



## Politics & Social Media

(A Case Study of UP Election 2022)

ANANT JAIN (RESEARCH SCHOLAR)

### ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that political parties have utilized the social media, which were initially meant to connect the people and express their views, in politics very well. It is widely used during election campaign. Here, U.S. and Indian election campaign have been discussed to explain how it has changed the very way of the campaign.

The Internet first surfaced as a tool for presidential campaigning in the 2000 U.S. presidential race. Both candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush created simple websites for the 52 percent of American adults who were active online by that time.<sup>14</sup> However, these small steps became essential for further elections. These campaign websites were the product of the static Web 1.0, where citizens could obtain campaign news, policy preferences, background information, and personal family photos from content posted by the candidates. At this time, the Web 1.0 technology was revolutionary because the campaign websites allowed citizens to learn about politicians and their platforms in a direct fashion.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, these communication tools were linear and non-interactive. Users could only read that information. Social media has a profound effect on elections. Oftentimes, social media compounds with the mass media networks such as cable television. For many individuals, cable television serves as the basis and first contact for where many get their information and sources. Cable television also has commentary that creates partisanship and builds on to people's predispositions to certain parties. Social media takes mass media's messages and oftentimes amplifies and reinforces such messages and perpetuates partisan divides.[60] In an article by the Journal of Communication, they concluded that social media does not have a strong effect on people's views or votes, but social media does not also have a minimal effect on their views. Instead, social media creates a bandwagon effect when a candidate in an election commits an error or a great success, then users on social media will amplify the effect of such failure or success greatly.





The Pew Research Center finds that nearly one fourth of Americans learn something about the candidates through an internet source such as Facebook. Nearly a fifth of America uses social media with two thirds of those Americans being youth ages of 18–29. The youth's presence on social media often inspires rallies and creates movements. For instance, in the 2008 presidential election, a Facebook group of 62,000 members was created that sponsored the election of President Obama and within days universities across the countries held rallies in the thousands. Rallies and movements such as these are often coined the "Facebook Effect".[61] However, social media can often have the opposite effect and take a toll on many users. The Pew Research Center in a poll found that nearly 55 percent of social media users in the US indicate that they are "worn out" by the amount of political posts on social media. With the rise of technology and social media continuing, that number increased by nearly 16 percent since the 2016 presidential election. Nearly 70 percent of individuals say that talking about politics on social media with people on the opposite side is often "stressful and frustrating" compared to 56 percent in 2016. Consequently, the number of people who find these discussions as "interesting and informative" decreased from 35% to 26% since 2016.[62]

In terms of social media's effect on the youth vote, it is quite substantial. In the 2018 elections, nearly 31 percent of the youth voted compared to just 21 percent in 2014. Social media use among the youth continue to grow as around 90 percent of the youth use at least one social media platform. Of the 90 percent, 47 percent received information about the 2018 elections via a social media platform. The messages shared on the social media platform often include messages to register to vote and actually carrying out their vote; this is in contrast to receiving the message from the candidate's campaign itself. Subsequently, of the first time youth voters in the 2018 election, 68 percent relied on social media to get their information about voting. This is in comparison to the traditional methods of being notified to vote of just 23 percent first time voters. Furthermore, just 22 percent of youth who did not hear about an election via social media or traditional means were very likely to vote; however, 54 percent of youth who found out about the election via social media or traditional ways were very likely to vote.[63] However, the youth are becoming distrustful of the content they read on social media as Forbes notes that there has been a decline in public trust due to many political groups and foreign nations creating fake accounts to spread a great amount of misinformation with the aim of dividing the country.[64]

Social media often filters what information individuals see. Since 2008, the number of individuals who get their news via social media has increased to 62 percent.[65] On these social media sites, there are many algorithms run that filter what information individual users see. The algorithms understand a users favorites and dislikes, they then begin to cater their feed to their likes. Consequently, this creates an echo chamber.[66] For instance, black social media users were more likely to see race related news and in 2016 the Trump campaign used Facebook and other platforms to target Hillary Clinton's supporters to drive them out of the election and taking advantage of such algorithms.[67] Whether or not these algorithms have an effect on people's vote and their views is mixed. Iowa State University finds that for older individuals, even though their access to social media is far lower than the youth, their political views were far more likely to change from the 1996–2012 time periods, which indicates that there are a myriad of other factors that impact political views. They further that based upon other literature, Google has a liberal bias in their search results. Consequently, these biased search results can affect an individual's voting preferences by nearly 20 percent. In addition, 23 percent of an individual's Facebook friends are of an opposing political view and nearly 29 percent of the news they receive on the platform is also in opposition of their political ideology, which indicates that the algorithms on these new platforms do not completely create echo chambers.[68]

Washington State University political science professor Travis Ridout explains that in the United Kingdom the popular social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are beginning to play a significant role in campaigns and elections. Contrary to the United States which allows television ads, in the United Kingdom television ads are banned and thus campaigns are now launching huge efforts on social media platforms. Ridout furthers that the social media ads have gotten in many cases offensive and in attack formation at many politicians. Social media is able to provide many individuals with a sense of anonymity that enables them to get away with such aggressive acts. For example, ethnic minority women politicians are often the targets of such attacks.[69] Furthermore, in the United States, many of the youth conservative voices are often reduced. For

instance, PragerU, a conservative organization, often has their videos taken down.[64] On a different level, social media can also hamper many political candidates. Media and social media often publish stories about news that are controversial and popular and will ultimately drive more traffic. A key example is President Donald Trump whose controversial statements in 2016 often brought the attention of many individuals and thereby increased his popularity while shunning out other candidates.[66]

In the 2020 Presidential Election, social media was very prevalent and used widely by both campaigns. For Twitter, nearly 87 million users follow President Donald Trump while 11 million users follow Joe Biden. Despite the significant gap between the two, Biden's top tweets have outperformed Donald Trump's top tweets by nearly double. In terms of mentions of each candidate on Twitter, from October 21 to October 23, there were 6.6 million mentions of Trump and Biden and Biden held 72% of the mentions. During the 2020 Presidential Debates, Biden had nearly two times the mentions as Donald Trump with nearly half of the mentions being negative. For Trump, he also had half of his mentions being negative as well.[70]

In Europe, the influence of social media is less than that of the United States. In 2011, only 34% of MEPs use twitter, while 68% use Facebook. In 2012, the EPP had the highest social media following of 7,418 compared to the other parties. This is in relationship to the 375 million voters in all of Europe. When comparing the impact to US social media following, former President Obama has over 27 million fans while the highest in Europe was former French President Nicolas Sarkozy of over 700,000 fans, a stark difference. The 2008 US presidential election skyrocketed the need for technologies to be used in politics and campaigns, especially social media. Europe is now following their lead and has been increasing their use of social media since.[71] However, just because European Politicians don't use social media as much as American Politicians doesn't mean that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter don't play a large role in European Politics- in particular- Elections

In terms of analyzing the role of fake news in social media, there tends to be about three times more fake news articles that were more likely to be pro-Trump over pro-Clinton articles. There were 115 pro-Trump fake news articles while only 41 pro-Clinton fake news articles; pro-Trump articles were shared 30.3 million times while pro-Clinton articles were shared 7.6 million times on Facebook. For each share there is about 20 page visits which means that with around 38 million shares of fake news articles there are 760 million page views to these articles. This means that roughly each US adult visited a fake news site three times.[74] Whether the spread of fake news has an impact on elections is conflicted as more research is required and is difficult to place a quantification on the effects. However, fake news is more likely to influence individuals who are over 65 and are more conservative. These groups tend to believe fake news more than other groups. College students have difficulty in determining if an article shared on social media is fake news.[75] The same study also concluded that conspiratorial beliefs could be predicted by a person's political party affiliation or their ideological beliefs.[76] For example, those that Republican or held a more conservative belief were far more likely to believe in baseless theories such as that of former President Obama being born outside of the United States; and those that voted Democrat or held a more liberal belief would be more likely to believe in conspiracies such as former President Bush having played a role in the 9/11 attacks.[77]

#### Role in conflict

There are four ways social media plays a significant role in conflict:[78]

Social media platforms allow information to be framed in mainstream platforms which limits communication.

Social media enables news stories to quickly go viral and later can lead to misinterpretations that can cause conflict.

Strategies and the adaption of social media has caused a change in focus amongst leaders from administrative dynamics to new media technology.

Technological advancements in communication can increase the power of persuasion leading to corruption, scandals, and violence on social media platforms.[79]

#### Map of 2011 Arab Spring Protests

The role of technological communication and social media in the world can lead to political, economic, and social conflict due to its unmonitored system, cheap interface, and accessibility.

#### Weaponization by state actors

Social media platforms have been weaponized by state-sponsored cyber groups to attack governments in the United States, the European Union, and the Middle East. Although phishing attacks via email are the most commonly used tactic to breach government networks, phishing attacks on social media rose 500% in 2016.[80] As with email-based phishing attacks, the majority of phishing attacks on social media are financially motivated cyber crimes that install malware.[81] However, cyber groups associated with Russia, Iran, and China have used social media to conduct cyberattacks and undermine democratic processes in the West. During the 2017 French presidential election, for example, Facebook detected and removed fake accounts linked to the Russian cyber group Fancy Bear, who were posing as "friends of friends" of Emmanuel Macron associates to steal

information from them.[82] Cyber groups associated with Iran, China, and Russia have used LinkedIn to steal trade secrets, gain access to critical infrastructure, or recruit spies.[83][84][85] These social engineering attacks can be multi-platform, with threat actors initiating contact on one platform but continuing communication on more private channel. The Iranian-backed cyber group COBALT GYPSY created a fake persona across multiple social media platforms and initiated contact on LinkedIn before moving to Facebook and email.[86]

In December 2019, a chat and video calling application developed by the United Arab Emirates, called ToTok was identified as a spying tool by the US intelligence. Suspicion over the Emirati app emerged because it banned the use of VoIP on applications like WhatsApp, FaceTime and Skype.[87]

Social media such as Facebook played a large role in the 2008 US Presidential Election. Mr Barack Obama was the first presidential candidate who effectively used social media as a major campaign strategy. The US Presidential election of 2008 was the first in which all candidates—presidential and congressional—attempted to connect directly with American voters via online social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. It has even been called the "Facebook election."<sup>16</sup> However, these tools served other purpose too. Social media tools were utilized to create support, initiate volunteer networks and lastly to raise campaign funds.<sup>17</sup> Barack Obama's used Facebook to reach among young voters. This was proved true: Obama had won nearly 70% of the vote among young Americans under 25 - the highest percentage since US exit polling began in 1976.<sup>18</sup> Later on these social media took some wrong too. As U.S. Presidential Election 2016 was known for spreading propaganda, citing fake news, Russian intervention and data leaks. For the first time in U.S. Presidential Election 2016, social media played a major role in targeting specific groups of voters with tailored advertising and fake news in to disrupt public support for leading political candidates, confusing and destabilizing their groups of supporters and drowning legitimate discussions by automated bot postings.<sup>19</sup> However after realizing misutilization of these tools management of these communication tools tried to mend the damage. As Twitter has announced that they identified and suspended a number of accounts that were potentially connected to a propaganda effort by a Russian government-linked organization known as the Internet Research Agency (IRA).<sup>20</sup> Right or wrong US election showed the way to other political parties of different countries. India was not its exception. social media in India was the May 2009 national elections, when, for the first time, online voter registration and transparency campaigns started' where first time political parties tried to reach out to voters through social networking websites.<sup>22</sup> The third mass use of social media was when India's against corruption and Anna Hazare movement started in 2011. With the help of social media Aam Admi Party came into existence and formed the government in Delhi by defeating a largest party.

The fourth mass use of social media was 2014 General Election. The revolutionary 2014 general elections in India saw social media as a new battleground and Narendra Modi emerged as India's Obama. Unlike the conventional ways of sending messages, recorded calls and public gatherings, this election saw politicians leveraging social media to reach out to their constituents like never before. Even those who were reluctant earlier have now become active either out of necessity to keep up with their peers or as mandated by their political party.<sup>23</sup> Thus, 2014 election established the power of social media in Indian politics. 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," said Arvind Gupta, head of the social media campaign for Bhartiya Janata Party.<sup>24</sup> When Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister on May 26, 2014, he was the second most 'liked' politician on Facebook in the world, trailing only President Obama.<sup>25</sup> From there on out politics was no longer defined by policy, but now included how politicians construct a public image.<sup>26</sup> Thus, politics became about branding, marketing, image building and communicating through social media.

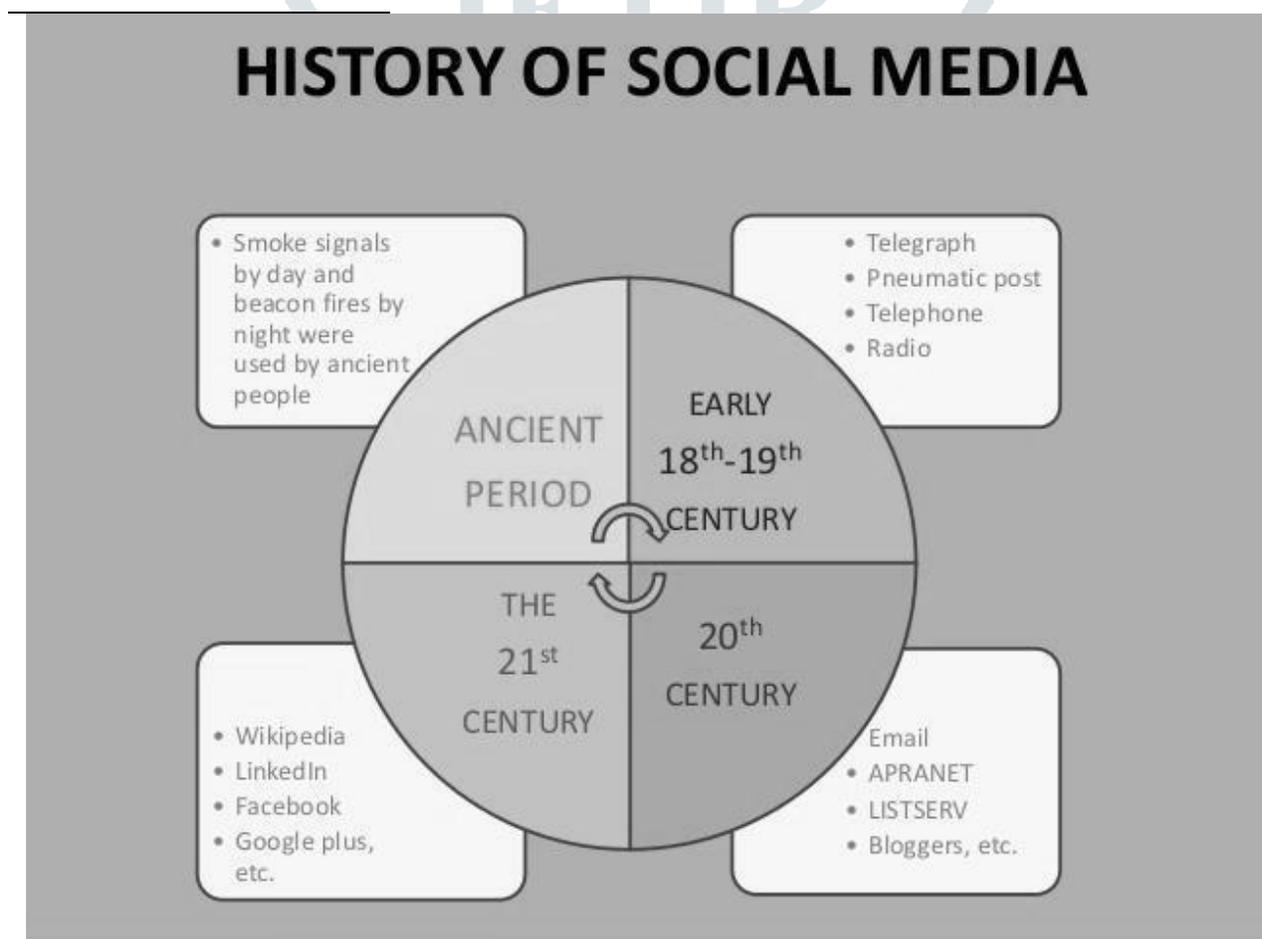
The most significant social networking services widely used for political communication are: Facebook and Twitter. A research explains these trends that Twitter is the first choice for leaders and ministries judging by the number of governments on the platform. Burson-Marsteller's research team identified 793 Twitter accounts belonging to heads of state and government in 173 countries. Facebook is the second most popular network among government leaders and it is where they have the biggest audience. The heads of state and government and foreign ministers of 169 countries are present on the platform. On average, Facebook pages are more popular than Twitter accounts, with a median average of 31,000 likes per page, compared to 14,000 followers for each Twitter account. YouTube is the third-most used network among governments (Twiplomacy study 2016 a research study about world leaders on Twitter conducted by Burson-Marsteller).<sup>27</sup> Though, all the three social media are ranked according to the use, nevertheless all these three have different characteristics and displays different nature.

**'I am a firm believer in the power of technology and social media to communicate with people across the world.'** -  
India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi

**'Part of what's changed in politics is social media and how people are receiving information.'** - Barack Obama

Overall, politicians of all parties across the globe now understand the importance of social media to communicate directly to voters and heavily impacting the results of their campaigns. Social media has travelled a long way. The earliest social media can be traced back to the 1970s, with the likes of CompuServe and Bulletin Board System.<sup>28</sup> CompuServe was founded in 1969 as a processing and time-sharing service, and was a major service throughout the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> CompuServe allowed members to share files and access news and events. But it also offered something few had ever experienced – true interaction. Not only could you send a message to your friend... You could also join any of CompuServe's thousands of discussion forums to yap with thousands of other members virtually any important subject of the day. Those forums proved tremendously popular and paved the way for the modern iterations we know today.<sup>30</sup> Later Bulletin board came into existence. In 1978, Ward Christensen and Randy Suess, two Chicago computer hobbyists create the first bulletin board system. Dubbed the CBBS (Computerized Bulletin Board System), it became the framework that countless message boards that would come after.<sup>31</sup> This gave the people limited though better experience.

This Bulletin board served as a messenger. BBS (or Bulletin Board System) presented what can be termed as the Internet's first file transfer system. BBS units were mostly based on local networks and hosted by hobbyists looking to experiment with technology and the Internet. Individuals could log on to a central host and use it to communicate, or even download games and movies. Much of this content was pirated, giving rise to what may seem like the forefather of peer-to-peer file sharing and Torrent downloads.<sup>32</sup>



(Figure: 2)

Image source: <https://image.slidesharecdn.com/fullnfinalsocialnetworkingnbusinesscommunications-150426012317-conversion-gate01/95/full-n-final-social-networking-n-business-communications-3-638.jpg?cb=1430011460>

### Objectives

1. To explore the reasons behind the use of Social Media by the Political Parties.

2. To examine the Social Media strategies used by political parties.
3. To describe and analyze the features/characteristics of social media used by political parties.
4. To compare the use of Social Media among four political parties i.e., Bhartiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party.
5. To examine the role of social media in election campaign.

### **Area of the Study:**

Concept of space has changed after the emergence of cyber world or social media. Here one cannot find a physical space like society, village etc. There is a virtual society, group, network which is beyond the boundaries of time and space. Thus, the area of social media is virtual in nature, so the area of study of this research work is restricted to the official Facebook page and Twitter page of Bhartiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party. Although, physical area of study is Uttar Pradesh. These has been discussed as follows-

### **Facebook:**

Facebook is very popular social networking site. It is the platform where users can post comments, share photographs and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form video. It quickly spread to other schools and was finally opened to the public in 2006. Facebook is now, by a very wide margin, the biggest social network worldwide. As of the second quarter of 2018, Facebook had more than 2.2 billion global monthly active users, including over close to 1.74 billion mobile monthly active users.<sup>75</sup> It has 1.49 billion daily active users on Facebook on average for September 2018 and 2.27 billion monthly active users as of September 30, 2018.<sup>76</sup> According to Alexa, Facebook ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (The rank is calculated using a combination of average daily visitors to this site and page views on this site over the past 3 months) in terms of global traffic.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Facebook is very popular and also user friendly. Its **headquarters address is 1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, California 94025** and about 33,606 employees are working as of September 30, 2018. **It also has International offices in various countries<sup>78</sup>. These are as follows-**Amsterdam, Auckland, Bangkok, Bengaluru, Berlin, Bogota, Brasilia, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Dubai, Dublin, Gurgaon, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Karlsruhe, Kuala Lumpur, London, Madrid, Manila, Melbourne, Mexico City, Milan, Montreal, Mumbai, New Delhi, Oslo, Ottawa, Paris, Sao Paulo, Seoul, Singapore, Stockholm, Sydney, Taipei, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Toronto, Vancouver, Warsaw

### **Twitter:**

Twitter is another most important platform of social networking. It is also as popular as Facebook. It is an American social networking service with its headquartering in San Francisco, California, United States.

Twitter ranked 11<sup>th</sup> (The rank is calculated using a combination of average daily visitors to this site and page views on this site over the past 3 months) in terms of global traffic.<sup>80</sup> Now it has also become a powerful tool for political war and spread agenda as well as propaganda.

### **Uttar Pradesh:**

Uttar Pradesh a Hindi heartland has ruled the Indian politics for a long time. It is the most populous and fourth largest state of India. It lies in the north-central part of the country. Uttar Pradesh is bordered by the state of Uttarakhand and the country of Nepal to the north, the state of Bihar to the east, the states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh to the southeast, the state of Madhya Pradesh to the south, and the states of Rajasthan and Haryana and the national capital territory of Delhi to the west. On January 26, 1950, when India became a republic, the state was given its present name, Uttar Pradesh (literally, 'Northern State'). Its capital is Lucknow, in the west-central part of the state.<sup>81</sup>

The developers of social media are trying to give its best to the users by providing various types of features. The most recent social platforms have seen a move toward sharing pictures and video. 2010 saw the launch of Pinterest, which allows users to 'pin' pictures to their boards for other users to check out, and Instagram, which enables users to share photos with friends. In 2011, Snapchat became available and pioneered the concept of sending friends a message that would disappear after a certain period of time elapsed.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Political Communication*

Political parties used to communicate with the people through various methods. They had to deal differently with these methods. They were scattered and had limited reach. Prior to the advent of online platforms like Twitter and Facebook, participation in the landscape of political communication flourished in the form of material culture— banners, sashes, and ribbons, and eventually more modern items like T-shirts, buttons, and bumper stickers. Back in the nineteenth century, before politicians were able to take advantage of the broadcast airwaves to bring their messages directly to voters, they depended upon their supporters to act as surrogate message carriers at public events such as parades and rallies. Social media gives an opportunity to the candidates to spread their political message to a large number of audiences; it also provides a platform for two-way communication and engaging their supporters. Social Media Guidelines from the Election Commission of India<sup>73</sup>

The Commission's attention was drawn to use of social media for election campaigning and also certain violations of the Electoral Law in the social media, which need to be regulated in the interest of transparency and level playing field in the elections. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It differentiates from traditional/industrial media in many aspects such as quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. The prevalence of Web and social media has increased over the years and there have been demands from the political and social groups to regulate the social media during elections as other media is regulated.

There are broadly five different types of social media:

- a) Collaborative projects (for example, Wikipedia)
- b) Blogs and micro blogs (for example, Twitter)
- c) Content communities (for example, YouTube)
- d) Social networking sites (for example, Facebook)
- e) Virtual game-worlds (e.g., Apps)

	Type	Examples	Description
1	Social Networking	Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus	Allows users to add friends, send messages, and share content. People on social networking sites group in communities of like-minded persons.
2	Social Bookmarking	Digg, Reddit, Delicious	Allows users to share their favorite online content with one another while also creating online bookmarks.
3	Blogs	Blogger, Wordpress, Livejournal, Tumblr	Online journals where the author can write (blog) about any topic of interest. The blogger can also use the blog to share content picked up from other social media sites (e.g., YouTube, Issue) by taking advantage of the simple embedded codes offered by those content hosts.
4	Micro-Blogs	Twitter, Tumblr	Allows users to send short 140character messages in real time to large audiences.
5	Collaborative Projects/Wikis	Wikipedia, Google Docs	Online content created as a result of multiple users working on the same content, but at different times, from different places.
6	Photo Sharing	Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa,	Allows users to upload photos to share either privately with only selected other users or publicly.
7		, Spotify	
8	Video Sharing	YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion	Allows users to upload video to share either privately with only selected other users or publicly.
9			
10	Document Sharing	Slideshare.net, Scribd, Docstoc	Allows users to upload files as PDFs, PPT and convert them to work with online presentation applications. The presentation tools include embedded codes and email options to share the content online.
11	Intellectual Property Sharing	Creative Commons	Licensing rights and permissions for others to use photos by simply embedding the codes in their blogs.
12	Online Virtual World	Second Life, Active World, Twinity	Provides the experience of being social in online 3-D virtual environment.
13	Questions and Answers	Google Answer, Yahoo Questions, Facebook Q & A	Allows users to ask random questions, and anyone can answer and start a conversation.

*Thus, we find out that Indian democracy has been changing itself according to need, time and space. Change in political communication is one of them. Since it is closely related to the inducement of the new age technology it can be said a paradigm shift in Politics. It gave more power to the people as well as the leader as it paved the way to quick and two way communication. At present almost all the country in the world where social media exist has recognized its power in almost every fields. It has a great impact in US election recently and it will be very interesting to see how it is changing the very shape of India political communication system. Types of Social Media*

With the development of technology and the platform various types of social media has come to fore. It has their own advantage and disadvantages.

Gitanjali Laad and Gerald Lewis have described the types, examples and description of social media in a simple and effective way through a table. By expanding their work, here types of social media is being described below - 70

As it provides two way communication both public as well as politicians has utilized this opportunities. Given the tremendous growth of social media, in particular Twitter and Facebook, social media are increasingly used in political context recently— both by citizens and political institutions (e.g., politicians, political parties, political foundations, think tanks etc.). From the perspective of political institutions, it is important to actively participate in the political communication based on the use of social media, especially during election campaigns. Social media thereby represents the ideal vehicle and information base to gauge public opinion on policies and political positions as well as to build community support for candidates running for public office. It has been observed that in a very short space of time, politicians in modern democracies across the world have eagerly adopted social media for engaging their

constituents, entering into direct dialogs with citizens and enabling vivid political discussions.<sup>7</sup>In democratic countries, political parties feel responsible to canalize and participate in public political discussion. Traditionally, politicians and journalists bring up and moderate those political discourses. However, the traditional structure of mass communication in the political context has changed. Based on the rapid development of Web 2.0 technologies and associated social media, internet users are enabled to create content on their own. By using political blogs or discussion forums, people express their opinion, participate in discussions or find politically like-minded individuals. As a consequence, professional journalists act no longer as an institutionalized 'gatekeeper' who measures and selects information for publication in newspapers or television. If we see minutely, Facebook has become a second self of a person. The popularity of Facebook proves this fact. Recently, more than 900 million people worldwide are members of the Facebook network (Facebook 2012) while Twitter counts more than 500 million users in total (Forbes 2012). With this tremendous growth, these platforms allow both citizens and politicians to participate in political discussions or to share political content publicly. Furthermore, it is argued that from the perspective of politicians and political parties it is important to actively join social media based political communication, in particular during election campaigns.<sup>8</sup>It has a great effect on opinion building. According to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. (adults conducted between May 29-June 11, 2018) 14% – say they have changed their views about a political or social issue because of something they saw on social media.<sup>9</sup>Nowadays, more than two-thirds of the world's heads of the state and government are active on social media.<sup>10</sup> Thus, with its increasing popularity it will have more effects on politics as well as society. Social media is narrowing the communication gap between politician and the citizens. This provides the opportunity to the leaders to broadcast their daily activities and government policies to an ever growing audience. On the other hand it also allow the citizens to have a direct access and interact with their leaders. Social Media and Different Political System:

In an Autocratic political system, leaders frequently attempt to engage in censorship on social media. They believe that online participation of citizen is dangerous for the status quo for example-China, Iran, Libya, Egypt etc. In a democratic political system, Leaders allow their citizens to use social media and express their views (negative or positive) on government policies. Example: USA, Britain, France, Canada, India etc. However, nothing is absolute in nature.

#### **Political and Social Movement through Social Media:**

Social media has played an important role in the very process of democratization of a country and change in the regime in different countries. In the recent years social movements arise out of social media overthrow the oppressive governments or dictators in North Africa and Middle East. These examples itself proves that social media has gained importance in determining politics and social movements. Facebook and Twitter have been cited as important components in social revolutions, including those in Tunisia, Egypt and the global Occupy movement.

#### **Why Social Media is becoming Popular Tool for Political Communication?**

What is unique about social media that it is gaining popularity as well as having impact on governance and politics? There can't be single answer to this question. However, some of the important factors has been discussed here are as follows- Social media and its highly visible environment provides candidates the ideal platform to promote themselves, articulate their policy goals and interact with their voters directly and without the filter of the mainstream media.<sup>11</sup>Election campaigns basically rely on communication. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have not only given politicians a powerful avenue for interacting with a more demanding citizenry, but have also allowed them to offer more personalised images to the public. It has also given the less resourceful parties the opportunity to match well-funded campaigns with creative and relatively inexpensive strategies.<sup>12</sup>Social media sites also allow candidates to track your behavioral patterns in order to target specific users with their ads. Behavioral patterns and stored data allow candidates to get a feel about where they stand and in what areas of social media they could use some improvement. Although voters have the opportunity to spread a candidates message via social media sites, candidates themselves also need to be engaged personally in social media sites in order to give voters timely and accurate information on their campaigns, while also connecting with voters on a more personal level.<sup>13</sup>There is less media censorship in social media by election commission in compare of traditional media. So political parties have opportunities in social media like no gate keeping of content, own content publishing, no time limitation of election campaign After collecting data from Facebook and Twitter pages of political parties 15 parameters has been selected for the unit of analysis. The analysis explains that Bhartiya Janata Party is leading in almost all the fields while communicating through social media. . It is the most active party on social media. It has a well organized facebook and twitter pages. After Bhartiya Janata Party, Samajwadi Party is most active party. Despite being national party Indian National Congress is behind also from a party like Samajwadi Party. Bahujan Samaj Party doesn't have official account of Social Media so that they are facing technological lag in political battle ground. Political communication is nothing but an art of persuasion. It

is used to convince people, pressure groups or particular target groups. Social media has played a great role in it. Social media as a means of communication has further widened and strengthened the rhetoric. It can be explained by following important points-

1. Social media removes the bindings of time and space
2. It provides the users to interact, react and ask questions and so others to provide answers. Thus, the users feel more attached and connected.
3. One of the most important changes which social media has brought is that it has removed the dependency on a particular orator or speaker as we have seen in classical rhetoric communication. Behind a particular social media platform there works many people or companies for the party. So the persuasion depends on the ability of people sitting behind the 'war room'.

According to Aristotle there are three elements for an effective communication i.e. The Speaker  
The Speech The Listener

Social media has completely changed the very concept of these three elements. Now the speakers are many however on a particular platform for a party. Though, not physically present but available in their drawing room or bed room. These speakers have no time limitations; they can speak any time any moments. Analysis of the data explains that BJP has utilised this platform very well. Their speakers show their presence everywhere in comparison to other parties. They leave no opportunities for interacting with the 'audience'. These speakers have no mercy on their opponents. At the same time they try to establish themselves as a 'brand with quality'. Second element is speech. Speech now is not face to face or in presence of audience. 'Speech' through social media can be delivered at anytime from anywhere in the world. This speech includes not only voice but also video, pictures, statements, opinion. Thus, BJP also takes lead here as it has utilized digital rhetoric<sup>120</sup> very well.

Third element is the listener. In political communication social media has not only changed the speaker and speech but also the listener. These listeners are not present in a particular space but are scattered. These listeners are tech savvy. India has largest numbers of youth and obviously the voters with smart phones in hands. Parties try to woo them, convince them to vote and elect their candidates.

According to Aristotle there are three ways of rhetorical appeals or modes of persuasion i.e. ethos, pathos and logos. Analysis of all the fifteen parameters selected for this research work clearly denotes that among all the parties BJP has used all the three modes very well. In various posts and tweets the party tried to project itself savior of the people. In both the social media tools selected for the study they projected the credibility of their leaders. Though, the other parties also tried to woo the people but they failed in the race on the track of social media. As far as pathos is concerned among all the parties BJP remained on the top utilizing people's or voters' emotional appeal. In the name of patriotism, culture nationalism, religion the party was able to convert emotions to votes. Lastly logos was also used tactfully. True or false BJP after putting some facts tried to show that their party is better than the others. Thus, by using various types of persuasion on social media BJP could win the election. Bhartiya Janta Party has used social media to convince and motivate the people in every planned and structured manner where other parties lagged behind.

Challenges and Suggestion: Every new technology also brings threats. Its pros and cons also depend on its use and misuse. Social media being democratic in nature makes the candidates and political leaders more accountable to the people. However, there are many challenges while using this platform or tools. As there is a saying that nothing is wrong in love and war so is in politics. Despite being a little regulation on social media there is always a possibility of false or fabricated information in favor or disfavor of a particular person or party.

In "Gorgias", one of his Socratic Dialogues, Plato defines rhetoric as the persuasion of ignorant masses within the courts and assemblies. Rhetoric, in Plato's opinion, is merely a form of flattery and functions similarly to cookery, which masks the undesirability of unhealthy food by making it taste good.<sup>121</sup> If we see the negative side of social media in political communication Plato's ideas become more relevant and contemporary. All the parties try to woo the voters with so many false information. Many parties tried to convince the people that their leaders are Messiahs who are going to change their life.

Further there may be a risk of controlled and targeted communication without any knowledge of its users. We have seen example like this in many countries where people sitting in a country has controlled the election of another country. US presidential election is its best example. It is also important to note that it is very difficult to prove it. This may be a question of ethics more than of its control and regulation. In a developing country like India despite being a large numbers of social media users there are people who do not own a smart phone or have internet access. Some old or disabled people also intentionally or unintentionally keep distance from new technology. So these tools of communication have a limitation. Nevertheless social media as a means of communication expanding very fast and it has immense effects that in Mc Luhan words we can say that this medium itself has become message. Despite being its limitations and misuse it seems that there is nothing which can stop its progress. Thus, Indian democracy is taking a new shape and moving towards a direction where there is a possibility of virtual candidates with virtual votes in coming future. With the rise in COVID cases across India in January 2022 and the ECI's curb on physical rallies, much of the election campaigning for the 2022 state assembly elections was diverted to social media. In this context, this article provides a summary of the different parties and their candidates' presence on Facebook and Twitter for the state of Uttar Pradesh which can offer insights into their political strategy and the role of social media in political parties' voter outreach programmes. The findings in this article are part of the Social Media and Elections Project, an ongoing project supported by the Trivedi Centre for Political Data.

Uttar Pradesh headed for polls between 10th February and 7th March 2022. With 80 seats out of the 543 in the Lok Sabha, 31 of the 245 seats in the Rajya Sabha, 403 seats in the State Assembly, and over 15 crore voters, the outcome of Uttar Pradesh's elections is significant for the county's politics.

Even though internet penetration in the state is one of the lowest in the country, it is observed that most political parties and their supporters have established a significant online presence on Facebook and Twitter to share and promote their parties' agendas. The Social Media and Elections Project tabbed the presence of candidates from various parties which contested the 2022 elections while marking whether their account or the page was active and verified. Details of various informal pages such as satire pages made in support or opposition of a candidate or a party were also collected.

### What's in the numbers?

The parties analysed in this article are major national parties—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC) and Aam Admi Party (AAP)—along with Uttar Pradesh's important state-level parties—Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

While consolidating the official Twitter accounts and Facebook pages of the candidates from these parties, we found that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) have the highest internet presence relative to the other parties contesting in Uttar Pradesh, with both parties having district-wise Facebook pages, many of which are active and verified. Despite being a state-level party, the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) online presence is minimal with just one state-level Facebook page and a few district-level pages.

Additionally, most of the BSP candidates who contested did not have a Facebook page or a Twitter account. In Figure 1, we see that only 47 or 11% of the 403 candidates who contested from the BSP have an active Twitter profile and only 102 or 26.5% have a Facebook page. The SP has 103 active Twitter accounts (29.5%), nearly twice more than the BSP, and 146 active Facebook accounts (42%) out of 349 candidates. In contrast, 205 or 54.5% of the 376 candidates from the BJP have active Twitter accounts and 191 or 52% have active Facebook pages. From the INC, 87 or 21.2% of the 403 candidates have active Twitter accounts and 115 or 28.5% have an active Facebook Page. The Aam Admi Party which contested elections in the state for the first time has 38 active Twitter accounts (17%) and 25 active Facebook accounts (11%) out of the 222 candidates it fielded. After accounting for variations in the total number of candidates contesting from each party, it still remains that the BJP has used the avenue for social media outreach better than other parties.

## Number of Candidates on Social Media

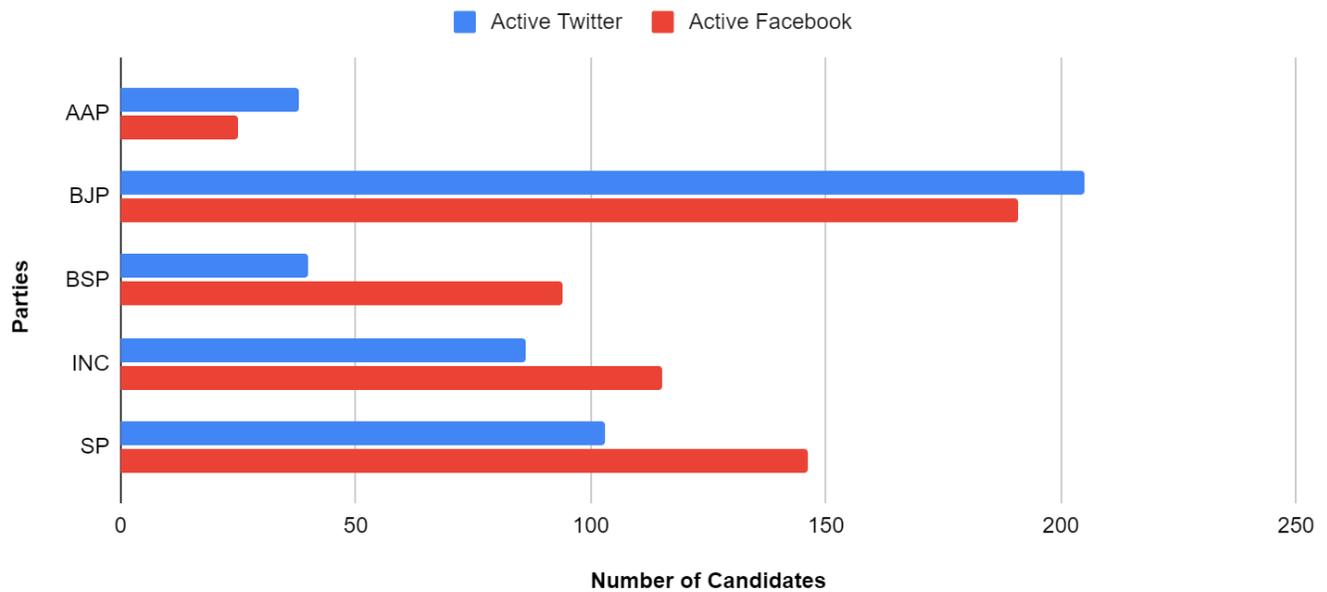


Figure 1: Number of candidates contesting 2022 UP Assembly Elections with active Facebook and Twitter accounts  
**Twitter and The Blue Tick**

With Twitter being an increasingly used platform for sharing political opinions, looking at how many candidates from each party have verified accounts is key. We see that the BJP, with 132 or 35.1% out of the 376 contesting candidates possessing verified Twitter accounts, leads in this domain. The other parties, including the INC, in contrast, have a dismal number of candidates with verified accounts: the INC has only 16 candidates with verified accounts, which is only 3.97% out of the 403 candidates that contested, and the SP has 13 accounts that are verified. It must be noted that none of the candidates announced by the BSP had a verified Twitter account. The same is the case for AAP as well, which can be attributed to the fact that the party has just made its entry into the state’s politics.

## Number of Verified and Active Twitter Accounts

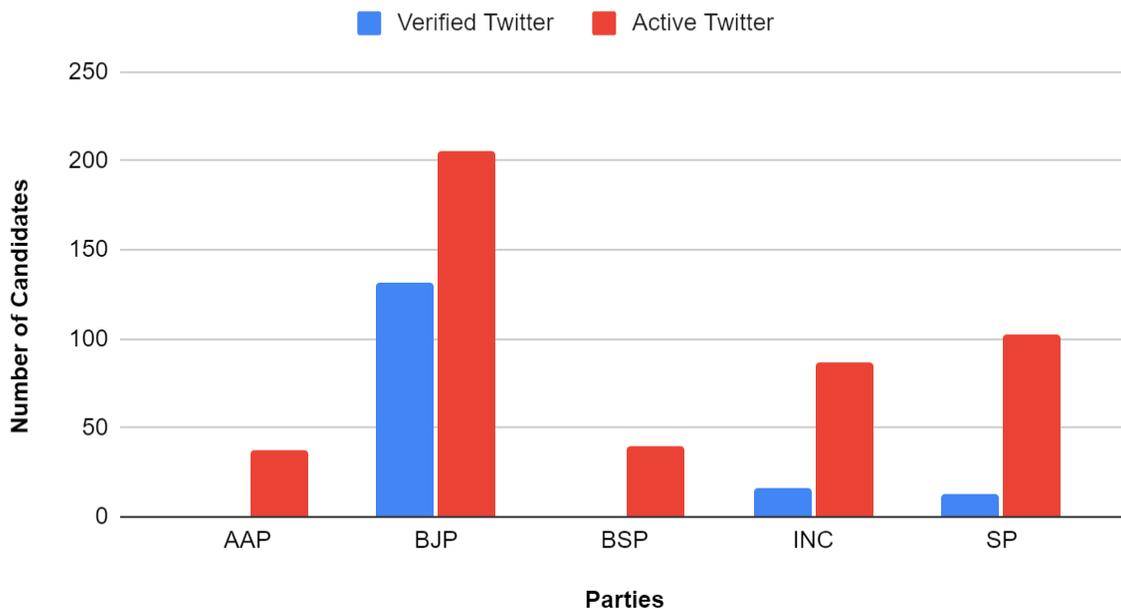


Figure 2: Twitter presence of key parties in 2022 UP Elections

### Facebook

Building upon the discussion on the district-wise pages of parties, the graph below gives us a visual representation of the Facebook pages created by each party at the district level. This is an important metric which can reveal the party’s active planning in having

district-specific pages since the maintenance of candidate pages, which we looked at previously, is largely subject to the contestant's office and personal capacity to mobilise social media presence.

There are a total of 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh and most parties have created district-wise pages to reach out to voters. The graph below reveals that out of the major parties—BJP, AAP, INC, SP and BSP—the INC has district-wise pages for all the 75 districts followed by the BJP which has pages for 65 districts. The AAP has pages for 43 districts, the SP has pages for 28 districts, while the BSP has the least number of district-wise pages with only pages for 8 districts. It is interesting to note that the All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), which is nascent in Uttar Pradesh's politics, has 6 pages, which is nearly as many pages as the BSP's, a party with close to 3 decades of history in the state.

## Number of District-Wise Facebook Pages

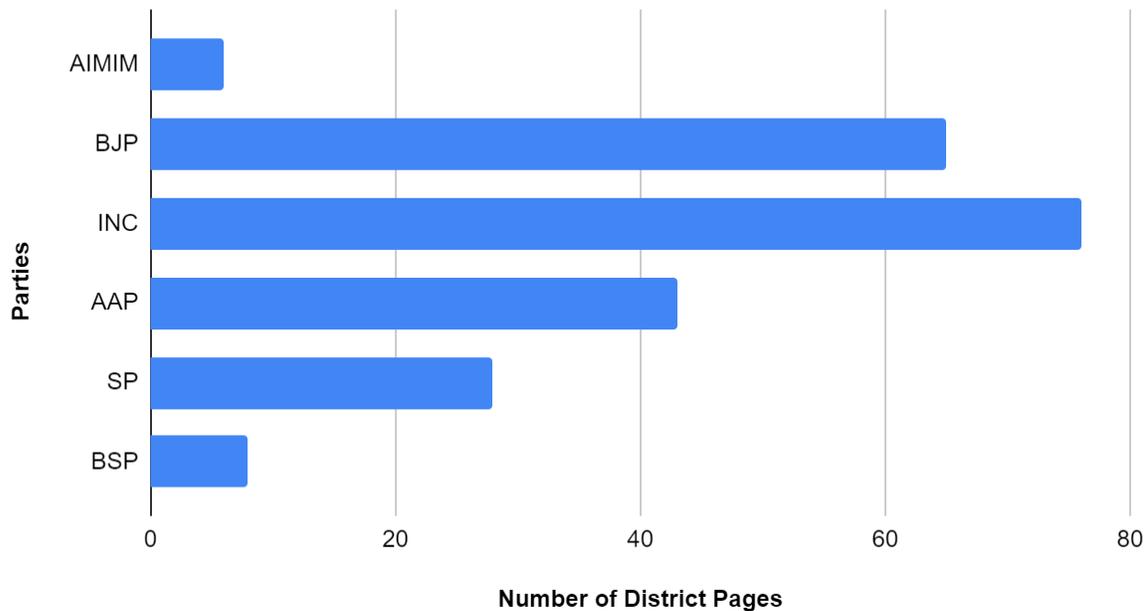
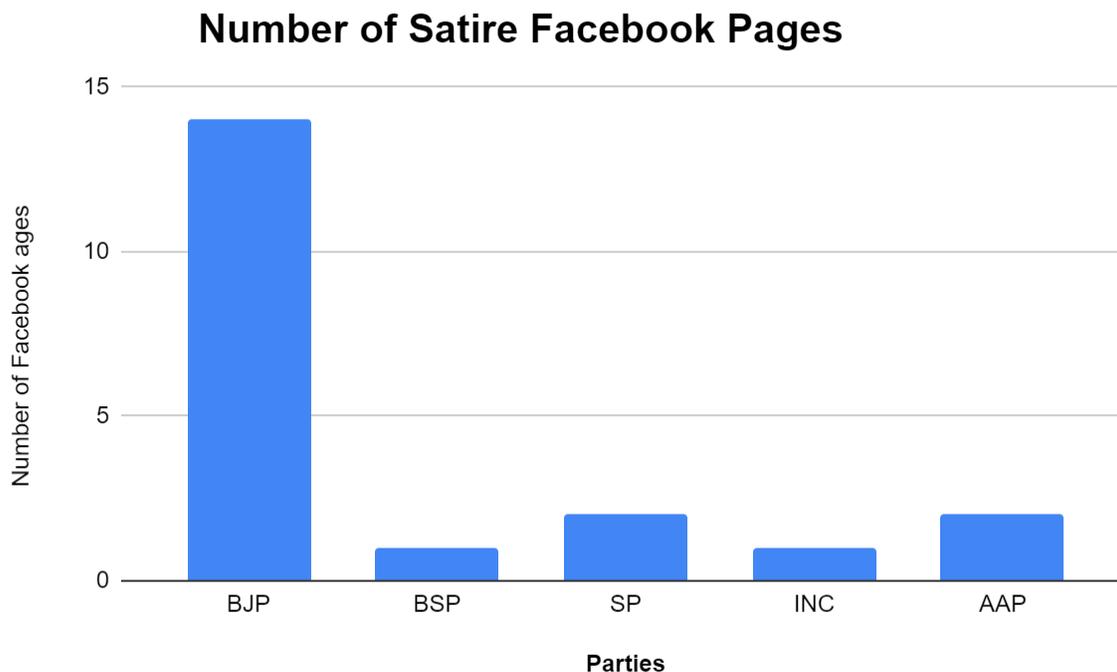


Figure 3: District specific Facebook Pages across Parties

### On the lighter side of things

Moving on to informal pages which post content that is satirical or comical, spanning the major parties, we came across 19 satire pages that support or oppose a particular party on Facebook. It must be noted that these pages, unlike the state-level or district-level pages, are not maintained by the political parties themselves but by party supporters. The BJP has about 14 Facebook pages in its support, the SP and AAP both have 2 pages in their support and the BSP and INC both have one page each in their support.



*Figure 4: Satire Pages made in support of different Parties*

Most of the content on these pages are memes, news reports with satirical captions, and pictures of tweets. The posts primarily target party leaders or the Chief Ministerial candidates. Candidates from non-leadership positions are rarely mentioned on these pages. The content shared is either in support of the candidates from the party that the page endorses or against rival parties. Below are examples of some of the content found on these pages.

## Conclusion

By analysing the digital presence of candidates of the key political parties in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh State Assembly elections, we gather that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) have a significant presence on Facebook and Twitter in comparison to the other major parties in the state like the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). With Twitter being an important platform for political discussion, the data reveals that out of all the parties which contested the 2022 Uttar Pradesh elections, the BJP has the highest number of candidates with both active and verified Twitter accounts and also the most number of candidates with active Facebook pages, making it the party with the largest presence on social media. Though the Indian National Congress has set up district-specific pages for all regions in Uttar Pradesh, the number of pages alone cannot offer insights into efficiency in voter outreach and this must be analysed in terms of content engagement by the audience. But it nevertheless indicates that the party, by ensuring the creation of district-level pages for all districts in Uttar Pradesh, has taken cognisance of the importance of social media in party communication.

The BSP, however, has the least presence on all social media platforms, be it in terms of creating district-wise pages, or its candidates' presence on Twitter and Facebook, indicating that it has a long way to go to adapt to newer forms of voter interaction. The Aam Admi Party, which has just made its foray into Uttar Pradesh's politics has shown initiative in creating a good social media presence, comparable to the Samajwadi Party's numbers—a party with a historically long presence in the state's politics—in terms of developing a district-specific social media presence. Additionally, the memes posted and shared by particular parties offer glimpses into their respective ideologies and affiliations. Social media, then, can be viewed as an important tool for politics in India, and how parties will strategise and evolve in response to the increasing proliferation of digital media across demographics will be key to the effectiveness of their communication and connection with voters.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Habermas Jürgen, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, *New German Critique* No. 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 49-55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/48773>(accessed on Nov 12, 2017)
2. Kaplan , Andreas M. and Michael Haenlein, “*Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media,*” *Business Horizons* 53, no. 1 (2010),61
3. Kietzmann et al, „*Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media,*’ *Business Horizons* 53, no. 3 (2011), 243

4. Landsbergen, D. ,Government as Part of the Revolution: Using Social Media to Achieve Public Goals' *Electronic Journal of e-Government* 8, no. 02, (2010), available online at [www.ejeg.com](http://www.ejeg.com) (accessed Dec 23, 2017)
5. Ligade, Dr. O.V. "Subaltern Studies: A New Trend in History Writing," *International Research Journal* 1, no. 6 (2009): 62-64
6. Livingston, Becky *Using Web 2.0 Technologies*, USA: ASTD Press, Issue –January 2010, vol.27, p.01
7. Parashar, Aatish. ,An Analysis of New Media's Role in Mass Movements (With reference to Anna Hazare's campaign 'India Against Corruption').' *J Mass Commun Journalism* 2, no. 7 (2012), 01. [http://www.omicsgroup.org/journals/2165-7912/2165-7912-2-118.html](http://www.omicsgroup.org/journals/2165-7912/2165-7912-2-118.digital/2165-7912-2-118.html) (accessed Nov 12, 2017) aajtak, <http://aajtak.intoday.in/story.php/content/view/687068/9/76/Social-media-to-drive-movement-against-corruption-Survey.html> (accessed Oct 22,2017)
9. Aquino, Carmela.,Its a Social World: A global look at social networking', [http://blog.comscore.com/2012/01/its\\_a\\_social\\_world.html](http://blog.comscore.com/2012/01/its_a_social_world.html)(accessed July 29, 2017)
10. Arandilla, Rachel. ,A History You Will Love: How Online Social Networking Began',<http://www.1stwebdesigner.com/design/history-social-networking/> (accessed Aug 08,2017)
11. arxiv.org, ,Planetary-Scale Views on an Instant-Messaging Network', <http://arxiv.org/abs/0803.0939> (accessed Aug19, 2017)
12. Ball,James ,The Guardian's Open 20: fighters for internet freedom', The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/20/twenty-fighters-open-internet> (accessed Nov 30, 2018)
13. Ball, James.,Hacktivists in the frontline battle for the internet',The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/20/hacktivists-battle-internet> (accessed on Nov 30, 2018)

