

## **A Study on the Role of New Media in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections in India**

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**Abstract:** *In the recent year's internet, particularly social media has changed the means in which politician and citizen network among themselves. Social media has almost eliminated the social and financial barriers that exist in the society. With the growth in the use of social media by politicians, the gap between the politician and citizen has been narrowed down. Social media can be defined as a platform in a network where members can share and discuss the information among them. Social media has become a powerful tool in the political campaigning and almost all political parties are using social media platform to reach out to the public. The study aims to look at the nature and method of new media used by the various national political parties in the 2014 parliamentary elections in India.*

**Keywords:** *social media, electoral process, politicians, voters, impact*

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### **I. Introduction**

The election campaign held for India in 2014 was the second most expensive campaign in the history of world, after the US presidential Campaign. The 1992 presidential election in US ushered in a new era of campaign media and next only stands the 2014 election held in for Lok Sabha elections in India in terms of technology and amount of money spent. There was an important development in the campaigning procedure as the parties tried to adopt pioneering campaigning approaches like digital rallies, social media, crowd fundraising and effective storytelling rather than run through the conventional mean of media communication of print and broadcast.

Electorates turned into more obviously involved with campaign media, particularly through radio and television programs. Communication scholars wondered about the beginning of the new era of campaign media, consecutively admiring its main stream trends and lamenting on the deprivation of political homily. The tendencies like political discourses were rooted mainly in traditional media. Less than a decade, innovative technological knowledge had enabled a main change in the campaign media structure that takes reformed methods in which political drives are conducted by candidates, described by the journalists, and experienced by electorates.

The language of transformation clearly pervades much of the current analysis of the 'new' communications environment. As Jay Blumler has opined, almost everything to do with political communication is in flux today, from media technologies and strategies of persuasion, to ownership and the nature of the audience (1999: 241)

New campaign media have boomed and developed into progressively prominent with each passing election. Contenders hire multifaceted media tactics and plans incorporating a fluctuating menu of new media inventions in combination with traditional media management methods. Campaign reporting is no longer the exclusive province of professional journalists, as bloggers and average citizens cover events and provide commentary that is widely available.

Voters look to new media as primary base of statistics and contribute energetically in campaigns through digital platforms.

A multi-layered communication atmosphere happens for voting campaigns. The media system is altering from a broadcast method connected with customary media where universal interest news items are dispersed to the mass community to a constricted casting model where judiciously created messages aim at distinct audience fragments. Yet again, the conventional media preserves a recognizable presence. Ample innovative and exploratory campaign reportage is done by skilled journalists, even as monetary pressures have forced the industry to decrease their numbers radically.

Conventional press still authenticate the statistics and data dispersed via new media podiums, such as Twitter feeds and blogs. Simultaneously, the propagation of new media has augmented the divergence and breakup of the communication surroundings. Media are extra diplomatically diverged, as position and sources linked with exciting theoretical positions plea to growing sections of the audience. The abundance availability of new sources makes it likely for voters to adapt their media intake to fit in to their individual tastes (Sunstein 2000; Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Stroud 2011).

Throughout the traditional media and in the process of various political phase, the candidates utilized already established nonpolitical and entrainment media to avoid conventional press gatekeepers who abridged their messages and inserted between extensive commentaries. Candidates required to reach electorates who were less alert towards traditional media like print and television news through personal pleas in the media venues they patronized. In US, by 2000 election, all main and minor contestants had basic websites that were heavily text-based (Bimber and Davis 2003).

Campaign websites incorporating communicating features, containing structures that permitted consumers to involve in deliberations, contribute to contestants, and volunteer became customary in the 2004 election. Election-associated blogs also increased, contributing electorates an alternative to corporate news bulletin materials (Cornfield 2004; Foot and Schneider 2006).

The US presidential election in 2008 marked the beginning of the next phase in the evolution of the new media, new politics. This phase is distinguished by the innovative technologies involved in the digital election communication that support communal construction, networking, collaboration, as well as dynamic engagement. Campaign websites became completely engaged with multimedia podiums where electorates could discover wide-ranging information about the contenders and about the poll logistics, access and share ads, blogs, videos and ads and deliver commentary, donate, and participate in volunteer undertakings.

The turning point that was witnessed in 2008 elections in US was the extensive use of social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, for exchange of information on various aspects of election, organizing campaign strategies, and participation in the election.

Conventional media set ups kept pace with the new development by including social media and video sharing features into the digital platforms. The innovations in the area of new media were augmented during 2010 midterm elections, particularly as Twitter and micro blogging sites were highlighted more conspicuously in the election media mix.

The influence of new media on elections has been considerable. Campaigns offer a workshop for the growth of political applications that carry over to post-election politics. The social media inventions that became prominent in the 2008 presidential election transformed into the standard exercise in the 2010 midterm elections. It set the stage for the development of political applications for handheld devices.

As the recent development, the candidates have integrated new media into their structural poll strategies for mobilizing, contacting and informing the voters. The poll campaigns also have developed advanced methods, like using focused text messages to reach specific constituencies and the targeted voters (Hillygus and Shields 2008)

The websites of the candidates have become the hubs of social media that can engage voters during and after elections. The parties outreach to voters continues between elections, especially through the use of regular text messages to supporters.

Grassroots political engagements have engaged new media as a way to disseminate the messages and reaching out and mobilizing their supporters. Simultaneously, election promotions had to get used to a more adverse and unstable election atmosphere.

Contestants are questioned and are under continuous inspection, as their words and movements are carefully documented. Journalists and people can accumulate information and distribute it using reasonable skills that link easily to linkages where gossips can be spread immediately. New media is capable to sustain gossips well following the conclusion of the election.

The association concerning traditional and new media has gone from confrontational to interdependent, as new media have developed the role for sources of campaign material for professional reporters. Regular people have become productive suppliers of election-related material extending from short responses to campaign materials to lengthy direct explanations of campaign proceedings.

Conventional press have tagged on new media structures onto their digital podiums which have become distribution methods for the materials that is created by the blogs, twitter feeds, websites and citizen-produced videos. This has made the role of new media increasingly important and the messages originates has set the campaign agenda. New media establish a plentiful source of voting materials for an increasing number of electorates. Although television is the main source of election news for a majority of people, online sources are also achieving similar acceptance (Smith 2011). The internet has transformed from a complementary source for election related information to a major source of news.

The present role of new media is nurturing a more active electorate and is possibly the most significant consequence of election promotions. Electorates use new media to take part in election promotions in customary and fresh methods. People produce and disseminate campaign material, containing opinion pieces, news stories, and independent ads audio and video accounts. They can avail and share data and statistics through peer-to-peer linkages using email and an ever growing range of digital platforms. They can involve in planned activities structured digitally by campaign groups, political parties, and interest groups.

## **II. Major Research Questions And Findings**

- i) To analyze the electoral campaigning trends in 2014 and track the distinct features of the campaign.
- ii) To find out popular mediums of news consumption so that the impact of future campaigns could be enhanced.

The question still looms at high is that whether the mass media has transformed the way of electoral process adopted by the political parties? However, the influence of the new mass media involved campaign is proved in the outcome of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in the country. Mass media are no longer the modest transporters of news, but have become tremendously powerful performers in the political game with autonomous powers of their own. They can destroy or extend political careers which is proved with the massive impressing victory of BJP which rooted out the political career of congress, the legendary party which ruled the nation after independence. BJP won 137 seats out of 282 (Election Commission of India figures). The victory was secured by achieving more than half of the total votes polled. Furthermore in 169 seats, the party's vote share was more than the vote shares of other political parties that completed second, third and fourth put together.

The new media can bring down governments or protect them from criticism. The advantageous factor was that the new media could help BJP to shape public opinion, set the political agenda and determine the content of public policy. 73 percent or nearly three out of four BJP victories were by margins of over one lakh votes and BJP's success was mainly against the Congress as nearly three out of five BJP victories were against it.

The view is that the modern media are no longer the 'fourth estate' that informs the public and acts as 'watch-dog of the constitution'. They have become a kind of fifth column with great but hidden political power and little accountability. As it can be observed that BJP won two thirds of the highly urban seats (37/570 and more than half of the rural seats (178/342). While the massive BJP victory can be attributed to the impact of new media.

The debate and research activities on the new media and its role in the elections has been continuing since the 1992 presidential campaign in US and it has proved in India during the 2014 parliamentary elections.

The issue is addressed both at macro-level and about the prominence of new media for egalitarian involvement besides more particular enquiries about the method, content, part, spectators, and impact of new media in specific promotions. The influence of new media in elections has been exciting and outstanding. The research findings should be measured within the framework of the stages of new media growth. As new media have developed, they have become more fundamental to the election procedures, and the effects are distinctive.

Researcher have addressed the inquiries concerning the procedure, purpose, and content of new media and the electoral process. The study also looked into the question what distinguishes traditional media from the new media in the campaigns?

The study observed the features of new media in polls and have delivered portraits of new media expansions in particular elections and followed their development over time. Leading characters that set new media separately from old media are interactivity and the capability to energetically involve spectators' in elections. New media also are flexible and adjustable, as they can house a various range of campaign uses. Among these, some applications have offline counterparts, which involves the fundraising, whereas others are exclusive to the digital realm, like election advertisements produced by voters.

Generally it is observed that candidate websites provides an illustration of research on the form, function, and content of new election media. Which leads to rising sophistication of websites across election cycles, and have analyzed their changing strategic value in poll campaign. It has become increasingly difficult to draw clear-cut distinctions between traditional and new media. Technology enables the convergence of communication platforms and the formation of hybrid digital media. Hybrid media have evolved as standard formats take on new media elements. Online versions of print newspapers originally looked similar to their offline counterparts. Over time they have come to resemble high-level blogs in style and function. Online newspapers have become less formal and more entertainment-focused, include mechanisms for interactive engagement, and accommodate significant multimedia and user-generated content. Research examining the influence of convergence and hybridity on campaign communication has not kept pace with developments that have important consequences for elections. Young voters, those under age 30, came of political age during the Internet era. Unlike older voters who established their campaign media habits in the print and television age, this generation has embraced the election online from the outset. A growing body of literature focuses on the

ways in which young voters are using new election media and its effects. Studies indicate that young voters are out front in terms of using new media for accessing information (Lupia and Philpot 2005), and many ignore traditional print and broadcast media and rely exclusively on digital sources (Owen 2011b). Young people also are at the forefront of new election media innovation and participate in campaigns through new media venues. Scholars have investigated the relationship between voters' use of new media and their levels of political attentiveness, knowledge, attitudes, orientations, and engagement. Early studies of the effects of new media on voter's campaign knowledge acquisition are mixed, while newer research reveals more consistent evidence of information gain (Norris 2000; Bimber 2001; Weaver and Drew 2001; Drew and Weaver 2006; Wei and Lo 2008). Scholars also have examined the influence of new election media use on the development of political attitudes and orientations, such as efficacy and trust (Johnson, Braima, and Sothirajah 1999; Kenski and Stroud 2006, Wang 2007; Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard 2010). Some studies have found a connection between exposure to online media and higher levels of electoral engagement and turnout (Johnson and Kaye 2003; Tolbert and Mcneal 2003; Wang 2007; Gueorguiva 2008; Gulati and Williams 2010). However, the effects may not be overwhelming (Boulianne, 2009). The online environment may be most relevant for people who already are predisposed toward political engagement (Park and Perry, 2008, 2009). The use of social media does not necessarily increase electoral participation, although it has a positive influence on civic engagement, such as community volunteerism (Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard 2010; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). 2009; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). However, many of the questions that have guided research remain contested or only partially addressed. Much research has employed well-worn theoretical frameworks that are not entirely appropriate for the new media age and has relied heavily on orthodox methodological approaches, such as survey research and content analysis. Theories explaining new media's role in elections should be refined or recast and creative research methodologies employed.

Going forward, scholars should critically and creatively address the basic question: How can new media's influence in elections be identified, measured, assessed, and explained in the current environment? This is a challenging proposition given that the new media environment is mercurial, and tracking developments is difficult. New media applications are introduced, modified, and sometimes, disappear. Audiences' new media tastes shift, and their engagement with particular platforms can be volatile. Candidates, parties, media organizations, and average citizens experiment with new media and introduce new scenarios in virtually every campaign. Theoretical frameworks should consider the unique characteristics of new media, with their inherent multi-path interactivity, flexibility, unpredictability, and opportunities for more active engagement. Theories should promote better understanding of the challenge new media present to entrenched media and political hierarchies and their consequences. They also should address the manner in which new media are influencing campaign logistics and strategies. Audience dynamics are becoming increasingly complex along with the campaign media environment, and scholarship developing analytical categories beyond demographics and basic political orientations would be beneficial. There has been much excitement generated by the prospect of using new media for electoral engagement, but the substance and significance of these forms of activation are barely understood. Studies might more deeply assess whether or not this engagement constitutes meaningful and effective political activation.

### **III. Conclusion**

Regular and standard procedural tactics should be restructured for the new media age or used in combination with cutting edge approaches. Some of the very same tools that are employed by users of digital media can be used by scholars to collect and analyze data. Electronic sources, such as blogs, discussion forums, and email, can function as archives of material that can be automatically searched, retrieved, extracted, and examined using digital tools. Audience analysis also can benefit from fresh methodological approaches. People do not consume news online in the same linear fashion that they read the morning newspaper. Instead, they explore news offerings by following a series of links to particular content. Web crawler techniques can be used to examine online election communities. Digital utilities, such as online timeline creators, visually chart the development of new election media and serve as research tools. Journals that can handle digital scholarship using multimedia graphics and interactive exhibits should be developed.

It is obvious that new media systems have had a huge impact on the results of the 2014, Lok Sabha elections and have totally reorganized to create a single, expensive, centralized, rapid-response operation. Success in selling of the political policies was scarcely more impressive. It is true that public opinion might have been even more opposed without the campaigns, but it is unlikely to have been much lower than it actually was, given the minimum or 'core' support for the policies, with or without political propaganda using the new media. There was plenty of room for support to have been much higher than it was. The new media transformed the political dimensions in the developing country like India. Similarly and perhaps the BJP politicians have been able to exploit the possibilities of the new media, and in doing so may well have lengthened their political careers and improved their success. Others (Congress and other political parties) have not been able to do this. The mass media appear to have encouraged trends towards hyper-democracy, governability or administration

overload. Some of the overviews are a procedure of crisis-mongering, some are longstanding forecasts grounded on temporary tendencies and in many cases there is a similar reasonable but differing sweeping statement to be made. Nevertheless the new media method has had an impact on electoral process, however perhaps on procedure and advent more than traditional content. The colossal perspective of the new media, shared with the ambition on the road to political marketing has produced the advent of a system of insipid populism.

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