



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 9 | JUNE - 2019



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON 2014 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS : A STUDY AMONG FIRST TIME VOTERS

Mirza Nader Baig

Research Scholar, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad (Telangana).

ABSTRACT:

Media is an important tool and pillar of Indian democracy. Since independence, Media has played a significant role in every election held in the country. The Lok Sabha elections held in 2014 witnessed the use of a new form of Media, what we call Social Media. It was the first time in the country that social media was used at such a large scale during the Lok Sabha elections, and it played a big and important role in the sweeping victory of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). Different social network sites like Facebook, twitter, Orkut, Skype etc were used extensively by different political parties to communicate with the voters and to persuade them. . Be it Veibler's 'the Ungli campaign', Goggle's 'pledge to vote' campaign, Facebook's online political debates, or telecom operator MTS' election tracker, firms tried to woo voters by using social media as a major platform for communicating its ideas and goals with the voters. There is no doubt that the impact of these campaigns was result oriented. It is due to these penetrating and eye catching campaigns that many people went out to vote for the first time in their life. The potential of the social media in influencing the voters during the elections was fascinating.



The social media, especially the Internet and different social sites are important source of information gathering. Social media has spun the social life in every sphere of life so ingeniously that it has integrated to people's opinion formation, decision making, agenda setting and public opinion formation.

The present paper tries to examine the "Impact of Social Media on Lok Sabha Elections 2014: A study among first time voters". The study will try to find out the use of social media by different political parties to reach voters and what was the impact of the use of this social media on the first voters, among students of Hyderabad in terms of creating awareness in them regarding Right to vote and shaping their perception towards voting. The study has conducted among college and University going students above 18 years of age and the sample size is 100. The collected data is coded, edited and analyzed with the help of SPSS software. The software name stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. SPSS is a widely used program for statistical analysis in the field of social science. A Statistical tool known as descriptive method is used for analyzing data.

KEYWORDS: Impact, Social Media, Lok Sabha Elections 2014, Internet, First Time Voter's.

INTRODUCTION

The mass media used for the purpose of social interaction is called social Media. It consists

mainly of internet and mobile phone based tools for sharing and discussing information & knowledge has spun the social

life at 360 degree so ingeniously that it has integrated to people's every aspect of the life. It combines technology ,

telecommunication and social interaction and provides a platform to communicate through words, pictures, films and music. (Guha, 2012) Social Media comprises of web and mobile technologies which turn communication into interactive dialogue. One of the most important advantages of the use of social media is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. The world over, different forms of social media have emerged as crucial communication tools through which people exchange thoughts, knowledge and ideas and know about the happenings taking place around the world in a very short span of time. "Social media is a legitimate tool of persuasion. It helps build a personal rapport, may be, more effective than door-to-door campaigning. In the information age, political parties today need to flex 'electronic muscle' along with money and might," The Lok Sabha elections held in 2014 witnessed the use of a new form of Media, what we call Social Media, where different social networks were used to target the voter's. Research shows that social media can be more persuasive than TV ads. According to analysts who called it vote India's first "social media elections", social media played an important role for the first time in the country's history. As per the statistics by the time Shri Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister, he had more than 16 million "likes" on Facebook, the second most for any politician in the world, and he was the sixth most followed world leader on Twitter. The potential of the social media in influencing the voters specially the first time voters during the elections was fascinating. India has the third largest Internet users globally of more than 238 million users with a majority comprising of youth. According to the Election Commission, around 2.3 million voters in the age group of 18-19 year were enrolled to vote in 2014 out of a total electorate of 81.5 million voters. Two different surveys showed that as more and more young Indians go online, social media will strongly influence India's 2014 general elections and may swing 3-4% votes. In urban seats, social-media usage is now "sufficiently widespread" to influence politics, according to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI). Through the use of social media, the BJP was able to sway many first time voters. Modi's popularity carried the BJP to victory with 282 seats out of the 543 seats in parliament, the biggest win by any party in India in 40 years. The main reason behind this win was the use of social media as a campaign tool in the right way like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and then lately WhatsApp and blogs. Different political parties had electrifying campaigns running all across the social media, whether it was to gather people for rallies, publicize their work, showcase their efforts and bring about revolution the social media helped different political parties invariably to reach out their voters. The present paper is designed to find out the "Impact of Social Media on Lok Sabha Elections 2014: A study among first time voters". The study will try to find out the use of social media by different political parties to reach voters and will examine the impact of the use of this social media on the first voters, among students of Hyderabad in terms of creating awareness in them regarding Right to vote and shaping their perception towards voting.

LITERATURE REVIEW:-

A study of the Indian media literature shows that there are not many studies that have examined the impact of social media on Lok Sabha elections in India with reference to the voters, although several articles that were published in different newspapers and magazines have introspected the same. "The social media effect was huge for the BJP in Lok Sabha elections 2014. They really understood that social media is an extended version of the campaign trail," said Michael Kugelman, a senior program associate for South and Southeast Asia at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Further there are very few studies on what was the impact of social media in these Lok Sabha elections on young generation which is growing up with social media technology.

The rise of social media has increased communication between people all over the world. The 16th Lok Sabha elections in the country witnessed something new that we call social media, apart from the other traditional media like Television, Radio and Print. By looking at its massive development and easy accessibility, in recent Lok Sabha elections politicians and different political parties start to use Internet more than to find friends, such as to promote their ideologies and their political campaigns. Studies confirm that Internet access is dependent on age, education and income variables. The digital divide, a technology and Internet access gap, is closely associated with education, income

and age (Riffe, 2003). A survey done by MTV, the popular music channel, across 31 cities in India among 5000 youngsters revealed that youth (34%) are influenced by social networks and are active users of features of mobile phones viz., camera (54%), send/ receive SMS (44%), Facebook mobile application (43%) and Internet websites (41%) underlining the popularity of mobile Internet among youth (Mint,2012). Text messaging has become the norm of communication among college students says a study (Daniel Ng, 2010) where irrespective of gender, majority of the youngsters express their desire to text messages because they believe that messaging keeps them socially active within their inner circle of influence and is vital for them to stay connected all the time. According to the Election Commission, around 2.3 million voters in the age group of 18-19 were enrolled to vote in 2014 out of a total electorate of 81.5 million voters. Today's youth is spending considerable time on the Internet connecting either on Facebook or WhatsApp. Two surveys conducted by different agencies revealed before the elections that due to its use among youngsters , social media will strongly influence India's 2014 general elections and may swing 3-4% votes. Political parties and leaders use Internet technologies such as social media to gather intelligence on the voters, organize volunteers, and raise funds and research on their opposition (Howard, 2005). Increasingly, Internet technologies are being used to provide political information in the public sphere and unlike the traditional media, they possess interactive tools for both production and consumption of political content. Voting advice applications (VAAs) are online tools have become increasingly popular among social media users in deciding which party/candidate to vote for during an election Level. VAAs provide community-based recommendations, comparison of users' political opinions, and a channel of user communication. VAAs proposed a number of approaches that could be used for community based vote recommendation

Social media is a media that is used for social interaction and it refers to the use of " web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue". Social Media can be defined as websites which are build on Web 2.0 technologies in order to provide space for depth social interaction, community formation and the tackling of collaborative projects (Bruns & Bahnisch, 2009).The rise of social media has increased communication between people all over the world. People of all ages and backgrounds the world over are using social media tools for a variety of reasons such as sharing information and connecting with others. Social media takes on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking According to Kaplan and Haenlein there are six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. Youtube), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life). Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowd sourcing and voice over IP, to name a few. Since social media occurs on the social network platform, then defining social networking sites will provide a working definition for social media. Boyd & Ellison (2007) define social media networking sites as internet-based applications that allow users to develop a public profile within a closed system, have a list of users whom they have a relation with, and are able to view their own friends list and that of others within the system. This is generally the model that social media follow. They include Facebook, Whats App, Twitter, MySpace, blogs, and YouTube. Social media can also be referred to as "new media"; an umbrella term that is used to refer to emerging communication technologies that run over the internet and are constantly evolving (Peters, 2009).

Some of the prominent and key roles played by social media are it helps to communicate , collaborate,educate,engage,entertain,maximize and monitor. Apart from this some of the most popular social media use today are as follows :

A) Facebook: The world's largest social network that was founded on February 4,2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates. On an estimation facebook has 900,000,00 monthly visitors. Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including status updates. Brands create pages and Facebook users can "like" brands' pages.

B) Blogs: A platform for casual dialogue and discussions on a specific topic or opinion .

C)Twitter: A social networking/micro-blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through the exchange of short status messages (140 character limit) which are called as tweets.. Twitter with 340 million tweets per day has gained very high popularity. Twitter is also called as the SMS of the Internet.

D) Instagram: A free photo and video sharing app and free online mobile which allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photos and then share them on a variety of social networking sites.

E) Whatts App: WhatsApp Inc. was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum. WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform instant messaging service for smartphones .It allows user to send messages without paying for SMS. Now a days it is most popular tool among mobile users.

F)YouTube & Vimeo:Video hosting and watching websites.

G)Flickr: An image and video hosting website and online community. Photos can be shared on Facebook and Twitter and other social networking sites.

H)Hike: It was created by Atul Singh in India and later was taken over by Bharti Softbank. It is specially designed for cross platform smart phone communication using internet. Audio, video sharing alongwith messages provides stickers for effective communication.

ELECTION SYSTEM IN INDIA:-

Being the largest democracy in the world, India is a secular and socialist country. After every Five (5) years Lok Sabha elections held in the country. During 2014 Lok Sabha elections, there were 543 Parliamentary constituencies in India ,9 million polling stations across the country and the elections were held in 9 phases beginning 7th April 2014 and the last phase was held on 12th May 2014. According to the Election Commission of India , around 2.3 million voters in the age group of 18-19 year were enrolled in the voters list in different constituencies all over India to vote in 2014 out of a total electorate of 81.5 million voters

The electoral roll is a list of all people in the constituency who are registered to vote. Only those people with their names on the voting list are allowed to vote. In all 1,616 parties registered with the Election Commission of India , out of which there were 6 national parties, 47 state parties and others as registered unrecognized parties. The main national parties,were Indian National Congress (INC) or commonly known as Congress, the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and some other national parties like the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and All India Majlis Itehad-e-Muslimeen (AIMIM) etc. The amount of money spent by the parties in these elections was around 30,500 crores. Modi's popularity carried the BJP to victory with 282 seats out of the 543 seats in parliament, the biggest win by any party in India in 40 years

IMAPCT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LOK SABHA ELECTION 2014:-

The 2014 Lok Sabha election was an important and divisive election and the role of the media specially social media played in it was very significant. Findings of the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the umbrella organization representing online and mobile value added services, triggered off a serious examination of the links between social media and electoral outcomes. The study, jointly conducted by IMAI and IRIS Knowledge Foundation, says there were 160 high impact constituencies in India out of 543, which were likely to be influenced by social media during the general elections. Social-media platforms were influential in 160 of India's 543 Parliament constituencies, making Facebook and Twitter users the nation's newest voting bloc, according to a previous IMAI survey released in April. In 2009 , 160 seats out of 543 were won with victory margins less than current number of Facebook users. India has the third largest internet users globally of more than 238 million users with a majority comprising of youth. According to the Election Commission, around 2.3 million voters in the age group of 18-19 were enrolled to vote in 2014 out of a total electorate of 81.5 million voters. For the first time , this election witnessed social data being shared with traditional mediums whether it is the television, newspaper or the online media sites from leading publishers in the country. Election discussions and debates on different TV channels were no more being discussed

only in television studios with experts but the common man was a part of it by sharing their views on social networks like Twitter and Facebook. This behavior forced political parties to adopt ways that suit the mood of young generation. According to Google India-TNS's findings, BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi and Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi were the two most-searched politicians before the starting of elections. In addition, 13 million people made 75 million interactions regarding Narendra Modi. During the election, Narendra Modi became the second most-liked politician on Facebook, behind only President Obama. Arvind Kejriwal also joined the ranks of the top five liked politicians globally. A report published in April 2013 by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and the Mumbai-based Iris Knowledge Foundation, Facebook users will have a tremendous impact over the results of the polls in 160 of India's 543 constituencies and the reason for this is the youth of India. As per indiaonlinepages site 2014 50% of population is below 25 age group and 65 % is below 35 % age group. This population is either studying in college or working in various companies such as IT companies, BPO's, research centers and various other sectors or are either entrepreneur. The youth is tech savvy and love being connected with updated trends and topics which is possible by using laptops, desktops or the most favorite e network connected mobiles. As per the LAMAI report 2013 this change for presence of social media could be observed as every political party participating in 2014 general election has set an 2-5% of its election budget for spending on social media. The report says that the leading parties Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Nation congress party has set this it 500 crores and 400 crores respectively

India has the third largest Internet users base globally of more than 238 million users with a majority comprising of youth. This includes well over a 100 million active on various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. No wonder, social media platforms, technology firms, e-commerce portals and telecom operators are using this opportunity to connect with users. Apart from technology firms, telecom operators are also doing their bit to engage with citizens to urge them to cast their votes. Tech giant Google revamped its election hub to include features like Pledge to Vote campaign, a 'Google score' tool for politicians, search trends info graphics, YouTube election play lists and Hangout details for users. India's homegrown personalized social media platform Vebbler has started 'the Ungli Campaign' aimed at engaging youth on conversations related to various topics surrounding the upcoming election and encouraging them to vote. Likewise, social networking giant Facebook also launched an election tracker and started a Facebook Talks series, which saw political leaders like Aam Aadmi Party founder Arvind Kejriwal and RJD chief Lalu Parsad Yadav answering questions of Facebook users.

"Social media is a legitimate tool of persuasion it cannot be ignored it has to be encouraged. It helps build a personal rapport, may be, more effective than door-to-door campaigning. In the information age, political parties today need to flex 'electronic muscle' along with money and might," . Social media become an unavoidable tool in these General elections and changed the face of Indian General Elections by providing platforms to politicians to reach out to their supporters by different means. After the 7th round of polling, there were 49 million Indian elections-related conversations on Twitter — more than double the 20 million Indian elections-related conversations on Twitter for all of 2013. Twitter had its own 'Tweeter Election' for election 2014. 56 million election-related Tweets were gathered till when election ended. Each of the poll days saw between 5.4 lakh and 8.2 lakh election-related Tweets. The tweeter results shows that the most popular parties and candidates were Aam Aadmi Party's Arvind Kejriwal, BJP's Narendra Modi, and Rahul Gandhi from INC. While the majority of the users of social media are concentrated in urban areas, the elections have also helped them expand their reach to the rural areas too. Before the elections, the use of social media was generally restricted to the national political parties, but as the general elections gained momentum, even regional parties joined the social media bandwagon. This election turned out to be the country's first social media election — candidates, journalists and citizens have been using the different forms of social medium and social sites extensively to discover elections content, converse with others in real time, and express their views.

For the first time in the country's history, social media played an important role during Lok Sabha Elections. Results and Analysis shows that social media effect was huge for BJP. Through its use of social media, the BJP was able to sway many young voters and the party won 282 seats out of the 543 seats in parliament, the biggest win by any party in India in 40 years. BJP's social media campaign was one of the most important factors in its victory and social media affected 30 to 40 percent of the overall seats all over India. "Standard tools like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and then lately WhatsApp - were the pillars of different parties. First Social networks were used initially by different political parties to target the voters for the campaigns during elections 'later on they helped the voters to evaluate and determine many choices they had in mind regarding the choice of right party and candidate to vote for.

Table 1: Table showing political parties in social media to woo voters

| Social Media Followers | BHARATIYA JANTA PARTY | CONGRESS PARTY | AAM AADMI PARTY |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Facebook Likes | 3,400,000 | 1,800,000 | 2,500,000 |
| Twitter followers | 417,000 | 1,063,00 | 5,1700,000 |
| You Tube subscribers | 44500 | 5117 | 40845 |
| Google+ | 7,398+ | 3,125+ | 1,41,366+ |

Table 2: Table showing followers of political leaders on social sites

| Social Media Followers | NARENDRA MODI (BJP) | RAHUL GANDHI (CONGRESS PARTY) | ARVIND KEJRIWAL (AAP) |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook Likes | 12,399,400 | 3,51000 | 5,005,786 |
| Twitter followers | 3,690,000 | N/A | 1,60,000 |
| You Tube subscribers | 1,32,803 | 2,221 | N/A |
| Google+ | 12,68,320+ | 2,118+ | 579+ |
| | | | |

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-

The present paper tries to examine the "Impact of Social Media on Lok Sabha Elections 2014: A study among first time voters". The study tried to find out the use of social media by different political parties to reach voters and what was the impact of the use of this social media on the first voters, among students of Hyderabad in terms of creating awareness in them regarding Right to vote and shaping their perception towards voting. The study has conducted among college and University going students above 18 years of age and the sample size is 100. The collected data is coded, edited and analyzed with the help of SPSS software. The software name stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. SPSS is a widely used program for statistical analysis in the field of social science. A Statistical tool known as descriptive method is used for analyzing data. Survey method using questionnaire was conducted, which is ideal method in obtaining data from large, representative but diverse and widely scattered groups of population. First Time voters were selected to collect the data.

DATA ANALYSIS:-

Survey method using questionnaire was conducted among 100 randomly selected first time voters in the city, who will voted first time in the Lok Sabha elections 2014 and use social media and Internet regularly. A questionnaire has been constructed and the data has been collected and analyzed.

| S.NO | Questions | Yes (in %) | No (in %) |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| | Are you aware of Social Media? | 86 | 14 |
| | Are you using Social Media as a form of communication tool ? | 78 | 22 |
| | Is it useful for your social development? | 64 | 36 |
| | Did you used it for getting any information regarding Lok Sabha Elections 2014? | 80 | 20 |
| | Did you ever receive any message /call from the candidate of any political party during election campaign? | 72 | 28 |
| | Did you find it a good tool for election campaign by different political parties ? | 68 | 32 |
| | Do you feel that the social media influenced the young voters of the under privileged section of the society ? | 52 | 48 |
| | Do you believe that the use of Social Media was judicious by different political parties in the General Elections 2014? | 32 | 68 |
| | Do you think the use of social media by different political parties impact your decision making at the time of casting vote? | 68 | 32 |
| 10. | Do you believe that there could have been a better participation of social media by different political parties in the General Elections 2014? | 82 | 18 |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:-

The result shows that among the 100 selected respondents as the sample size a majority (86%) of the respondents is aware of social media, and (78 %) of them use social media as a form of communication tool and (64%) of the respondents find it useful for social development .

(80 %) of the respondents used the social media for getting information regarding Lok Sabha Elections and (72 %) of them received message/call from the candidate's of different political parties during election campaign. About (68%) respondents find it a good tool for election campaign by different political parties.

Almost half of the respondents (52%) feel that the social media influenced the young voters of the under privileged section of the society during General Elections and only (32%) believe that the use of social media was judicious by different political parties. When we talk about the Impact of Social Media (68%) respondents feel that use of social media by different political parties impact their decision making at the time of casting vote. , while a majority of the respondents (82%) believe that there could have been a better participation of social media by different political parties in the General Elections 2014.

CONCLUSION:-

Nowadays , Social media has become very significant because of the two most important and precise characteristics i.e: ubiquity and interactivity. Social media technologies are capable of reaching audiences all over the world in a short span of time . With rapid growth of young mobile and Internet users and the increased use of social media among youth the present paper tried to find out the Impact of Social Media on Lok Sabha Elections 2014 among first time voters and the use of social media as a tool for election campaign. India which has 65 % of its youth below age-group of 35 years , here we see that social media plays a very important and crucial role in the life of the youth. In today's world

collaboration through online mode becomes easy if it is facilitated by social media technologies. Social media can be effective for building effective communication; Political parties or their candidates can establish themselves as the right candidate in their constituencies and can influence the voters of that area. The social media is useful because it can be used to reach a very large group of people and it offers politicians and political parties a chance to reach diverse audience at the same time. Unlike traditional media, which reaches only a small portion of a potential market, Social media can be used to mobilize support for a political party or a candidate, during elections because they are persuasive, informative and educative in nature.

Based on the findings of this study, the paper concludes that the Impact of Social Media on Lok Sabha Elections 2014 among first time voters was quite effective. Different political parties used the social media in a proper manner during these General Elections to carry out their political activities. Twitter and Facebook helped to break down information barriers between politicians and voters, allowing them to better understand the candidates and the issues they were promoting. However, complete reliability on social media is not an authentic source of information. All political parties had electrifying campaigns running all across the social media. The real change, which has been achieved by these campaigns, is that people were awakened, the spirit of patriotism and right to vote emerged in the public. As a responsible citizen of the country it is our duty to work towards a better country by electing right and competent representatives. If we could unite through the efforts of the social media we can bring a new change making our country further better for the future. The potential use of social media to improve transparency could work in the country's favor. So if the different political parties could continue to use social media as a major platform for communicating its ideas and goals, then it can be proved as a good thing for the country and its people.

REFERENCES:

1. Use and Rise of Social Media as Election Campaign medium in India, Narasimhamurthy N (IJIMS),2014,Vol 1,No.8,202-209
2. A survey of Social Media on Election System, Gayatri Wani et al, / (IJCSIT) International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technologies, Vol. 5 (6), 2014, 7363-7366
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_general_election,_2014.
4. <http://www.slideshare.net/Webfluenzintelsys/campaign-analysis-ofsocial-media-strategy-bjp-vs-aap-vs-congress>.
5. Najam Sethi New Media: Prospects & Problems.
6. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>
7. Social Media: Key Issues and New Challenges- A study of Nalgona District, Global Media Journal- Indian Edition, Summer Issue/June 2014/Vol. 5/No. 1
8. <http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/making-a-clean-cut/article7434376.ece>
9. <http://www.asiadespatch.org/2013/05/13/pakistan-elections-2013-social-media-impact/>
10. <http://www.voanews.com/content/social-media-emerges-as-a-key-tool-in-indias-election/1931238.html>



Mirza Nader Baig
Research Scholar, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad
(Telangana)