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Impact of social media during elections – A global perspective

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Module 1: (Overview)

ABSTRACT

Smart leaders frequently use new media to affect politics. Election-related effects of social media were noticeable in the early 2000s. In his first presidential campaign, Barack Obama made use of social media to mobilize the public and win the 2008 election. According to Pew Research Center, 74% of internet users or 55% of the adult population—looked for election news online during Obama's first campaign. Local elections also benefit greatly from social media. A famous example is when Beto O'Rourke came dangerously close to unseating Senator Ted Cruz in 2018. The majority of Indian political figures now use Facebook and Twitter to express themselves without the censorship of mainstream media. It is vital to understand how social media affects elections and what voters can do to use the internet responsibly given that candidates devote a lot of resources to social media campaigns. Social media platforms were created by businesses to encourage interaction, but although this interaction can help politicians spread their messages and reach more voters, it has also been demonstrated to make it simple for election misinformation to spread globally.

Keywords— social media, Twitter Bombs, Google Bombs, Political Campaigns, Traditional Media, Political Parties, Candidates, Civic Engagement, Political Messaging, Political Engagement, Online Presence, Political Participation, Internet, Crowd Sourcing, Advertising, Panel Data, Political Communication, Fundraising, Digital Domain, Political Promotion

1. OBJECTIVES

- To study the different social media tools available for political promotions.
- To evaluate their effectiveness during elections in achieving desired results.
- To analyze the role of social media during global elections.
- To examine their application during elections in India.

2. INTRODUCTION

Social media first emerged in the early 2000s. Because there are so many ideas, thoughts, and opinions travelling through the social media platform, it is persuasive and frequently attempts to alter or influence people's beliefs especially when it comes to their political views. The use of social media to talk directly to voters on anything from their own party's policies to those of their rivals has transformed the political landscape. In India's case the majority of Indian political figures now use Facebook and Twitter to express themselves without the censorship of mainstream media. Social media channels cost less than one percent of the expense of traditional media, they are accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Politicians can now spread their message via unending infomercials and evaluate the effectiveness of their communication by observing the direct reactions to their acts on social media platforms.

On social media, political hoaxes and fake news items are produced with the intention of misleading voters. These stories are typically made to sway voters' opinions, forward a political objective, or to confuse people or change their impressions. Social media will likely have a bigger impact on electoral outcomes as time progresses, political campaigns get more expensive and the need to reach out to constituencies becomes more crucial.

The following are some benefits of using social media for election campaigning:

- Election information is easily accessible;
- Representatives may engage voters in real time; and
- Social media provides up-to-the-minute information.

Cons of social media in Election Campaigning:

- Connecting local masses and reaching out to individual voters who are not online is challenging;
- Politicians use this to make more noise and are occasionally a way to encourage polarization;
- It is a threat multiplier and can increase overall suspicion, outrage, hatred, and violence because of Misinformation and Disinformation;
- Political minorities are using social media to create a political gridlock.

3. RECENT PRACTICES

3.1 Big Data, algorithms, and microtargeting

Companies create social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, or Instagram to filter information for users based on particular criteria:

- (a) Information on demographics (age, gender, and location)
- (b) Interests (for example, soccer, music, or photography)
- (c) Engagement, such as "likes," "clicks," or "time on page,"
- (d) When a user interacts with the social platform by clicking, liking, checking, posting, or navigating, more comparable material is displayed to them.
- (e) Platforms use the same procedure to curate political material. For instance, a user who selects St. Louis as their area can see freshly suggested Missouri political forums on their social network page.

3.2 Microtargeting

It is a method of content curation, also known as "the algorithm,". It gives advertisers the ability to tailor their adverts to particular demographics. Social media sites are often paid by political campaigns to distribute political advertisements to potential voters. Although businesses may have the best intentions when developing a social media platform, success is not always guaranteed. Social media can be used for many reasons, many of which might be detrimental to civic discourse. For example - Beginning in January 2022, advertisers won't be able to purchase targeted advertising based on sensitive user data, like political affiliation, according to a statement from Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram.

The youth spend the majority of their time on social media; hence they are one of the main factors contributing to its rise. Everyone, including political parties, is aware of this fact and so they work to influence the younger generation. Political parties can now control voters, especially "Swing Voters" - those voters whose opinions can be swayed by manipulating information, by gathering information about their likes and dislikes via social media.

As time progresses the Internet and social media will significantly affect a variety of facets of our life. People all around the world are already able to access vast volumes of information on virtually any subject, connect with like-minded others to discuss important topics, and share their knowledge with others at a low cost thanks to the facilities provided by Internet technology. This is transforming how people learn, shop, engage in leisure activities, stay current on current events, do business, and preserve a feeling of community. Similar to how political organisations and people communicate with citizens, social media may have a growing impact. It may fundamentally alter how citizens engage in politics.

Social media has been under fire for a long time due to its inability to present reliable, balanced information in a way that the public can use. It's possible that some opinions or interest groups go mostly unnoticed. Social media may be trending toward entertainment, sensationalism, and the maintenance of the status quo. It might not be profitable to present a fair and thorough study of subjects that would interest a smaller audience.

There are several ways that political candidates use social media. The various communication avenues made available by it have the capacity to affect how different people develop. Popular social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are effective communication tools that make it simple to boost the popularity of political candidates. It plays a decisive role in most political contests. Politicians are able to obtain cash, attract political commentators, and spend less on marketing and promoting their candidacy thanks to social media.

One of the key aspects of social media is interaction, which encourages users to engage with both the message's content and its sender. Studies that are focused on mobilization focus on the concept of e-democracy, which translates to an interactive online environment where youngsters, for example, can learn about current political concerns while simultaneously corresponding with political officials. Politicians have a fantastic opportunity to connect with their supporters and voters on Facebook. Through the provision of a public online "Wall," where community members may simply post comments in support of or opposition to their political leaders, technology also links and encourages engagement between the community and elected political representatives.

While social media in general and Facebook in particular offers the youth significant opportunities to interact with politicians and different stockholders, the youth can make friends with politicians in representative bodies, government officials, and well-known community leaders through Facebook and start other relationships with them. Therefore, interactions and "friendships" between young people and those influential political individuals are likely to be major sources of political knowledge and views. Therefore, these leaders may have a propensity for inspiring and persuading young people to engage in political activities online.

3.3 Global and Indian Scenario

In terms of global social network usage, India is placed third. The different social media sites that are used for political promotions are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube etc. A social media revolution in Indian politics began with the general elections of 2014, which are known as the "First Social Media Election" in the country's political history. Shashi Tharoor, a Congress MP and

former UN Under-Secretary-General, was the only politician in India having a Twitter account before the 2009 general elections. Prior to the 2014 elections, all major political parties considerably increased their online presence.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP success)'s in utilizing social media platforms to mobilize India's digital generation has compelled rival parties to change how they engage on social media. As a result, India's digital domain is being inundated with millions of messages with political motivations, making elections vulnerable to manipulation on social media. According to reports, the BJP is in charge of 18,000 phoney Twitter names and between 200,000 and 300,000 WhatsApp groups.

According to the Indian government, there are now more than 500 million social media users in the nation. WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter each claim 530, 448, 410, 210, and 15 million users, respectively. One-sixth of WhatsApp users in India were members of a group that was either run by a political party or its leader, per the 2017 CSDS-Lokniti survey. A 2019 CSDS-Lokniti and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung survey found that one in three Indian individuals use social media to consume political content daily or frequently, indicating the prevalence of politically oriented content.

In 2018, there were 2.62 billion social network users worldwide, and by 2019, that figure is expected to rise to 2.77 billion (Statista, 2018). Due to their explosive expansion, social media are becoming an essential component of contemporary political campaigns both domestically and abroad. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit have transformed the way political campaigns are carried out, how the public and elected officials' access and share political information, and how we learn about politics, form opinions and attitudes, and ultimately participate in or abstain from the political process. While social media has undoubtedly changed how we perceive political communication and its impact on the general population, it is challenging to identify consistent, sweeping consequences.

A 2009 meta-analysis revealed that Internet use generally had favorable, albeit minor, effects on various facets of political activity (Boulianne, 2009). Similar to this, a 2015 meta-analysis showed that using digital media had only modest effects on political engagement, with only 50% of 170 claimed effects from 36 chosen studies being statistically significant (Boulianne, 2015). When examining 116 relationships/effects reported in 22 different research, another meta-analysis indicated generally positive effects of social media on three different engagement dimensions, namely social capital, civic engagement, and political participation (Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016). These extensive aggregate research provide proof that social media use and consumption have hardly consistent consequences across contexts and demographic groupings. Studies with random samples of young people, for instance, are more likely than studies with samples from the broader population to find a significant effect (Boulianne, 2015). Additionally, studies that employ panel data are half as likely to uncover associations between social media use and political engagement that are statistically significant and in favour (Boulianne, 2015). The association between Internet use and political participation varies depending on the type of use, according to studies.

In fact, the Obama administration was the first to use platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. On the other hand, before Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009, these services either didn't exist or weren't widely utilised. Obama was the first to tweet from the @POTUS account on Twitter, go live on Facebook, and utilise a Snapchat filter, according to the White House. But in reality, any president serving during the previous eight years would have likely become the first president on social media. Barack Obama was the first presidential contender to use social media to develop his brand before the 2008 election. He went from a relatively political unknown to the elected official by spreading grassroots efforts, pulling the rug from underneath the political establishment. The entire landscape of political campaigning changed through his use of grassroots fundraising, social media expertise and viral sensibilities used to defeat more prominently known candidates.

The campaign was successful at a crucial juncture in the uptake of social media and smartphones. Obama connected with supporters personally by eschewing traditional media and using social media. Among other platforms, he used Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, MySpace, Digg, and podcasts (even many niche networks that are now defunct). By utilizing crowdsourcing, Obama captured thousands of supporters to create and distribute additional content. A variety of resources were available for download and use in spreading the word on his own website, barackobama.com, along with additional methods for gathering volunteers and supporters. By using social media to disseminate his message, he may have avoided spending more than \$100 million on TV advertising. And he was the first president to rely on little donations from tens of thousands of supporters rather than large gifts from a small number of well-off people.

3.4 Twitter bombs and Google bombs

Google bombing and Google washing are words used to describe the process of artificially inflating a website's position in search engine results for unconnected, off-topic, or irrelevant search terms.

Also prevalent throughout the 2016 presidential race were Twitter bombs. In order to get others to pay attention to one's cause, these twitter bombs used bots to send unsolicited comments to targeted users via Twitter.

Module 2:

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thomas Fujiwara, Karsten Muller, Carlo Schwarz, (March 11, 2022), The Effect of social media on Elections: Evidence from the United States: According to this paper Election officials throughout the world are worried about the rising influence of social media on voting decisions (e.g., NPR, 2020a). There is a contentious discussion going on about whether platform providers in the US should "filter" election-related content (e.g., Politico, 2020). The paper offers evidence that social media can influence election outcomes by using variations based on a shock to Twitter's first climb to prominence. In the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, Twitter decreased the Republican Party's vote share, according to the research. This conclusion contrasts a current

narrative that blames social media for Trump's election victory, but it is in line with research suggesting that users of social media were not more likely to support Trump in 2016 or have polarizing opinions, but rather less likely.

Kevin Carney, January 20, 2022, Job Market Paper, The Effect of social media on Voters: Experimental Evidence from an Indian Election: The paper suggests that voters in developing nations are turning to social media more and more as a source of political knowledge. This essay displays how political groups on WhatsApp help users identify true and genuine news from fraud or fake news by increasing their voter knowledge. Keeping in mind the widespread worry regarding political misinformation, especially on WhatsApp in India, it is surprising. However, the context should be kept in mind when understanding the study's findings. Party-organized WhatsApp groups are widespread worldwide and a crucial subject of investigation. However, there are various channels via which political material is distributed on WhatsApp, including personal chats, nonpolitical groups, and individual groups. In these settings, misinformation may be more prevalent than in groups established by party officials.

Sumaira Tufail, Ummel Baneen, Dr. Bushra Akram, Rizwan Sajid, Impact of social media on Political Efficacy and Vote Intention: A Case of Educated Youth. According to this paper it may be concluded that social media strongly and favorably influences the political effectiveness and voting intentions of educated youth. Males are more politically effective, or more politically aware, than females are. The study also found a small relationship between family structure and place of residence and political efficacy. The bulk of respondents (67.5 percent), according to the findings, do not belong to any political families. Results show that the majority of respondents (96.1%) and Twitter users have personal profiles (25.5 percent). Although the majority of responders (92.8 percent), LinkedIn (91.5 percent), and blogs have no profiles (95.4 percent). The majority of respondents agreed that social media can influence or shape people's thoughts. The fact that the majority of respondents had voted in recent elections lends credibility to it.

Sereyvisith Sokhan, 2014, Social Media and its political impact: A case study of Cambodia 2013 election. This paper revolves around two main questions—to what extent do Cambodians rely on social media and did it affect their voting decisions—and using Media System Dependency as the conceptual framework, it attempts to determine the political impact of social media on voter decisions in the 2013 election in Cambodia. The study shows that social media is used by Cambodians to a great extent, and it had an effect on how they voted in the 2013 elections. The results also demonstrate the wide variety of social media sites used in Cambodia.

What is the Role of Social Media in Presidential Election Cycles? Business Honours Program Thesis University of South Florida, Muma College of Business: This research study has revealed the great impact of social media in political campaigns through a review of earlier studies and the development of original research. It was concluded that one of social media's main purpose is to build a strong brand through social networking and the production of original content. Political candidates are able to directly engage with and impact the voting public through the use of various social media platforms. In a digital world, voters find it difficult to find a common ground that encourages genuine human communication while mobilizing the media. Voters create views of one another and politicians as a result of political participation on social media platforms. According to the data used in this study, voters' political interest may be changed or rekindled depending on if they choose to participate in online political activities. Candidates that serve as the campaign's leaders, finally guiding public opinion around appropriate conduct and internet habits.

Narasimhamurthy N, Use and Rise of Social media as Election Campaign medium in India Bangalore University, Bangalore, India: The study evaluates the political influences of social media during the 2014 Indian parliament election in India due to the increasing growth and widespread use of social media. Since India is one of the most technologically advanced nations, It has the largest penetration of Internet users, and people believe that online news sources are more trustworthy and credible than traditional media like newspapers etc.

Module 3:

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The exact steps or methods used to find, pick, process, and analyse information on a subject are known as research methodology. The methodology section of a research paper gives the reader the chance to assess the general validity and dependability of a study. The methods section responds to two key inquiries: How was the data gathered or produced? How was it examined?

5.1 Descriptive

Descriptive research refers to a certain form of scientific research study that is concerned with describing the traits of a specific person or group. It involves study on specific hypotheses, characteristics or roles of individuals or groups, the recounting of events, etc. The goal of descriptive research is to gather comprehensive and accurate data for the study; therefore, the methodology used must be thoroughly thought out. What the researcher wishes to measure should be defined precisely.

5.2 Exploratory

Exploratory research's main goal is to examine a problem in order to gain understanding of it and lay the groundwork for more focused examination. It focuses on the exploration of concepts and ideas. The exploratory research design is appropriate for investigations that are adaptable enough to provide researchers the chance to investigate all sides of a subject. The research procedure is currently flexible and unstructured, and the needed data is only weakly specified.

5.3 Research Design

In this research descriptive and exploratory both the approaches are used.

5.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis proposed here is as mentioned below

H₀- Social media can be an effective tool for political promotions of political parties during elections.

H₁- Social media cannot be an effective tool for political promotions of political parties during elections rather it will create confusion and might lead to anti publicity.

5.5 Types of Data

This paper was written while referring to a combination of both primary and secondary sources.

5.6 Primary Data

Primary data is information that is gathered for the first time through personal experiences or proof. It can also be referred to as raw data or first-hand knowledge. The method of gathering the data is expensive because it requires the use of human resources and money to have an agency or outside organisation conduct the study. Direct supervision and management of the data collection process is done by the investigator. The majority of the information is gathered by means of observations, physical examinations, surveys, personal interviews, telephone interviews, case studies, focus groups, etc.

5.7 Secondary data

Secondary data is information that has already been gathered and documented by some researchers for reasons other than the current research issue. It is available in the form of information gathered from various sources, including government publications, censuses, organisational internal records, books, journal articles, websites, and reports, among others. This form of data collection is inexpensive, easily accessible, and time and money efficient. The information was gathered for another purpose, thus it might not be reliable or suit the current research goal, which is the only drawback.

5.8 Area of the Study

The study is counted throughout the city of Mumbai. Mumbai being the finance capital of India, is expected to have awareness on social media and different political promotional techniques.

5.9 Population

Set of maximum people including males and females having knowledge of usage of social media for election promotions to which the findings are generalized.

5.10 Sample size

Sample size of 86 respondents was selected to make the study meaningful.

5.11 Sampling Technique

This paper used a questionnaire which consisted of 13 simple general questions. This questionnaire is made with the purpose of providing the data of most importance in nature to aid analysis of impact attributes

5.12 Ethical Considerations

The participants; legal rights were protected by the researcher, who avoided unwarranted intrusion, obtained informed consent, and upheld their right to privacy. In order to broaden the study's scope and preserve trust in the research process, the researcher carefully formulated the research questions. The researcher took into account competing interests and was considerate of social and cultural distinctions. In order for the research to be evaluated by peers and to boost public trust and reliability, the researcher made an effort to present all findings completely, objectively, and with full information on techniques.

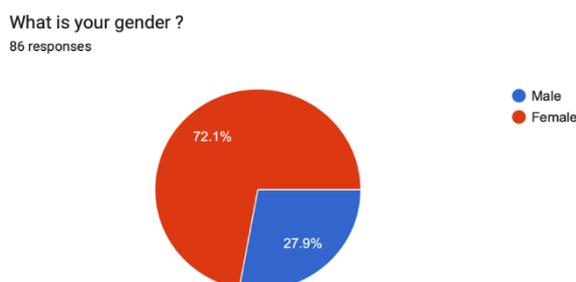
5.13 Limitations of the study

- (a) The number of participants who answered the questionnaire were limited.
- (b) It is difficult to authenticate whether the answers given by the participants were honest.
- (c) A major part of the study is based on secondary data based on research.
- (d) Technology is constantly changing; hence some parts of the research may be irrelevant later on.

Module 4:

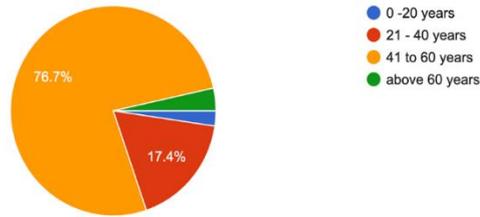
6. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

We took the survey: Questionnaire method and the results were as follows: we got 86 responses to the compulsory questions asked below:



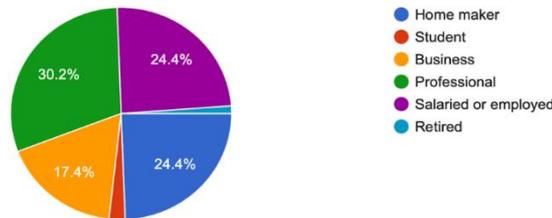
The study shows a two-sided response from men as well as women.

What is your age ?
86 responses



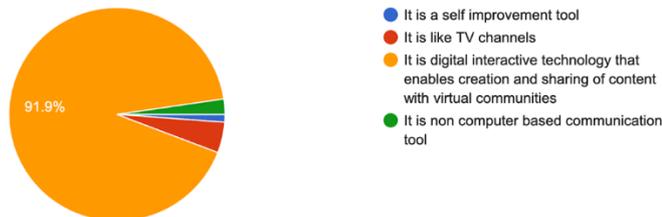
The study has attempted to get a perspective from all age groups.

What is your profession ?
86 responses



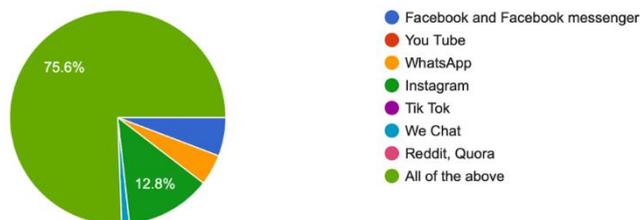
The study comprises participants from various professional backgrounds.

According to you, what is social media ?
86 responses



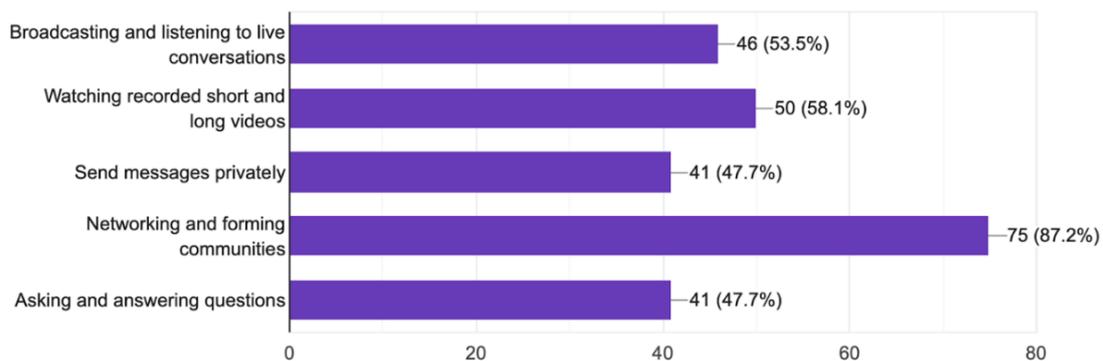
The study shows that most participants believe that social media is a digital interactive technology.

What are Social Media examples ?
86 responses



According to the study most participants believe that social media comprises of Facebook, Instagram, whatsapp, Tik Tok, We Chat, Reddit etc.

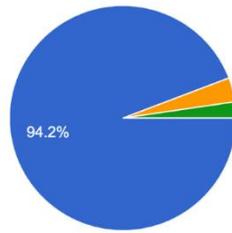
Social Media can enable which of the following ?
86 responses



As per this study, social media can enable several things including sending messages, watching videos etc.

What is traditional media ?

86 responses

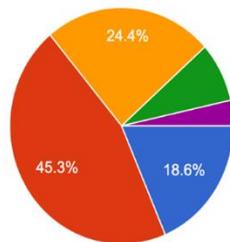


- It is one way communication using television, newspaper, radio, magazines
- It is two way communication using computers
- It is communication using internet
- It is a communication wherein the sender has no say

A majority of participants believe that traditional media comprises of one-way communication using television, newspaper, radio, magazines and so on.

Social Media is less expensive than traditional media

86 responses

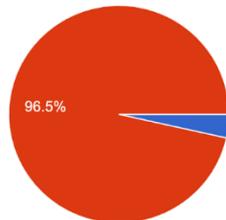


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Participants have varied responses regarding the expenses related to social media.

Which media allows an open communication in informal language with active involvement and more reach ?

86 responses

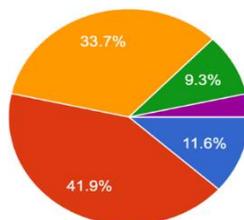


- Traditional Media
- Social Media

A majority of participants are of the opinion that social media allows open communication in informal language with active involvement and more reach.

Does social media determine your thoughts and actions ?

86 responses

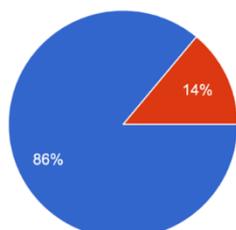


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Participants have mixed response about whether social media determines their thoughts and actions.

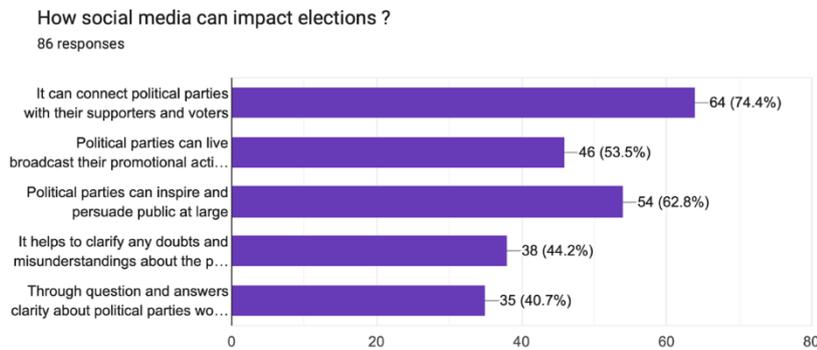
Have you ever come across an instance where social media has been used for political promotions ?

86 responses

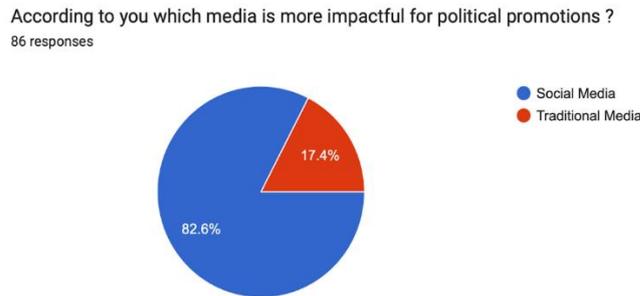


- Yes
- No

Most participants in this study think that social media has been used for political promotions.



Participants have varied responses on the impact of social media on elections.



While most participants believe social media is more impactful than traditional media, some participants are yet of the opinion that traditional media is more impactful for political promotions.

Module 5:

7. CONCLUSION

The way that individuals vote has been significantly influenced by social media in multiple ways. Additionally, it has altered candidate debates, political issues, and election results. What was represented as a straightforward communication tool actually served as a means of influencing how individuals perceive the facts. Since the 1930s, political figures have used new media to influence politics. By bridging the gap in communication, politicians like Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy achieved electoral success. An additional significant change has been the transformation of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, from networks for fostering friendships among friends to potent political instruments. During the 2008 presidential election, social media's political importance in American politics was established. Social media does influence how people vote. Facebook users were much more inclined to vote when they saw a "I voted" button and a message highlighting their friends who had already cast their ballots than when they saw an informational message. The explicit political agenda that some social media sites have towards the nation's politics is a drawback to social media's potential to alter how individuals cast their ballots. For instance, hundreds of biased posts on social media, particularly in the final month before the election, heightened the pressure during the 2016 American elections. As a result, many people's views and decisions regarding political matters change, which alters their candidate preferences and encourages previously reluctant voters to cast ballots. After the announcement of results also, social media can have a big impact on how the results are seen and how the public feels about them, which can spark protests across the nation.

According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's most recent poll, there are over 20 crore internet users in India and more than 18 crore mobile/cell phone internet users, with the majority of them falling between the ages of 18 and 35. There are roughly 10 crore voters between the ages of 18 and 23 who are casting their first ballot. Thus, social media is incredibly important for influencing public opinion during elections. People's political efficacy, political involvement, and political understanding are all impacted by the usage of social media for political purposes. The political parties use these social media platforms to connect with the public, inform them about their charitable endeavours, and engage in competition with one another.

The new media era has some advantages that might stick around. The possibility for political information to reach even the least interested voters has greatly risen thanks to digital media. Future political communication is surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty. Political polarisation has made rational decision-making and compromise unnecessary. The widespread dissemination of false information obstructs sound judgement. Political leaders could potentially misuse social media's influence in a negative way, which has been realised.

Module 6

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your gender? *
 - Male
 - Female
2. What is your age? *
 - 0 -20 years
 - 21 - 40 years
 - 41 to 60 years
 - above 60 years
3. What is your profession? *
 - Homemaker
 - Student
 - Business
 - Professional
 - Salaried or employed
 - Retired
4. According to you, what is social media? *
 - It is a self-improvement tool
 - It is like TV channels
 - It is digital interactive technology that enables creation and sharing of content with virtual communities
 - It is non-computer-based communication tool
5. What are Social Media examples? *
 - Facebook and Facebook messenger
 - You Tube
 - WhatsApp
 - Instagram
 - Tik Tok
 - We Chat
 - Reddit, Quora
 - All of the above
6. Social Media can enable which of the following? *
 - Broadcasting and listening to live conversations
 - Watching recorded short and long videos
 - Send messages privately
 - Networking and forming communities
 - Asking and answering questions
7. What is traditional media? *
 - It is one way communication using television, newspaper, radio, magazines
 - It is two way communication using computers
 - It is communication using internet
 - It is a communication wherein the sender has no say
8. Social Media is less expensive than traditional media. *
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
9. Which media allows an open communication in informal language with active involvement and more reach? *
 - Traditional Media
 - Social Media

10. Does social media determine your thoughts and actions? *

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. Have you ever come across an instance where social media has been used for political promotions? *

- Yes
- No

12. How social media can impact elections? *

- It can connect political parties with their supporters and voters
- Political parties can live broadcast their promotional activities
- Political parties can inspire and persuade public at large
- It helps to clarify any doubts and misunderstandings about the party's image
- Through question and answers clarity about political parties work and motto can be brought.

13. According to you which media is more impactful for political promotions? *

- Social Media
- Traditional Media