


Social Media as a Marketing Tool for Political Purpose and Its Implications on Political Knowledge, Participation, and Interest

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ABSTRACT

Social media usage is one of the most popular online activities these days. In 2018, it is estimated that 2.65 billion people were using social media worldwide and these numbers are expected to reach almost 3.1 billion by 2021, the majority of whom are young people. With some notable exceptions, there are few studies that have been undertaken in the field of politics and social media. This study examines how usage of social media for political purpose influences the voting behavior of the voter in this realm. The authors test the proposition that using social media for political use offers a new pathway to their political participation, interest, and knowledge using path analysis. Results demonstrate that political use of social media impacted both levels of and growth in traditional political participation, interest, and knowledge during the 2019 election.

KEYWORDS

Online Marketing, Political Interest, Political Knowledge, Political Marketing, Political Participation, Social Media, Social Networking, Voter Behavior

1. INTRODUCTION:

It was during 2008 American presidential elections, social media have seen a perquisite in the use of social networking sites for political purpose. Among the various platforms, Facebook which is the most sought after social media platform with over 750 million subscribers across the globe (Facebook.com) which can be termed as third most populous country in the world. Initially these social media platforms were not evolved as political instrument, however statesman has quickly adapted to use them for political campaigns and communication. During 2008 elections, Barack Obama's with the help of social networking sites made an appeal to American youth even among those who are not old enough to exercise their vote (Dalton, 2009; Nagourney, 2008). After Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential race, citizens watched him be ahead of a mass of 7,000 and spoke about the potential of connected youth. This millenials who drove Barack Obama to triumph and utilized the social media sites effectively that Barack Obama frequented. "The Internet and an extraordinary social movement enabled him to come to power and youth were the propellers of his victory" (Harfoush, 2009). While

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President Barack Obama wasn't the first one to explore social media as a powerful election campaign tool (Howard Dean, 2004 Democratic primary), he was the first to use it as an essential element of his candidacy to network with the youth whom he thought of the potential voters who aligns with his ideology. This credence in social forums and use of new and incredible tools in particular social media platforms like, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook to run campaigns that connects with individual voters at grassroot level in a more personalized manner.

While studies made by Williams & Gulati(2008) and Zhang et.al (2010) have get down to consider the effect of social networking sites on politics, an extensive research must putthrow in the emerging political realm that co exists with social media platforms. This study extends the research on social media platforms in order to provide a superior understanding both of what motivates youth to exhibit and share one's own political views, engages in debates, initiates discussions on political issues and policies on social media platforms, as well as what is the effect of using social media for political purpose on voter behavior.

In our research, the term “ social media for political purpose” has been used extensively which can be defined as using a social media platforms exclusively and extensively for political purposes, like having display image of a political party or politician in order to express the political preference towards one's profile page, or following a politician page or profile, adding politicians to their friends list, following a politician or political party, initiating the debates on political issues, extending the support for a political party or a politician by posting or commenting positively on their ideologies, spreading the message and gaining support for the same, moreover campaigning for a party or politician and raising money in the form of donations etc. Using social media platforms for political purpose is unique way of accessing social networking sites, and those are worthwhile unlike inclusive online political participation. It seize the brilliance of individual person to not only share details about politics, exchanging political views besides showcase their affiliation with political party or a politician of their favorite publicly in the respective social media platforms.

Further, while social media platforms for political purpose integrates with many aspects like political participation, political interest and political knowledge that voters gain or acquire upon using the social media platforms. It also highlights the one's commitment and affiliation for a political party or a person that lowers the barriers and cost of performing political marketing activities like campaigning, brand building and brand repositioning.

Further research propounds those using social media platforms for political use must be distinguished from using social media for traditional participation and engagement.

Thus social media platforms for political use is very important in such a way for providing new ways for millennial's to get involved in political discussions and politics as such. Our Research propounds that twin forms of political communication such as online and offline is still matter for even today for encouraging participation enhancing knowledge, creating and sustaining the trust among the voters while creating positive attitudes and favourable interest among the targeted voter group.

The current study probes inquiry among the random sample of Andhra Pradesh and telangana voters. Researcher find it particularly pertinent to contemplate voters of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, as are aware of the political scenario and political inclinations of voters that are found in tender age and most especially during general election scenario, so the voting behaviors we make out among these population group are natural to persist over their course of life (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003; Valentino & Sears 1998). In this study we examine how social media platforms for political use contributes to increasing political participation, enhancing political knowledge and interest while of forming positive attitude and sustaining and creating trust among the voters of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana during the election campaign.

1.1 Social Media Platforms in Various Contexts

Boyd & Ellison, (2008) defined social media platforms as “internet based services that allow each individual to put up a public profile within a bounded system, Articulate a list of other likeminded

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