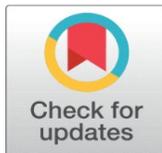# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDO-US ELECTORAL SYSTEM: EXPLORING CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of technological advancements in media on the strategies employed by political leaders to communicate with the public, and to examine how these changes influence the voting public's perception and reception of political messages with a comparative analysis between India and the USA. In this regard this study employed a qualitative analysis method for the research by utilizing content analysis and case study methodology. A systematic examination of media coverage and political leaders' communication strategies across various platforms was conducted and an in-depth analyses of specific political campaigns or events to illustrate the impact of technological advancements in media on political communication and public engagement. The research highlights the interconnectedness of media and electoral politics, showcasing how social media platforms have revolutionized traditional modes of political engagement.

The study reveals that social media has enabled two-way communication between voters and political leaders, amplifying marginalized voices and transforming political discourse. However, this shift also presents challenges, including the spread of disinformation and difficulties navigating social media .

The findings emphasize the significance of social media in shaping electoral politics, influencing political participation, engagement, and the democratic process. As social media evolves, addressing its challenges and threats is crucial to ensuring informed citizenship and democratic values.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of technological advancements in media has revolutionized the way political leaders communicate with the public. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for political mobilization and activism (Wayne,2023). The proliferation of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of election campaigning, enabling politicians to connect with voters, share their policies, and build their personal brand more effectively (Tolbert et al.,2023). In recent times, social networking platforms have emerged as vital tools for expanding and facilitating business operations. Contrary to the common misconception that only teenagers utilize social media applications and websites, these platforms are increasingly being leveraged for business purposes (Narasimhamurthy,2014). While there are indeed teenagers with entrepreneurial aspirations, the majority of users on business-oriented social network

websites are adults. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram offer significant benefits for businesses by enabling them to reach a large portion of their target audience. With millions of users actively engaged on these social networks, companies that overlook their potential miss out on a substantial consumer base Zuckerberg,(2015).

However, this shift has also raised concerns about the impact of technological advancements on the democratic process. The increasing reliance on social media has created new challenges for political communication, including the spread of disinformation, the amplification of partisan echo chambers, and the manipulation of public opinion (Suri,et al.,2016) .

With the majority of adults now actively participating in social network sites, understanding how persons utilize these platforms and the implications for American politics becomes increasingly significant (Bode, 2012). Social networks, originally tasked with managing and directing the political sphere, have evolved into tools for navigating political processes. This transformation is primarily driven by the intention to broaden the use of social media beyond an elite stratum engaged in political propaganda (Newman et al.,2015). It aims to demonstrate that any individual utilizing any social media platform can act as a political actor. This research paper tries to make a comparative analysis of indo-us electoral systems in the era of social media. for that a little knowledge about the electoral system of both countries is important . here is a brief description of the electoral system of two countries:

Although both India and the United States are democracies, their voting methods couldn't be more different. One important distinction is the electoral framework. In contrast to the decentralized system in the United States, where individual states are responsible for managing elections , the Election Commission of India operates within a centralized structure in India (Howard et al.,2019).

Equally varied are voting systems. In India, the electoral college selects the winner based on the number of votes cast using the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) method. U.S. presidential elections, on the other hand, are a hybrid of first-past-the-post (FPTP) and the Electoral College (EC). Furthermore, ranked-choice voting (RCV) has been implemented in a number of US jurisdictions, enabling voters to arrange candidates according to their preferences(Astuti,2022) . Another aspect that differs is election management. The whole election process in India is overseen by the strong and competent Election Commission. The United States, on the other hand, has two government agencies that deal with elections, but none of them is in charge of actually running the elections.

Another difference between the two countries is voter participation. In the most recent general election, 66.8% of eligible voters in India cast votes. In comparison, only 61.8% of eligible voters cast votes in the 2020 presidential election in the United States, which is historically low.

One distinctive aspect of the American electoral system is the Electoral College, which uses 538 state-appointed electors to choose the president. Someone has pointed out that this approach might make the popular vote winner lose the presidency.

To sum up, the election systems of the United States and India are quite different, despite the fact that both countries are democracies, however the impact of social media is seen on the elections of both countries. The current research paper delves in understanding the impact of technological advancements in media on the strategies employed by political leaders to communicate with the public. It seeks to examine how these changes influence the voting public's perception and reception of political messages, and to explore the implications of these developments for the democratic process. By exploring the complex relationships between technology, media, and politics, this research hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape of political communication in the digital age.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the rise of web 2.0 type technologies recently (kiryakova et al., 2011; mabić et al., 2019; baxter et al., 2014), the concept has amplified significance of the internet regarding political communication. The potentials of social media (particularly twitter), wikis, as social software package(mazurek, grzegorz, et al., 2022; dijck, 2011), seem supportive in the context of politics, and enabler to get increased sharingin democratic processes. Creighton (2005) describes public involvement involving to take note of public anxieties, wants, and moralsthat are linked with governmental and corporate level decision-making. The term "e-participation" emphasizes to involve utilizing the bounties of internet tech to facilitate dialogsamid the chosen and the voting public. In connection with, karpf (2009) presents the concept of "politics 2.0," which entails leveraging costs along with abundance of info to foster more participation(wattal sunil et al., 2008).

During the 2008 presidential cycle, two distinctive features of internet campaigning emerged, primarily pioneered by democrats. The first feature involved campaigns leading to expand opportunities for followers to actively take part in the process of elections encompassing campaigners, party worker, and representatives. For instance, online campaign run by al goreallowed followers to generate and share tailored web pages with their groups and families. Howard dean designed a strategy to involve their supporters in their campaign with the motive to raise funds in relation to his election campaign (kreiss, 2009). Meet up like platform helped to utilize the commercial campaign and assist supporters in event planning to manage fund raising. Dean's internet team also designed and implemented tools that empowered supporters to create their affinity group sites for dean, along with an application enabling them to set personalized fundraising goals and solicit contributions from their network.

The second feature involved developing data organization to facilitate the coordination to involve and engage supporters with the voters. In essence, the internet significantly "amplified" (agre, 2002) institutional based campaign practices that had been in place for over 40 years. Following the 2004 election cycle, persons with experience from presidential elections transitioned into real professionals having expertise in digital media (kreiss, 2010).

With the insights gained from the 2004 experience, these professionals embarked on developing improved systems to interact and communicate with followers. Post-2004, the firms established by these persons created dedicated "customer relations management" for the sake of political purposes. These systems allowed campaigns to maintain more accurate records showing involvement of supporter, getting trail of donations and acts taken on volunteer basis. Additionally, such systems empowered campaigners to direct targeted emails to their supporters as per their discrete characteristics to their zip codes.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How have technological advancements in media altered the ways in which political leaders disseminate information and engage with the public?
- What are the implications of these changes for the voting public's access to information, political awareness, and decision-making processes?

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the impact of technological advancements in media on the strategies employed by political leaders to communicate with the public, and to examine how these changes influence the voting public's perception and reception of political messages.

5. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H1: Political leaders' use of media and the public's reception of their words have both been profoundly impacted by the rapid development of media technology.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research paper aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between technological progress, media, and political communication. The findings provided valuable insights for political leaders, policymakers, and media practitioners seeking to effectively engage with the public and promote informed citizenship in the digital age.

7. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study employed a qualitative analysis method for the research by utilizing the following techniques:

1. Content analysis: A systematic examination of media coverage and political leaders' communication strategies across various platforms.

2. Case studies: In-depth analyses of specific political campaigns or events to illustrate the impact of technological advancements in media on political communication and public engagement.

8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Several noteworthy discoveries were made throughout the course of this investigation, and they are outlined below:

Persuasion and propaganda have long been associated with political communication. Political rhetoric has its origins in the ancient practice of leaders displaying their authority and strength via the erection of monuments and symbols. Political discourse and popular opinion were both influenced by public addresses (Dogra et al., 2021). The advent of mass media in the twentieth century reshaped political communication discourses, including advertising, public relations, and propaganda. During times of crisis and conflict, political leaders like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill used radio broadcasting to reach millions of listeners. Building one's political identity and advancing one's political agenda were and are common goals of political communication. From an agenda-setting perspective, political communication seems manipulative; it makes use of social scientific methods and heuristics to comprehend media environments, human motivation, and behavior (Hastuti, et al..2023).

The significance of social media in influencing political discourse and rallying followers has grown in importance in the modern digital age, as has the trend of political communication moving online(Gottfried,2016). The presidential campaigns of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 were the first to actively use social media to reach out to voters and collect donations. Similarly, the 2019 Ukrainian presidential campaign of Volodymyr Zelenskyy changed the way the campaign is organized and impacts voters by relying extensively on social media for advertising. The distinctive characteristics of digital communication and its influence on political advocacy and discourse have been exposed by a thorough examination of the interplay between political communication, media, and politics in India's dynamic and consequential political system. Next, there are several reasons why social media platforms have exploded in popularity in the modern day. The high price of the necessary equipment to reach a wide audience was, up until recently, social media's main challenge (Norris, 2023) . The proliferation of the internet, however, has somewhat mitigated this issue. As a result, blogs, social media sites and Weibo have become quite popular for personal advertising. People no longer interact, organize, and discover like-minded organizations in the same manner that they did before this transition. Information and media are more accessible than ever before, allowing individuals to quickly research and discuss any number of issues (Vergeer et al.,2013).

In the twenty-first century, social media platforms have grown in importance as a form of communication, significantly influencing societal, economic, and political aspects of life. The media plays an increasingly important role in politics, particularly during elections, with the help of both people and political leaders. By breaking down digital political communication into its component parts, we can see how echo chambers and filter bubbles have grown in social media and wonder if these phenomena are the result of human error or if algorithms are trying to influence the flow of information by announcing themselves in this way.

Third, the importance and strength of social media platforms have been highlighted by their expanded utilization as a tool in the election, which has defined their role in shaping the technical conclusion of the race.

The research also reveals that social media have evolved into a new kind of activism, suggesting that people of all educational and economic backgrounds are becoming politically active. Despite the fact that the present study presents both certainty and uncertainty about the e-democracy scenario's present state, it introduces two intriguing questions that need more investigation. To start, would political participation among users rise if more people had access to and were better able to utilize digital tools, such as via increased broadband use or general digital literacy? Second, is there a virtual equivalent of the historically noted disparity in political participation? In order to find out whether e-democracy is more theoretical or practical, we need to know the answers to these questions. The paper concludes that future research on participation behavior should use a longitudinal approach to compare the evolving degrees of ICT democracy.

Fourthly, with regards to the role of social media in the electoral politics of India, it is established that social media made political information accessible. Quickly disseminated to almost all major social media platforms as information moves through various phases(Backhouse,2011). People get this data from these sites and then share it with others, demonstrating how democratic social media is when it comes to sharing information.

Facebook users' political literacy, engagement as voters, access to campaign materials, political discourse, and election-related news all contribute to the platform's prominence in India's electoral politics system, according to the study's results. The latter are accountable for improving political discourse and election processes by providing a safe haven for citizens to freely share information.

Fifthly, in order to evaluate Facebook's impact on electoral politics in American and Indian democracies, researchers have looked at social media sites, especially Facebook, within the framework of electoral politics (Zuckerberg,2015). It has long been believed that anybody with access to the internet might become a "content creator" via social media. This paper introduces the concept of "new media populism," which is concerned with the ways in which populists channel the wrath of "the people" and provide a platform for "the people" to express their opinions in politics. Facebook and Twitter, two examples of new media, may increase the public's access to news about politics. Among these features is the ability to publish news and/or leave comments(Pisciottano,2019). Global studies have shown that most social media users only consume content, while a smaller percentage actively participate by posting comments or original content (Chaudhary et al.,2020). Therefore, national political systems, rather than media, often determine the extent to which the public in various nations participates in expressing its views via the present status of a country (Kleis Nielsen, et al.,2018). Of course, nations often select for local solutions, which shapes cyberculture and ideology. In both India and the US, social media sites have had a significant effect on political discourse, campaigns, and communication. While it's true that both sovereign states have certain comparable characteristics, it's also important to note that cultural, demographic, and technical differences cause the impact of social media sites to vary somewhat across the two nations.

9. DISCUSSION

Young people and voters in rural areas, in particular, have found new ways to get involved in politics through social media in India. Even in places with slow internet, politicians can reach out to voters through messaging apps like WhatsApp. But since not everyone has the same level of access to digital information and technology, this openness to the public might make preexisting problems worse.

Social networking sites have boosted political engagement in the US, particularly among younger voters, marginalized communities, and activists. Social media has been a driving force behind movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, which have brought attention to pressing societal issues and called for political reform. Online harassment, targeted disinformation, and voter fraud have all recently increased, which has slowed the expansion of digital activism. Free and fair elections in the US and India were compared from a legal standpoint, which covered a lot of ground. Comparing the American and Indian voting systems reveals some important distinctions with far-reaching consequences for equality and representation. Under India's first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, candidates are elected based on the number of votes they get in each constituency. This voting method often results in underrepresentation of some groups and the exclusion of smaller political parties.

However, in the United States, the electoral votes are distributed according to the states via the Electoral College. As a result, there have been instances when a candidate has been elected president without actually receiving the majority of the popular votes. Through a variety of mechanisms, both systems strive to guarantee the integrity of elections: Whereas the United States has confusing voter ID laws, widespread issues with accessibility and fraud, and a system in place to combat non-voting citizens, India mandates voter ID cards and offers solutions to these concerns. While the United States allows huge sums of private money and Super PACs to influence elections, India maintains strict control of campaign financing. This has an effect on electoral fairness in India.

India is the 3rd largest user base for Twitter and increased political mobilization and campaigns through social media makes the micro blogging site an important platform to study. While, like the Indian Facebook does, twitter offers political organizations an opportunity to convey information on a global level, it enables them to exchange information in real time during such processes and engage with a public directly. It has a networked design, and its purpose is to fast spread and share information thus fostering the quick interaction of a number of people. Also, Sometimes Twitter is the main source of the news and is known to leak important news stories even before conventional media.

Electronic campaigning reveals that choice of platforms such as blogs, websites and social media depend on user behavior. Thus, the effective exploitation of Web 2.0 technology from the instance of 2008 U. S presidential election which is characterized as a significant turning point in new media politics, with high degree of public engagement via a cohesive social media strategy. Such a success saw politicians throughout the globe use the same technology, particularly during the elections. Still, the relevance of Twitter in Indian elections, where there are 815 million voters, internet availability is at 10% of population and the majority of them utilize social networks is fairly disputable.

When it comes to future elections coming in 2024 in the United States of America, it might be observed that the scale of the effect of Twitter is guaranteed to be pretty large. Since politics has also accepted the usage of social media platforms notably in the course of political campaigns, the role of twitter in shaping the political agenda and its affects in affecting voters' choice will be crucial.

Therefore, the study has successfully produced a research on complex impacts of social networking sites on electoral politics and it has offered a comparative comparison between India and USA. In terms of the primary goal of the research, the study has established the interconnectedness of media and electoral politics in contemporary democracies and provided an explanation for how the structure of social media platforms has altered traditional modes of political engagement. In contrast to traditional forms of media, most social networking platforms feature two-way contact and involvement by the voters with political leaders while at the same time elevating the voices of the poor, minority or the less prominent individuals. As a result of this shift, political discourse is shifting, and with it comes new opportunities and threats, such as the spread of disinformation and the difficulty of interacting with social media.

Rather than being straightforward communication tools, the study's examination of social media sites' structural properties in connection to the ecosystems it outlined demonstrated how these sites function as postmodern ecosystems powered by algorithms, user actions, and data analysis. They pave the way for data analysis, microtargeting, and electioneering with an emphasis on political messaging, all of which have the potential to influence voters and their expectations of the government in ways that were previously unimaginable. People with more means will inevitably figure out how to utilize these tools to their advantage in elections, casting doubt on the transparency and accountability of our democratic process.

It is feasible to discern the parallels and dissimilarities in the use of social media platforms by examining their influence on democratic politics, particularly in relation to the elections in the United States and India. Because political leaders and parties can reach a more diversified audience via social media at lesser expense than through conventional media, it has become an essential tool in both nations' election campaigns. Nonetheless, research did show that there are significant differences between American and Indian Internet use. Another problem is that political parties in India can't reach everyone who follows them on social media since internet availability isn't universally high. This is particularly true in rural regions. But the new generation of communicators has made it easier to voice political issues, which has given parties a better grasp of public opinion. As the number of people with access to faster internet continues to rise in the United States, platforms like Facebook and Twitter are exerting increasingly more power to reinforce the country's binary political system in the run-up to and during elections.

This study found that most campaign arsenals no longer include social media platforms due to the type and degree to which political parties and leaders in the two nations under consideration use these platforms in their election campaigns. In India, political parties are starting to utilize social media to reach out to young voters, while in the US, platforms like Facebook and Twitter are more often used for things like policy debates, election campaigns, and real-time political messaging. However, the research did highlight some worrying trends, such as an increase in the spread of false information and efforts to influence voters via social media manipulation, which might undermine democratic political processes.

As a last point, we learned more about modern electoral politics by comparing the impact of social media in India and the United States. Misinformation, division, and technological stratification have all been exacerbated by these platforms, even as they have expanded chances for political communication for everyone. Both nations' social media usage has brought up the question of free speech and its limits, particularly in relation to anything that may be considered hate speech, disinformation, or electoral meddling.

Thus, the research encompasses a cross-section of the understanding that social media platforms considerably alter the American and Indian political politics. They pose a danger to the credibility of the elections even while they may provide doors to greater political power and citizenship. Findings from this study highlight the need of social media monitoring and education in order to mitigate the potential negative effects on democratic processes and fully realize the potential beneficial contributions of social media to modern democracies. According to the results of the comparison, in order to

strengthen the democratic institutions of both countries, it is important to figure out how to have a productive conversation and work together to explain the best practices in the area of technology and democracy.

10. VALIDITY OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The study conceives the hypothesis, whose validity has been examined as follows:

H1:   Political leaders' use of media and the public's reception of their words have both been profoundly impacted by the rapid development of media technology.

Technological advancement across media has impacted the political leaders' population through transformation of the media in the way it is being used and the population in the way they receive and interpret the messages from the leaders. Application of technology particularly the social networking sites have greatly influenced the electoral political systems in India as well as the United States of America. These changes have been reciprocated by political leaders in both nations by the trend of resorting to the use of the digital platforms in voter appeal and campaigning, as well as influencing the populace. The change from the conventional media, TV, and radio to the social media platforms – twitter, face book, and the Instagram has assured political heads a direct engagement with the masses apart from media interference. Therefore, such campaigns are more personalized, conducted in real-time, and easily involving the audience.

After evaluating the electoral systems prevalent in India and USA in the international context in which both the states formulate their electoral policies in the wake of technological progresses, there seems to be a direct correlation between the changes dramatically in the thinking of political leaders for using the media and voting trends among public. Moreover, mapping compound changing media uses by political leaders by the Indian and USA while formulating electoral policies there is significant correlation between technological advancements, and fluctuating voting behaviour.

11. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has successfully explored the complex impacts of social networking sites on electoral politics, providing a comparative analysis between India and the USA. The research has established the interconnectedness of media and electoral politics in contemporary democracies, highlighting how social media platforms have altered traditional modes of political engagement.

Notably, social media has enabled two-way communication between voters and political leaders, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and individuals. This shift has transformed political discourse, presenting both opportunities and challenges, including the spread of disinformation and the difficulties of navigating social media .

The study's findings underscore the significance of social media in shaping electoral politics, with implications for political participation, engagement, and the democratic process as a whole. As social media continues to evolve, it is essential to address the challenges and threats associated with its use in electoral politics, ensuring that these platforms promote informed citizenship and democratic values.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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