

# The rise of Social Media as a digital tool For Political Manipulation

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**Abstract -** *In a democratic system, the media play a crucial role in educating the public about the policies and programs of various political groups. The media creates the public's perception of political parties in addition to serving as a watchdog over society and reporting on politicians' abuse of power. Public opinion was shaped in part by political campaigns that used many types of media, including print, electronic, and the internet. Information reaches the target audience via the ever-expanding reach of social media. There will be a larger youth population than in previous elections for both the legislature and the general assembly, and campaigns targeting this demographic will use social media as a weapon. This article investigates the effect that political parties' usage of social media has on voters' perceptions of such parties. The study explored the ways in which political parties use social media to spread their ideas and build their own reputations among their followers and the general public. Finding out how individuals see political discourse and campaigns on social media is another goal of the article. The purpose of this paper is to administer a survey to 400 people in the Jaipur area. More and more, people are able to put aside their differences and work together thanks to social media. In the present context, it serves as a horizontal communication medium that offers the advantages of participatory democracy. You can learn more about how social media will play a role in the next elections by reading this study. Furthermore, the article will assess how widespread the use of social media platforms is in political discourse.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Political Parties, Political Views, Media, Legislative Assembly, Campaigns.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key components of a democratic system is the freedom to express one's political opinions. Because of the paramount importance of political opinions in democracies, political gladiators seek to ascertain the general public's perception of them and their respective political parties in order to react accordingly.[1] When seen in a larger context, political opinions are a component of political engagement that characterises the degree to which individuals are involved in the political processes of their respective nations. have been considering this in the same vein as they see political engagement as providing citizens with a means to initiate a two-way flow of information with their government. Three areas—expressing concerns, desires, and convincing responses—depend on the relevance of Verbal et al.'s input to the present investigation. [2]

Communicating concerns on critical subjects with a political undertone, revealing one's preferences, and ultimately propelling action from the government or

political gladiator are the core of expressing one's political views. The traditional methods of people expressing their political opinions—such as street protests, communiqués, and press briefings—have given way to the incorporation of graphics on social media platforms. Inferentially, this has altered the nature of political discourse. argue that the Internet has made social media the primary means by which individuals and politicians communicate. provide more understanding of the shift in political discourse by pointing out that the changes in political expression in the modern day may be seen as occurring in two distinct, though closely related, domains. These views provide light on the relationship between political actors and the press, two major hitters in political communication who are in a constant state of competition with one another.[3]

Consequently, they are crafting and disseminating political messages to the public. The people are the primary recipients of political communications, and the vertical approach signifies the connection

between the two groups of communicators. Citizens have taken new dimensions in communicating with the political class via social media, according to Brants and Voltmer's contribution. Because the people are the ultimate arbiters of legitimacy in any given democracy, individuals often take centre stage in political discourse. If politicians and political parties want to create political capital out of public opinion, they typically strive to control and guide it as much as possible. If people have a negative impression of politicians, they may be less likely to support them in elections, and vice versa. Most politicians have set up specialised social media offices and hired staff to oversee their accounts in an effort to maintain continual communication with the public. [4]

Users are able to continually share information via social media, which are communication channels driven by the Internet. Because of their reliance on the Internet, all social media platforms enable real-time communication via the sharing of visual and auditory content. Individuals are able to secure their own accounts, often using passwords. No one is forced to use social media; rather, it is a choice, engaging activity.[5]

The social media's unfettered access and lack of control has greatly influenced the way its users express themselves visually in political discourse. It was former US President Barack Obama who, according to historical accounts, was the first to utilise social media for political purposes. In his 2008 presidential campaign, Barack had made heavy use of social media as a means of communication to get Americans to vote for him.[6]

The power of social media to impact global politics now is in its ability to mould political rhetoric, mobilisation, and leadership. Politicians and other political players now have a potent new weapon at their disposal: social media. Authoritarian governments also use social media to control information, repress opposition, and disseminate their agendas; hence, the influence of social media on modern global politics is not exclusive to democratic nations. Thus, it is crucial for scholars, people, and politicians to comprehend the impact of social media on modern international politics in order to recognise the advantages and disadvantages of social media in relation to democracy, human rights, and international security. [7]

As a medium for the dissemination of information and the mobilisation of public opinion, social media has profoundly altered the nature of political discourse in the modern era of international politics. Politicians and political groups may reach out to voters and rally support for their campaigns using social media, which also gives people a platform to voice their opinions and participate in online activism. Social media has also had a major influence in determining the results of elections and other political events. By connecting people with similar political aspirations, social media has aided in the dissemination of information and

ideas. The polarisation of political discourse has been exacerbated by the misuse of social media for the dissemination of false information and the amplifying of extreme ideologies. With the constant improvement and innovation of social media platforms, their impact on political discourse is only going to increase in the future. Therefore, we need to take a close look at how social media affects political communication and figure out how to lessen the damage it might do to democracy and political debate. [8]

Social media has evolved into a potent instrument of political mobilisation in modern international politics, allowing people and organisations to organise and demand political reform. Social media has facilitated the quick dissemination of ideas and information, allowing individuals with shared political objectives to associate with one another.[9] Social media has been especially effective in mobilising youth and disadvantaged populations, who have hitherto been absent from official political debates. Social media has given them a platform to share their stories and views, which has increased the reach of their messages and the number of people who are willing to back their causes. Social movements like the Black Lives Matter and Arab Spring were greatly aided by the widespread use of social media to plan and execute demonstrations, marches, and other types of action. More openness and responsibility in government has also resulted from the use of social media to bring public figures, including politicians, to account for their conduct. In sum, social media has revolutionised political participation by giving a voice to the voiceless and facilitating political action and mobilisation that will undoubtedly define modern international politics for the foreseeable future. [10]

Many have pointed to social media as a key cause of the problem of political propaganda in today's international politics. Politicians and other groups have taken use of these platforms to rapidly disseminate false information to large audiences with little to no control or monitoring. Various types of political propaganda are spread on social media platforms, such as altered photos and videos, false news, and rhetoric meant to incite a response. [11]

Social media has also been used by political figures to disseminate false information, cast doubt on their opponents, and further their own political goals. People are finding it harder and harder to tell reality from fiction due to the abundance of political propaganda on social media, which has eroded their faith in established media sources. Since of this, democratic rule is in jeopardy since people and organisations are more prone to rely on inaccurate or misleading information when making political decisions. Reducing the influence of political propaganda on social media requires measures to increase media literacy and critical thinking abilities, as well as measures to ensure that political players face consequences when they disseminate inaccurate or deceptive information. Furthermore, social media sites should do more to police user-

generated material and encourage a more mature and open style of political discourse. [12]

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the survey research approach. People of all ages who regularly use the internet have been the subjects of a recent poll. Questionnaires, either filled out by hand or electronically, are used as data collection instruments. The goal of administering the survey was to get a better understanding of how various demographics use social media. To measure the effect of social media, one must know how people feel about the information they get from these sites. Facebook and Twitter, among others, played a pivotal role in the 2019 and, more recently, the 2024 Lok-Sabha Elections. Participants will include university students, who make up a significant portion of the young population, university faculty, who are influential voices in the academic community, and other eligible voters. A representative sample of 400 residents of Jaipur will be used for this study. One of the requirements for carrying out this research is that the survey be filled out solely by those who use the internet for communication and information. The research shows, via literature studies, that one's offline involvement in political campaigns is closely linked to the amount of time one spends on various social networking platforms online.

### Data analysis

The data was analysed using survey-questionnaire replies. The people who filled out the survey were heavy internet and social media users. The data gathering process improved our comprehension of the research. Here are the main takeaways from the study:

## 3. RESULTS

### Age Group

Three age categories were used to categorise the respondents, as shown in Table. The fact that young people make up a sizable portion of the electorate and account for about 75% of all replies suggests that they are also more active participants in political discourse. A little over 7.5% of the total replies came from those in the 35-50 age range, while 16.3% came from those in the 25-35 age group.

**Table 1: Respondents' age range**

Age Group	Percentage
18-25	74.9%
25-35	16.3%
35-50	7.5%

Others	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Gender

According to the data in Table, the number of female replies was greater than the number of male responses. Given the mixed-method nature of the survey's distribution, it was intriguing to see that women were more likely to respond and share their thoughts on political mobilisation and social media. Among those who took the survey, 216 were women, while 184 were men, making up 46% of the total.

**Table 2: The Role of Women and Men**

Gender	Percentage
Male	46%
Female	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Time dedicated to social media

Since the amount of time people spend on social media platforms determines the likelihood of real mobilisation, tracking this data was crucial. Numerous studies have shown that users' engagement in political mobilisation is correlated with the amount of time they spend on social media. People who spend more time on social media are more likely to have an impact on public opinion and, by extension, political mobilisation. Thirty-two percent of the population (130 people) admits to spending two to three hours daily on social media, while almost a third of the population (116 people) utilises these platforms for less than two hours. The fact that 20% of the population spends more than four hours per day on social media (80 individuals) and 18.5% spend three to four hours per day (74 people) is intriguing.

**Table 3: Daily Time Invested on Social Media**

Time Spent	Percentage
Less than 2 hours	29.0%
2-3 hours	32.5%
3-4 hours	18.5%

More than 4 hours	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Online Communities for Sharing Generalised Data

You can see from the table that people are using social media to get broad information, and the numbers are interesting to look at. Among those who are questioned about the various ways they obtain their news, 79.2% use WhatsApp and 76.7% use Instagram. When it comes to sharing information, 69.1% of the population uses Facebook, while 42.8% use Twitter.

**Table 4: Use of social media for obtaining Key Details**

Platform	Percentage
WhatsApp	79.2%
Instagram	76.7%
Facebook	69.1%
Twitter	42.8%

### Platforms for Political Communication on Social Media

In order to stay informed about politics, 43.3% of the population uses Twitter, according to the table. With 29.4 percent of the population depending on Facebook for political news, the platform is clearly influential. Despite having the greatest influence on people's ability to access general information, Instagram and WhatsApp only have a little role in shaping political opinion or mobilisation, accounting for 16.5% and 10.8%, respectively.

**Table 5: Use of Social Media for Political Information Gathering**

Platform	Percentage
Twitter	43.3%
Facebook	29.4%
Instagram	16.5%
WhatsApp	10.8%

### Goals of Engaging in Social Media

Examining the reasons respondents gave for utilising social media was crucial for comprehending the influence of these platforms. The survey allowed respondents to choose several reasons for using social media. Table shows that over 83% of social media users are looking for fun, while nearly 58% are using these platforms to stay informed about current events. Fifty-three percent of people in the survey said they often share photos and files with friends and family via social media. Among social media users, only 24.8% use it to meet new people, while 29.0% use it to start groups and forums where significant topics may be discussed. They make up 17.2% of the overall population that is engaged on social media.

**Table 6: Goal of Engaging in Social Media**

Purpose	Percentage
Entertainment	83.2%
News related information	58.0%
Sharing Files & Photos	53.8%
Creating Groups & Forum for Important Discussions	29.0%
Making Friends	24.8%

### Social media's most beloved group

Table shows that among modern political parties, the Bhartiya Janata Party has the most social media appeal. With 344 responses, BJP's 86% popularity rating on social media is much higher than that of the Indian National Congress (8%), which comes in second, and the Aam Aadmi Party (3%), which comes in third, respectively. With just 2 responses (0.5%) and 10 respondents (2.5%), the Samajwadi Party is completely unnoticed when it comes to their social media popularity. Mobilisation for politics can only occur when various social media platforms facilitate political communication.

**Table 7: Social Media Presence of a Well-Known Political Party**

Political Party	Percentage
BJP	86%
Congress	8%
AAP	3%



SP	0.5%
Others	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data shows that almost half of all internet users (47.3%) believe that political discourse takes place mostly on social media, with a further 34.3 percent of users expressing a strong agreement. Regarding the use of social media for political communication, 7.4% vehemently disagree, while 10.5% opted for neutrality. Concerning the impact of social media on political debate, a lesser proportion, 7.9% (32 respondents), were in strong disagreement.

**Table 8: Engaging in Political Communication using Social Media**

Response	Percentage
Agree	47.3%
Strongly Agree	34.3%
Neutral	10.5%
Strongly Disagree	7.9%

### Using Social Media to Build Your Brand

The number of people using the internet and, by extension, social media to meet a variety of requirements, is growing daily. For people who keep up with political news, social media does assist shape politicians' public personas and the ideology they espouse (as seen in Table). Of all people, 74.4% think social media is a good way to establish one's reputation, while 19.7% think it's a bad idea. A smaller percentage, 5.9%, likewise believes it might benefit or hurt politicians' reputations.

**Table 9: Enhancing One's Reputation Using Social Media**

Response	Percentage
Yes	74.4%
No	19.7%
May Be	5.9%

### In The 2024 Lok Sabha Election, The Impact Of Social Media On Political Mobilising

All of India's elections held after 2019 relied heavily on social media. In the most recent Lok Sabha Elections and the just-concluded Jaipur legislative elections, it played a larger role. According to Table, almost all respondents (94.9% to be exact) think that social media will be the most important tool for political mobilisation. In India, social media will have a greater influence than traditional media because, according to 5.1% of the population, social media would aid in political mobilisation.

**Table 10: Social Media's Function in Organising Voters**

Response	Percentage
Yes	94.9%
No	5.1%

Research on the purpose of social media for political mobilisation found that, since they include all citizens with voting rights, Indian elections would always rank among the most anticipated events of the year. Voting rights are enjoyed by the people in a democratic setting, as seen by the participation of over 60% of the entire population, which is typically the average voting percentage in India. Political figures have always relied on various types of media to disseminate their views to a wider audience. We compared and contrasted the significance of social media with that of more conventional types of media in our research. As time goes on, the influence and quality of social media engagement grows with each election. Here, it's worth noting that there's a strong association between the voting population and social media users, the majority of whom are young people.

According to the research, politicians are using social media for a variety of reasons. Politicians use social media to build direct and informal relationships with the target audience, in addition to the obvious goal of gaining votes in elections. They are able to position themselves favourably and influence the opinions of many stakeholders with the support of their social media following. Reaching out to individuals in a more personalised way while spending as little as possible is simpler. Even a poor person's electronic invitation to the prime minister receives sufficient attention—a response from the country's prime minister—because of the enormous popularity and visibility of social media.

Various political parties' existence and subsequent use of various social networking site forums is also disclosed in the research. People also tend to depend on Instagram and Whatsapp for entertainment-related information, while Twitter and Facebook are more often used for political news. It has been noted that politicians use these platforms to communicate about politics, and some have even made major policy announcements on their social

media accounts. Social media is a major factor in determining the destiny of politicians, according to the report.

## CONCLUSION

Studying the impact of social media on political mobilisation in the modern digital era is the primary goal of the research. The results of this research show that social media may be a powerful tool for political mobilisation and engagement. Half of all internet users spend more than two hours daily on social media, according to the data, which explains why half of all internet users actively participate in social media campaigns. The findings demonstrate that political parties and politicians are making good use of social media platforms for political discourse. According to the study's findings, Bhartiya Janata Party is clearly the most well-liked political party on social media. While more people use Twitter than Facebook to stay up-to-date on politics, a sizable portion of the audience relies on WhatsApp and Instagram for more general news. Researchers concluded that politicians' chances of successfully mobilising their constituents would increase if they began utilising messaging apps like WhatsApp and Instagram in addition to Facebook and Twitter. According to the findings, politicians' public personas and the ideas they propose are greatly influenced by social media. In the next Indian elections, the study's findings guarantee that social media will play an important and substantial role in political mobilisation.

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