

Chapter 31

Young Citizen's Political Engagement in India: Social Media Use by Political Parties

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ABSTRACT

Social media has emerged as a dominant digital medium platform in contemporary society. The quick development of social media has instigated changes concerning the way publics to interact with a group of people with similar ideologies, the quality of information they share, or the opportunity to acquire and share ideas. Social media use has a major influence on public relations, marketing, and political communication. Therefore, politicians are formulating their strategies to reach increasingly networked individuals. The chapter defines political engagement concept, focuses on excessive use of social media to understand how the emergence of digital citizenship is changing political engagement. In addition to this, the chapter also examines whether the use of social media exercise any effect on 2014 and 2019. General elections outcome or not and discuss the proposed conceptual framework for future empirical testing. The chapter highlights the various concerns needed to be taken care of while using social media as a marketing tool for promoting political participation and engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a dominant digital platform in the present-day digital society (Kumar & Nanda, 2019b). It has become an essential part of community discussions and communication. The quick development of social media has instigated changes concerning the way publics interact with group of people with similar ideologies, the quality of information they share or the opportunity to acquire and share ideas. Social media platforms are increasingly being accessed and used at all times and places, resulting in major impact on public relations, marketing, and political communication. Therefore, politicians are also utilizing the social media in formulating their strategies to reach increasingly networked individuals (Pradhan & Kumar, 2015). They are giving more preference to social media attention of the public in driving political engagement.

Due to this very fact, social media has become an integral part of political communication during the elections. Social media platforms make it possible for contenders to have a dialogue with their constituents and for citizens to interact with each other. Politicians use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube etc. for propagating their views, broadcasting the updated information and getting engaged in political discussions. As a result of this, citizens are well versed with the political and economic issues of the country. The development of social media has completely changed the political landscape of the country (Calderaro, 2018). Recent advancements in growth and popularity of social media has attracted the attention of political communication researchers. The main objective of the study is to investigate the political impact of social media as a new marketing tool that help the publics to obtain political information as well as interact with others on the Web.

The paucity of research examining political engagement directs the need for research in the area of political communication and social media. Last decade has witnessed a number of studies focusing on using web 2.0 technologies for democratic engagement (Jensen, 2016; Loader et al., 2015; Harris & Harrigan, 2015). Still, there exists lack of theoretical and empirical research on candidates' social media presence and the political engagement behaviour of the public. The present research examines the potential of the social media to stimulate political engagement, especially among younger citizens (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Bennett, 2008; Dahlgreen, 2011). There is a contradictory information concerning Web2.0's influence in creating new political participation in social media activities. Newness in social media campaigns help in mobilizing and reinforcing political participation.

The current research study is first of its kind in defining the concept of political engagement, proposing a framework and analysing the present trend of youth interactive participation and involvement through social media in 2014 and 2019 general elections in India.

Political Engagement

The concept of engagement is not new to the academic literature. It has been explored in various academic disciplines such as educational psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational behaviour from different perspectives (Paruthi and Kaur, 2017; Kumar and Nanda, 2019 a). Many eminent researchers and practitioners have endeavoured to define political engagement. A general review of previous studies reveals that engagement does not occur inside any medium; rather, it happens inside the individual (Mollen and Wilson 2010; Paruthi and Kaur, 2017). In short, engagement deals with users' emotions and feelings but social media platforms arouse this intrinsic feeling and mobilizes young citizens to cast their vote.

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