Digital Democracy Social Media in Political Campaigns "The 2014 Lok Sabha Experience in India"

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ABSTRACT

Social Media is the way the world communicates in the 21st century. Today the idea of social media is radically different from that a decade ago. Today Facebook and Twitter are more a way of communication than the word of mouth. India being the largest democracy in the world voted recently for one of the biggest battles of power i.e. the Lok Sabha Elections 2014. The most important distinction of this election is that over 65% of the electorate is between the ages of 18 to 35. This is also considered the age group that uses social media the most. With 205 million internet users and over 85% of web users browsing on Social Networking sites this elections saw all political parties in India attempting to woo its voters through the social media. Indian politicians are amateurs on social media and their presence is unimpressive hence this elections saw a beeline of campaigns and tie ups with agencies. For the first time in the History of Politics in India New Media was used massively for dissemination of Information on candidates, parties, agendas etc. alongside traditional ones. The Political mandate was very clear in every politician's mind which was reaching out to the maximum number of potential voters and what better way to do it is through "Social Media". Therefore does Social media campaigns actually woo its voters to ultimately garner more votes is the larger question hencethe significance of the study is to analyze the co relation that exists between social media campaigns and voting behavior of its audience? In this Lok Sabha election did social media play a role in bringing its young voters to vote for its candidates? And also to measure the impact these strategies have had on the youth in the Country. The methodology employed for this study would be the Case study method in order to understand the various social media campaigns and strategies used along with a survey to study the impact it has had on youth in Bangalore city to draw certain Inferences to the study. The survey being restricted to only young voters from the city could be a major limitation to this study.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Campaigns, Youth, Voting behavior, New-Media Campaign

INTRODUCTION

"The PC has improved the world in just about every area you can think of. Amazing developments in communications, collaboration and efficiencies. New kinds of entertainment and social media. Access to information and the ability to give a voice to people who would never have been heard"

- Bill Gates

In the Months Leading upto the Vote in the largest Democracies in the World, Facebook said it received its 100 millionth user in India which is a big milestone for a country that is estimated to have 170 million Internet users. Elections in India are considered to be the most

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vibrant festivals of democracy that bring out multiple hues of our Parliamentary system of governance. Lying at the core of Indian democracy, elections broadly shape the contours of the government. The Elections are a mammoth exercise in India as they decide the fate of the largest democracy of the world, an influential nation in South Asia and an emerging superpower.

Today, the idea of social media has radically changed from that of the media a decade ago. While a decade ago the Internet was considered new media, the society now turns to Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as sources of information. The rapidly growing popularity of social media is making things undergo a fast metamorphosis. Twitter and Facebook have become great tools for the reluctant young Indian to actively engage at least in discussions on political, economic and other social issues. What started as a discussion has eventually become a powerful group for not just mere discussions but criticism and dissemination of opinion on several such issues which mainstream media would not discuss or show for several reasons.

The Three social media giants Facebook, Twitter and Google emerged as a major player in the general elections in India 2014, with political parties and candidates competing with each other in breaking the news, spreading their message through these outlets in addition to those via the traditional media. All these three major players have seen a substantial increase in their India traffic and usage. For instance, Facebook has now 100 million users in India, while that of Twitter has more than doubled since January this year.

Initially most political parties did not take the social media and the rising wave of youth seriously and ignored it as a passing phase which would have no impact on voting patterns or electoral outcomes. Yet some political leaders found this as a great tool to connect with the educated, white collar middle class of India who for long had taken the voting day as an unexpected holiday to enjoy instead of voting. For some, connecting to them with discussions on national issues and engaging them enough to vote really worked. The most important reason for the success of social media and why some political parties have gained immensely out of it is because, most of the youth of India working in various sectors today do not get an opportunity to watch a lot of television or have rather distanced themselves from the ubiquitous television sets, but have hooked themselves on to this all the more exciting and explorative world called the virtual world through their laptops, workstations and smart phones. Eventually what started as a mere virtual platform for discussions became a wonder tool for dissemination of information, advocacy, voter mobilization and voter registration drive.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS THE AMERICAN SCENARIO

In the United States during its elections, the use of social media by presidential candidates has become a way for many voters to find out about candidates. As a result, presidential candidates have had to adapt their campaign strategies towork with these media in a way that would effectively target these audiences. On the 10th of February, 2007 a relatively unknown Junior Senator from Illinois announced his candidacy for president. Almost 20 months later, that unknown senator was elected President of the United States. Barack Obama's presidential campaign was unorthodox (Simba 2009). As Simba (2009) noted, Obama's campaign success had frequently been credited to his public speaking and ability to inspire. However, his use of the Internet and social media to engage new voters provided Obama with a level of support that most of the other candidates never saw.

The Obama campaign not only revolutionized how campaigns reached out to their audiences, but it also affected how they fundraised. Simba (2009) pointed out that Obama outspent his Republican opponent after years of Republican candidates outspending Democratic candidates. The use of the Internet as a fundraising tool led to a remarkably high number of small denomination donations from a group of voters who had never previously been engaged in the political process (Simba 2009). Although Barack Obama's campaign marked the most successful use of new and social media by a presidential candidate, it certainly did not mark the first. Howard Dean's 2004 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination offered the country a glimpse into what Internet campaigning was capable of producing. Murray (2005) stated that Howard Dean's rise to fame was centered on his use of new and social media. Much like Barack Obama after him, Dean was unknown prior to announcing his candidacy. By disseminating his message through new and social media, Dean was able to mobilize a new group of supporters. These supporters thrived on the ease that the Internet provided in making a donation, getting information, or coordinating an event (Murray 2005).

While Internet usage played an important role in setting Dean's campaign apart from other candidates, Murray also pointed out that Dean utilized this new technology to target a previously overlooked demographic: young voters. Murray (2005) stated that young voters were typically early adopters of new technology so Dean's use of these methods clearly showed his dedication to reaching out to these voters in particular. Murray (2005) goes on to cite a study, by the Pew Charitable Trusts, *Internet, Politics, and Democracy Online Project*, who found that the majority of individuals who engaged with candidates online during the 2004 primary were individuals who had never before been politically active. The influx of newly involved voters was pivotal to the support that Dean was able to gain, as he "would not have been able to gain the support of the traditional active party base with his seemingly progressive platform" (Murray, 2005, pg. 5). While his bid for the nomination was ultimately unsuccessful, Dean still managed to introduce new and social media to the world of political campaigns.

 The successful utilization of new and social media by both the Obama and Dean campaigns could ultimately prove to be a model to follow in engaging the youth vote. As new and social media change and evolve, it is those in the 18-24 age group who adopt and apply these new types of Internet use. The Pew Research Center's *Internet and American Life Project* found that 95% of 18-29 year-olds use the Internet, and 78% of all American adults use the Internet on a daily basis. As a result, it appears that it will be extremely important for politicians to utilize this network moving forward (S.Hamilton *"Use of Social Media in Political Campagins,* 2011).

SOCIAL MEDIA, POLITICS AND INDIA "THE DEMOGRAPHICS"

Social media has become the new election battleground for India's nationwide parliamentary elections. India recently witnessed an unprecedented election result which reflected the mindsets of people of the world's largest democracy. The Rules of the game have been changed and only time will prove its impact on Indian politics. Just to put things into perspective, here is some data about the size of the Indian electorate.

We have 814 million voters in comparison to the United States with 193.6 million and the United Kingdom with 45.5 million. The sheer volume of the data of India's voting population was perhaps the largest obstacle. The second was the variety of data India's voter rolls in 12 different languages and 9, 00,000 PDFs amounting to 25 million pages made for a heterogeneous, non-uniform and deeply diverse information set.

INDIAN ELECTIONS TREND

Represents the Twitter Mentions around Indian Elections, Parties, Polls and Politicians
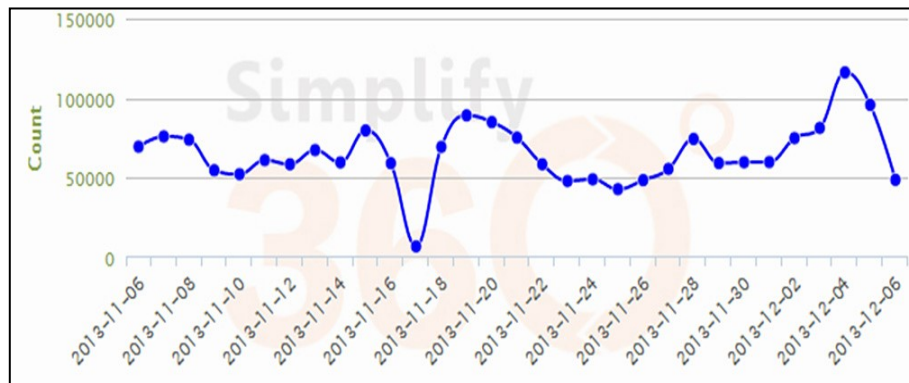
(Nov 6, to Dec 06, 2013)

Fig. 1   Source: The Economic Times & Simplfy 360

POLITICAL PARTIES TREND

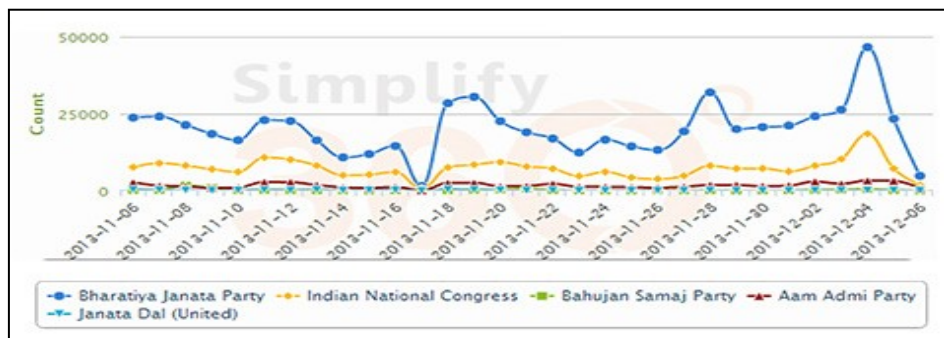## Represents the Twitter Mentions Trend around the Parties

Fig: 2   Source : The Economic Times & Simplfy 360

NET SENTIMENT ON POLITICIANS

This depicts the Politicians who were talked the most by people on Twitter. Net sentiment is arrived by considering both positive and negative sentiment of a politician.

Fig. 3.   Source : The Economic Times & Simplfy360

SOCIAL MEDIA, YOUTH AND POLITICS:

There are more than 200 million Internet users in India. Most of them are young and mobile urban dwellers. This demographic is also socially engaged, making for the highest Twitter and Facebook usage in the world, outside of the United States, according to Alexa Internet Statistics.

Social media can be characterized as a type of new media. However, it is important to recognize that while social media may fall under the broad umbrella term of new media, social media may have its own distinguishing factors. Social media utilizes the social networking sites themselves act as its primary form of communication. The networking sites themselves are the platforms through which social media occurs. In order to appropriately define social media, a working definition for social networking sites must first be established. Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social networking sites as: *web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (pg. 211).* This definition provided an outline for describing social media.

The platform that social media is carried out on is a system that allows individuals to share information with other individuals they list and find new individuals through their friends' lists. This is generally the model that social media follow. *Hence, this paper will define social media as any technological communication that utilizes peer-to-peer networking as its primary form of disseminating information. Specifically, social media will refer to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs in this analysis.*
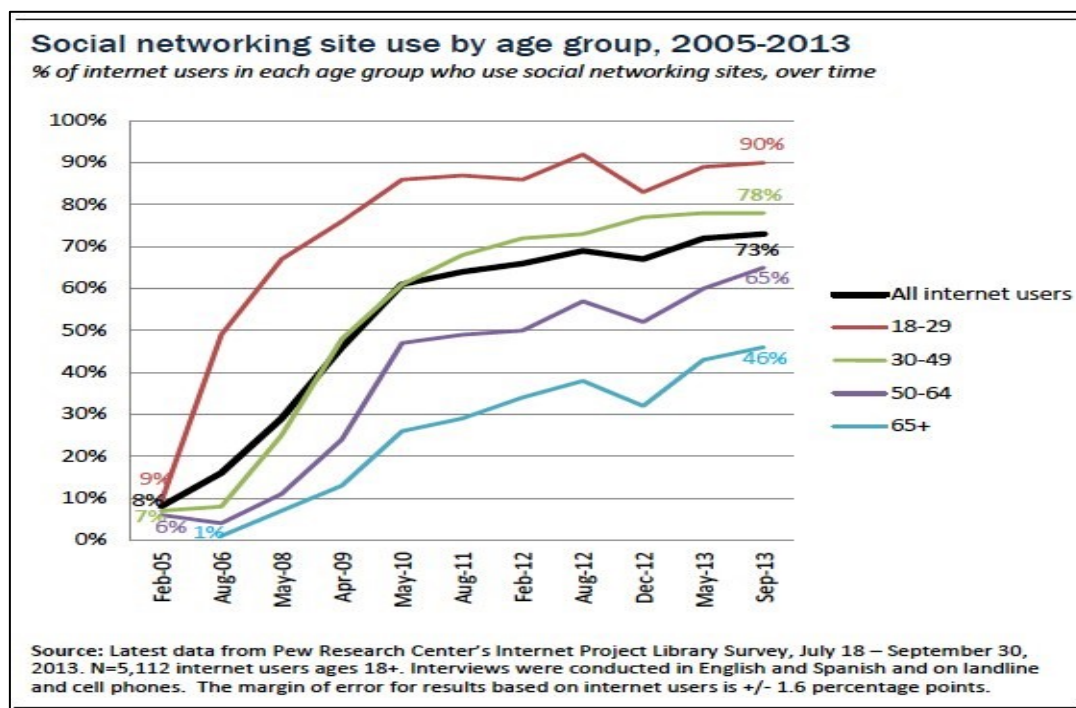
Fig. 4. Source : Pew Research Center

("The Hindu" Report 2013) states that every third person in an Indian city today is a youth. In about seven years, the median individual in India will be 29 years, very likely a city-dweller, making it the youngest country in the world.These are some of the findings of the 'State of

the Urban Youth, India 2012: Employment, Livelihoods, Skills,' a report published by IRIS Knowledge Foundation in collaboration with UN-HABITAT.

A closer analysis of the urban youth suggests that greater political participation, engagement at a policy level and urgent attention to improving their quality of life can ensure that India enjoys the benefits of this dividend. The report traces the incredible rise and the eventual decline of this cohort in India. The population in the age-group of 15-34 increased from 353 million in 2001 to 430 million in 2011. Current predictions suggest a steady increase in the youth population to 464 million by 2021 and finally a decline to 458 million by 2026.

By 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country with 64 per cent of its population in the working age group. With the West, Japan and even China aging, this demographic potential offers India and its growing economy an unprecedented edge that economists believe could add a significant 2 per cent to the GDP growth rate.

Sanjay Kumar (Author of the Book "Youth and Electoral Politics: An Emerging Engagement"). Said "Indian youth is participating actively to bring about change in the country, and in the coming time it will be this section of society that will be targeted by political parties as a vote bank". It is believed that a number of factors like Nepotism, Money power and Muscle power kept the youth away from actively participating in Politics until now where we can see that there is ray of hope for youth and their involvement in Politics.

Citing some recent events that have occurred in India, the youth across the country has demonstrated some strong emotions. It could be the Protest march at Delhi against the gruesome "Gang Rape" or another moment that redefined politics "The Delhi Elections" that caused a nationwide awakening among youth. Since then there has been a considerably good amount of participation of youth in the political setting of the country.

MEDIA, DEMOCRACY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

A functioning media is a crucial element of a functioning democracy. The press has always been present, and it has a privilege no other industry enjoys i.e. a specific protection in the Constitution. Many journalists see themselves as protectors of our system of government "watchdogs of democracy" and in many ways the framers of the Constitution would agree. Of course, when this role is pursued with passion, it is bound to annoy those in power from time to time. The People who comprise of the vast viewing and reading public, are often caught in the middle, sometimes agreeing with the press and other times siding with the elected officials.

The political power of the press is a subject on many peoples' minds. The press is simultaneously blamed and praised for many aspects of political life across all democracies. On one hand, it is accused of a wide array of offenses: endangering national security, oversimplifying important issues of public policy, focusing too much on the negatives and not enough on the achievements of government, and demonstrating some sort of political bias. On the other hand, the same politicians and pundits who criticize the media attempt to influence and control it, trying to get their messages out to the public

There is a necessity to create platforms for diverse mediums and credible voices for democracy to thrive (Parceiro, 1999). Informing citizens about the developments in the society and helping them make informed choices; media makes democracy function in its true spirit. It also keeps the elected representatives accountable to its public. Media to operate in an ideal democratic framework needs to be free from governmental and private control. It needs to have complete editorial independence to pursue its public interests.

Here's a closer look at the objectives of Social Media Strategy for these parties

Bharatiya Janta Party	Aam Aadmi Party	Indian National Congress
- Connect with new and existing voters. - Spread Awareness about the party's agenda, campaigns - Generate Interest and Desire for party's initiatives & prospects - Register party's name with Growth & Alternative for Change - Nurture a community of Brand Advocates - Integrate offline-online campaigns to broaden the spectrum - Engage with the youth and inspire them to contribute their bit towards the mission	- Connect with masses and engage with them - Increase awareness about the party, ideology and movement - Generate interest amongst followers to contribute for the party - Voice out their honest opinion over issues - Register their presence with keywords like anticorruption, transparency and clean governance. - Crowd Source ideas for Constituency Manifesto - Highlight the issues faced by common man	- To counter negative and misleading propaganda of political opponents and their mouthpieces. - To inform and convince the undecided voter to support party's policies and programmes. - To bridge the gap between supporters & senior leaders and open up communication channels. - To convert supporters into committed workers of the party. - To guide, update and enthuse the core party workers to fulfil political goals of the party.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This is the generation of the Internet and this generation consists of people who are comfortable in communicating and putting their lives online on the Internet, emailing, updating statuses, Blogging, Tweeting and writing on each other's Facebook timelines. Using social networking websites allows users to express oneself in a larger space namely the web space, having many friends, whether they know them from the off-line world or only from the online world people like to express themselves, and they are curious about other people.

Virtually every wealthy, industrialized country is now a democracy. A high proportion of poorer countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America are also democracies. Democracy is the best form of governance and it does, however, raise a number of questions. There are many approaches to the theories of democracy, but the ruling ideas that lie behind them can be summarized in many ways, one among them being "Democracy and Participation".

The eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau was the first major theorist of democracy in the modern world. Rousseau is forever associated with the idea that a good political system allows its citizens the freedom to participate in political life. We need to consider such a viewpoint because the notion of participation must be central to our understanding of what democracy is, can be and should be. Participants seek to replicate in the modern world the virtues of the political system invented in Athens in classical times. Rousseau believed that people were free only when they were actually voting to choose their leaders or actively discussing proposed legislative changes. Central to this approach is the argument in favor of participatory democracy. The essential argument is psychological. Political participations good for us, both as individuals and as a society. It is an important dimension of human experience that we should seek to participate in choosing the rules and the people that govern us. It is also important for our society that we should exert some important influence on the decision making process in our capacity as independent-minded individuals with personal viewpoints. Ultimately, from this standpoint, political participation is a good thing, because it is an expression of human desire and social need for civic equality. ("*Democracy and Democratization*". G Phillip, 2011).

Social networking sites (SNSs) first appeared and became popular in the late 1990s, but really began to grow in 2003 when major social networking sites were launched. Facebook, Twitter etc. can be viewed as a public sphere, which is an area in social life where people can get together to discuss issues, mostly in politics, lifestyle and Entertainment. Cook (2004) stated that a public sphere and public communication are important for maintaining relationships and creating dialogue. This may also result in the formation of opinions therefore enabling social media to act as a portal to form opinions and discuss them. It may not be wrong if we state that today social media has become a little more than just a information sharing space. Social media is turning into an "Opinion Leader" today. All of us tend to infer the meaning of opinion leaders in our way. For some of us they are merely our parents, teachers or mentors who tend to play a prominent role in the establishment or the formation of our views, ideologies and their subsequent manifestation into our actions. For the others, the opinion leaders are great people such as Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi, who paved the way for the revolutions altogether, completely changing the faces of the entire countries, with their opinion and succeeding actions. But today, with the changing contemporary scenario's, there is someone else who has taken on the role of opinion leaders, and that is Social Media. Opinion leaders basically communicate messages to a primary group, influencing the attitudes and behavior change of their followers, and in the same way, the various channels of social media, also tends to influence the attitudes as well as behaviors and changes their outlook towards certain concrete beliefs.

OBJECTIVES

As a tool, the internet has to be used by people within a sociopolitical and cultural context and as result, governments have developed different ways to control and track the new online sphere. In many ways, we could say that the internet has introduced another word: an online world in parallel of the offline one, which evolves at a very fast pace and in which governments, businesses and individuals attempt to import the values and rules from the offline world to the online one. But the internet is a place for imagination, a place where users create online selves, or avatars. It is a place where reality can be emulated or improved ("*Political Communication in New Democracies"*, ANE SAN MIGUEL, 2012).

Social media has emerged as a vital tool of communication and has created new ways of mobilizing public opinion and encouraging participation in political and civic activities ranging from voting to joining online petition and social groups to posting short messages on Twitter and also expressing their support through blogs and uploading videos on YouTube etc. Therefore the main objective of the study would be to:

1. Analyze the kind of attention that social media has managed to generate for itself amidst the urban world in bringing Politics and Political Practices Closer to the people**.**
2. To study the outcome of such political practice (The Voting Behavior& Political Branding) initiated through new media, social networking sites to spread awareness.
3. To analyze the involvement of youth through social media in the political scenario in India with reference to the Loka Sabah Elections 2014.

METHODOLOGY

The method of analysis used for this particular study is:

1. The 'Case Study' Method, where case studies of online vote campaigns in the country are used for the purpose of the study, and

2. The Content Analysis Method, where content of various websites and articles published was analyzed.

3. Social Networking sites of the various Political Parties and popular Political contenders of the 2014 Loka Sabah Elections were analyzed to study the popularity and usage of them amongst youth.

4. An online survey was conducted and a questionnaire was administered to 100 young social media users in Bangalore city to understand their usage and Information access of political news through these social media networks.

CASE STUDY ONE

The Modi Campaign

Modi Stratergy (Facts)

- Facebook likes - 13 million
- Twitter followers - 3.9 million
- YouTube Downloads – 13 million
- Chai pe Charcha in 4000 Locations
- 3D Hologram Rallies in 1350 Locations
- Messages through All major messaging services to more tha 130 million people.

The recent Indian Loka Sabah Elections has been attributed to factors ranging from slowing economic growth to high levels of corruption. But for the first time in the country's history, social media played an important role, according to analysts who are calling the vote India's first "social media elections. This Political Leader over time built a Brand for himself, "Brand Modi" was something most youngsters in the Country seemed to relate to this election. Also referred to as the "Facebook Leader" By the time he was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi 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. Getting the young voter's vote meant harnessing the power of social media. Arvind Gupta, who as the head of BJP's IT division led the party's social media campaignSaid" We saw a trend, we read this trend, where the youth of the country were embracing social media as their first tool when they started using the internet, and we made sure our presence was there,".
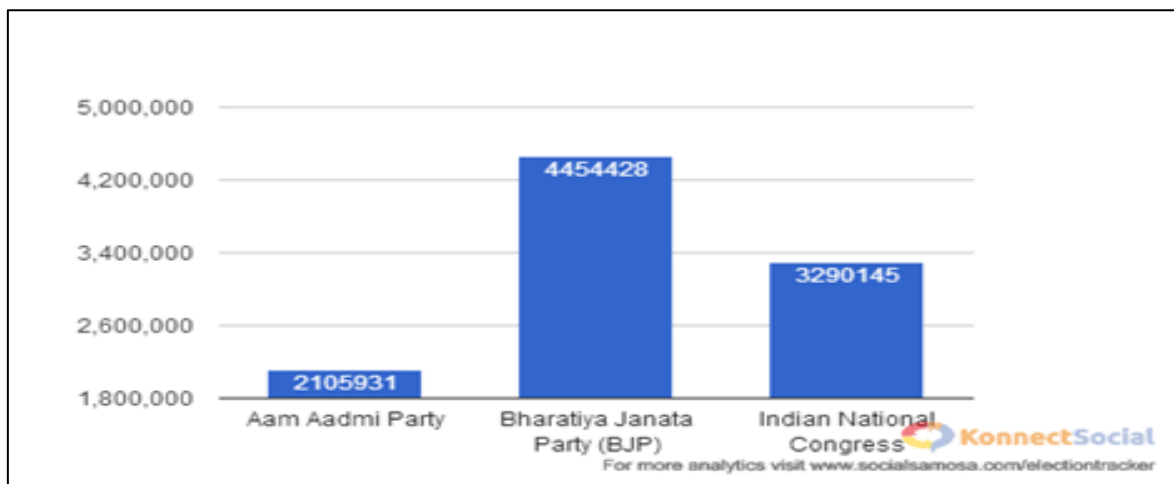
He has also stated that the social media affected 30 to 40 percent of the overall seats; a number he said could go up to 60 percent by the 2019 general elections. In many

constituencies, social media was amongst the top three communication tools, overtaking traditional methods such as advertisements, he added. The importance of social media is underscored by the almost 74 million Internet users in the country, a 31 percent increase from March 2012 to March 2013, according to "India Digital Future in Focus." The report published by ComScore Inc., a U.S. company that measures digital usage. The same report said 75 percent of India's online population was younger than the age of 35, significantly younger than in other BRIC countries.

Standard tools like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and then lately WhatsApp, from a social media perspective, were the pillars of the strategy. For many Indians, it started with the use of Twitter by Modi, who gained millions of followers during the election campaign, according to Kugelman."Mr. Modi himself reached out through his Twitter account to the youth of the country, appealing to what the youth are looking for: jobs, security and the use of technology," said Nilotpal Chakravarti, the associate vice president of the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).Twitter is where Narendra Modi has generated the maximum buzz. Surrounded by more than 3.5 million followers, his voice gets amplified as most of his tweets get hundreds of re-tweets in no time.

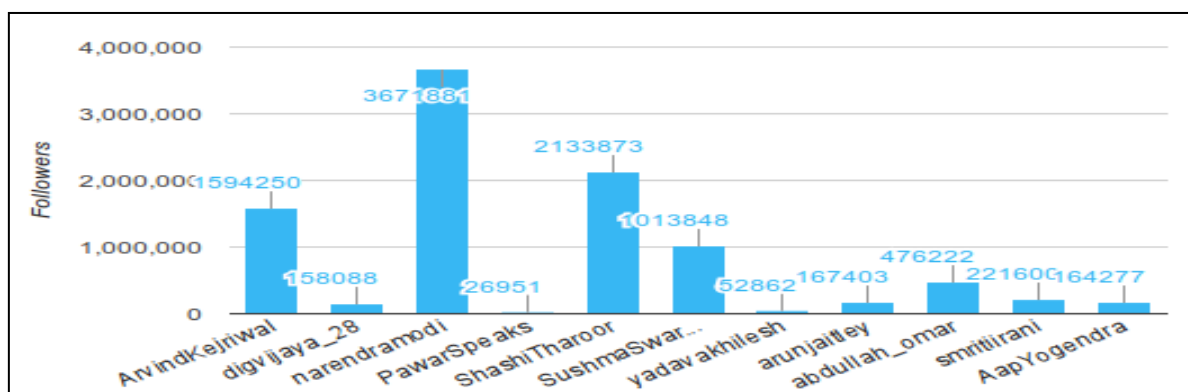

Fig: 6(a) Source: Socialsamosa

Even though his Twitter handle tweets regularly throughout the day, the kind of content that he shares is nothing spectacular.
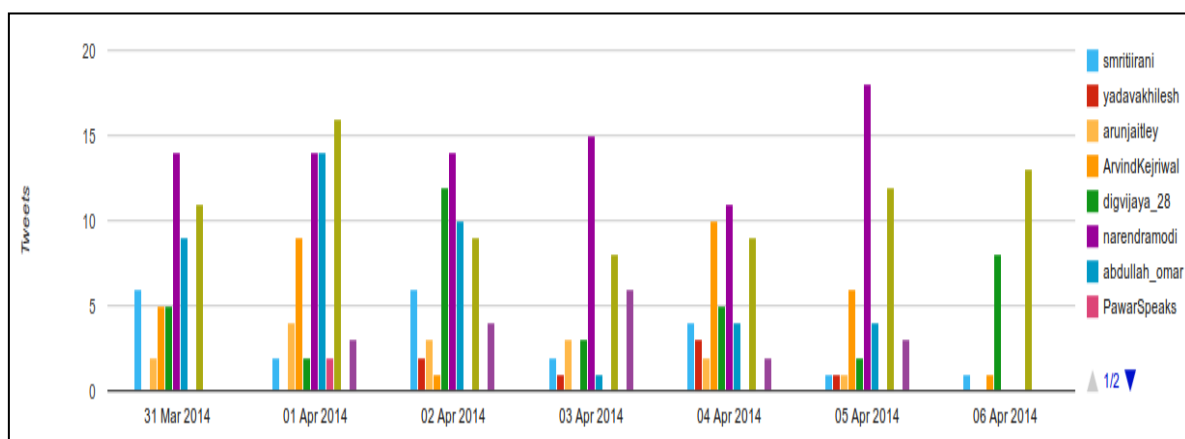

Fig: 7(b) Source: Socialsamosa

Most of his tweets are about sharing his stories for his campaign trails. He shares the sentiments of the people he met, the state of that particular city/region and the response of people towards BJP.

Right from having an interactive website, to a dedicated volunteer's dashboard, mobile apps, extracting the most out of Google Hangouts, Facebook Page, Twitter handle, YouTube Page, Whats App; they haven't missed a single trick in the book to make sure that they connect with the youth and the masses at multiple touch points with a unified tone of messaging and engagement. As a result today "Narendra Modi is found to be the most mentioned politician on Social Media in India" according to a report from Blogworks.

CASE STUDY TWO

The Vote for India& Voterite Initiative:

Vote for India

The Mass for Awareness is a voluntary organization which works for creating awareness among people about their fundamental right and freedom. This Organization has been working towards making voters aware about their invaluable vote. In a democratic system, where people choose their representatives, Election is the only medium through which voters can decide the future of the country. Mass for Awareness has been working to spread awareness among voters to realize the value of their vote through various indoor-outdoor cartoon exhibitions, seminars and road shows. As part of its voter awareness campaign called "VOTE FOR INDIA". Vote for India is India's first campaign that publishes research based report on the performance of Indian parliamentarians, "Representative at Work", yearly. The campaign is being run at both levels, online and offline.

Campaign through Social Networking Sites

 Vote for India runs campaign through social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and many more to reach and interact with more and younger people who could make the campaign a big success. The Run up to both the Delhi elections and the Lokasabha Elections saw the rise of these voter Initiative campaigns, also supported by the Election Commission of India that simultaneously worked on the Importance of Voting.

Voterite

 Another Social media platform that holds the key to encourage people and push them to take an active part in raising the voice and selecting a right political representative. Vikram Nalagampalli thought of opening 2-way communication between the candidate and the voter that gave rise to Voterite.com, which enables the voter and the candidate to discover each other and engage in some meaningful conversations. The portal went live on Nov 14, 2013 with its beta version out in Nov 2013, and since then it's been adding an average of around 500 users every day. "Voterite" recently launched a social media platform that is envisioned to influence elections through peer-peer campaigning. The idea is to fix the problem at the grass root level which, can only be done by empowering citizens. Voterite is an attempt to talk the language of India's youth population by leveraging social media and influence them to take active part in redefining the way leaders are elected. "2014 is just the beginning of a very important milestone in the political landscape.

ONLINE SURVEY

An Online Survey (Pilot Study) among Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp users was done. An Online Questionnaire was administered to young people within the age group of 18-35. The Respondents for this study were all residents of Bangalore City and regular users of social networking sites.

Most of the respondents belonging to the age group mentioned above were found to spend more than 3 hours in a day either online or on a social networking site. Majority of the Respondents also stated that almost 75% of the Information they gathered was from highlights and updates that were on the Facebook and Twitter Pages that they accessed.

When asked about their Interest in Politics many of the respondents showed varied Interests towards the topic but surprisingly when the same respondents were asked about their awareness towards the Candidates contesting in the Loka Sabha Elections they were all aware of the political parties and their respective candidates contesting this time around.

Of the hundred respondents 82 percent of respondents stated that they had liked a Facebook Page or followed their favorite political party or political leader on Twitter. Many of the respondents also believed that 'liking' a Page is an important way of showing support for the politician, political issues etc. that they and their friends care about, and more likely that also came across was that they also believed in commenting on various posts and sharing the same with their circle of friends which resulted in a faster and larger dissemination of information.

Most of the young people who were questioned said that they think politicians should use social media more and they also think politicians should be asked questions publicly more often to show they are responsive to people's views. The respondents felt that the Interactive platform that the social networking sites offer makes it easy to put across views and are partially assured that it would be seen and acted upon.

And 65% of the total respondents who were a part of the survey also highlighted that Facebook is where they first heard about news and major events, rather than traditional news outlets such as print and television news programs.

INFERENCES

1. An extensive usage of Social media among young urban youth seemed to be the highlight of this study with every respondent using it for more than three hours on a daily basis.

2. The Online accessibility of Information made it convenient for the young urban voter to stay connected to the political state of affairs.

3. The Voting Behavior of young people pre and post-election make it evident that the voting campaigns through social media have had a positive influence on this group of Voters.

4. The Social media led campaigns helped to keep the political party and the candidate alive in the minds of the young urban voter constantly with its numerous updates which in turn created a Brand or managed to build an image for every Political Party.

5. The Online Campaigns have been successful to an extent to educate the young voter with the necessary information one needs before Election Day.

6. It has been able to sensitize young people about the importance of voting.

7. The extensive usage of social Media somewhere has triggered of an enthusiasm of information sharing about Political scenarios in the social media circuit. This was considered a "Cool Thing" to do by many young people.

8. It has opened up a huge domain for youngsters to debate discuss and analyze politics and political policies and also to make decisions.

9. On the long run this strategy can turn into a "Political Marketing" Strategy which would result in the rise in brand building and image building excierces through social media platforms.

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10. It has brought back the young Indians Interest in the Governance of the Country

DRAWBACKS TO THE STUDY

The study has made an analyses of the material and resources that was available at the time of research hence not all material was analyzed to draw inferences to the study.

The Survey was a minor pilot study conducted amongst young people in Bangalore City. This sample survey audience may not reprasent the overall youth population of urban zones in the Country.

CONCLUSION

There was no stone left unturned in reaching out to the new and existing voter's population through digital and social media platforms. The key highlight though has been the social media strategy and the seamless integration across various platforms with consistent communication and messaging. There has been phenomenal usage of different social media platforms to the best of their capabilities. The launch of some exceptionally innovative campaigns and initiatives like Mere Sapnon Ka Bharat, NaMo Number, Chai Pe Charcha Khidakee, Har Haath Shakthi Har Haath Tarakee etc. to register their presence synonymous with Growth, Development and Good Governance. The perfectly judicious mix of grass root offline campaigns and the interwoven digital media strategy have worked wonders for many while at the same time social media reached its pinnacle, and set the stage for them to engage with users and gain votes by tangible conversions.

There can never be any doubt that a large number of first time voters and a large number of those young people who had never voted in the past did vote with much enthusiasm in the recently concluded assembly elections. Each of states that went into poll witnessed a massive surge in the polling percentages which broke all previous records. This could not have been possible without the active participation from a large number of such voters who were not voting in the past. Even a fraction of the votes of the young educated brigade can change things substantially as far as the results of a particular constituency or that of the entire nation is concerned. A new study by IRIS Knowledge Foundation supported by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) "Social Media & Lok Sabha Elections" states that there will be 160 High Impact Constituencies out of the total of 543 constituencies, which will likely to be influenced by social media during the next general elections.

The reason for the importance of social media and its success in actively mobilizing the youth and can be found in the very demographics of India today. As per International Labor Organization, India has the largest youth population in the world with 66% that is nearly 808 million of its population is below the age of 35. With an upwardly mobile population increasingly latching on to the decreasing prices of mobile phones and tablets, social media connection is now like a social status for most of the young population in the country today.

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