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Social media and its impacts on politics

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, social media are said to have an impact on the public discourse and communication in the society. The Internet has become an increasingly important tool for citizens to not only gain political knowledge, but to engage in the political process itself. In particular, social media are increasingly used in political context. More recently, micro-blogging services (e.g., twitter) and social network sites (e.g., Facebook) are believed to have the potential for increasing political participation. While Twitter is an ideal platform for users to spread not only information in general but also political opinions publicly through their networks, political institutions have also begun to use Facebook pages or groups for the purpose of entering into direct dialogs with citizens and encouraging more political discussions.

In this paper, our main focus is to discuss the influence of social media on politics. We explained the importance of social media from the perspective of voters and politicians. We also focused on positive and negative effects of social media on politics. Finally, we conducted an online survey through questionnaires to know the impact of social media on politics..

Keywords: Social media, Politics, Voters, Citizens, Political communication, Technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, social media have shown a rapid growth of user counts and have been object of scientific analysis. The growing relevance of communication in social media implies a fundamental change in traditional public communication, which has usually been exclusively initiated and managed by specific actors, e.g., politicians, companies as well as journalists [3]. Social media are increasingly used in political context recently, both by citizens and political institutions (e.g., politicians, political parties, political foundations etc.). From the perspective of political institutions, it is important to actively participate in the political communication based on the use of social media, especially during election campaigns [4]. Social media thereby represents the ideal vehicle and information base to gauge public opinion on policies and political positions as well as to build community support for candidates running for public offices. It has been observed that in a very short space of time, politicians in modern democracies across the world have eagerly adopted social media for engaging their constituents, entering into direct dialogs with citizens and enabling vivid political discussions [5].

Personal communication via Social Media brings politicians and parties closer to their potential voters. It allows politicians to communicate faster and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the intermediate role of mass media [6]. Reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated online as well as support and participation for offline events. Messages posted to personal networks are multiplied when shared, which allow new audiences to be reached. The Internet is seen as an advance in communication between citizens and elected politicians, with the growing access to information, the chance for feedback, and transparency [7].

There is a growing body of research focusing on the role of social media in political deliberation. The recent US presidential campaign in 2008 has shown that social media technologies have become increasingly important for political communication and persuasion [8]. It became obvious, that social media could be successfully adapted to contact and discuss with voters as well as to disseminate important information to them. Especially young people were inspired to political topics using social media as communication platform.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Megan Baker [1] focused on whether or not the Internet, through social networking sites such as Facebook or YouTube are facilitating an increased engagement of citizens in the political process. The Internet has become an increasingly important tool for citizens to not only gain political knowledge, but to engage in the political process itself. Some scholars suggest that this may

"revitalize democratic society, enabling citizens to command the political and economic resources needed to become effectively self-governing". While the media is a pervasive aspect of life on a day to day basis, a time when it really becomes important is in regards to government and political information. I do not think that social networking sites will create a "new era of democracy". These sites will become more and more influential as more and more people log on and make it a part of their daily lives.

Stefan Stieglitz [2] proposed a methodological framework for social media analytics in political context. More specifically, our framework summarizes most important politically relevant issues from the perspective of political institutions and corresponding methodologies from different scientific disciplines. In particular, social media are increasingly used in political context. More recently, microblogging services (e.g., Twitter) and social network sites (e.g., Facebook) are believed to have the potential for increasing political participation. More specifically, he outlined various approaches of data tracking and data analysis as well as corresponding analysis methods that might help gain a deeper insight into political discussions in social media.

Daniela Floss [3] focused on social media's impact on citizens' confidence in political institutions. Drawing on research within the field of political science that builds on the discrepancy theory from cognitive psychology, this paper argues that citizens' preferences of how political institutions should work and the outcomes they should produce moderate social media's impact. Building on research of media framing effects on political attitudes a preference-perception model of media effects is developed. This paper also develops a distinct set of specific media frames that correspond to a variety of political preferences as well as aspects of political legitimation. The model contributes to further specifications of the relationship between mediated political information and political attitudes.

GözdeYavuz [4] investigated on impact of social media exposure during political campaigns on vote choice. Although voting behaviour has often been assumed to be influenced by predispositions rather than short-term campaign activities, media effect has been scrutinized as an influential aspect of election campaigns with the increasing use of media, especially social media. It is assumed that frequency of exposure to specific media outlets had a noteworthy influence on shifting votes from established parties of the parliament to the new ones. The impact of exposure to social media among youth is high. The impact of exposure to social media on the shifting party choice is examined by using pre-election and post-election survey data from the national election.

Ahmed, Jaidka, & Cho [5] focused on log likelihood analysis and Latent Dirichlet Association to know the impact of social media. During the 2014 elections, new and upcoming parties used Twitter for self-promotion and media validation, while established parties used it to supplement their offline strategies. It is also observed that the winning party's electoral success is significantly associated with their use of Twitter for engaging voters, the large population of first-time voters and levels of internet accessibility. Use of social media enabled new narratives from outside to enter in election campaigns. They considered tweets in English and did not segregate contribution of offline campaigns. They considered only one social media platform and lack of statistical confirmation are some of the limits of this paper.

3. Our main focus is to discuss the influence of social media on politics. We explained the importance of social media from the perspective of voters and politicians. We focused on positive and negative effects of social media on politics. The methodology we adopted is an online survey through google form which consists of 15 questions and were mostly targeted on the younger generations. Based on the online survey results, majority of the people follow both politicians and political candidates. Majority of youth (67%) follow politics on various social media like face book, Instagram and others. Majority of the people (70%) get information on politics through social media. We made a survey on some of the major political events which changed the history of politics and changed the way people think about the politics in our country. We included the impacts of social media on politicians and the younger generations. We also included some case studies. From these case studies and online survey results we tried to discuss about the influence of social media on politics.

4. METHODOLOGY

Our main focus is to discuss the influence of social media on politics. We explained the importance of social media from the perspective of voters and politicians. We focused on positive and negative effects of social media on politics. The methodology we adopted is an online survey through google form which consists of 15 questions and were mostly targeted on the younger generations. Based on the online survey results, majority of the people follow both politicians and political candidates. Majority of youth (67%) follow politics on various social media like face book, Instagram and others. Majority of the people (70%) get information on politics through social media. We made a survey on some of the major political events which changed the history of politics and changed the way people think about the politics in our country. We included the impacts of social media on politicians and the younger generations. We also included some case studies. From these case studies and online survey results we tried to discuss about the influence of social media on politics.

5. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICS

Social media, in particular, is now a serious factor in political campaigns and in the way people think about issues. Candidates and their supporters constantly post their views on Facebook and Twitter. Each party has its own pages, from which it broadcasts propaganda and requests for donations. Let's look at some of the leading ways that social media influences politics today.

5.1. Trending news

One of the ways that social media has transformed politics is the sheer speed at which news, poll results and rumours are shared. Most of the people spend more time on sites such as Facebook and Twitter than they do on serious news or political websites. This means that you get all of the latest trending news stories and opinions shared by your friends whenever you log on.

5.2. Polling Impact

Political polls are an important part of every campaign. They are often confusing, because you can often find multiple polls with contradictory results posted on the very same day. Polls results have a big influence on elections.

5.3. Direct Interaction with Politicians

One of the positive effects that social media has on politics is the opportunity for voters to interact more easily with candidates and elected officials. Traditionally, if you wanted to meet a politician or candidate, you'd have to attend a live event. Not everyone is able to do this. With modern technology, it's now possible to attend virtual events where you can participate in live streaming events and interact with politicians and candidates.

5.4. Demographics and Targeting

Targeting is used throughout the advertising industry to make sure that ads and messages reach the right audience. Politicians do this as well. In the age of social media, politicians and people running for office are able to target their campaigns. If a candidate wants to address the concerns of women, college students, retired people, Latinos or any other group of voters, they can now tailor their messages. Just as advertisers on Facebook are able to use analytics and targeted advertising, so can candidates and politicians. Thus, if you notice that political messages seem to be talking to you personally, this is no accident.

5.5. Rumours, Fake News and Conspiracies

Political campaigns are now influenced by every story, whether true or not, that gets spread around social media. It's getting more and more difficult to separate actual news from fake news online. Social media makes this distinction especially confusing. The constant stream of memes, links and rumours about political leaders and candidates is a mixture of truth, lies, satire and speculation. They are now quite a few fake or satirical "news" sites that often post stories that sound authentic. The Onion is the best known of these, but there are now many others as well. Some [fake news sites](#) are not even amusing but simply exist to post clickbait stories or to troll readers who don't do their own research. There are also sites with political biases or those peddling various unsubstantiated conspiracy theories. It's easy to be influenced by misinformation posted by your friends and followers, even if they don't intend to mislead you. It's therefore necessary to use a great deal of discernment before believing anything.

5.6. The Power of Confirmation Bias

One of the hidden forces that operates on social media is confirmation bias. This is especially powerful when it comes to controversial topics, including politics. If you're like most people, the majority of your friends and followers on social media probably share your outlook. This means that the vast majority of tweets, Facebook posts, pins or other content you read on these sites tend to express the same point of view, one that you already hold. It's natural for people to surround themselves with others of like mind. This is true both online and offline. On social media sites, this can create the illusion that "everybody" thinks the same way. If you have a few hundred friends on Facebook, for example, and 90 percent of them agree on most political issues, the information you get will be filtered through this bias. People will post links to stories that confirm your existing bias. They'll repeat opinions you already hold.

6. CASE STUDIES

6.1. Arvind Kejriwal political win:

Arvind Kejriwal took to the BJP's game of social media and politics and taught them how it should be done.

Apologies on Social Media can be the best apologies: Arvind Kejriwal's perception was very negative after he walked out of the

government in 49 days when he was first elected. However, he decided to renew his campaign by offering a sincere apology to people through his Facebook and Twitter pages.

Engagement on Social Media is the true key to success: Success on social media for politicians is often measured by number of followers or likes, but Arvind Kejriwal clearly proved that people engagement is actually the true measure of success. The AAP launched a page called Delhi Dialogue, through which they invited the people of Delhi to share their views on their major views for Delhi, and created a manifesto on the basis of that, which people loved. Social Media and politics were in great sync here!

A War with Social Media Weapons: Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP openly declared war against the other parties on social media, and used social media features such as Twitter hashtags and Selfies to great effect as weapons. AAP was able to create new hashtags depending upon the situation on the ground and make them trend. The combination of social media and politics was not working well for BJP this time!

Use all possible Social Media channels, and use them well: The AAP used more social media channels than the BJP. Apart from the common Facebook and Twitter, the AAP also used Quora (a Q&A platform where they intellectually answered people's questions), Mango App (where they broadcasted speeches and messages) and also popular social media influencers like the YouTube channel "TVF". The Delhi Elections were truly a war fought on Social Media, and as there can only be one winner, it is Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP, who used all the tricks and tools to a roaring success.

6.2. Narendra Modi historical political win:

Narendra Modi with his team was quite active on social media since 2009, but as BJP declared him as Prime Ministerial candidate, upsurge use of digital media was seen. In addition, so as to get support of lower income group and farmers Narendra Modi and his team initiated programs like Chai Pe Charcha through live interaction. Also, in order to augment the voter base website named India272.com, namonumber.com was launched.

Approach through facebook: On Facebook page "I support Narendra Modi" had become very popular amid people. Along with make sure that large numbers of people come across with Modi's rallies and speeches whatsapp number 07820078200 was also launched to boost up the campaign. Also, in order to augment the voter base website named India272.com, namonumber.com was launched. On Facebook page "I support Narendra Modi" had become very popular amid people. Along with make sure that large numbers of people come across with Modi's rallies and speeches whatsapp number 07820078200 was also launched to boost up the campaign. Moreover, as digital media is a two-way communication so as to keep public engaged he used to reply on their comments.

Twitter: Narendra Modi has third largest followers on twitter after Amitabh Bachan and Shahrukh Khan. At present he has around 13.7 million followers. Narendra Modi has got more than 29million likes on his page and most fascinating thing you might have found on his FB page is that every post is written in English instead of Hindi. Narendra Modi's youtube channel has about 254611 subscribers and he constantly uploads videos regarding any event. During elections he kept on uploading videos of his rallies for viewers.

Benefits that Narendra Modi Reaped from a Perfect Social Media Marketing Planning:

PM could valve about 12 crores first time voters. United previous voters of the party. Spread out party's policies amid public. Create faith in populace about the party's idea of growth. Inspire youth to participate & to make difference.

6.3. Arvind Sawant political win:

The campaign kicked off with the tags #VoteForChange & #ShivSena4Namo and these tags instantly connected to Mumbaikars. The Facebook posts were about the daily rallies he attended & the policies he planned to implement if elected, along with detailed daily recaps of the day's events. Arvind Sawant was positioned as the 'Clean Politician' who was 'Approachable' & the man who would spearhead change & improve the situation of the common man.

'#VoteForChange' was chosen was mainly because the voters of South Mumbai were desperately searching for a change & the account helped this hashtag be used more than 100,000 times in a span of 2 weeks.

'#ShivSena4Namo' was a very popular hashtag that got an India trend on twitter the day before the general election. This was used with the sole intention of capitalizing on the Modi fever that had engulfed the nation.

Whatsapp as the base platform for publicity: Whatsapp was used primarily as a means for a comfortable, two-way, direct dialogue between the followers and Arvind Sawant. The content strategy for Arvind Sawant's Whatsapp marketing was clear to keep the viewers informed about the venue & time for the various rallies that Arvind Sawant was going to attend. This seemed to be a highly effective means of communication as the number of supporters showing up for the rallies increased by over 20%.

In conclusion, all the digital marketing efforts bore some substantial fruit since Mr Arvind Sawant won the election for the South Mumbai Lok Sabha seat by 1,28,000 votes. His social media presence helped increase awareness about the candidate with a steady stream of engagement across various social media platforms.

6.4. SushmaSwaraj use of social media:

SushmaSwaraj is an Indian politician and a leading member of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Serving as a member of parliament for the sixth term, currently she is the leader of opposition in the 15th Lok Sabha. Since Bharatiya Janta Party considers social media as a key component to their election campaign mix, SushmaSwaraj also entered the digital world in 2010 to support the party's initiatives and build a social media presence to connect with the new and existing voting populace.

Use of twitter: Her communication strategy on twitter is very straight forward and to the point. She posts her opinion over current happenings, shares videos of her speeches on important issues and pictures of her achievements in the past. She fares on Social Media and whether her online campaigns are enough to sustain the buzz created by the massive digital media campaign under the leadership of Narendra Modi.

Use of Facebook: On Facebook, SushmaSwaraj has about 4 lac followers but surprisingly she is not active on the medium. Till date she has just posted 4 videos and one picture on Facebook her last post was seen on Dec 27, 2012 but still on an average 70,000 people are talking about her. A metric which defines her remarkable popularity amongst online citizens. As a result of her inactivity on the medium the total engagement and engagement % as of followers is negligible.

Other social media: SushmaSwaraj has been able to build a social media presence effortlessly. While the amount of efforts spent on the medium is very low relatively, the number of followers and mentions for her shares a different story altogether. This evidence is enough to prove her popularity amongst the online citizens. Her digital strategy should focus on being vocal over social media platforms rest everything will fall in place.

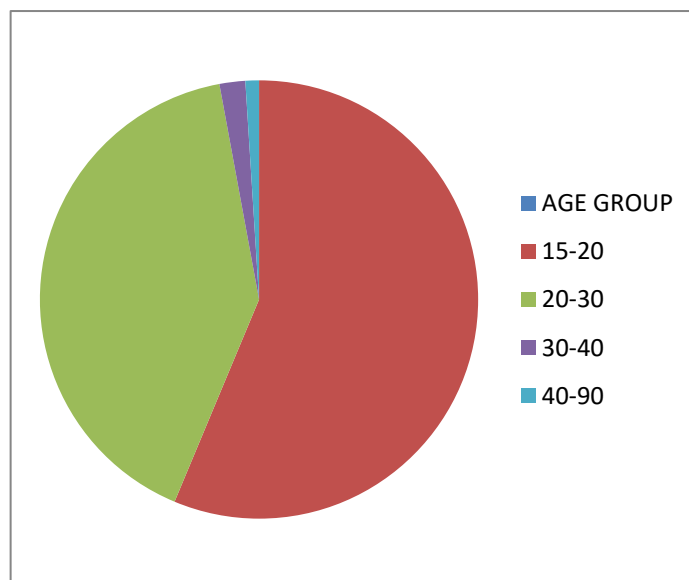
6.5. Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign:

Barack Obama has been lauded by numerous observers, both academic and non-academic, to have mastered the use of new media, particularly social media, in his 2008 presidential campaign. Castells (2009) research showed that one in three users of the Internet had a profile on a social networking site during the election. Though all the presidential candidates, including John McCain and Hillary Clinton, leveraged social networking sites in their campaigns,

Social media as a weapon: Obama's campaign "did everything incrementally better than its competitors" (Lutz, 2009). Obama had 5 million supporters throughout 15 different social networking sites (Lutz, 2009). By Election Day in November 2008, Obama had almost 3 million Facebook fans, four times his opponent McCain and twenty-three times the number of Twitter followers than McCain (Vargas, 2008). Fourteen million man-hours were spent watching Obama-related videos on YouTube (Vargas, 2008). Obama even created his own social media website, Mybarackobama.com, or MyBO, which had 2 million user created profiles (Vargas, 2008).

Digital Campaigning success: Users could donate to the campaign, match another user's first-time donation, leave blog posts, and create volunteer groups through the site. Obama also used the MyBO site to mobilize his supporters to volunteer on his behalf in the comfort of their own home by making phone calls to rally other supporters or to fight attacks against Obama through his website 'FighttheSmears'. Social networks were not the only game - changer. According to exit polls, 66% of those under the age of 30 voted for Barack Obama. The youth segment, often the most reluctant to participate in politics, gave Obama a boost of 17,000 votes.

7. ONLINE SURVEY REPORT

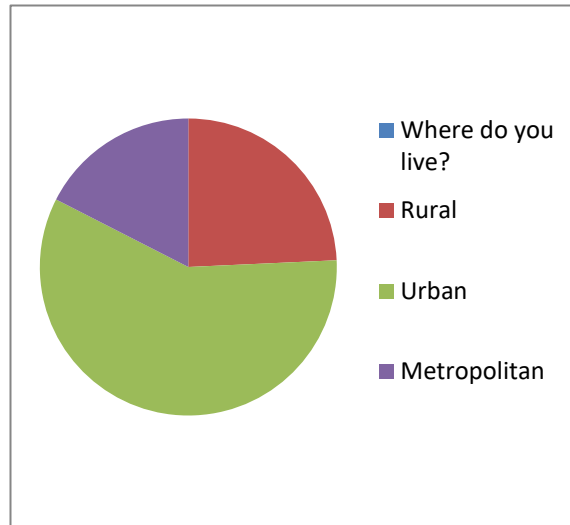


Age group people have chosen 15-20: 56.30%

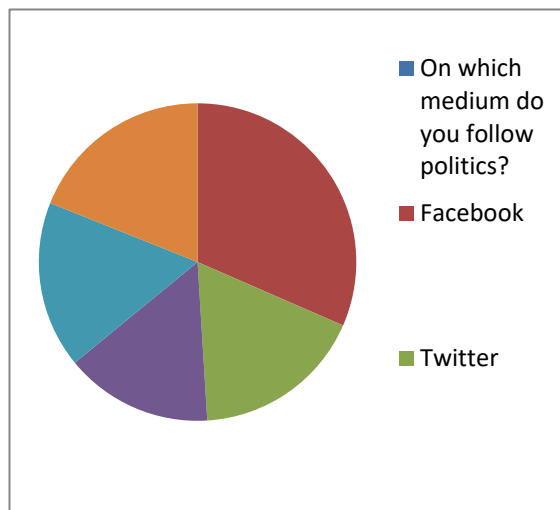
20-30 : 40.80%

30-40 : 1.90%

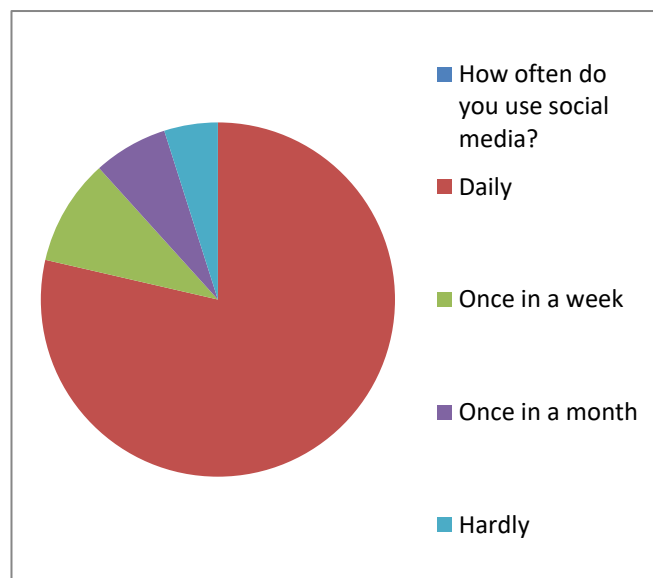
40-90 : 1.00%



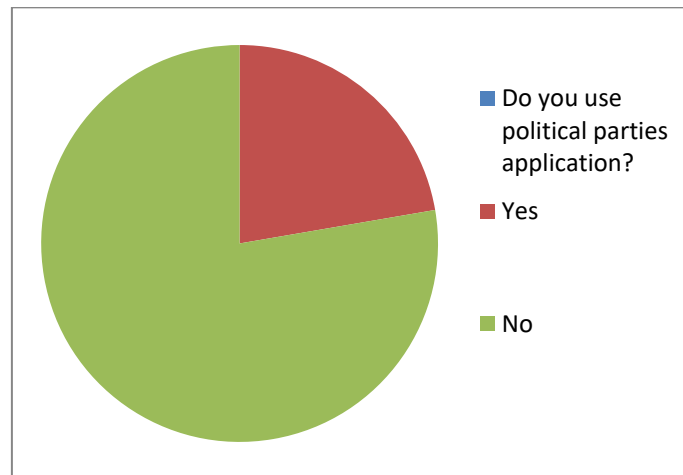
Above pie chart represents the population graph that where the people live. People living in urban area are 58% People living in Metropolitan are 17% People living in Rural are 24% from our survey.



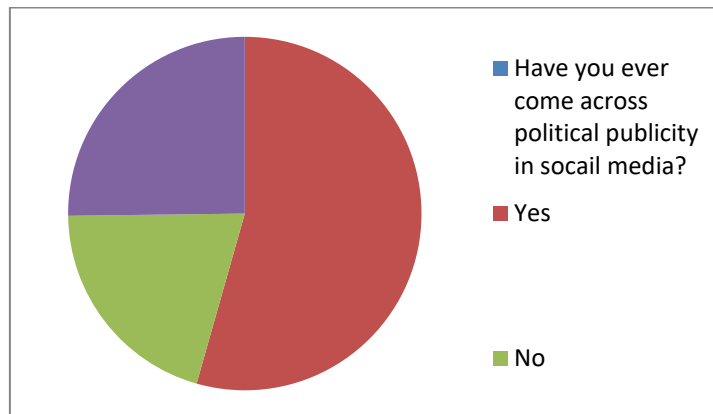
This graph represents the split up of the people following various social networking sites. People following face book is 32%. People following twitter is 17%, People following instagram is 15%. People following youtube is 17%. People following others is 19%.



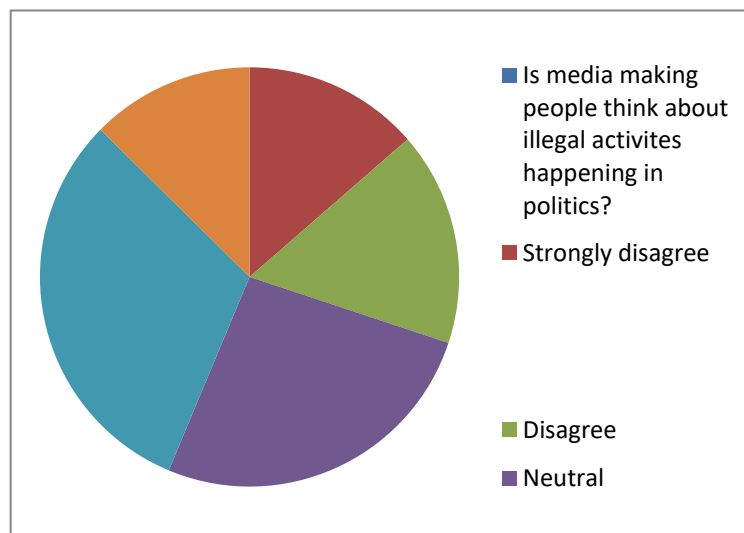
Above chart gives us the idea of people following social media in their daily life. Percentage of people following social media daily is 79. Percentage of people following social media once in a week is 10. Percentage of people following social media once in a month is 7. Percentage of people following social media hardly is 5.



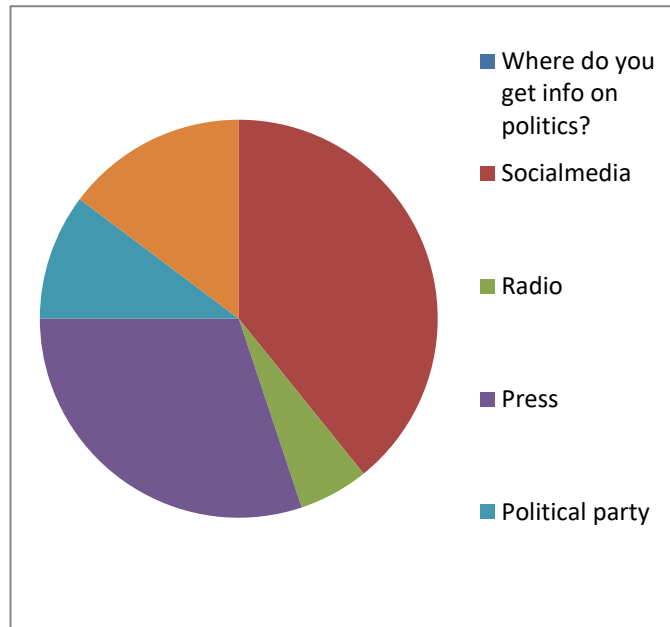
Above pie chart indicates that majority of the people do not use political party applications. People using political parties' applications is 22% and People not using political parties' applications is 78%.



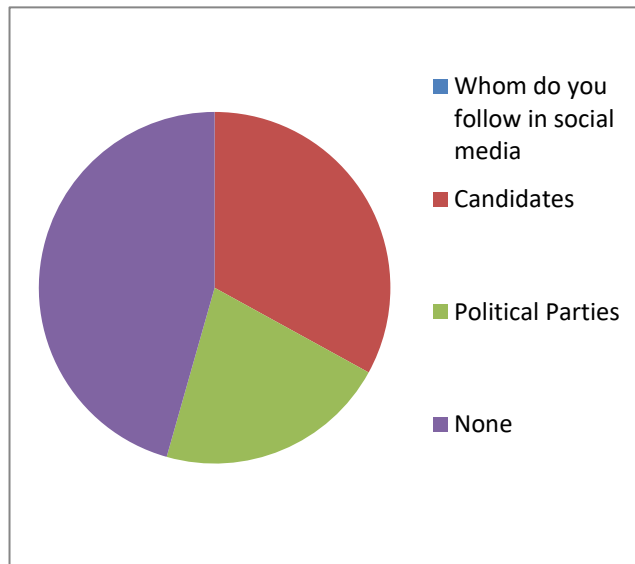
Above pie chart gives us the idea of what extend political parties have been publicizing their parties in social media. Percentage of people voted that they have come across political adds: 54. Percentage of people voted that they haven't come across political adds: 25.



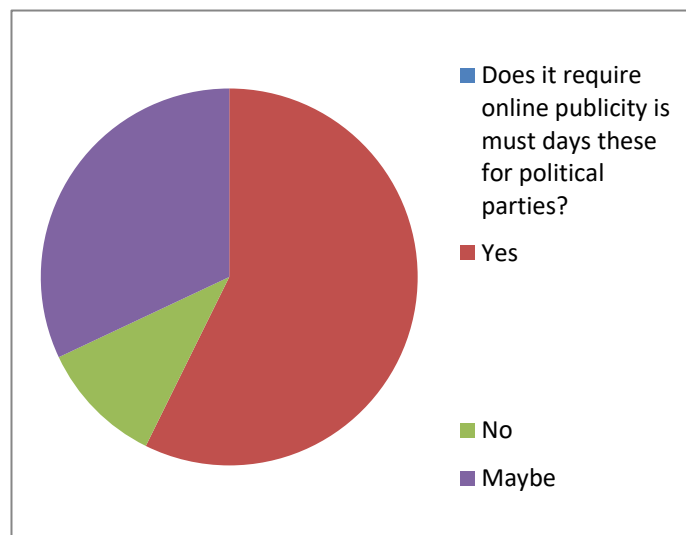
Most of the people gave us neutral option that social media is not the platform of making illegal activities. Percentage of people voted for strongly in disagree illegal activities in politics is 14. Percentage of people voted for disagree in illegal activities in politics is 17. Percentage of people voted for neutral in illegal activities in politics is 26. Percentage of people voted for agree in illegal activities in politics is 31. Percentage of people voted for strongly agree in illegal activities in politics is 13



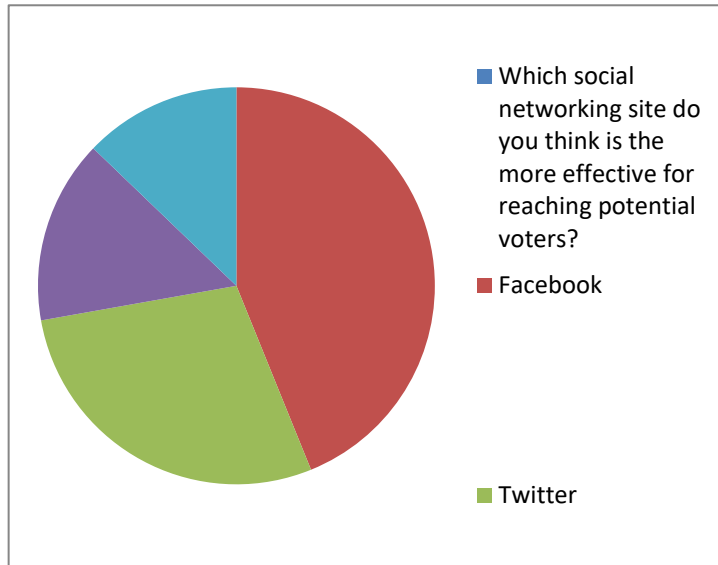
This chart represents the information gained from various sources like social media, radio, news papers etc, and their votes regarding the medium the follow. Information from social media is 39%. Information through radio is 6%. Information through press: 30%. Information through political parties: 10%. Information through others: 15%



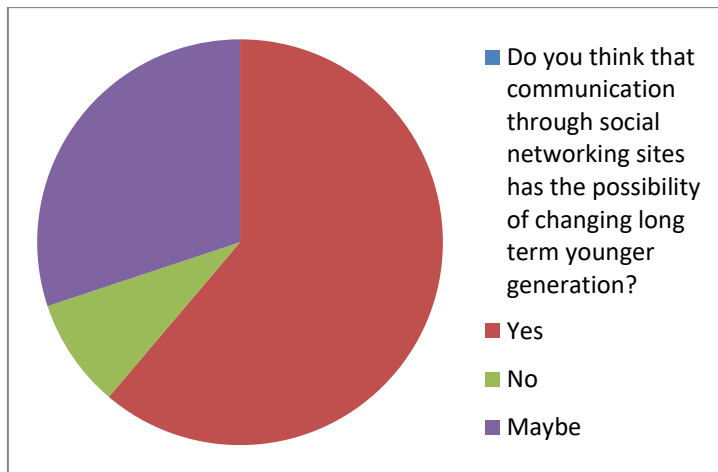
This graph represents that majority of the people follow individual leaders but not the parties. People following leaders is 33%. People following parties in social media: 21%. People following none of these in social media: 46%.



Above pie chart gives us an idea that online publicity is must these days to attract the younger generation. Percentage of people voted for yes about publicity these days is 57. Percentage of people voted for no about publicity these days is 11. Percentage of people voted for maybe about publicity these days is 32.

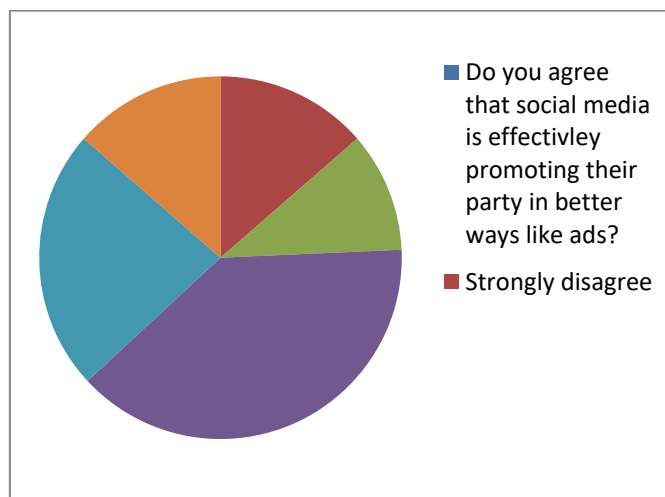


From the above chart we can conclude that majority of political parties have reached voters in face book as it has the majority of the population follow. The percentage of people these apps reaching people are Face book is 44%, Twitter: 28%, Instagram: 15%, Others: 13%.



From the above chart we come to conclusion that social media has been changing the present day situations in younger generations. The percentage of these sites reaching the younger generation

Yes: 61
No: 9
Maybe: 30



This chart represents majority of the people gave as neutral option.

The social media is effectively promoting their party in better way like ads

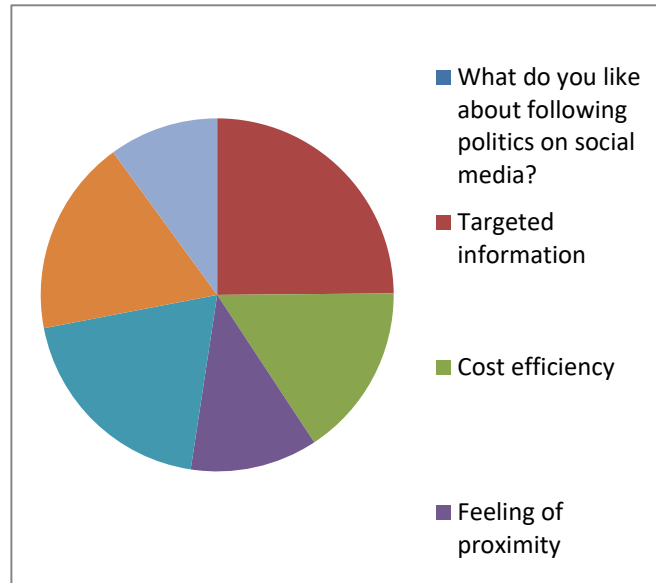
Strongly disagree: 14%

Disagree: 11%

Neutral: 39%

Agree: 23%

Strongly agree: 14%



For this question the targeted info is the most point that majority of the people feel about the politics. The percentage of people chosen for targeted info from politics in social media: 25. The percentage of people chosen for cost efficiency from politics in social media: 16. The percentage of people chosen for feeling of proximity from politics in social media: 12. The percentage of people chosen for info straight to you from politics in social media: 20. The percentage of people chosen for interaction with people from politics in social media: 18. The percentage of people chosen for others from politics in social media: 10

8. OVERALL SUMMARY

We conducted an online survey through google forms which consists of questionnaires. Based on the responses we got, we could make some conclusions. Majority of the people follow political parties on Fb pages, twitter and you tube. Most of the people agree that social media is used to promote political parties effectively. Online publicity can be done effectively with the help of social media. All the political news reaches the majority of the voters through the social media. And also by studying some case studies, we could say that political leaders were successful in digital campaigning which helped their parties to promote better. Thus, social media has a key role in politics and enhances the interaction among individuals.

9. CONCLUSION

Based on the case studies and online survey, we conclude that social media plays an important role in politics. Many politicians and political parties used social media as a weapon in election campaigns and succeeded in their political life. Social media is a great tool that has brought more power and voice to people. The interactive nature of Social media helped them to refine their program to respond better to people's expectations. Based on the online survey results, majority of the people follow both politicians and political candidates. Majority of youth (67%) follow politics on various social media like Facebook, Instagram and others. Majority of the people (70%) get information on politics through social media. Social media political advertising helps the people to follow the right people to vote. It is very cost effective in campaigning and connects large group of people. It also makes the people think about the illegal activities happening in politics. Finally, we conclude that social media has greater impact on politics and it has possibility of changing the long term young generation behaviour towards politics.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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