

## Role of social networking sites in Indian politics

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### Abstract

The social networking sites are nowadays playing an increasing role in people's everyday life and the use of the social networking sites has become more and more important as a way of communicating in the last couple of years. Social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and MySpace etc. have gained more and more popularity. From the social networking sites especially the "big tree" services as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have grown tremendously in the last couple of years. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and in turn are permitting a new arena of grassroots politics. The main objective of this article is to study the role of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube etc. on Indian politics.

**Keywords:** Political parties, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Politicians

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, Social networking sites (SNSs) are one of the most important medium of communication among mostly people. Social media are new information network and information technology using a form of communication utilizing interactive and user-produced content, and interpersonal relationships are created and maintained. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) [10] define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (2013) There has been an explosive growth in the use of Internet not only in India, but also worldwide in the last decade. The population of India is around 1.2 billion as of 2012, of which the number of Internet users (both urban and rural) is around 205 million. It is estimated to increase to 243 million by June 2014, and India will be the second-leading country after China which currently has the highest Internet user base of 300 million.

The use of social networking sites is significantly complex. Even though use of social networking sites has several challenges such as security, privacy, accuracy at the same time it provides the opportunities for sharing, collaboration, and engagement of users which is provided by the medium of social networking site. It is very crucial to understanding how and why these tools can and should be used in politics committee. Social networking sites have rapidly grown in importance as a platform for political activities in its different forms. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and YouTube provide new ways to encourage citizen get involved in political life.

### 2. Most Popular Social Networking Sites

#### 2.1 Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular online social networking sites. It was founded on February 4, 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates. Today more than 500 million users are active participants in the Facebook community alone and studies suggest that between 55% and 82% of teenagers and young adults use SNSs on a regular basis (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011) [9]. The worldwide fascination

with Facebook is based on the possibility it offers to be in contact with people whose e-mail addresses and phone numbers have changed or become outdated. But an even more important feature of Facebook is the chance to create networks: Facebook's activity is based solely on communities. Being on Facebook isn't just limited to information within a group of friends. Through groups, users can form new networks. A user's posting, in the form of text, pictures or both, can receive feedback from other users in the form of the "Like" button, and the option to make their own comments. They can also forward the posting to their own Facebook contacts using the "Share" option. One popular feature Facebook supports is community pages for common interests. Many political candidates create a page for themselves, and when a user clicks on the "Like" button, that user indicates that they would like to receive updates each time the candidate adds something to Facebook.

#### 2.2 Twitter

Twitter is a free, Internet-based micro blogging service, on which users can send short, 140-character messages to each other. Its use is based on quick exchanges of thoughts and information between friends, acquaintances, and all the users of the Twitter platform. Twitter messages are most commonly called "tweets". In conversations concerning society, Twitter can be an interesting vessel, because its messaging form is very compact. In short messages, there is no opportunity to justify a point of view or cite sources, and because of this, political messaging and conversation can be more heated and critical here than on other social media platforms. Despite this, Twitter can be used for active political discussion. Twitter can also be used to steer the user to more detailed content elsewhere, through web links or other references. However, studies on the use of Twitter to influence voting behaviour highlight only small groups of "super users". Rajput, Himanshu (2014) [12] states that Twitter along with other social media is going to play a vital role in Indian political scenario. However social media cannot be an alternative for traditional media but can be used along with these channels to harness its full potential.

### 2.3 YouTube

YouTube is the Internet's leading video service. It began operating in 2005, and grew very quickly, with 50 million visits to the site just by the end of the same year. In 2010, there were already more than 2 billion visits to YouTube every day. The basic idea behind YouTube is that users upload videos to the site and at the same time, watch and comment on what they see. Based on the number of viewers, the most popular videos on YouTube are music videos, entertainment programmes, and news videos, but there are also some user-made videos about personal problems that have found quite a large audience. YouTube is also an important channel for parliamentary and regional election candidates, with a much lower cost than TV commercials. YouTube users have so far been more inclined towards entertainment than politics, and because of this, the most watched political content has been satirical "mash-ups", where a video recording is mixed with a different audio recording, changing the message and meaning of the video. Also popular are secretly filmed slip-ups and witty remarks made by politicians.

### 2.4 MySpace

MySpace is one of the general-purpose social networking sites; launched in August 2003 by Tom Anderson the CEO of an Internet company called eUniverse. Das and Sahoo (2011)<sup>[4]</sup> indicated that MySpace has the third position in the list of the ten most popular social networking sites in the world with M80.5 estimated unique monthly visitors.

### 2.5 Blogs

Blogs have been published since the mid-1990s, when they mostly resembled online personal diaries, and were basically "web log books" from which the word is derived. The main difference to a real diary is that this online version can receive comments, links, and other feedback from readers. A blog is, above all, the writer's tool for the publication of their own thoughts and opinions. What makes blogging an effective information network is the inter-user blogosphere that shares links between blogs referring to similar content. Blogs can be tagged using different search terms, they can be listed in blog directories according to name, and each blog entry is another hit on search engines. Although the basic idea of a blog is to stimulate conversation, the communication between blog writers is usually quite scant. For example, in following the interactions between American social bloggers, it has been noted that bloggers often quote bloggers of identical backgrounds and borrow and recycle things or themes they have brought forward. However, occasionally a blogger may highlight and support or criticize the opinion of a fellow blog writer.

### 3. Emergence of Social Networking Sites in Indian Politics

With the emergence of Social networking sites such as Facebook, SNS usage has become a global consumer phenomenon. Social networking sites have influenced many aspects of our life be it education, culture, administration, marketing, businesses or politics. Social Networking Sites is playing a considerable new role in Indian democracy. With the changing politics of India political parties and politicians have found a new ways of reaching out to a younger and aspiration population. The use of social media by Indians was first highlighted during the 2008 Mumbai attacks when information

shared through Twitter and Flickr between Indians and the outside. "The second mass use of social media in India was the May 2009 national elections, when, for the first time, online voter registration and transparency campaigns started" where first time political parties tried to reach out to voters through social networking websites. However, all of these are still in trend, but increasingly in urban India, political parties are becoming tech savvy as this is the only way to reach out eloquent youths. Among major political parties in India, BJP has the biggest charisma in social media. BJP started using the social media even before 2009 general election, which it lost. But in recent years, it has dig deeper into social media. But social media can also be subject to significant abuse. Some politicians have been accused of boosting their apparent popularity on social media with legions of followers who don't exist and of using social media to smear their opponents. Worse, social media have been used to fan violence against religious and ethnic groups.

### 4. Social Networking Sites and Indian Political parties

The role of Social Networking Sites in Indian politics has risen tremendously in the recent years.

Different Indian political parties have their own websites which was not seen some years back and some of them also use other social mediums to interact with people. With every party having its own website and leaders being active on different media it makes the citizens feel that they are within their reach. The need to take appointments or wait for them to talk is no longer required. The leaders are accessible at the click of a button. Mr. Narendra Modi, prime minister of India, has used all media to interact with people. He has been effectively using social media to disseminate information and remain in touch with the young population of India. Mr. Rahul Gandhi who is one of the icons of youth in India has used almost every social medium apart from actual communication to interact with the people and especially the youths. He has used social networking websites like Facebook to talk to people and prominent people as well as common man interacts at the same time. He also writes blogs to share his views with people. Mr. Shashi Tharoor of Congress Party was one of the first politicians to start tweeting.

The new political arena is full of commercials, blog posts, and hundreds of tweets. Through social media, politicians are now able to constantly display their message through endless commercials, see direct responses to their actions via Facebook or Twitter, and connect with public (Foley, 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>.

### 5. Conclusion

A positive development of social Networking sites emergence has been that the youth is talking about the political issues. Earlier the political discussions were restricted only to those who read newspapers, watched news channels or participated in discussions in nukkad of a village or clubs. But now, social networking sites has made the youth of India to sit up and discuss political issues. They spend time to analyze and discuss politics. Social media outlets are essential to politicians and political parties, enabling them to gain support, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly social media allows the highly motivated people to create a context more easily in which the barely motivated people can be effective without having to become activists themselves, creating an environment perfect

for politicians to utilize. Social networking sites have been able to make profound impact by means of news, interaction, learning and marketing. Social networking sites have become an important source of news. Various news channels tweet or give updates on significant happenings all over the world and the news quickly gets passed around the networks in ways never experienced before. It allows people to keep in touch more regularly. People in different cities, countries and continents can keep in touch effortlessly and it creates an opportunity to experience different cultures and exchange opinions.

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