siyech, Mohammed Sinan (2019): "The Pulwama Attack's After Effects: Fake News and Rumours," RSIS Commentary, 4 March, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/the-pulwama-attacks-after-effects-fake-news-and-rumours/#.XaSmaS17H-Y>.

discourse "while influencing the government's foreign policy and national security positions, a practise that does not bode well for the democratic and ethical potential of Indian social media".

Methodology

The purpose of social research, according to most people, is to improve our understanding of society. Media research is a branch of the social sciences. The current generation is immersed in a media-mediated world, particularly via social networking sites. As a result, politicians utilize social media to appeal to voters, particularly the younger, during election and political campaigns. This is a relatively new phenomena in many nations' political realms. This paper's technique is descriptive-explanatory in order to comprehend this phenomena. Descriptive-explanatory research aims to define a social phenomenon by describing how it occurs and explaining why it occurs²⁷. The study makes an attempt to characterise social media as a powerful instrument for political communication. Although the scope and complexity of explanatory statements varies, all explanatory statements involve ideas. Observable and non-observable concepts are both possible. Concepts in this study have clearly visible referents, such as the numerous social networking sites and how they are used for political communication.



Graph 1.

²⁷ Bailey, K. D. (1994). *Sociology and the new systems theory: Toward a theoretical synthesis*. Suny Press.

Table 1. Social media exposure

	2018	2019
High	10.1	10.1
Moderate	10.6	10.9
Low	15.7	15.3
No	63.6	63.7

Table 2. Users of Social Media

	2018	2019
Facebook	22	23
Twitter	6	5
Instagram	7	8
Youtube	-	25
Whatsapp	26	29

Results and Discussions

The internet has provided communication channels that are critical in the dissemination of news, and "social media has the capacity to alter not just the content, but also the dynamics of political corruption, values, and conflict dynamics in politics"²⁸. Diplomacy throughout the world has grown less private and more susceptible to public view as a result of the use of social media in electoral processes, global warfare, and radical politics"²⁹. The internet and social media platforms have

²⁸ Singer, P. W., & Brooking, E. T. (2018). *LikeWar: The weaponization of social media*. Eamon Dolan Books.

²⁹ "The Big Picture of Indian Politics, Politicians and Social Media". *CiOL*.

aided the distribution of political information that opposes traditional media strategies, which are generally centralised and top-down and have high entrance barriers³⁰. Twitter is only the poorest user when we look at the daily share of users (not counting those who use the device weekly) among total users - just 5% of the 12% who report using the platform claimed that it did so daily. This corresponds to around 42 percent, which show that the majority of Twitter customers do not utilize it every day. On the other side Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube have very high daily use rates of 23%, 29% and 25% and are quite high in their whole user base. For Facebook, it is 72%, WhatsApp it is 85% and YouTube is at 81%³¹.

Elections are heavily influenced by social media. Social media frequently combines with other forms of mass media, such as cable television.

"For many people, cable television is the starting point and initial point of contact for information and sources". Commentary on cable television also fosters polarization and feeds into people's predispositions toward specific political parties. "Social media amplifies and reinforces the words of the mainstream media, perpetuating partisan differences in the process"³². In October 2020³³, Twitter implemented a new policy prohibiting candidates from claiming victory before their election result has been verified by news outlets or certified officially³⁴.

The information that people view on social media is frequently filtered. "Since 2008, the percentage of people who acquire their news from social media has risen to 62%"³⁵. Many algorithms are used on various social media platforms to filter the content that individual users see". Once the algorithms have a good understanding of a user's likes and dislikes, they may start tailoring their feed to their preferences. As a result, an echo chamber is created³⁶.

"Because of the massive user base, social media is becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, the dramatic fall in telecom data costs stimulates interest in social media and raises hunger for

³⁰ Andrejevic, Mark (2013). "Public Service Media Utilities: Rethinking Search Engines and Social Networking as Public Goods". *Media International Australia*. **146** (1): 123–132.

³¹ Lokniti – Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS),(2019). Ishtihaar.com

³² Kleinnijenhuis, J., van Hoof, A. M., & van Atteveldt, W. (2019). The combined effects of mass media and social media on political perceptions and preferences. *Journal of Communication*, *69*(6), 650-673.

³³ "Expanding our policies to further protect the civic conversation". *Blog.twitter.com*. 9 October 2020. Retrieved 9 October 2020.

³⁴ Yurieff, Kaya (9 October 2020). "Twitter moves to deaden impact of false and misleading tweets ahead of Election Day". *CNN*. Retrieved 9 October 2020.

³⁵ Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2016). News use across social media platforms 2016.

³⁶ "Six ways the media influence elections". *School of Journalism and Communication*. 2016-11-08. Retrieved 2020-10-07.

digital content consumption." Even though political parties do not spend money on advertising, sharing information on their sites costs nothing, making the medium desirable for campaigns³⁷.

"It can be shown that the impact of social media networks on voters differs statistically depending on the age variable". The impact of social media on the voting behaviour of voters aged 18-24 was found to be greater than that of people aged 46 and up and 32-38. There are considerable disparities in media usage among age groups, according to a research undertaken during the 2010 Swedish National Election Campaign³⁸, which explores the link between media usage, age groups, and political engagement. At this time, points out, young people's technological abilities and their ability to innovate are becoming increasingly important³⁹. "They have an edge in their capacity to use social media because of their interest in the innovations given by this approach to politics. Politics, on the other hand, speech is a kind of communication used by young people to express themselves, explain and maintain their political identity with care"⁴⁰, and social media serves as an intermediary. As much as feasible, use an open communication channel. When the link between social media, political engagement, and political conduct is examined; For a long time, the relevance of social networks as a factor in forecasting political involvement has been underlined or explored⁴¹.

Conclusion

Social media platforms, political parties, civil society, and electoral authorities need to collaborate to increase the use of social media platforms by politicians during elections and to provide full guidance that benefits voters. The particular qualities and affordances of social media make it an excellent venue for fake news to propagate. On social media, users' networks are separated. On social networking, users add others as friends mostly because they have similar backgrounds or interests. As a result, what shows in their news feed maybe stuff that they want to read and believe. As a result, we may deduce that false news is one example of the hybrid media system's

³⁷ Saxena, Mayank & Adhana, Deepak. (2020). ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CHANGING FACE OF INDIAN POLITICS: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FACEBOOK.

³⁸ Holt, K. (2013). Age and the effects of news media attention and social media use on political interest and participation: Do social media function as leveller?. *European Journal of Communication*, 28(1): 19-34.

³⁹ Owen, D. (2020). The Past Decade and Future of Political Media: The Ascendance of Social Media.

⁴⁰ Ekström, M. (2016). Young people's everyday political talk: a social achievement of democratic Engagement. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(1): 1- 19.

⁴¹ Bode, L. (2012). Facebooking It to the Polls: A Study in Online Social Networking and Political Behavior. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 9(4): 352-369.

problematic hybridity. Fake news on social media has the potential to have a large impact on not only the 2016 election but also other aspects of our everyday lives. The emergence of new information technology has resulted in new types of media capture and censorship. When an authoritarian government lacks the resources to fully control all pieces of political information in the public domain (owing to the proliferation of decentralized Internet platforms such as blogs and news aggregators), it may resort to selective deletion. It's realistic to assume that most middle-class Indians learn about political activity on Twitter via television news reporting. There are still many people who do not use the internet or who are not "advanced" internet users. Their major source of information is the government-controlled official media. It does not and cannot ensure that the same will translate into voter participation on Election Day; traditional media continues to have a considerable influence, but primarily in rural regions. Social media not only draws people in by raising awareness but also helps to urge people to vote. While social media alone cannot drive people to vote, it can be done with the aid of news and print media. Youtube videos have been discovered to be an essential source of information for individuals and to impact their voting decisions, with a gender link.

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