Study the Rising Social Media use in Indian Election Campaigns

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Abstract - This study aims to investigate how political parties in India have used and expanded their usage of social media platforms as a means of conducting their election campaigns. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for campaigns in India's electoral system. Voters, particularly the millennial and Gen Z generations, are being courted by these new media platforms. Campaigns and political parties may more quickly and easily contact a huge number of people using social media. Unlike with more conventional forms of advertising, politicians may have two-way conversations with prospective voters on social media. Through the use of social media, political parties and candidates are able to directly communicate with voters, allowing them to feel more invested in the campaign by sharing their values, objectives, and achievements. By using social media, politicians may provide their supporters with an inside look into their campaign and make it easier to monitor activity. New media also makes it easier to gather news that is relevant to key audiences. It is crucial to do research due to the substantial increases in the usage and growth of social media. The purpose of this study is to examine the public's engagement in politics as it relates to the usage and growth of social media platforms.

Keywords: Campaign, Political Participation, Election, Social Media, Voters, Political Parties.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A global digital and networked populace emerged with the advent of the internet in the 1990s and beyond [1]. Numerous options have been made available to individuals as a result of the creation of ICT and Web 2.0. Politics is only one area that has been impacted by the rise of the internet and social media. The number of Indians who use the internet has been steadily increasing over the last decade. With the biggest youth population, India is also the biggest democracy in the world. India has the second-highest number of internet users in the world, according to the Internet and Mobile Association of India. Throughout the world, including India, the role of social media in politics has grown in the last decade. Social media, as stated in [2], "allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" and "builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0." In accordance with [3], social media are online platforms that provide users with the ability to privately and publicly display information via the creation of profiles. The ability to connect with other users and see their friend lists is a key feature of social networking sites. Not only can people make friends on social media, but politicians all around the globe are now utilizing it to communicate with voters and win them over. New media communication has emerged with the advent of ICT and Web 2.0. Traditional media such as television, newspapers, etc. used to control the flow of information, but social media has made it more accessible to more people. [4]

To my knowledge, no politician has ever been more effective than Barack Obama in using social media for campaigning and communicating with voters. His strategic use of social media was a key factor in his victory in the US presidential election. Once again, Obama's strong social media involvement was a key factor in his 2012 US election triumph. As the Arab Spring swept throughout North Africa and West Asia, social media played a crucial role in galvanizing the populace against their monarchical governments. In addition to these nations, social media has been instrumental in the rise of neo-social and social movements in a number of others, India included. [5]

The 2008 Mumbai attacks were the first time social media gained traction in Indian politics. At that critical juncture, reports about this catastrophe were reaching people in India and throughout the world via social media. A lot of individuals became politically involved in the 2009 national election using social media. The Indian Foreign Ministry recently

made history by using Twitter for diplomatic reasons for the first time. After Anna Hazare launched her anti-corruption campaign, the role of social media in Indian politics became even more prominent. The rise of a social movement behind Anna Hazare's fight was facilitated by social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.[6]

In order to speak out against sexual harassers, many women turned to social media and Twitter in particular. In India, women took to twitter to join the Me-too movement, which was sparked by the worldwide women's campaign. Twitter and Facebook in particular were essential in galvanizing Delhi residents to demonstrate in response to the Nirbhaya gang rape case. The government arrested rapists and passed stricter regulations in response to the massive protests by students, members of political opposition parties, and non-governmental organizations. Politicians in India are starting to get the hang of technology and see social media as a potential tool to connect with people. [7]

The widespread belief that the media has an immediate, profound, and direct effect on its viewers and members predates the advent of scientific studies challenging this assumption. One may argue that accumulation theory gives an explanation for how the media influence public opinion on issues like politics and information over time. New goods, ideas, and solutions are constantly flooding contemporary and postmodern culture, offering fresh interpretations and inventions of all types. Changes might be as subtle as a new hairdo or as radical as a complete shift in political philosophy. The Uses and Gratifications hypothesis explains, according to sociologist, how individuals in a given culture adopt innovations in a fairly consistent pattern. [8]

The fundamental tenet of the uses and gratifications theory is that viewers are purposeful and capable of assessing the various purposes that media can play, and that viewers actively seek out messages from media in order to fulfill their emotional and social needs. By focusing on "what people do with media rather than what media do to people," the growing field of uses and pleasure research is signaling a change in the way media impact research is conducted. [9]

Esearchers have used a "state-of-the-art theoretical approach" based on the uses and gratifications of users to get a deeper understanding of the unique reasons people utilize newly developed communication mediums. There are a lot of academics that believe that the uses and gratifications method is the best way to understand people's motivations for engaging with online tools including e-mail, social networks, chat rooms, and online media. Furthermore, research on political blog readers' intentions has shown certain prominent themes, including the following: political guidance and surveillance, information seeking and convenience, social value, and amusement. In addition, we looked at what factors predicted different reasons people used political blogs

and social media for political information and discovered that factors like political efficacy, political involvement, and strength of party affiliation were significant. [10]

Uses and gratifications have taken on more importance with the advent of new communication technologies in recent years. Researchers have already applied the results from studies on the uses and gratifications of television to studies on the Internet, and new research from the uses and gratifications perspective is appearing as a result of the extensive use of new media like social network sites and virtual worlds. When researchers broadened the definition of gratifications, they helped society better grasp the uses and gratifications hypothesis by differentiating between gratifications that were gained and gratifications that were sought. The gratifications received are a stronger indicator of media consumption than the gratifications sought, according to several studies. If a medium satisfies or surpasses a user's desired gratifications, then the user will be more likely to use it again. Different audience members' media habits, expectations, and the gratifications they actually obtain from exposure to a diverse array of media products can be better understood by examining the gap between these two forms of gratifications, according to other scholars. [11]

As a technology that may give people more control over the information they seek out and the information they generate, the Internet is seen by some communication specialists as the pinnacle of individualism. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the Internet is the pinnacle of community development and enhancement, allowing people to form virtual bonds in ways that were previously impossible with more conventional forms of communication.[12] Despite this hopeful picture, others have worried that people may become more isolated and lonelier as a result of their newfound use of online communication tools. Some people think that people may become technologically dependent, like having a "Internet addiction," if they use their personal computers and other forms of new media too often. Online communication necessitates a rethinking of terms like "active" and "audience," according to the majority of uses and gratifications researchers. People use the Internet for a variety of reasons. There are some people who are very goal-oriented and may want to accomplish a job by going to certain websites. When it comes to obtaining and sharing political information via social media, the theory of uses gratification offers a solid foundation for understanding the issue. Therefore, this research delves into the political motives behind social media usage during election campaigns and identifies factors that might foretell such use. In light of the above debate, the following research topics are addressed by this study:

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RQI: Are social media platforms really becoming a new force in Indian politics?

RQ2: How has social media changed Indian politics and how will it continue to do so?

RQ3: How can social media platforms influence their audience to vote?

RQ4: Is social media in India giving citizens a way to actively participate in the voting process?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This investigation is qualitative in nature and seeks a thorough comprehension of the situation at hand, its characteristics, and the effects it had. Complementing the theoretical framework and providing answers to research problems are the strengths of the study. Theories are often constructed with the aim of providing a clear and logical explanation for phenomena. Using social media and networks to organize a protest group is the fundamental unit of analysis for any system that involves the establishment of a connection between two parts. When discussing the integrated system of social media and its function in mobilizing public involvement in a protest, the concept "relationship" deserves special emphasis. Information flows, increases, and uses are the methodological foci of the current research, which aims to provide light on the gratifications of uses. In this study, I set out to examine how people are becoming more politically active via the use of social media and other new online behaviors'.

The role of social media, search engines, micro blogs, Twitter, and Facebook in spreading information and organizing people to become politically active is examined in the research. The psychological communication approach known as "uses and gratifications" looks at the ways people utilize the media. The central tenet of an audience-based theoretical framework is the idea that people choose media in order to satisfy desires and needs. These demands are related to an individual's social and psychological make-up and manifest as reasons for using a certain media. People use media and get satisfaction from it based on their perceived requirements, social and psychological traits, and the qualities of the media itself. Researchers have also relied heavily on the ideas of uses and pleasure to shed light on many facets and provide solutions to their enquiries.

3. RESULTS

Uses and Gratifications Theory

There is an emphasis on the medium's motives, the psychological and social traits that impact this use, and the behaviors' or attitudes that emerge as a consequence of the combined influence of these factors in uses and gratifications, which investigates the nature of the audience, the level of involvement, and the satisfaction gained from watching television.

The roots of satisfaction and uses may be found in Lasswell's paradigm of the who, what, and how of media consumption. The uses and gratifications model of mass media was developed based on Laswell's identification of three main functions: environmental monitoring, event correlation, and transmission of social legacy.

Research on the motivations of radio listeners (e.g., for quiz programs and soap operas) dates back to the 1940s, when the format was first introduced. This research prompted a functional view on media processes and impacts by highlighting the media's ability to meet many daily demands. Studies along these lines emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in reaction to television's rise to prominence as a mass medium; they later split off to focus on the intersection of politics and the media. A number of scholars have organized and reviewed the current state of uses and gratification research, and they have defined the theoretical basis of the perspective as following: needs have social and psychological origins; expectations of mass media or other sources generate them; differential patterns of media exposure lead to need gratifications and other consequences, most of which are unintended.

The versatility of the applications and gratifications standpoint is its greatest asset when it comes to media. Researchers in the field of uses and gratifications have a common analytical framework that centers on motivations, social and psychological antecedents, and cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral results. This framework is consistent across a wide range of contexts and interests. Research on the topic of uses and gratifications either narrows down on one medium or makes broad comparisons across other types of media. Scholars will look into the causes, motivations, and pertinent social and psychological factors that influence media consumption, as well as any ramifications or consequences that may result from it. In what follows, we'll take a look at some of the most common ideas and methodologies used in research on usage and satisfaction, as well as study design.

Political mobilization via the use of social media

Online communities known as "social media" allow users to freely share and discuss their stories, experiences, and opinions via the medium of text, images, video, and voice. Individuals and organizations participate in content creation, content sharing, and person-to-person talks on these websites. Blogs, micro blogs, message boards, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, asocial bookmarking, tagging, news, and more will all be used by social media users. The popularity of social media has skyrocketed in the last few years. These days, people are collaborating, exchanging ideas, and interacting in new ways thanks to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. People with similar interests may connect with one another via social media and engage in idea sharing, status updates, commenting, and event participation. Nowadays,

there is a wide variety of user groups that utilize social media for all sorts of purposes. The line between personal life and professional life is becoming more and more blurry due to social media. People may now feel as if they never really leave the media realm, what with all the online monitoring and sharing of opinions and news via social media.

In order to garner support, inspire engagement, and maintain an open and ongoing discourse, politicians and political parties rely heavily on social media platforms. Ultimately, politicians thrive in an atmosphere fostered by social media because it enables highly driven individuals to more readily create a scenario in which less motivated individuals may be successful without really being activists. Campaign strategies and the political process are undergoing changes due to the public and political impact of new social media. A new era of grassroots politics is emerging as a result of politicians' increased use of the Internet and social media.

Voters nowadays use their computers, Smartphone, and other digital devices to research issues, find information, and, in certain instances, become more politically active than they were in the past. There is a favourable correlation between an individual's voting behavior and their usage of mass and social media, according to several researches. A general rule is that people are more inclined to cast ballots when they rely on mainstream and social media sources for news and information. In the end, social media streamlines word-of-mouth and makes cooperation easier, cheaper, and more successful. What's more, research shows that social media is reaching those who are more inclined to be politically engaged.

The impact of the internet and social media on people's engagement in politics has been the subject of several studies. Scholars and onlookers alike have shown that social media users are more politically active than non-users. Having said that, the findings from the investigations have been inconsistent or mixed. Researchers have shown that people who use the Internet for political purposes are more engaged and informed about politics than the general population, as well as more inclined to actively seek out political information. They also claim higher levels of political effectiveness. Visitors to political websites are more likely to be interested in campaign news and to vote for candidates who pique their interest, according to other research that have examined the correlation between the Internet and political engagement.

Using social media as a platform for transparency is common among politicians, political parties, and voters. People share photos, personal details, and messages with their online friends. One advantage of this is that it bridges the gap between professionals and consumers, letting the latter see how the former operates and giving them the opportunity to immediately contribute to the former's work. With the old boundaries crumbling, politicians may reach out to

their voting base via social media and build stronger ties with voters or advocates. The rise and success of social media, however, are not free. People are not only able to, but encouraged to, make personal information publicly accessible as a result of the digital boom, which has far-reaching consequences. In time, people's use of social media may teach them a lot about politics and civic engagement. The dissemination of messages to voters has also made considerable use of social media information services, similar to the usage of the Internet.

With the rise of social media as a go-to for political news and information, the different gains model provides a great chance to look at the Internet's democratic potential as a tool for better political communication and access to a wealth of political information. Social media stands apart from other forms of online communication and mainstream media because it combines several of these features. Here, it's worth emphasizing that social media may be seen as a productive meeting place where regular people can engage with others about shared interests and access a wealth of information. Cyberspace, according to several academics, is best understood as a platform for free expression of ideas and opinions. A lot of people are talking about politics and getting their news from social media.

Elections to the Indian Parliament in 2024 and Social Media

A social media election is being used to describe India's 2024 parliamentary election due to the fact that it was the biggest democratic election globally up to now and a significant portion of it transpired online. There was a significant increase in internet voting compared to previous years, although several other important elections took place first: There was a record-breaking voter participation of 66.4%, 150 million individuals in India between the ages of 18 and 23 became eligible to vote, and the country's population is heavily concentrated among those under the age of 35. Approximately 19% of India's population, or 243 million people, have access to the internet, an increase of 14% from previous year. Social media use has been on the rise, but with more people online and less reliable news outlets, politicians who want to show they're committed to transparency and those who don't trust conventional news outlets may turn to social media instead. During the 2009 elections, just one politician actively engaged with social media had 6,000 Twitter followers. For the 2024 LokSabha election, social media was the go-to platform for political discourse and information consumption. According to the research, 29 million Indians engaged with the Indian LokSabha elections on Facebook in some way between the announcement of the polls and the completion of voting, totaling 227 million interactions. Even more impressive is the fact that 13 million individuals engaged with Narendra Modi in 75 million different ways. It demonstrates the significant influence that Facebook had in the election. Online

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tools for connecting, building discussions, sharing, mobilizing opinion, and citizen action were used on such a massive scale in this election—undoubtedly the first of its kind in India.

More than 243 million people in India use the internet, making it the third biggest user base globally. The bulk of these people are young people. Among them are about 100 million people who are actively engaged on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Social networking sites, software companies, online marketplaces, and phone companies are all capitalizing on this trend to reach a wider audience. Everyone from political figures and candidates to journalists and regular individuals has been using social media to find election-related news, hold real-time conversations, and voice their opinions. More than 800 million Indian voters may now easily access election-related news and information thanks to another search engine's Elections Hub. In order for Indian voters to make educated choices on Election Day, it guarantees that information is readily available to them.

At the time of his oath of office, Narendra Modi had amassed over 16 million Facebook likes, making him the world's second-most-popular politician, and he was the sixth-most-followed global leader on Twitter. With the use of social media, the BJP managed to win over a large number of young people in India. Using

Social media to attract young voters was a must. Hundreds of thousands of individuals used social media platforms to help the BJP crowd source its manifesto, which was one of the most fascinating applications of social media in the election process. Last but not least, the BJP's use of social media to great effect during the parliamentary election.

4. CONCLUSION

Given the proliferation and pervasiveness of social media, this research seeks to analyse the impact of these platforms on the 2024 Indian parliamentary election. People in India, which is known as one of the world's most connected nations, have the best Internet connections and trust online news sources more than those in more conventional media. When looking at global rankings for social network use, India comes in at number three. Thus, we can learn a lot about the impact of social media and other new forms of communication on Indian politics from this country.

Utilising the uses and gratifications method, this research first investigated the factors that influence people's incentives to use social media during political campaigns, as well as the reasons why individuals utilise these platforms. There are three main reasons why people use social media. According to previous studies on the Internet and its interactive applications, its primary purposes are for political surveillance and information-seeking, as well as for convenience and enjoyment. Additionally, it serves a social utility.

During the general election for the 18th parliament, political parties and candidates made extensive use of social media and networks to reach out to voters, gather campaign volunteers, and even raise a little bit of money. The campaign highlighted the significance of social media in modern political campaigns by reaching out to new audiences via a variety of new media platforms. By empowering people of all ages to come together and take action, this social media platform has remarkable success in reaching a younger demographic. The impact of online media usage and acceptance was on full display during the most recent parliamentary general election.

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