Social Media and Indian Politics

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ABSTRACT
Over the years, Indian Politics have come a long way, and with time, many regional and smaller parties have time and again entered and changed the phase of politics. However, the two more prominent groups namely Congress and BJP which have dominated the politics throughout, remains the same. The concept of elections witnessed a drastic change after the technological developments. India witnessed a substantial positive change after the parliament passed the Information Technology Act in 2000. However, even then the advancements were slow to come, and people were not much aware of the social media.
It was during 2006 when Indian Citizens began using Orkut, the first social media site. From then on,social networking entered a new phase as many more applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and so forth. Began developing, and the young Indian minds quickly adapted to such sites. According to recent statistics, India emerged as the 7[th]largest market for social media sites. In the initial phases, social media was mainly used for mutual interactions and personal profiles. However, the changing dynamics have led people to discuss everything over the sites and fix their views.
Social media is changing the way political parties interact with voters bridging the gap like never before. Given today's era of increasing social media usage, and growing internet penetration due to increased usage of smartphone on the one hand and saturation of traditional mediums on the other, social media offers perfect platform for political parties to reach audiences worldwide. The first experimentation in this regard was done by the BJP government who mainly focused on social media campaigning during the 2014 Loksabha elections. Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister, was one of the candidates in 2014 elections representing BJP and took use of these social media sites to grab the minds of youth. Will this social media and youth change the wave of Indian politics? This paper will cover these and some more issues related to Indian politics.
KEYWORDS
      Social media, Media campaigning, Political campaigning,Indian Politics, Elections,Indian youth.

INTRODUCTION
      Social Media has been the outcome of the developments of the world ion the 21st Century. No one individual can be credited for the same as it is a resultant of significant support from all over the globe and people, from its inception has adopted the same readily. The Concept of Social Media is not new to the societies. The concept has been in existence from a very long time. However, the platform of Social Media as it exists today was not found in the earlier times. Social Media is wholly a newer concept now with technology playing an impart part of the same.

      Today, social networking sites have become an inseparable part in Human Life. The daily updates, news, discussions, etc. bring enthusiasm to people and thus, these sites have developed immensely over a short span. Socializing always played an essential role in society and interactions among people is a common phenomenon. However, with the advent of various social media sites, the interactions have changed its we, way, and it has become easier even to communicate with persons living away or in other countries and helps to maintain healthy relationship.

      The scope of Social Mediahas not been restricted to information only. However, the same has also included the elements of Politics in it. Recently, throughout the world, many Politicians have taken the help of the platform to reach out to there people, and many campaigns have turned Social. Technology has accelerated such developments, and further, the number of users of social media have attracted these political parties to resort such means. Such are the effects of Social Mediaon the world.

What is Social Media ?

The term 'Social Media' is the result of two broader terms used together. The term 'Social' refers to anything which relates to a society or a community at large. On the other hand, the term 'Media' is a popular term suggesting means of communication to a larger group rather than individuals. Social Media together would mean a place where people can express themselves socially, however, not personally. The element of media makes it public and thus, the communication is not restricted to two individuals.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Researcher would like to find out the role of social media in Indian politics and its significance in 21st centurykeeping these in view this study was undertaken titled as " Social Media and Indian Politics".

OBJECTIVES

1) To analyse the scenario of social media in India.
2) To study the importance of social media in political campaigning.
3) To study impact of social media on voter's behavior.

HYPOTHESIS

1) Social media is a 'Influential tool'in Indian Politics.
2) Social media impacts on major part of our society specially on Indian youth.
3) Social media changed the Indian political space.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of Research : Quantitative and Analytical Research

Data Collection Method : This study has been carried out with the help of secondary data only, all the Data has been collected from the various sources such as websites and reports and compiled as said by the need of the study.

Sources of Data Collection :The study is based on the published data. For the purpose of present study, the data was extracted from the various newspapers, journals, articles, websites.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THESTUDY :

Significance of this study can be attributed to the rapidly growing internet and social media penetration all over the world and most specifically in India. It has urged everyone to be innovative to get benefitted. It all started with 2008 US elections and then there after whole world have time to time experienced the power of social media through various revolts etc. (e.g. Arab spring).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Role of Social Media in Politics

Social media plays an important role in politics and on the reach of a politician to the voters and influencing them. Social media has become a significant part of everyone's daily lives and is the outlet through which they are informed about the on-goings of the world. As it is the source of contact with the public, it becomes vital for politicians to create a presence of their own on various social media platforms and promote their parties and views that they stand for. They also use it for calling onto supporters to vote or to protest against something. Social media is also the best way to connect with the youth of our country and earn their support. Since 65% of India's population is below the age of 35, who are devoted users of social media, having information on networking sites related to politicians and their activity becomes essential. Politicians in India have taken it upon themselves to create their presence on every social media sites and post about rallies and future plans.

Some examples of Indian politicians using social media :

1) BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) has been using social media since before the 2014 elections which led to Narendra Modi becoming Prime Minister. Currently, the Prime Minister has 44 million followers on Twitter, which is a social media platform avidly used by Indians. BJP has been strategically using social media to get their word across the country, to target problems faced by the general public, to publicise the party, and Narendra Modi. In this way,

they have been able to reach many youths in the country and influence them for gaining support.

2) Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also has a great social media presence that propagates their views and ideas to the followers. They used these media forms extensively to give information on their current activities, meetings, and also to get volunteers which were large in number. They used Twitter for trending activities being done by AAP which commented and shared by a large number of users. In this, they won the 2015 Delhi Legislative Assembly elections.

The Politicization of Social Media in India

The 2014 general elections—regarded as the "First Social Media Election" in India's political history—kickstarted a social media revolution in Indian politics. Before the 2009 general elections, Shashi Tharoor, a Congress MP who had previously served as UN Under-Secretary-General, was the only Indian politician with a Twitter account. All major political parties significantly expanded their social media footprints ahead of the 2014 elections.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s success in mobilizing India's digital generation using social media platforms has forced contending parties to revamp their social media engagement. As a result, millions of politically motivated messages now flood India's digital space, making elections susceptible to social media manipulation. The BJP reportedly operates around 200,000 to 300,000 WhatsApp groups and controls 18,000 fake Twitter handles. The party has developed an effective IT wing linked to disinformation and propaganda, both of which it uses to stoke communal divisions to reap electoral benefits. The spread of disinformation, and polarizing, BJP-led social media campaigns promoting Hindutva, deepen tensions among Hindu and Muslim communities. These combined threaten truth and India's secular-democratic fabric.

Social Media–A Road way to reach out to Youth

Even though politicians for their campaign still use posters, cut-outs, fliers, graffiti and personal rally's to reach and win over voters but with the social media changing the picture of urban India, political parties are becoming tech savvy and realizing that social media is the only way to reach out to the youth. A good example is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, He was the main and first person who uses social media power in 2014 election and rise as a great leader in India, Indians love and blessed him through social media and his party became a major party in 2014 elections.

For 2009 general election social media usage in India was little. Today, however, Facebook has 294 million users and Twitter has an estimated 33 million accounts in the country. 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 a 2-5% of its election budget for spending on social media. The report says that the leading parties Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and Nation congress party has set this it 500 crores and 400 crores,respectively.

Social media and elections

Social media has emerged as an essential tool of communication and has created new ways of political mobilisation and encouraging social media users to engage in political activities; such as following their political groups by tweeting, status update, expressing support through blogs and videos on YouTube.

The youth of this generation is highly invested in politics and the ideas associated with it. Previously, there was no standard platform for individuals to voice their opinions and politicians had to take to the streets to gain popularity. However, now, social media has become a platform where people can freely express themselves. Politicians still use posters, cutouts, etc for their campaigns- but becoming digital and paying attention to their digital platforms has changed the picture. Platforms like Twitter are perfect for political organizations to broadcast information on a worldwide stream for either debates or discussions. With an estimated 53.1 million active users, (as per the census of 2015), India is

the third-largest user of Twitter. The number of people using this platform is huge and it is believed to be a great way of influencing elections and campaigns.

Thus, Indian political parties are utilising the internet and social media to connect with youth for their agenda and political events because they now know how and where to find them. All the political parties and their candidates have their respective social media pages and teams to run their campaigns vehemently, and greater resources are being invested in digital campaigning. Observing the famous 2014 general elections of India, social media was the battleground for various political campaigns and there was a tremendous flow of varied political opinions. The election proved that there was a great potential to influence the country's youth over social media through social media and political campaigns. A serious note was found in both the occasions: regional election as well as state election.

They used social media like never before. Conventional ways of sending messages, recording calls and public gathering became redundant. In 2014 the strategy inculcated by the parties was to first monitor the support through social media and then formulate better strategies to seek targeted votes from the people. This resulted in Narendra Modi gaining a following quickly. In India, the use of social media became more relevant and important following the Anna Hazare movement and the victory of Shri Narendra Modi in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election.Few examples of successful Social Media campaigns by the Political parties in times of elections are:

1. Aam Aadmi Party in 2013 and 2020 assembly election.
2. Bhartiya Janta Party and Indian National Congress in 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays social media has emerged as an important tool of communication and has created new ways of political mobilizing and encourage social media users in political activities right from joining their political parties by tweeting, status update, expressing supports through blogs and videos on YouTube.

The growingimportance of social media in day- to-day life cannot be ignored. With the growing amount of users, theimplication of online campaigns is rendering all politicalparties to integrate social media as a key strategy to mobilize public opinion. The new media has become the fertile ground for the political parties and leaders to manipulate public opinion. At the same time, its negative use can also be seen. The political parties can use the platform to manipulate the voters by providing misinformation. Hence, there should be some kind of restrictions to using it. Otherwise it can have negative impacts in the stability of the society. The misuse can lead to chaos and instability in a democracy.

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