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HOW SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING AFFECTED 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN INDIA



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ABSTRACT

How Social Media affected the 2014 General Elections in India:

It's worth looking at some vital statistics from credible sources to appreciate the power of the medium:

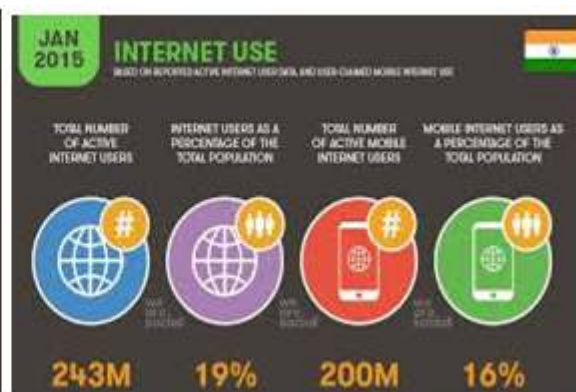
India has bypassed US to become the world's second largest Internet user after China, 16% of the people uses Internet roughly around 10% of the Australian population more importantly its users are significantly younger than those of other countries. As per the recent Google survey social media



had impacted around 30% of seats in Lok Sabha Elections in 2014 nearly 160 of India's 543 Parliamentary constituencies. According to IAMA report social media influenced 3%–4% of votes in 24 states where Internet usage was sizeable and 4 out of every 10 urban voters (or 37%).

KEYWORDS :Social Media Networking , General Elections , statistics , election process.

INTRODUCTION :



Growth of social media in India:

Across India, there are 143 million users of social media. Urban areas witnessed a growth of 35 per

cent with 118 million users as of April 2015. On the other hand, the number for rural India stood at 25 million, up from close to 12 million last year, showing a growth of 100 per cent.

While the above statistics and insights speak for it, I believe that social media played a very pervasive role throughout the election process. Political parties have spent 2-5% of the election budgets for social media.



The role of social media for the elections broken down into the following:

I. Ask, share and decide:

New and existing voters go online to seek information, address queries and, most importantly, to form opinions. The same is widely influenced by the social media chatter, information provided by political parties, the ability to participate in a dialogue with the voters, and the overall sentiment prevalent around the leaders up for voting.

II. Source of news feeds for traditional media:

Social media influences other media (TV/ Newspapers picked up a lot of news from Twitter) Traditional media channels such as television/print leverage social media conversations and discussions to shared real time news and views around political parties.

III. Word of mouth transported to physical world:

Word of mouth is carried offline, wherein those who are passively consumed or are engaged with the chatter carried the opinion offline to peers, family and colleagues, thus made a huge impact in the physical world.

IV. Everyone was a journalist on social media:

It enabled every person was a reporter-journalist and educationalist on Face book, Twitter, Quora etc. and shared information /news of national interest. There was very active Twitter base in India that was highly political and there were constant fights between the right-wingers and the rest, which read as BJP-Congress fights. Major political episodes in the country became trending topics and both sides were able to make TV news headlines quite regularly.

V. Opportunity to influence female audiences:

Last but not the least; with the increase in female internet penetration, it became an active source of influence and education for the female voters which constitute close to 49% of potential voters.

However, there were certain pros and cons witnessed in 2014 elections on the social media campaigning:

Positive impacts observed:

- + Accessed to new and female voters.
- + One on one platform to participate in a dialogue with citizens.
- + Accessible to all.
- + Powerful platform to educate and inform.
- + Transparent, fast and quick.
- + Source of positive influence for political parties.

Negative impacts observed:

- + Could not be entirely controlled.
- + Prone to hacking, there were plenty of instances observed in the 2014 election process.
- + Observed the backlash of Slack responses.
- + Negative sentiments influenced the election.
- + Sometimes facts misrepresented



Some of the challenges observed in the election process related with the social media:

- 1.Many of those who actively debated on social forums who were either minor (under 18 years of age) or did not have their Voter ID card yet.
- 2.The semi-urban and rural masses, whose votes matter, were not yet fully into social media.
- 3.It would be safe to assume that most middle class Indians experience political activity on Twitter through news reports on TV
- 4.There are still 84% of people that don't use the internet, Official media controlled by the government and private channels were their main source of information.
- 5.It was not clear how many people turned and voted on polling day.

CONCLUSION:

Social media played a crucial role in the 2014 general elections in India which Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata party formed the government at center with full majority which has not seen in the last three decades, Not only Narendra Modi other tech savvy politicians like Chandrababu Naidu also came to power in 2014. I strongly believe future elections will be fought through social media networks only, Mobile applications such as WhatsApp already playing a crucial role for transmitting messages and videos. In 2019 general elections parties will fight over the mobile apps such as WhatsApp and Hike.

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