The Role of Media and Communication in Political Activism and Mobilisation

Beena Muniyappa
Faculty
Department of English
Bengaluru North University
Kolar

Abstract

Media plays an important role in informing the people about political concerns and acting as a watchdog against power abuses especially in a democracy. Contemporary developments in technology have enabled politicians and political parties to communicate directly with citizens across the country effectively, with a wider reach than traditional media. Social media is no longer merely the latest in a long series of communications technologies but has transformed everyday activities and brought people together in ways like never before. The article proposes to investigate the extent to which political parties use social media for propaganda and political messaging among followers and users. The purpose of this article is to look at how people use social media to absorb political problems or debates. The findings show intriguing information on the types of social media users, as well as the most popular social media ratings and the impact on society.

Key Words: Communication, Media, social media, politics, campaign, election

Introduction

Marketers have penetrated the virtual parallel universe through social media platform, where individuals from all walks of life explore the possibility of connecting with friends and strangers alike. Social media has expanded its extent to encompass a variety of activities, which is more than its intended initial purpose. Social media becomes the medium for connecting with customers, interacting with potential clients and to ultimately achieve corporate goals. Politicians have not been left behind in this venture but have utilised the platforms to communicate with supporters and the general public to propagate the manifesto, spread messages, share information, and to also engage in a political debate among other things. With an increased popularity of social media, public is more adept at updated political and economic issues. In the tussle between mixed up ideologies, social media takes up the

role of catalysing democratization of information and a dynamic political sensibility faster than traditional media.

Barack Obama is largely regarded to have won the US Presidential Election in 2008 because of theintelligent use of Twitter to communicate messages to voters. Obama's campaign had a considerably better ability to respond in real time to emerging discourses surrounding political events during the 2012 presidential election (Kreiss, 2014), which likely aided his victory. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet another example of a politician who successfully used social media to sway the public and win elections (Madianou, 2015). The importance of social media in shaping political landscapes was also evident in Kenya's national elections in 2013. (Bing, 2015). Globally, the use of social media has now become nearly mandatory. A study found that political Twitter users are more interested in and engaged in politics in general, and less trusting of the mainstream media, demonstrating the fast-expanding popularity and importance of social media (Bode & Dalrymple, 2014).

Given the significance in persuading individuals to join in various political activities, particularly those related to elections, a full examination of the function of various social media in political involvement is required. Despite the fact that social media is still a relatively new communication technology, scholars have begun to examine the role of social media in political contexts. The current paper gives a quick overview of the current research in this sector.

Politicians have been using the internet to better contact people in the new media society for over a decade (Collier, 2012). Initially, a static webpage was used to promote campaign goals, pledges, and information. However, when social media, also known as social networking sites (SNS), grew in popularity in the mid-2000s, campaigns began to focus on how to use it to persuade voters.

For example, the 2008 US presidential election set the bar as the first to fully comprehend the power and reach of social media to influence votes. Barack Obama's campaign used Facebook in a unique approach to reach out to young people in the United States. It was successful in drawing nearly 70% of the votes cast by voters under the age of 25.

Review of Literature

The studies might be divided into four groups after a careful examination of the research papers found by scanning the Scopus database. These groups are concerned with

- (i)   the importance of social media for political purposes,
- (ii)   the content type or style of messages shared for this purpose,
- (iii)   the mechanism of message propagation, and
- (iv)   Political engagement and its relationship to social media usage as an antecedent or outcome.

Although, a majority of formal politicians continue to rely heavily on politicking strategies tailored for citizens adhering to the dutiful citizenship model, an increasing number of citizens are turning to informal forms of political action that are better suited to their personal preferences, interests, and goals. Citizens are frequently informed through social media by traditional media, which frequently uses news stories or commentary to promote its positions (Raynauld & Lalancette, 2016).

Researchers have also discovered that while social media platforms are changing the way people create and meet, their ability to bridge divides on difficult themes is still restricted (Hendriks, Duus, & Ercan, 2016). Rintel et al. claimed that the internet is a dangerous place for the old rules of mediatization, citing the "Miliband Loop" controversy that arose during the 2011 UK public sector demonstrations. Using social media for political reasons has been shown to enhance the likelihood of protesting as well as involvement

Tan (2016) claims that relatively low-budget indie films, particularly the documentary genre, can vividly evoke alternate histories, give voice to the silent, and channel these voices digitally into the communal cinematic and social media experience in Singapore. This, in turn, may offer political dissidents a voice, allowing them to present a more fundamental challenge.

According to Gordon & Perugini (Gordon & Perugini, 2016), info graphics shared on social media by Israel Defense Forces are part of a larger apparatus of discrimination used by Israel to frame their actions post-hoc in order to claim that it was carried out in compliance with international law.

A study discovered subtle differences between men and women in online activities, particularly commenting on other users' statuses and the tone of communication produced by the respective gender groups, with men posting more negative comments directed at parties as well as other Facebook users (Vochocová& Mazák, 2010). In the context of Twitter, similar variations in frequency and type of tweeting were discovered between male and female politicians (Evans, Ovalle, & Green, 2015).

Methodology

From 2010 to 2016, literature was searched in the Scopus database using the terms "social media," "politics," and "political campaign." Only the titles, abstracts, and author-specified keywords in the research publications were searched with the keywords. Only journal papers were chosen since, in general, journals are peer reviewed, whereas many conferences, books, and book chapters are not.

The year 2010 was chosen as the beginning point because Scopus has only been indexing publications since then. As a result, this literature survey evaluates studies from the previous seven years. Scopus index was used for the search since it is a well-known bibliographic database with approximately 22,000 volumes from over 5,000 publishers around the world, with nearly 24% of its content coming from the social sciences (Scopus, n.d.).

Findings and Discussion

Researchers discovered that as the intensity of political discussion on social media increases, the strength of the association between party membership and involvement drops. This shows that political debates on social media can bridge the gap between members and non-members in terms of party engagement. Furthermore, organizational legacies of political parties may play an important role in the digital age (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016).

Users who engage in politics, whether through social media or other online or offline activities, are more likely to engage in several forms of political engagement, according to the study. Political expression on the internet, aided by news consumption, boosts support for the existing socio-political system both directly and indirectly through nationalism. The public's participation in the online debating process could help to strengthen the system's stability and validity.

Social media's role as a new instrument in the Indian general election of 2014

In the context of the relationship between politicians, social media, and the general public, the Internet performs the following functions:

• Politicians promote their controlled speech and offer their point of view without being interrupted by journalists or constrained by the media format.

• Politicians now have the ability to post a presumed political agenda on social media.

• Political parties and politicians can use social media to rally the public and invite them to join in discussions on issues of public concern.

• Politicians and political parties appear to engage more efficiently with their fans when they use social media platforms, bypassing institutional and bureaucratic requirements.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The paper examined a collection of questions about the function of social media in civic and political mobilization processes in this article. Social media mobilizes specific socio-demographic segments, affects how individuals are informed and encouraged to participate, and constitutes a new kind of mobilizing agency that neither merely reflects nor crowds out existing organized and established organizations, according to the findings. Participation in Facebook groups has a powerful and independent effect on mobilization, thus social media platforms like Facebook must be viewed as complements to both existing organizational society and mainstream media as information frameworks for mobilization.

The findings demonstrate that those who are mobilized to protests through social media differ significantly from those who are galvanized through established civil society and political organizations. Participants who are mobilized using social media have a lower socioeconomic status and are younger than those who are mobilized through traditional civil society organizations. There is a similar tendency to mobilization through mainstream and other media: social media recruits have a lower income, are younger, and are less likely to have a full-time work than the general population. It is debatable whether social media mobilization expands the reach of mobilization processes. The current data cannot provide an answer to this question because they do not indicate development over time. As a result, social media

appears to be a medium that supplements traditional political and civil society organizations by reaching out to diverse and underserved communities.

Works Cited

Braun, J. (2015). Social Media and Distribution Studies. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511558048. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115580483

Chadwick, A. (2015). The "Social Media" Maneuver. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511557813. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115578133

Collier, M. (2012) Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for seniors.

Social Media Data: Best Datasets, Databases & APIs 2022 - Datarade. Retrieved 2022, from https://datarade.ai/data-categories/social-media-data.

Flew, T. (2015). Social Media Governance. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511557813. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115578136

Funk, T. (2011). Social media playbook for business. Praeger.

Hermida, A. (2015). Power Plays on social media. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511558034. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115580340

Ingenhoff, D., & Meier, A. (2012). Social Media. Dpunkt.verlag.

Jensen, K. (2015). What's Social About social media? Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511557887. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115578874

Langmia, K. (2016). Social Media. Lexington Books.

Lev-On, A. (2018). The Anti-Social Network? Framing social media in Wartime. Social Media + Society, 4(3), 205630511880031. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118800311

Lomborg, S. (2015). "Meaning" in social media. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511557867. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115578673

Madianou, M. (2015). Polymedia and Ethnography: Understanding the Social in social media. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511557867.

https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115578675

Nielsen, R. (2015). Social Media and Bullshit. Social Media + Society, 1(1), 205630511558033. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115580335

Olivas-Lujan, M., &Bondarouk, T. (2013). Social media in strategic management. Emerald.

Scott, D. (2012) The new rules of marketing & PR.