



The Role of Social Media in Creating Political Awareness and Evolving Political Participation in India: An Empirical Study

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Abstract:

The term 'Social Media' is the result of two broader terms used together. The term 'Social' refers to anything which relates to society or a community at large. On the other hand, the term 'Media' is a popular term suggesting means of communication to a larger group rather than individuals. Social media together word means a place where people can express themselves socially, however, not personally. The element of media makes it public and thus, the communication is not restricted to two individuals. Politics is an internal part of the state and included within its ambit the science of state which was attained by fighting the upcoming circumstances and forming an understanding of the same. The impact of media have on democracy is one of the most widely-debated aspects of the relationship between the media and politics. For many, the existence of a free press is one of the key features of democratic governance.

In recent years, social media has emerged as a new aspect of political communication, as evidenced by the Twitter and Face book feeds or pages of political candidates. In past few years, social media has become more prevalent in election campaigns. It provides a platform for two-way communication. Political parties have started to use social networking sites to engage directly conversations with voters and encourage more public conversation. Candidates can use social media and its highly visible environment to showcase themselves, communicate directly with their supporters and spread the information about their policies.

The media has traditionally been said to promote democracy in two key ways: by fostering public debate and political engagement, and by acting as a 'Public Watchdog' to check abuses of power. The capacity to provide a civic forum in which meaningful and serious political debate can take place is often viewed as the key democratic role of media. The major research question in the proposed study is to find out relationship between the variables of social media and political awareness and political participation. The questions are: Whether social media influences political participation? Whether social media increases political awareness? Whether social media molds political orientations? Whether social media plays important role in politics? To find out all these answers following objectives have been undertaken –

- 1. To determine how the people are using social networking sites in the context of politics.*
- 2. To examine how social networking can be helpful in increasing political awareness.*

3. *To evaluate how social networking is helpful in increasing political participation.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Role, Communication, Politics, Impact.*

Introduction:

Social media facilitates a collaborative web site by engaging users to participate, comment and create content as a way to communicate with the graph of the community, other users and the community. Social media has emerged as a great tool for citizens to talk about issues that affect the daily life that are important to the nation. In the 21st century, Facebook, Twitter and the YouTube are not just new things in the online world, but they are emerging rapidly as promoters and creators of ideas. Social networking is a platform for building social networks. These social networking services are web-based and these provide ways for users to interact online. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, photos, posts, activities, events, and interests with people on their network. Therefore, social media is a two way network that not only gives you information, but also communicates with you while giving you that information and allows you to connect with other visitors as well. This interaction can be a way of soliciting your comments or allowing you to vote on a topic, or recommending movies to you based on the ratings of other people with similar interests. The social network also allows information and ideas to flow between networks, such as pool ripples, to enhance ideas and to allow each person to participate as a leader in ideas by producing and distributing media, not just through minimal use.

The word ‘Politics’ is gotten from ‘Polis’ which means, actually ‘City-State’. Old Greek society was separated into an assortment of free city-states, every one of which had its own arrangement of government. US Political Science Specialist David Easton (1979, 1981), who characterized governmental issues as the definitive assignment of qualities. By this, he implied that politics incorporates the different procedures through which government reacts to pressures from the bigger society, specifically by dispensing advantages, prizes and punishments. ‘Authoritative values’ are in this way those that are generally acknowledged in the public eye, and are viewed as authoritative by the mass of residents. Right now, is related with ‘Arrangement’: that is, with formal or definitive choices that build up a strategy for the network.

What is Social media:

Social media is the outcome of the technological developments around the world. However the concept of social media networking more often linked to sociological and technological aspects, which are considered only as a medium of development of social media. Social media is a platform where people can communicate through electronic means unlike the traditional method and creates a virtual world for users to stay connected. According to Oxford Dictionary, the term social media refers to those sites or applications which allow the users to take particular interest in social system administration for making and offering contents. Surer, Alexander and Kaplan studied the different dimensions of social media and combined the concept as ‘The tools used for bringing human capabilities which facilitate a means for social connection and interchange of ideas, a place where a group of people can interact, combining practices, values and technology ‘(Cheal-Coughlin & Moore, 2012). Social media can be seen to have changed, or be changing, politics in at least three key ways. In the **first** place, electronic mechanisms have altered the conduct of elections. This is particularly apparent in the case of election campaigns, which increasingly revolve around internet-based activities. Websites, emails and podcasts provide political candidates and parties, a fast and cheap means of getting their messages across to a (Potentially) large audience, in the process allowing them also to recruit campaign volunteers and raise campaign funds. E- Campaigning has the advantage that it is particularly effective in reaching younger people, who are often the most difficult section of the population

to engage through conventional strategies. **Second**, social media offer citizens wider and easier access to political information and political comment. This has occurred in a number of ways. For example, government in all parts of the world have, albeit at different speeds, recognized the advantage of making government information available online, and, in a growing number of cases, of following citizens to access government services through websites, so called 'E-Government'. **Third**, social media have supported the development of political and social movements, and increased their effectiveness, thus giving rise to a new type of activist politics, sometimes called 'New Politics' and contributing, some argue, to a general shift of power from governments to citizens. In recent years social media have become a means of sharing information and a means of communication. Social media is most popular term used by mostly young generation now a day. Since the internet age began and with the advent of new technologies the pattern of political engagement and the level of political awareness have changed. It gives an opportunity to its users to get connected with all over world without any tour and travel. The increasing use of social media drew the attention of researchers to do research about its impact. Political communication researchers and others who have any type of political problem connected to internet will definitely start to search out for solution.

Distinction from traditional media:

Earlier people use to gain information, education, news etc, by electronic media and print media. Social media are distinct from the earlier industrial media or traditional media such as Newspapers A newspaper is a publication that is issued daily or weekly and includes local and international news stories, advertisements, announcements, opinions, cartoons, sports news and television listings. Television is used for broadcasting and receiving moving pictures and sound over a distance.

The Power to Publish:

Few years ago - if you wanted to create and share a video with the world then you needed expensive equipment to create the video - and then you needed the support of a broadcaster to get that video distributed. Or if you wanted to share written ideas with a large audience, you needed a publisher and printer to get your ideas into a book. Now, anyone with cheap technology can publish directly on the web. Without taking anyone's permission. Many young people are taking advantage of the power to publish - not necessarily intending content for a global audience, but using sites like YouTube to share video clips intended for friends, and platforms like facebook to share photos or comments reliving a recent shared experience with friends.

Basic forms of Social Media:

There are basically four kinds of social media:

- **Social Networks:** This allows people to connect with their friends and other people and share content. The popular social network these days is MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Whatsapp etc.
- **Blogs:** A blog is something which is regularly updated and it is an online personal journal or a diary. Meg Hourihan defines it as "collection of posts...short, informal sometimes controversial, and sometimes deeply personal...with the freshest information at the top."
- **Wikis:** These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia.
- **Podcasts:** These are the files that are available through subscription.

Role of Social media in Indian politics:

In India, Social Media has emerged as a medium of masses. It has played an important role in recent protests and has portrayed social unrest. Common people are now able to raise their voice through Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter. It can keep a powerful check on the activities of the politicians by seeking transparency in their actions. For example, Anna Hazare, a 73 year old social worker from Ahmed Nagar gave the power a run for their money. With around 1,00,000 'likes' on 'India against corruption' on Facebook page. He was able to create a social movement against corruption. The role of media is to guarantee that public responsibility happens, by investigating the exercises of government and uncovering maltreatment of power. In completing this role the media is enhancing and somewhat, supplanting crafted by formal delegate establishments. Media experts for example- researchers, columnists and TV moderators are especially, fit to this role since they are 'outside' politics and have no intrigue other than to uncover inadequacy, debasement or just jumbled reasoning at whatever point and any place it very well may be found. Conversely if open responsibility is left exclusively in the hands of expert politicians, it might be obliged by the way that the individuals who endeavor to uncover clumsiness or wrong doing will want themselves, at few stages, to hold government power. This may pollute their intentions, yet it might likewise debilitate them from condemning procedures and practices that they may wish to exploit it later on.

Use of social media in Political Communication:

The speed of communication, particularly in the realm of political communication, has increased in recent decades due to advancements in communication technology, hence transforming the foundations of communication. Politicians consistently endeavor to adjust their strategies in response to evolving societal dynamics, therefore using diverse media platforms to cultivate popularity and resonance among the populace. One notable illustration pertains to the extensive utilization of newspapers, magazines, and posters by politicians during the 19th and 20th centuries. However, as time progressed, politicians began to diversify their communication methods, incorporating television and radio. In the present era, the 21st century, politicians have further expanded their influence by embracing online media platforms and leveraging smart phones as a means of accessing new media or the Internet. The dynamic between politicians, journalists, and citizens has evolved into a multifaceted connection characterized by both horizontal and vertical dimensions. This is the context in which political elites' endeavor to advance their own interests, while both new and conventional media strive to collaborate in order to optimize their communication outreach. However, it is important to note that they also engage in competition with one another to uphold principles of fairness (Voltmer et al., 2011). The significance of the Internet in the realm of Political Communication throughout the early 1990s was minimal. Therefore, the transition from conventional modes of communication to digital media in the 21st century resulted in a significant change in their strategies for engaging with their constituents. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have facilitated a multifaceted and individualized type of communication exchange among users, resulting in the establishment of a power dynamic between the sender and recipient of messages. Undoubtedly, social media platforms have facilitated opportunities for individuals to engage in political discourse. Twitter emerged as a prominent platform for disseminating information during the pro-reform movements that transpired in response to the 2009 elections. The significance and distinctiveness of social media reside in its provision of individuals with the ability to express disagreement and get immediate response or feedback, a capability that was not attainable via conventional media channels. The impact of social media communication on election campaigns has significantly influenced the current and future electoral processes in major democratic nations, leading to a transformative change in campaigning strategies. The advent of social media has given rise to a politically engaged demographic that can significantly influence the outcome of political contests, determining both victory and loss for political parties and leaders. Indeed,

in contemporary society, the trajectory of a political leader or party is determined by the strong understanding of social media have effectively used various social media platforms to their benefit.

Role in society:

Whether we realize it or not but Social media has a great impact on society, Social media sites have taken over our lives. In my opinion it has a positive impact. It has definitely made us closer with the relatives, friends and other people who are residing in other countries. It is a place where we can contact anyone around the world at any time. We can also share elements of our life, from what we enjoy to photos of ourselves and those in our lives. It is like being a part of that person's world, even though distance keeps us apart. But not all consequences of this technology are good ones. It has allowed us to hide behind screens and limited our social interaction face to face. Nowadays, people have so many members on their Facebook friends list but less number of people whom they see on a semi-regular basis. Social media has an enormous impact on each and every institution of our society. Even politics, culture, economics condition also gets influenced by the social media.

Integrating communities:

Social networking sites helps in integrating all the parts of the country including subcultures and minority groups who otherwise never get the physical means and space to practice their views and beliefs. Through social networking sites individuals can communicate with others irrespective of meeting face to face or present at a specified time. As these individuals are not aware of things they can use these sites and can raise their voices and can also participate. As these social issues need regular discussion individuals can use networking sites to communicate periodically or regularly depending on them and others' requirements. So we can say in a country like INDIA social networking sites is acting as an officer who integrate individuals about social issues like corruption, girl's education, and Human rights, riots etc.

Impact of Social media in Indian economy:

Nowadays social media is responsible for creating a platform for marketers and app developers. These days people buy phone primarily to use whatsapp, facebook etc. The economic impact of Social media for business use is that it acts as a marketing platform to connect with consumers and build brand value. The sale of mobile devices and internet connectivity has increased. Facebook has developed partnerships with local operators and optimized its product for lower speed and smaller data packages. Interent.org app allows people to browse health, education and other information services.

Advantages of Social Networking Sites:

1. Open communication is very easy through social networking sites.
2. Easy to discuss ideas, views through social networking sites.
3. Provides an opportunity to spread business area and contacts.
4. Allows to reconnect with friends and family and to develop relationships.
5. Allows messaging, sharing photos and many other things.
6. It makes marketing easy and wider.
7. Social networking is helpful in access to new and female voters.

8. Powerful platform to educate and inform the citizens of any country.
9. Social media is most probably transparent, fast and quick.
10. Accessible to all to participate in a dialogue with citizens and a source of positive influence for political parties and politicians.
11. You can connect with throughout the world for latest news.

Disadvantages of Social Networking :

1. Social media is sometimes restricted to urban areas.
2. Social media is being a tool to hurt people.
3. It decreases man to man way to communication because online surfing is the way to communicate.
4. Social media increased laziness because instead of running to your friends you can message them.
5. Because of the increasing use of social media family closeness is decreasing.
6. Pewcenter.org published a report that most of the children have become victims of the cyber bullying over the past. Anyone can do anything through fake account without being traced.
7. By hacking personal accounts of anyone, someone can make financial losses and loss to personal life.
9. Security is main issue because a large number of teenagers are addicted to social media.
10. Health issues have negative impact because social media is disturbing routine life of users.
11. Social networking is time consuming.
12. It can misuse your personal information.
13. Access of its use can cause brain disorder in children.
14. It increased social isolation.
15. There are so many time wasting activities on social media.
16. Fake news, messages, photo editors, audio- video mixing especially in political field to misguide citizens.

Impact of Social Media in Political Participation:

Political Participation; Participation of the candidates of the society in matters related to politics has been a subject of increased interest in recent years. There are different articles on famous participation and non-participation had been attempted since the emergence -Voting in 1924 and the series on citizenship edited by way of Merriam inside the past due twenties and early thirties. Political participation, which has been described as the involvement of individual at numerous levels in the political system, percentage within the choice of rulers and without delay or circuitously in the formation and/or within the execution of public policies and also comprising all those facts that one manner or some other, are intended to affect the running of and differences of the part of every political system. Hence active and powerful participation of the humans has turn out to be crucial for the existence and continuance of the political system.

It is, something different, in a democracy that political participation assumes paramount importance. From the conventional theory to the more calculative eighteenth-century view of democracy, in any event, democracy implied and endorsed an excessive stage of popular involvement. It is a system in which real power lies with the people who practices it by participation within the advent, renovation and supervision of different structures in the system. The consent of general masses is the prime situation for the fulfillment of democratic political system. As participation is the principal mode of granting or withdrawing consent, so without widespread citizen involvement the democratic process falls short of its dreams. In the modern age now not best in democracies but additionally other forms of political systems participation of the people in political affairs has been given too much importance. So the totalitarian rulers today also are seeking to comfry the mass approval to justify their arbitrary selections.

Social Media and Politics:

The impact of the media have on democracy is one of the most widely-debated aspects of the relationship between the media and politics. For many, the free press is one of the key features of democratic governance. However how do the media act as custodians of democracy and why have credentials, even debating that they may undermine it? The media has basically been said to promote democracy in two key ways: by fostering public debate and political participation power. The capacity to provide a civic forum in which fruitful and serious political debate can take place is often viewed as the key democratic role of the media. The virtue of this is that systematically informed citizens with more independent and considered views will be more politically engaged. The media is therefore agent of political education. Indeed, the media may have changed on a large scale, formal representative bodies, for example assemblies, parliaments and local councils as arenas for the dialogue, debate and deliberation that are the very important features of democratic politics. This has happened because the media are, arguably, better suited to this role than are traditional representative organizations. In addition to offering the crowd may be its only meaningful opportunity to watch politicians in action (through for example, interviews with politicians and televised assembly debates), the media provide a field for the expression of a much wider range of viewpoints and opinions than is possible within representative institutions composed only of elected politicians. Not only do the media substantially widen the range of views and opinions expressed in political debate, but they also perform debate and dialogue in a way that is lively and engaging for the general crowd, devoid of the formality, even stuffiness, that characterizes the exchanges that take place in assemblies and council chambers around the world. The most significant of these are the transformation of political leadership and with it, a reapportionment of government power; changes to the political culture that, some have warned, are leading to a growing disenchantment with politics and making societies more difficult to govern; and alterations to the behavior of governments and the nature of policy- making- democracy or Democracy refers to the use of computer-based technologies to enhance citizens engagement in democratic processes. This nevertheless, may happen in different ways. In the representative model, e-democracy seek to strengthen the operation of established democratic mechanisms. In the deliberative model, e-democracy aims to open up new tasks for direct famous participation. In the activist model e-democracy tries to strengthen political and social movements and bolster crowd power basically communities an ICT-based protests. E-democracy include the following online voting in elections, online petitions organized by governments or other bodies, political information, news and comments via websites, blogs and so on. Use of social networking sites or social media allows citizens to engage in political debate and possibly, policy-making. The increasing use of mobile phones and social media may organize popular protests and demonstrations.

Does the increasing use of social media change or enrich politics?

Social media was being popular in India in elections of 2014. Politicians use social media to communicate with common people to engage in politics. So the use of web 2.0 SNs has made it comparatively easy for political parties, social activist, individual leaders and for the common people also. The first great use of social media in India was during Mumbai attacks in 2008. The second great use of social media was the May 2009 national elections. At that time online registration of voters and transparency in political campaigns started and for the first time political parties tried to reach out to voters through social networking, websites. Among many political parties BJP has biggest charisma in social media and in recent years it has dig deeper into social media. BJP leaders have their own team for his social media management. Any other party also has a big support of social networking site. In September 2018 around 600 million people in India are now on social networking, Twitter, Google and YouTube have committed in writing to ensure that any political advertisement published.

Conclusion:

Social media plays a critical role in modern politics, offering tools for communication, engagement, and mobilization. While it has democratized information dissemination and enhanced transparency, it also presents challenges such as misinformation and polarization. Understanding the multifaceted impact of social media on politics is essential for leveraging its benefits while mitigating its risks. As social media continues to evolve, so too will its role in shaping political landscapes worldwide. As one analyses the influence of social media on political discourse, it is riveting to observe different eras in politics and how the world adapts and reacts to the constant slow-paced underlying evolution taking place around them. How people perceive information and how unknowingly, yet easily, the world can be manipulated. As one navigates through different ways of showcasing this digital landscape, it is essential to strike a balance between harnessing the potential of social media and addressing its challenges. By promoting transparency, accountability, having a rational belief system, and critical thinking, we can ensure that social media serves as a force for good in shaping political narratives and strengthening democracy. Social media's impact on politics is complex, with both positive and negative consequences. As users, we must be responsible consumers of political content and actively engage with the political process. By using social media as a tool for informed, civil, and open discourse, we can harness its power to strengthen democracy and civic participation.

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