



Impact of social media in Lok Sabha General Elections: -An Analytical study of Recent Trends

(Special reference to Lok Sabha election 2019)

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1) Introduction & Review of the subject :

The Indian independence movement was a series of historic events with the ultimate aim of ending British rule in India. The Indian Independence Movement was a constant process of ideological evolution, especially, anti-colonial, it was supplemented by visions of independence, economic development, democratic republic, and political structure with civil liberty.

The approach of electoral campaigns has also been evolving constantly with time as the political parties have now become increasingly competitive and the Congress party has also managed to scale of its offensive on social media. The traditional ways of election campaigns are no longer effective or enough to gain the attention of voters with rapid changes and advancement in media. The election campaigns increasingly need to rely on technology and wide network by being present in spaces where the voters now reside.

The 17th Lok Sabha election (2019) in India was unique in many aspects the one of the important aspects noticed by the people was the role of social media in election. The Lok Sabha election in 2019 was the biggest ever test of the role of social media in an election. The role of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp group was crucial.

2) Objective of Research...

- 1) To study of impacts of social media on Loksabha General election.
- 2) To study of impacts of social media to strengthen to the Democracy

3) Hypothesis:-

Social media helps to strengthen the Democracy and helps to Political parties and candidates for changing the political behaviour of voters

4) The Traditional approach to campaigning: 1952-1984

Ever since the first Lok Sabha election in 1952, the general elections in post independent India have become the world's largest electoral exercise. In early general elections of India political parties used newspapers, public meetings and door to door canvassing to convey their messages, policies, manifestoes and information about the party.

After 1952, during the Nehru era, two other general elections were held for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in 1957 and 1962. In both, the voter turnout improved—while in 1951-52 it was 46 per cent, in 1957 it was 47 per cent and in 1962 nearly 54 per cent. The proliferation of Hindi newspapers and the venularization of the public sphere made a significant impact on political parties. Rapidly increasing circulation of newspapers in the North India was accompanied by strong mobilization of minority groups in South India during the 1960's. The phenomenal wave of the rise of the vernacular press in Indian democracy added to the multiplicity of issues.

With Rapid advancement and industrialisation of India, the traditional method methodologies of electoral campaigning also changed dramatically and give rise to and even higher proliferation of modern media Technologies. . The Congress party also use mass media extensively to target and sway voters during the entire election period of eighth general election 1984.

5) Second evolutions of election campaigns 1984-2004

During the 1989 Lok Sabha elections professional advertising agencies were brought in for electoral campaigning. It was for the first time when general election witnessed political advertising at a massive organised scale. This new trend later emerged as the determining factor, rewriting how political parties would fight elections. To disseminate a targeted message to a select group of the audience as well as to the general population, the BJP opted for narrowcasting as well also known as 'video on wheels' (VOW), the Yatra leveraged strategies that marked the genesis of hybrid media, the precursor of today's converged media scenario. The biggest achievement of the concept of VOW is that it has modernised rural marketing communication channels like never before.

In 14th General Election 2004, fledgling technical knowledge of Information technology (IT) was leveraged for election campaigns. The use of daily poll feedback given by their analyst made BJP appear as quite hi-take among its peers who remain doggedly shy of using technology. The strategic intent of the campaign was to collect and maintain a reliable and authentic large database and to approach the voters through emails and SMSs.

6) The rise of the IT cells and social media armies (From 2004) -its impact on Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019

The 16th general election of 2014 will always be remembered for its grandness and scale in Indian history, with a total of over 815 million voters, a number larger than even the combined voters of United States and the European Union. The Congress adopted a mix approach of electoral campaigning by creating election control rooms to keep the track of campaigns and launching a website for online promotion. However, the relentless, strategic, organised and highly professional data driven campaigns by the BJP turn the table of the entire electoral campaigns. The BJP tried to find a new way of redefining the traditional approach of political campaigning and succeeded in organising large public rallies like corporate events, with all necessary tools to reach the voters. Apart from countless number of public rallies and roadshows the BJP's IT cell strategized these campaigns using micro-targeting techniques through a mix of social media, traditional media automated calls, brand building activities and image positioning by a number of volunteers of the party. A detailed analysis of the 2014 General Election and the narrative shaped by the media of the electoral campaigns tells us that political branding, image management, crisis communication, data analytics, microblogging and most importantly short clips videos today had the key for subsequent elections as the number of young first-time voter raised to over 0.2 billion.

The 17th Lok Sabha election (2019) in India was unique in many aspects the one of the important aspects noticed by the people was the role of social media in election. The Lok Sabha election in 2019 was the biggest ever test of the role of social media in an election. The role of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp group was crucial. General elections were held in India in 6 phases from 11th April to 19th May 2019 to elect the member of the 17th Lok Sabha, votes counted and the result was declared on 23rd May 2019. There was highest ever participation of women voters. The Bhartiya Janata party received 37.36% of the vote the highest vote share by a political party since the 1989 General Election and won 303 seats, further increasing the substantial majority in addition the BJP lead National democratic alliance NDA on 356 seats. The Indian National Congress won 52 seats failing to get 10% of the seats needed to claim the post of leader of opposition and the Congress lead United progressive alliance won 91 seats.

The approach of electoral campaigns has also been evolving constantly with time as the political parties have now become increasingly competitive and the Congress party has also managed to scale of its offensive on social media. The traditional ways of election campaigns are no longer effective or enough to gain the attention of voters with rapid changes and advancement in media. The election campaigns increasingly need to rely on technology and wide network by being present in spaces where the voters now reside. One of the biggest game changing factors, which has completely turned the table of electoral campaigns, is the boom of internet. Now with over 70 million internet users and contents rapidly moving towards masses, this is emerging as the true game changer on and off the campaign trail. In recent years, social media has emerged as an important factor in election campaigns as well. It has turned out to be a boon for the political parties to shape the result of election. Political parties are now extensively using modern technological tools such as sending personal messages, promotions on social media, short personalized videos and stories and even holdings digital meetups and rallies.

Now a days, the Internet has the potential to mobilize the voters and drum up both financial and material resources as well, especially through crowd fundraising and the online recruitment of volunteers and supporters. With the advancement of internet, the advantage of convenient, strong and always-on-communication network between the politician and the citizens is now given. This has also elongated the campaigning period for all parties extending it well beyond the traditional outlook of cutting off and beginning their campaign modes only when the polls have been announced.

The consecutive electoral turnout from first election is shown in following table

Sr.	Lok Sabha	Voting Percentage
1	1 st Lok Sabha (1951-52)	44.87
2	2 nd Lok Sabha(1957)	45.44
3	3 rd Lok Sabha(1962)	55.42
4	4 th Lok Sabha(1967)	61.04
5	5 th Lok Sabha(1971)	55.27
6	6 th Lok Sabha(1977)	60.49
7	7 th Lok Sabha(1980)	56.92
8	8 th Lok Sabha(1984)	64.01
9	9 th Lok Sabha(1989)	61.95
10	10 th Lok Sabha(1991)	56.73
11	11 th Lok Sabha(1996)	57.94
12	12 th Lok Sabha(1998)	61.97
13	13 th Lok Sabha(1999)	59.99
14	14 th Lok Sabha(2004)	58.07
15	15 th Lok Sabha(2009)	58.21
16	16 th Lok Sabha(2014)	66.44
17	17 th Lok Sabha(2019)	67.40

Above table shows that with use of social media by political parties lead to highest voter turnout. Though the use of social media increased, but the other traditional means of campaigning are also used by political parties like mega rallies, door to door campaigning, banners etc.

Prashant Jha in his book “How The BJP Wins” has stated that, “since 2014, the BJP has played, in varying degrees, the Hindu card. The Hindu card did not work for it in Bihar-showing that the politics of polarizations is only one element in a larger matrix and cannot work in all contexts. But it did succeed in UP, where the BJP – sharpened the rhetoric of how the regime has appeased Muslims. “Playing religious card by political parties and dissemination of such post by social media has created problems before secularism.

THE MODI WAVE

According to Farhat Basir Khan, in his book “The Game of Votes”, he stated that, “The pre-existing apprehension of Congress finally took shape as Narendra Modi was named the prime ministerial candidate from BJP in the 2014 General election. The mass popularity of Modi was a key reason for the BJP to select Modi as its prime ministerial candidate over other veteran party leaders. People were looking for a strong leader who would bring in much-needed economic reforms and fight corruption. The incumbent Congress was reeling from exposes and scams – 2G, coal Adarsh, land – whose face was Robert Vadra, all but did them in. This was also the time when media in India displayed some brilliant journalism, using RTI to its fullest”. The projection of Narendra Modi as prime ministerial candidate was started much before the election in social media. This proves that the social media is used for voter building long before elections.

In 2019 Lok Sabha election every political party was online having social media accounts of party and their leaders. Aam Adami Party in Delhi has achieved great success using social media. This shows that the use of social media was increased in 2019 Lok Sabha election than 2014 Lok Sabha election.

7) Conclusion:

Following conclusions can be drawn-

1. It seems that use of social media in elections has created problems before secularism.
2. The use of social media for voter building seems to continue long before elections.
3. After the 2014 elections, the 2019 elections seem to have seen an increase in the use of social media.
4. The rise in the use of social media does not seem to make traditional promotional tools obsolete.
5. The use of social media in election campaign seems to increase the voting percentage.

Reference:

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