Role of Social Media Campaign: New Era of Election War and their Impacts in India

B. Balakumaraguru

Department of Management Studies
Vel Tech Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

R. Sankar Ganesh

Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies
Vel Tech Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0708-8327

Abstract

Political campaigning has been transformed by the rise of social media platforms, especially in the context of Indian elections. This study investigates how social media campaigns affect the dynamics of elections and their wider effects on the democratic process in India. This study investigates how political parties and candidates use social media to interact with voters, spread campaign messages, and rally support via a thorough examination of current electoral patterns and case studies. Additionally, it explores how social media affects voter behaviour, the sharing of information, and political debate, taking into account both the advantages and disadvantages of this new paradigm. The study also looks into how internet groups and influencers affect public opinion and election results. Additionally, it discusses how social media campaigns affect election integrity, transparency, accountability and election monitoring. Social media makes it easier for political parties and candidates to quickly and efficiently contact a large number of people. Politicians differ from traditional media in that they may use social media to actively communicate with prospective voters. Voters are more engaged in a campaign when political parties and candidates use social media to communicate their objectives, successes, and points of view with the general public. Based on the uses and gratification theory, the current study examines the development and application of social media as a platform for political campaigning during election season.

Keywords: Social Media Platform, Election Campaigning, Uses and Gratification Theory, India, Election Integrity, Transparency, Accountability and Election Monitoring.

Introduction

The impact of social media on political campaigning in India has increased recently, resulting in a notable change in the electoral landscape. The broad use of digital technologies and the rise of social networking sites as important forums for political conversation have been the main drivers of this change. Social media's reach and instantaneous nature have allowed political parties and their leaders to interact with people more effectively. They have done this by using viral content and targeted advertising to sway public opinion. Social media campaigns have raised questions about the health of democracy and election integrity, even as they have increased voter involvement and participation. Social media's extraordinary progress in Indian politics has seen a rise in the country's popularity and utilisation of these platforms. Political parties and leaders have emerged on social networking sites as a result of this expansion, signalling a move away from conventional campaign tactics and towards more digital ones. Political parties now need to make the most of social media campaigns in order to contact and influence voters. These platforms are used for voter outreach and mobilisation.

Frequently used in conjunction with viral content to amplify political narratives and ideologies are targeted advertising and micro-targeting strategies. This change signals the beginning of a new phase in election warfare, one that is marked by the growth of grassroots movements and online political involvement, but also by the use of social media as a weapon to disseminate propaganda and false information. As a result, there have been significant effects on democratic processes and electoral processes, with threats to election integrity posed by digital disinformation efforts against increased voter engagement. These developments highlight the necessity of taking proactive steps to manage the intricacies of social media's influence on Indian politics in order to maintain accountability, transparency, and democratic principles. With the introduction of social media platforms, political campaigning in India has experienced a dramatic change in the last few years.

Significance of 2024

At least sixty-four nations (including the European Union) with a combined population roughly 49% of the world's population are scheduled to hold national elections, indicating that more voters than ever before will cast ballots globally. The outcome of these elections will have a enduring impact on a substantial number of citizens. For example, China's attitude towards the self-governing island will be heavily influenced with the outcome of the next presidential election in Taiwan, where it has repeatedly threat of invasion. Obviously, holding an election does not guarantee an impartial or equitable procedure. Although Bangladesh's biggest opposition party is abstaining from the election in protest of a government crackdown that has lasted for months, prime leader Sheikh Hasina is expected to win a fourth term in power in January. In contrast, before to the February election in Pakistan, the most popular politician, the former prime minister Imran Khan, is behind bars while his party is suppressed and his supporters are being held. Elections may still be entertaining to watch even in cases where the outcome is practically predictable. The results of the March presidential election, assuming the actual vote distribution is made public, may be seen as a potential gauge of Vladimir Putin's support

and whether the Russian people will continue to support his apparent re-election campaign, even though he may already be started one of the never-ending conflicts. While martial law remains in place, it is unclear whether Ukraine's scheduled 2024 presidential election will go place, even though incumbent Volodymyr Zelensky has declared his intention to compete for re-election and is still quite popular. Elsewhere, significant political succession plans are also underway Opinion surveys predict that the opposition Labour Party will prevail in the next national election. Under pressure, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has committed to holding the election in 2024. The Conservative Party has more than 14 years left in office, but its economic prospects are dismal. Not to mention the bigger picture: the U.S. presidential election that concludes in November may open the door for former President Donald Trump to win a second term, which the Economist recently referred to as "the biggest danger to the world" of 2024.
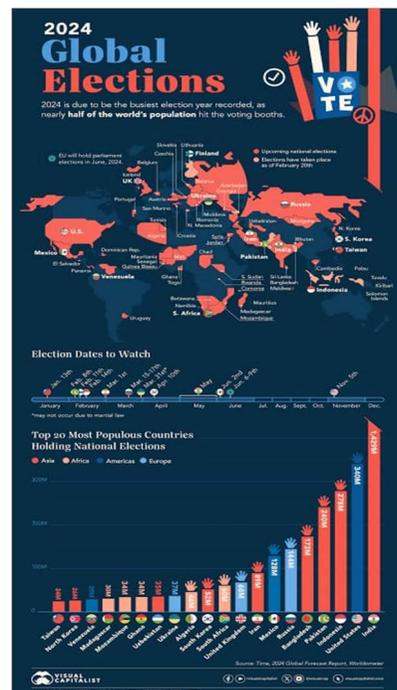
2024 is more than a year for Elections

Elections Worldwide

Many different techniques are used in electoral systems around the world to convert the votes of the people into political representation. Common systems include Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP), which

combines aspects of PR and FPTP, First-Past-the-Post (FPTP), which awards seats based on the percentage of votes each party receives, and First-Past-the-Post (FPTP), which awards seats to the candidate with the most votes regardless of a majority. Candidates are ranked according to preference in multi-member constituencies using Single Transferable Vote (STV), while Majoritarian Systems, such as runoff voting, guarantee that candidates receive a majority of the vote. Furthermore, indirect approaches are used in systems like the United States' Electoral College to choose leaders. Every system has unique benefits and disadvantages that impact how political interests are represented and how democratic government functions in the countries in which it is implemented. Global electoral systems use a wide range of techniques, such as parallel systems, in which nations use many election procedures at the same time, as in Germany's mixed-member proportional representation system. Novel techniques such as Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) and Approval Voting provide different strategies for choosing candidates and promote results that are decided by consensus. In addition, even though there are still issues with security and dependability, some nations have used electronic voting methods to expedite the voting process and improve accessibility. These many strategies highlight how flexible voting systems are around the world, adapted to the particular requirements and environments of other countries.

Elections in India

India is the world's largest democracy and a socialist, secular and Republic nation. The modern nation-state of India was founded on August 15, 1947. According to the Constitution, India follows a parliamentary form of government. Free, fair, and regular elections are a fundamental part of the system. The results of these elections establish the makeup of the state and union territory legislative assemblies, the two chambers of parliament, and the government. The highest body and structure in the system is the presidency and vice-presidency. The world's largest event, India's general elections to elect legislators, must be managed. Using nearly 800,000 polling sites dispersed throughout the nation's wildly varied geographic and climatic zones including snow-capped mountains, parched deserts,

and sparsely inhabited areas more than 800 million people cast ballots. The Election Commission is periodically given supervision, direction, and control over the entire process by the Indian Constitution. India is confronted with a multitude of hurdles concerning president, vice president, parliament and Legislative Assembly elections. The electoral process in India involves tasks like delimitation of constituency boundaries, compiling voter enrollment lists, submitting nomination papers, reviewing and withdrawing nominations, conducting election campaigns, casting votes, counting ballots, and declaring results. Political parties and candidates' campaign for public office. Various strategies are employed to engage with the voters, that including hosting public events, distributing flyers & posters, organizing processions, door-to-door canvassing, and leveraging media coverage.

Social Media Usage in World

Social media, which has billions of users on sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others, has become an essential part of peoples' lives and is used for more than simply communication. Although many platforms are widely used worldwide, there are regional preferences that are a reflection of different cultural situations. This expansion has been made possible by the increasing use of smartphones and mobile internet connectivity, especially in areas with weak traditional internet infrastructure. For many users, social media is their main source of news and information since it provides easy access to real-time updates on events and popular subjects. Influencer culture has also revolutionized marketing by allowing companies to interact and communicate with customers directly. In political action and social movements, social media has also been crucial in organizing, mobilizing, and raising awareness.

Social Media Usage in India

In today's modern culture, social media has grown in popularity among our younger generation in India. It makes it possible for the younger generation to engage, communicate, share knowledge, and send messages to one another from across distances. Social media connects people all throughout the country, despite differences and geographic limitations. The country has become more interactive due to the

consequences of globalization, media convergence, and time and space compression. The young people in the nation who are growing up with new communication technologies are being known as the "Younger Generation".In India, 84% of Internet users currently use social media. This corresponds to about 110 million Indians using social media. The 2014 Indian parliamentary general election saw fierce competition between political parties and candidates as they used social media giants Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google to disseminate their messages and break news, complementing traditional media. Global revenues from social network advertisements are expected to increase by around 54% this year, based on multiple projections. In 2013, India's proportion in global social advertising is a pitiful 2.9%. In India now, women and girls have an Internet penetration rate of approximately 9.8% of the total population, compared to 10.6% for men. Social networking sites are used by over 52% of Indian men and 48% of Indian women who use the Internet. In India, approximately 8.5% of the total population uses social media. Today, over 80% of Indians use social media, with the top 8 metros, including lead 53cities, representing this percentage. As of right now, there are 1.256 billion people living in India, of whom 31% live in cities, 243 million of them use the Internet, and 19% of the country's population is online. On the other hand, some people contend that if "near-equal" access to the Internet is created in the future, there will be a significant chance of increased online political engagement.

Influence of Social Media in Elections Globally

Social media has drastically changed how elections are fought around the world, impacting how voters interact with candidates, how information is disseminated, and how campaigns are run. The increased voter participation made possible by platforms which provide politicians direct access to voters and allow for interactive communication is one of its most noticeable effects. However, these tools have also raised worries about micro-targeting and potential manipulation. Furthermore, the platform's importance in influencing election results is further highlighted by the impact of social media influencers as well as its involvement in election monitoring and transparency initiatives. Overall, social media increases democratic accountability and participation, but its negative effects misinformation and division, for example must be mitigated if elections are to be held internationally with integrity.

The election of Donald Trump to the US presidency in 2016 brought to light the profound influence of social media on election results. via the use of social media, especially Twitter, Trump's campaign was able to contact with his followers directly and avoid going via established media routes. Trump's divisive and contentious tweets attracted a lot of attention, influencing media coverage and the election's public conversation. Social media also had a significant influence in Trump's base mobilization; on sites like Facebook and Reddit, grassroots supporters organized and disseminated campaign-related content. The Trump team was able to effectively reach critical groups in swing states with customized messages thanks to their use of social media, especially Facebook, for targeted advertising. Furthermore, voter views may have been influenced and the contentious political atmosphere surrounding the election may have been exacerbated by the widespread spread of false information and fake news on social media, including made-up tales and conspiracy theories. All things considered, Trump's effective use of social media during the 2016 election highlighted its potential as a medium for political mobilization, communication, and persuasion, but it also raised concerns about how it can influence democratic outcomes and processes.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Prior to the start of empirical research, the general public's perception of the mass media was that it had a direct, immediate, and significant impact on each and every audience member. One may argue that accumulation theory atones for the media's role in gradually modifying public opinion on subjects like politics and information. Simple changes like a new hairdo can have significant effects like adopting a new political stance. According to sociologists, the Uses and Gratification theory explains why people adopt innovations in a particular culture in a fairly predictable manner.

Numerous studies demonstrate that satisfactions received rather than satisfactions sought are better indicators of media usage, and that repeated use is

likely to occur when a medium meets or surpasses a user's satisfactions wanted. In light of this, this study investigates the political motivations behind people's use of social media during election campaigns as well as the variables that could influence these motivations. In light of the above-mentioned conversation, the following research topics are addressed in this study:

- *RQ₁: Is social media genuinely becoming a significant force in Indian politics?*
- *RQ₂: How has social media changed Indian politics and how will it go forward?*
- *RQ₃: How do social media influence voters to cast their vote ballots?*
- *RQ₄: Can individuals in India use social media to engage actively in the electoral process?*

Methodology

The current study's objective is to present a thorough and qualitative assessment of that particular event, its characteristics, and its effects. The study's ability to strengthen theoretical frameworks and resolve challenging research issues is what makes it rich. Generally speaking, the purpose of theory is to provide a logical and understandable explanation for a phenomenon. The use of social media and social networks to form a protest group over a relationship between two system components inside the same system constitutes the fundamental unit analysis. The word "relationship" is particularly significant in terms of how social media is employed inside the system since it characterizes a set of components that go into a large-scale protest and the part that social media plays in sparking the connection.

The current study is methodologically focused on information flows, rises, and uses in order to provide a thorough and complete usage of satisfactions. In this study, I've attempted to examine the emerging behavioural patterns people are exhibiting as well as how they use social media sites on the internet for both individual and communal political involvement. The analysis in the report examines the role that social media platform, including search engines, Facebook, Twitter, social blogs, and microblogs, play in spreading information and sparking political participation. Based on perceived requirements, social and psychological traits, and media qualities, people use the media and reap the benefits that come with it. The theories of pleasure and uses have been extensively employed to provide solutions to research difficulties and to clarify the components.

Theory of Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications looks at the traits of viewers, how involved they are, and how much enjoyment they get from watching television. It gives particular attention to the motivations behind people's media usage, the psychological and social elements influencing this use, and the attitudes or behaviours that result from the interaction of these elements. Laswell's theory of who uses what, how, and why may be used to track the origins of enjoyment and usage. Laswell defined the three primary functions of mass media as environmental surveillance, event correlation, and social legacy transmission. This concept forms the basis of the uses and gratifications model, which articulates media needs and expectations.

Early applications and satisfaction may be traced to research conducted in the 1940s, which looked at why listeners chose to tune in to radio programs such as soap operas and quiz shows. These investigations demonstrated how the media may support a number of daily requirements and allowed for a functional analysis of media effects and processes. Uses and gratification studies tend to have a common analytical framework that centres on motives, social and psychological antecedents, and cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioural results, despite the wide range of contexts and interests. A typical study on uses and gratifications will compare uses and gratifications across media or concentrate on a specific medium. In doing so, researchers will look at motivations, a mix of pertinent social and psychological antecedents, and consequences or impacts related to consuming a particular medium. The ideas that are commonly found in uses and gratification research as well as research techniques used in study design are examined in the following sections.

Leveraging Social Media Political Rallying

Online networks known as "social media" allow users to freely exchange private text, audio, video, and photo content as well as information about their lives and self. Globally, social media has grown at an exponential rate in recent years. These days, new types of social interaction, dialogue, trade,

and collaboration are being driven by social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and other social network sites. Many user communities utilize social media these days for a range of purposes. There is an increasing amount of misunderstanding between work and play due to social media. Furthermore, people can discover that they continue to live in a media environment long after their employment ends due to internet surveillance and the spread of ideas and news via social media.

Politicians and political parties depend on social media platforms to spread the word, promote engagement, and maintain an ongoing discourse. The political system and campaign strategies are starting to change as a result of social media's emergence and its influence on voters and politicians. A few studies have also discovered a positive correlation between a voter's voting behaviour and their use of social and mass media. Stated differently, individuals who rely more on mainstream and social media sources for information are more likely to vote. Politicians, political groups, and individuals all have a forum for openness thanks to social media.

The differential gains It provides a valuable opportunity to explore the democratic possibilities of the Internet, which enables people to obtain a range of political information and engage with each other more effectively and efficiently. Social media is currently the primary source of political news and information. Social media incorporates several forms of human interaction, which sets it apart from traditional mass media consumption. In this perspective, it's also critical to remember that social media may be seen as a useful forum for conversation where regular people can interact and learn a variety of facts about subjects that pique their interest.

Social Media and Indian 2024 Parliament Elections

Like in previous election cycles, social media is set to have a major impact on the 2024 Indian Parliament elections. It provides political parties and candidates with a crucial forum for communicating party policy, updating supporters on their campaigns, and having direct conversations with voters. The dissemination of false information and fake news, however, continues to be a worry as it may affect voters' opinions and choices. Political parties are expected to use targeted advertising on social media

platforms as a primary tactic, since it allows them to communicate with certain audiences and geographic areas in order to garner support. Political parties are expected to use targeted advertising on social media platforms as a primary tactic, since it allows them to communicate with certain audiences and geographic areas in order to garner support. Influencers and social media stars are also anticipated to have a big impact on voter choices and attitudes, especially among younger populations. Social media platforms may be used for election monitoring and transparency initiatives, enabling individuals and groups to keep tabs on campaign spending and instantly report anomalies. Strong steps are necessary to protect the integrity of the voting process, nevertheless, since worries about foreign meddling and misinformation efforts have surfaced. It is expected that social media will play a significant role in the 2024 Indian Parliament elections overall, but there will also be obstacles that need to be overcome to guarantee free and fair elections. With over 243 million users, Over 100 million people use various social networking sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Businesses that provide software, telecom services, e-commerce, and social networking sites are clearly making the most of this networking potential. Social media platforms have been widely utilized by political personalities, candidates, journalists, and voters to get election-related news, engage in real-time communication, and share their opinions. To inform and educate the more than 800 million Indian voters about the elections, another search engine established an Elections Hub featuring news and information relevant to the voting. It ensures that on election day, Indian voters will have simple access to information to enable them to make informed choices.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the political implications of social media during the 2024 Indian parliament election, given the platform's growing popularity and usage. India, a nation with extensive internet connectivity, boasts the biggest proportion of Internet users worldwide, and its populace regards information sourced from the Internet as more trustworthy and credible than that from conventional media. In terms of social

network utilization, India comes in third place worldwide. As a result, India provides an interesting case study for analysing the political ramifications of recently developed communication channels like social media. This study initially looked at the reasons individuals use social media during political campaigns and whether factors may predict these motives, using the uses and gratifications approach. In the 18th parliament general election, social media including social media and social networks has been largely relied upon by political parties and candidates to engage voters, recruit volunteers for their campaigns, and raise a percentage of the required funds. This highlights the importance of social media in political campaigning. By using a variety of social media platforms and new media to reach a wider audience, the campaign raised awareness of the significance of social media use in contemporary political campaigns. This social media tool efficiently reached the younger generation while also assisting the broader public in organizing and promoting action. The impact of digital media uptake and use was evident in the outcomes of the most recent general election for parliament.

References

Althaus, Scott L., and David Tewksbury. "Patterns of Internet and Traditional News Media Use in a Networked Community." *Political Communication*, vol. 17, 2000, pp. 21-45.

Dahlberg, Lincoln. "The Internet and Democratic Discourse: Exploring the Prospects of Online Deliberative Forums Extending the Public Sphere." *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2001, pp. 615-33.

Eighmey, John, and Lola McCord. "Adding Value in the Information Age: Uses and Gratifications of Sites on the World Wide Web." *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 41, 1998, pp. 187-94.

Eveland, William P., and Dietram A. Scheufele. "Connecting News Media Use with Gaps in Knowledge and Participation." *Political Communication*, vol. 17, 2000, pp. 215-37.

Eveland, William P. "The Effects of Political Discussion in Producing Informed Citizens: The Roles of Information, Motivation and Elaboration." *Political Communication*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2004, pp. 177-93.

Garramone, Gina M., et al. "Uses of Political Computer Bulletin Boards." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1986, pp. 325-39.

Gimmler, Antje. "Deliberative Democracy, the Public Sphere and the Internet." *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 27, 2001, pp. 21-39.

Johnson, Thomas J., and Barbara K. Kaye. "Wag the Blog: How Reliance on Traditional Media and the Internet Influence Credibility Perceptions of Weblogs among Blog Users." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2004, pp. 622-42.

Kahn, Richard, and Douglas Kellner. "New Media and Internet Activism: Form the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging." *New Media & Society*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2004, pp. 87-95.

Matheson, Donald. "Weblogs and the Epistemology of the News: Some Trends in Online Journalism." *New Media & Society*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2004, pp. 443-68.

Mitra, Ananda, and Eric Watts. "Theorizing Cyberspace: The Idea of Voice Applied to the Internet Discourse." *New Media & Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2002, pp. 479-98.

Rubin, Alan M. "The Uses-and-Gratifications Perspective of Media Effects." *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, edited by J. Bryant, et al., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002, pp. 525-48.

Wyatt, Robert O., et al. "Bridging the Spheres: Political and Personal Conversation in Public and Private Spaces." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 50, 2000, pp. 71-92.

Author Details

B. Balakumaraguru, *Department of Management Studies, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India*

R. Sankar Ganesh, *Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India,* **Email ID:** *sankarganeshphd@gmail.com*