

Social Networking Websites Transforming Political Advertising: A Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Internet is something that is being used today in every aspect of life. The rapid growth and popularity of internet has paved the way for policies to tap the potential of social media. Politicians are using different types of social media strategies for campaigning for elections. Social media strategies have completely changed the way political communication, political parties and the politicians choose to communicate with the voters. This channel for campaigning is evolving with time and its role in campaigning for contesting for elections is becoming more and graver. Different types of marketing approaches as well as their attributes are well connected with political campaigns as well as challenges are also focussed upon. Unique strategies for deliberating political campaigning and contesting elections are being evaluated and assessed. The evaluation strategy comprises of 4 techniques. These include rating of the policymaker, bellwether, intense period debrief as well as system mapping.

Keywords: Social media strategies, politics, political campaigns, social media and elections.

INTRODUCTION:

In the past few years, social media has never failed to leave an impact on public discourse as well a communication. Social media is also being used increasingly in the context of politics. It is believed that the microblogging websites like Twitter and social networking platforms like Facebook have a huge potential of increasing the participation of politicians. While Twitter is considered to be a good and effective platform for the users in order to spread information and also to gain political opinion with the help of different political institutions, networks, etc. Different political parties, politicians and political organisations have started using Facebook and other such social networking websites for entering into a direct dialog with the citizens who are the voters. They aim at encouraging political discussions on such platforms. Earlier studies have also shown that from view point of political organisations, there's an emerging demand for continuously collecting, monitoring, analysing, summarising and visualising the politically relevant data. All these activities that are subsumed within social media analytics, maybe considered to be difficult. They might find it difficult to use different types of social networking websites and large amount of data and information. Systematic analysis as well as tracking approaches along with apt scientific techniques and methods in the political scenario are still unexplored (Choi, 2016). Some papers propose and discuss the methodological framework for analytics of social media in the context of politics. To be more specific, the framework of these papers summarise most important issues which are political relevant. They present them from the view point of political organisations and the corresponding methodologies of different scientific domains.

In the present day scenario, everyone is looking to join the social media platforms. This is mainly because everything is going digital today. Each and every individual is connected with the society and the world through

media. They communicate regularly with the help of social media. There is a huge database of users that are registered on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. It's become quite beneficial and one of the best ways of reaching the audience in a very simple and concise manner. But, the question is how social media can be used by politicians for the political campaigns successfully. Meeting everyone personally isn't possible at all for the political candidates. Thus, it's very important for them to be connected with their voters in some way or the other. Social media proves to be the best solution in this case. The popularity of social media is growing immensely with each passing day due to a number of reasons (Kumar & Natarajan, 2016). Use of these social networking websites for politics and for political campaigns has become important for all political parties. Since, the social networking websites are capturing the attention and the traffic, it become important to assess their potential. Social media not just helps the politicians to get information, but it even helps them in interacting with each other. They can also express their commitments online by posting their campaign promises on the social networking websites. They can also share blogs related to political opinions, attitude, etc. On the contrary, it even helps users in politically expressing themselves. They can also encourage their friends and relatives to vote. They can ask for donations online, update their status and post graphics. Social media websites have a huge impact on elections in terms of number of voters involved in the campaign. For instance, in the year 2008, Obama, former U.S. president used social media for campaigning for his elections. He understood that social media has a good potential, thus, he leveraged it to campaign for his candidature in the political elections of 2008. It was the campaigns that happened initially where social networking websites were pervasive. The politicians try to develop interesting posts to engage their followers.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Political campaigns are crafted very carefully for every candidate. Their purpose is to address the constituency of the candidate and present him or her and his or her party as best as possible. After development of US, his suffrage was restricted to owning of the land by whites. These men generally involved themselves in politics simply by reading the newspapers or visiting the politician in person. However as humans moved forward towards the 1930s election, Franklin Roosevelt who was the president then used radio for connecting with Americans. Then in the year 1960, Kennedy and Nixon debated and introduced mass developed version for in person politics. It was done through televisions across the country (Adamu, 2018).

Political campaigns are crafted carefully for every candidate for addressing their constituency. It also helps the candidates in presenting the candidates and the party in best way possible. As we progressed forward towards the elections of 1930, Roosevelt used radio for connecting with American population. Then in the debate of 1960 between Kennedy ND Nixon, the mass produced version of in person politics was presented through TV throughout the country. This advanced in technology has developed more opportunities for the voters to participate. It helps them in learning more about every candidate and have an easy access to those candidates (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015).

Every social media channel targets different kind of audience. It uses different types of tools for allowing the people to share their videos, ideas, links, etc. for developing a network of citizens by connecting them through common interests. The increasing number of users of these social media websites has attracted a large number of companies for including internet advertising in marketing plan. Since social media targets the capabilities and is also less expensive as compared to print or television advertising (Anderson, Toyin and Kenneth, 2017).

The companies aren't just the only ones to realise the advantages of networking and advertising of such websites. During the elections of 2004, the political campaigns started exploring the advantages of these websites. In the political campaigning for the 2008 elections, people tried understanding the use of such websites.

With an invention of internet, information travels fast between people. This increased with snail mail being replaced by instant connection of mails and social networking websites. Internet was the product of Dept. of Defence Advanced Research Project Agencies program. It was meant for acting as a network of communication between different agencies. Since internet was available to general public, the information travelled quickly (Assibong and Oshanisi, 2018). A whole generation grew up during the era of instant communication and connectivity. With the help of social media websites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, millions of users can easily share information. They can spread news about their lives. Even distribution of news stories became easy across the world.

Levy and Kotler disputed that the marketing professionals, the political challenges can be crucial. Especially where the academics along with marketing circumstances and political science have investigated about the way the political and commercial marketing events have achieved from one another (Ayeni and Esan, 2018),.

Experts suggest that the businesses and the political parties expand the whole concept of marketing campaigns

for accomplishing success. The commercial and the political campaigns have similar kind of characteristics. The commercial campaigns mainly focus on the promotion of particular products, ideas and services. They aim at creating awareness about service, ideas and products. They reassert and also refine the different between competitive position of brands for continuing the market share and profit level. Similarly, the political campaigns often intend promoting the candidates parties, political causes and the political agenda. They target the voters as commercial consumers for its purpose of garnering votes. It helps in increasing the awareness and for improving possibilities to win the election (Chikere and Nwoka, 2015). In the political market, the positioning is likely to be oriented about the product than the market. Experts also recommend that the parties and candidates should position themselves on the basis of the position in the race of elections. They are the leader, challenger or the follower. They disregard in recommending the implications of the competitive position. They also affect the policies communication. The main issue with position of the political party is that creation of a steady image with one single theme. In marketing, the most widely used term is "Branding". It includes marketing of commodities in the commercial sector to consumers. It's quite similar to marketing of politicians, their political agenda and their parties to voters (Chukwuka, 2015).

A brand offers a range of assurance and origin of quality to consumers for identification of particular product, idea or service. Several researchers have explained the advantages of branding techniques which are applicable to politics too. The promotion of candidates or the political parties as brands intensifies the party and the candidate. This is called brand loyalty in the course of elections and the non-election period. It's possible that loyalty for a particular brand is less for some candidates and more for others. But, the opposite of the same is also possible. For example, an individual buys a branded mobile for a lifetime. He might vote for a dissimilar party at different election. The techniques of branding are generally used by party managers for emphasising and spotlighting some of the important characteristics and qualities of candidates (Egobueze and Ojirika, 2017),

While considering the effect of social media, relationship of the public with outlet becomes important. Twitter and Facebook have also become an important part of how we communicate, socialise or spend time. Social media websites have started taking precedent over the outlets of communication as its heightened usability as well as accessibility. In turn, the dependency on such outlets for providing the individuals with some rewarding interactions has also become good. Some authors have also explained the dependency of the media system theory as "more the individual depends mainly on having the needs gratified by use of media, and more important will be the role of media in an individual's life and thus more influence media will also have. Thus, more people rely on Twitter and Facebook as not just mode of communication but also as rewarding part of the process of communication, more influence and value Twitter and Facebook would have.

Facebook and Twitter have also developed an audience that's aware about not just elements in message but to process the elements too. Facebook and Twitter have a unique ability of reaching the individuals who prefer seeking the company, cause or a person. It makes social media an effective tool of marketing which enables succinct communication between individuals who express an interest. More significantly, it enables the public figures for building deep relationships with the clients, individuals and the partners. They create a far reaching and easy campaign tactics for the modern day political candidates (Ibrahim, Liman, and Mato, 2015).

If we take the example of Obama, he chose a wonderful marketing campaigning team. He also managed them very well. Right from start till the end, there was absolutely no dissension of public. He selected an experienced and non-controversial senator as the running mate. It also complemented a lack of skills of foreign policy. McCain just assembled smooth running campaigns teams later in the day. Maverick made the choice of unknown running mates in final analysis, finally undercut his capability of tagging Obama as an inexperienced candidate. It also questioned his choice.

Obama developed a bond with the American population. His electoral campaign also gave USA an opportunity of re-establishing its ethical leadership throughout the world. But, just like any other brand, he was expected to deliver his promises, perceived as well as actual.

Analysing the content that is available publically on SNS like Facebook has become quite popular to study the issues of socio politics. The content contributed by the public which is available in the form of wall posts and the corresponding comments on the FB pages or the FB groups, helps people express their sentiments and opinion on some news, person or topic. It also allows the political and the social scientists in conducting an analysis of the political discourse (Okuchukwu, 2015).

Previously, the studies focussed mainly on SNS and how politicians use them. Other authors investigated the extent of use of FB by the congressional candidate during the electoral campaigns. They realise that a number of supporters of Facebook may be considered to be valid indicators of the electoral success. Regarding the Dutch elections of 2006, it was seen that SNS offers an opportunity for the political candidates to reach out to individuals

who are not so interested in the political campaigns. Therefore, viewing the profile of the candidate further strengthens the existing attitude. On the contrary, the political candidates who react for the comments of the users are considered to be more favourable (Kaur, and Verma, 2016).

Some researchers also draw attention towards the difference between marketing and the political arena. It highlights the dissimilarities between propagandistic characteristics of some political campaigns and ideology and certain instrumental and functional applications which resemble brand marketing. There are some prominent differences between political marketing and product and service marketing. It's also applicable to international context over some degree. It includes, an introduction of the brand which is easier in commercial space and unusually in pattern of the new parties is quite complex. The political party of the candidates are intangible. The conglomerate products such as voters can't disentangle in spite of preferences. The voters also have a collective choice that may not be their preference while the consumer might get a refund for his or her purchase. No price is attached with the choice of voting or party which widely discriminates in making the purchase. Each and every voter makes his or her decision on same day whereas the consumers don't. The factors which influence the consumer's choice of brands are family, social segments, religion and ethnicity. Researchers have also described certain micro and the macro differences between the political and the commercial marketing which comprises of deliberating concepts of embedded value, rhetoric and the symbols. The suggestions given facilitate the political requests which are widely strict on the symbolic connotation (Çolaklar& Biçen, 2015).

CONCLUSION:

Connecting with public on the social and the personal level has become very important for political candidates and tool they employ for the campaigning. With the progress of social media across the world, the politicians use social media tools to communicate on a large scale. The practitioners seek to evaluate upcoming relation between social media and the politics. The social campaign of Narendra Modi in the year 2014, Arab Spring in the year 2011 activated interests in the political action as well as network digital connectivity. According to a study, 61 million person experiment with political mobilisation and social influence. It was revealed that FB feeds relatively affect the pattern of political voting by simply testing the concepts of behaviour of voting. It can be influenced by FB messages considerably. Some of the messages provoked by some friends stimulated all the numbers by 60,000 voters as well as 280,000 voters were increased indirectly through social contagion. Here the number of voting candidates increased to 340,000.

According to survey about civic engagement and social networking websites revealed an 82% relationship between the political participation and engagement as use of the social networking websites. The supporting effect of this is that youth population can be randomly samples. It was seen that there is a relationship between the participation of election campaign and use of social media. However it tends to be weak and social media has a very positive effect on the participation of citizens.

The social media websites such as Twitter have now become important for a rapid response regarding the political events. Further, the consumers and the voters are prone to avoid media messages, whether political and commercial. For making insights into different types of engagement which happen between the voters, consumers and campaigning. It's important to understand methodology of evaluation.

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