

Chapter 2

Changing Dynamics of Political Communication in the Digital Era: A Case Study on India

Romica Bhat

Amity University, Rajarhat, India

Sayantana Ghosh

Amity University, Rajarhat, India

ABSTRACT

This case study examines how political communication in India has evolved with the rise of digital technology, analyzing its impact on political campaigns, voter engagement, and public discourse. The study delves into the significance of social media platforms, digital messaging apps, and online news outlets in shaping the political landscape in the world's largest democracy. In recent years, India has witnessed a significant surge in internet and smartphone usage, leading to a transformation in the way political parties and leaders interact with their constituents. This study investigates the various tools and strategies employed by political actors to connect with voters and disseminate their messages in a digital-first environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication has always been an integral function of acquiring power and has been used to bring about changes in the social and political world around us (Das & Alam, 2019). According to the International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences, “Political communication is an interactive process in the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public.” “The process operates downward from governing institutions towards citizens, horizontally in linkages among political actors, and also upward from public opinion towards authorities” (Norris, 2000). In any democracy, political communication is a tool to facilitate change. Not only this, but for any deception and manipulation, political communication has taken centre stage and has been part and parcel of democratic politics (Bakir & McStay, 2018).

Since its inception, the media has played a significant role in facilitating political communication in order to reach a wider audience. Traditionally, in political communication, newspapers and radio played key roles (Chadwick, 2017). But with time, the situation changed. Across the world, with the rise of digital media, the fundamental basis of political communication has become digitally dependent. From the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama in the US to the 2014 Indian general election, the use of digital media as a key tool of political communication has become the new trend (Castells, 2009). With time, not only has the usage of digital media as a tool of political communication improved and become stronger, but also, with the rise of misinformation, uncontrolled usage, and unequal web literacy, it has faced several critical problems (Morozov, 2011). An important aspect of using digital media for political communication is that the audience can freely communicate with the politicians and express their views about politics without fear of not being heard (Kumar, 2019). With its remarkably strong growth, this field also added some new words to its repository, all thanks to social media. Words like Fake News, Post Truth, Misinformation, Black Hat Propaganda, Spin, Information Warfare etc., which are either recently coined or came forth after taking a backseat for long are rampantly used nowadays (Lawson & Niblock, 2016). Controversies such as the election of Donald Trump, Cambridge Analytica and tension

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