

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN UTTAR PRADESH FOR POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

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ABSTRACT

Social Media has become one of the most effective tools in political campaigning by the political parties in different parts of the world. With the emergence of social media, the digital campaigning has got new ambience. Uttar Pradesh is the largest state of India demographically, therefore it witnesses different experiments of political campaigning. Political parties use both conventional and modern means of campaigning to persuade their respective voters. With the advancement of information and communication technologies, the growth and development of internet has been quite significant in the country as well as in Uttar Pradesh. Political parties are now using the social media platforms to access the voters comprehensively. Initially, the BJP and some other political parties started using social media to reach their voters. But some major political parties like BSP refrained from using these digital platforms for political campaigning. But the trend changed with the 2014 General Elections in the country as well as in Uttar Pradesh. Now the other political parties are also using the social networking sites for the purpose. This paper aims to explore the role of social media in the political campaigning in Uttar Pradesh.

Key Words: *Social media, effective tools, information and communication technologies, political campaigning, general elections, political parties.*

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars believe that the emergence of internet has been a significant phenomenon which has been affecting the people including politics. The experts believe that the rise of internet has facilitated the growth and development of social media. This new media has been very important in both democracies and autocratic regimes. In the autocratic systems, the social media has emerged as a powerful platform to facilitate the communication process helpful in maintaining status quo. However, in democracies, the social media is changing the political landscape ranging from political campaigning to the good governance. The trend is

likely to continue with more effects in the days to come in different walks of life in general and politics in particular (Diamond & Plattner 2010). The traditional mass media have always influenced politics in different parts of the world. As long as the social media is concerned, the impacts have been quite significant and comprehensive on politics as compare to the traditional media. There are some important attributes of social media that provide an opportunity to the users playing significant role in the entire communication process. The social media is based on the user generated contents. This gives the users immense opportunities in the participatory communication process where they certainly not the passive recipients of the messages. Instead, they play pivotal role. Since there are many stakeholders

involve in the communication process, the political candidates can't hide any wrong doing (Diermeier 2011). There has been several studies in the field of social media and its impact on political campaigning. The emergence of social media has affected the political communication in many ways. This has also impacted the political campaigning. In fact, the political communication has got a new ambience through social media (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Schattschneider, 1960). There has been plenty of studies to find out the role of mass media on the political campaigning. With the advancement of communication technologies, the impact has now multiple dimensions to be studied (Wolfe et al., 2013). The birth of social media is a significant development in the field of mass communication. This outcome of information and communication technologies is so vital that it has not only changed the mass media landscape but also the social, political and economic spectrum comprehensively. Social media has emerged as a strong channel of mass communication in the world. These social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are useful to facilitate the political candidates in accessing their respective voters. One of the significant developments of the use of social media is that these digital platforms have expanded the horizon of political campaigning of the candidates. (Boulianne, 2016; Jungherr, 2016). Political parties in the country are using the social media platforms for the political campaigning. Major social media platforms are filled with this information belonging to different political parties. The social media in-charge of the Aam Admi Party Ankit Las is of the opinion that these digital platforms provide the comprehensive access to both voters and the candidates. (The Hindu, 2016).

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

Social media has emerged in India in the backdrop of information and communication revolution. In the last many years, the politicians in the country have been using social media for the purpose of

persuading the masses towards them and their political agendas.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Following are the objective of this study-

- To understand the social media penetration and its effects in the state of Uttar Pradesh
- To understand the role of social media for the purpose of political campaigning.
- To understand how the social media campaigning impacted the temperament of political campaigning in the state.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study uses the secondary data for the purpose of study. The relevant data has been obtained from the sources like newspapers, websites and journals. Having been collated from various sources, the same has been analysed for the purpose of finding out the conclusions.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN UTTAR PRADESH

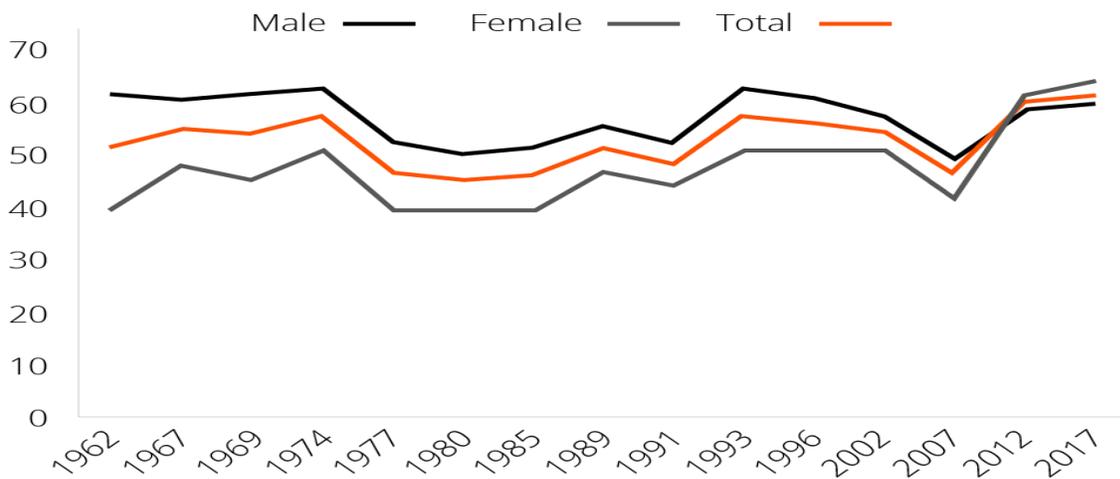
This is a well-known fact that any political party that seeks the destination in Delhi, needs to reach this destination via Uttar Pradesh. That is why Uttar Pradesh is very significant state politically. The state alone sends 80 MP to Lok Sabha and 31 to the Rajya Sabha. Because of the aforementioned reasons, every political party that aims to establish its strength in the national politics, puts all efforts to acquire weight in the state.

IMPORTANCE OF UTTAR PRADESH IN NATIONAL POLITICS

The state of Uttar Pradesh shares largest number of constituencies in both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. Therefore, the state is very important politically. The state played significant role in the 2014 General Elections when the BJP claimed the landslide victory. The BJP that 80 seats from the state was one of every four seats at the party's national level performance. This wonderful electoral achievement won't have been possible for the BJP after its establishment in the last three decades had the people of the state not voted in favour of the party (Carnegie Endowment of International Peace). But the narrative of reaching Delhi through Uttar

Pradesh was changed after 2004 General Elections when the Congress accessed the power after making alliance with different parties even after performing insignificantly in Uttar Pradesh. UP helped Congress with few seats even in 2009 General Elections. Then also the party lead the UPA successfully for another term of five years at the Centre. The state holds prominent position in the national politics. Eight Prime Ministers of India are from Uttar Pradesh alone. At the time of dominance of Congress party in the first few decades after Independence, the state played a significant role (Verniers, 2014).

Historical voter turnout for Uttar Pradesh vidhan sabha elections 1962-2017



Source: Adapted from ECI Data by Trivedi Centre for Political Data

Scroll.in

Source: fcroll.in

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY POLITICAL PARTIES

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state demographically. The state sends largest number of MPs to the Parliament of India. Considering the largest number of seats, all political parties aiming to form the government at the centre try their level best to perform best in the state. Political parties use all means to access the voters to persuade them towards their ideologies and electoral manifesto. The state played an important role in the 2014

General Elections when the BJP led NDA performed exceptionally to claim the landslide victory. The social media has been growing manifold and is expected to leave the traditional mass media behind in the state of Uttar Pradesh. This platform has become new centre to impact the voters. Subsequently, political parties are trying to access the voters through social media. There is no doubt that the social media is being misused for destructive purposes when many political parties are using this platform for their divide and rule agenda. However, the social media is expected to lead the mainstream mass media for political campaigning in

the days to come (The Hindu, 2016). Considering the importance of social media for political campaigning, political parties in Uttar Pradesh state have been trying to use this platform for accessing the voters. Before the 2017 Assembly Elections, the Congress used organised capacities to strengthen their base in the state. Though the BJP has been forerunner in the use of social media for the purpose of political campaigning, other political parties are showing interest to use this digital platform as well. The BSP led by Mayawati is an exception in this regard. Mayawati considers social media as a matter of urban middle class and therefore not concerned with her core vote base (Seth, 2016).

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Political parties find the social media platform as a suitable media to facilitate the connectivity with their voters round the clock. The importance of social media for political campaigning can be understood from the incident when the Mr Modi, one of the architects of India's political campaign through social media told his party leaders that only such candidates having more than three lacs would be offered the party ticket for contesting the elections. In India, the social media has been used for both the participation and mobilization of the people. In 2008, after the Mumbai terror strike, a campaign was started in social media to restrain the live broadcast of the incident for this was facilitating the handlers in Pakistan. The Anna Hazare Movement was one of the major developments in modern India when the civic society was mobilized by the social media for the purpose of Ombudsman type of institution. The unfortunate Delhi rape case, the social media played an important role in the mobilization of masses in favour of stringent laws for the rape case. These were some incidents in India, when social media proved its potential in the mobilization of masses.

YOUTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The youth has always been the forerunner of innovation and creativity. Social media is an ideal blend of both innovation and creativity. That is why the youth find it more compatible to their nature. In many countries, the political leaders reached the youth through the social media. Barrack Obama also used social media for to access the youth. India being the fertile land for the IT industry, social media grew manifold. The cheap smartphones and affordable data introduced mobile penetration in the country. Youth find this friendly media and therefore used it for personal purposes. In the meantime, researcher concluded that the social media can also be used for the purpose of accessing the youth. In India, 2014 General Elections are considered to be the historic from the perspective of voters' turn out. These historic elections witnessed 66.4 percent of record voters turn out. This is said to be possible because of the participation of youth who was accessed through the social media.

CONCLUSION

This is clear from the aforementioned description that the social media has emerged as a potential source of mass communication in the world. This is affecting each walk of life ranging from personal to political. Because of these reasons, political parties found this platform to be suitable to access the voters in large numbers in just a single click. Uttar Pradesh is the most significant state of India politically, that is why the use of social media politically, is a new trend in the political communication. Studies reveal that all political parties use this platform for the purpose of political campaigning.

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