Role of Social Networking Sites in Politicalcampaigning: A Study of Gurgaon District

Snehlata[1], Kusum Lata[2], Manoj Kumar[3], SubhdraKumari[4]
[1]PhD Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh, Haryana, India.
[2]Extension Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Government College for Girls sec-14,Gurgaon, Haryana, India.
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh, Haryana, India
[4]Student, Centre for Conversing Technologies, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajastan, India.

*Corresponding Author:
Kusum Lata
Email: pragati.kusum@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper focuses to study the role of SNSs in political communication as well as to study the SNSs as an emerging tool of political campaigning. This study is guided by Technology Acceptance Model of communication school of thought. A survey of 150 college students of Gurgaon district is conducted using combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. The data is analyzed using correlation and percentile technique. The study found that social networking sites is positively associated with political discussion, political participation and it can be best used for political campaigning because of itsrapid acceptance and its multiplier effect.
Keywords: SNS, TAM, Communication, Campaigning

INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. While we use the term "social network site" to describe the phenomenon, the term "social networking sites" also appears in public discourse and the two terms are often used interchangeably. "Networking" emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) [1].

Difference between Social Media & Social Networking Sites

There are certain differences between Social media and social networking do have some overlap, but they really are not the same thing. Social Media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while Social Networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with other by using internet connectivity, on the basis of the working style and features. Social media is a way to transmit or share information with a broad audience. Everyone has the opportunity to create and distribute. On the other hand, social networking is an act of engagement. Groups of people with common interests or like-minds, associate together on social networking sites and build relationships through community.

Social media are forms of electronic communication such as social networking sites (especially Facebook and micro-blogging site Twitter) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media has positioned itself at the forefront of this new wave of technological communication and influence, and as it continues to play a major role in the lives of so many people worldwide, it goes without doubt that this tool will be taken advantage of in all aspects of society, especially in democratic processes. According to data available in the beginning of year 2014, 2.5 billion people use Internet globally. There are two billion active social network users in the world. Facebook and Twitter has 1.184 billion users and 232 million users worldwide respectively. Access to Internet facility is 12 % (which is 151,598,994) of Indian population (which is 1,220,800,359 as according to 2011 census). Total SNS population in India is 97% of Internet users and among them 7% (90,000,000) of Internet user are actively using Facebook [2]. Despite the low level of the internet penetration in India, social media has been able to reach beyond its core audience. This is because of the new space created on account of the interface between print, television and the internet, which can change the way the business of politics, is conducted in India.

In this age of ICT Revolution, the communication has become effective as never before. The social networking sites have also played a crucial

role in bridging boundaries and crossing the seas and bringing all people at a common platform where they can meet with the people sharing the same interest, opinions or find friends and communicate with them. It has become a potential mean of communication and communication is an important part of the politics. Political communication in today's world is a very vast, spreading social field of virtually infinite varieties. Social media has encompassed many different forms of associations and network. The emergence of new forms of social involvement, all suggest important interface between media and democracy. Over the last few years there emerged an alternative streams that opens new directions within political communication.The developing connection between emerging social media and its public and political influence has begun to transform the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and, in turn are "permitting a new arena of grassroots politics" (Axford& Huggins, 2001) [3].

The main advantage of social networks, for an election campaign, lies in its multiplier effect. Greyes suggests using a platform like Twitter for nano-targeting, because tweets are searchable by hash tag – a word or abbreviation placed into a tweet after a pound sign to indicate the topic. He says that ad-hoc communities organize around certain hash tags, making them easy to target with messages tailored specifically to their interests. In his article he argues this type of targeting can reach those outside the campaign's designated area and marking tweets with niche-specific hash tags has the further advantage of allowing a campaign to reach donors and online activists outside the campaign's geographic area. According to him, "Users who feel a deep connection with a person or brand are happy to show their public support and provide free marketing for that person or brand through their online activities" [4]. This new wave of technology has brought with it the ability to interact with a wider range of people in a shorter amount of time. Social media offers innovative opportunities for political actors, political institutions and the public to interact with one another. Most of the prominent political parties are getting attracted toward the use of social media for their election campaigns. Most of the prominent political parties are getting attracted toward the use of social media for their election campaigns. The use of social media by politicians for wooing the younger generation continues. Since social media is a relatively new way for politicians to communicate during political campaigns, it is not surprising that problems with social have arisen for politicians. A March 18, 2011 USA Today article discusses the problems that the speed of this technology can cause negative effect on political campaigning, referring to Twitter, the article contends that it now only takes 140 characters to damage a political campaign because these technologies move so quickly, any off color remark can

instantly be read and shared by millions of people (Kucinich) [5].

Colin Delany in his article suggests that in politics, the Internet can be used in many ways, for example for fundraising, recruiting, mobilizing people, grassroots organizing, advertising, messaging and geographic targeting. This is happening in India now as parties are trying to use the Internet to enroll new members, create larger volunteer bases, and asking people for donations, votes and support.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This research paper is guided be TAM theory which provides an adequate background to the political communication on SNSs particularly on Facebook and Twitter. TAM model was introduced by Davis in 1989 as an application of the "theory of reasoned action" (TRA). According to TAM, user's attitudes toward technology are critical factors in their accepting and using new technologies. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the most fundamental determinants for formulating positive attitudes toward technology and behavioural intention to use technology and, therefore, ultimately define actual use. With regard to the Ease of Use and usefulness of technological dimensions, the social networking platform is widely accepted by the young generation. Higher Perceived Ease of Use led to higher Perceived Usefulness and ultimately greater intensity of use of the social networking sites. Perceived Ease-of-Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) are the main reason behind technology acceptance by the user and increasing social networking sites users. Facebook and Twitter are free online communities which provide such facilities (Perceived Usefulness) in the form of interpersonal discussion, making online groups with the people sharing the same interest, liking the status of anyone or to comment on wall posts. These Social networking sites are designed in very user friendly way so PEOU which is the second main requirement of TAM theory is also helped to understand the attitudes toward the acceptance of these SNSs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is limited academic research that has been done on the political aspects of the online social networks especially in Indian Context. I review several research works to build an adequate background to the study and further help to guiding this study.

Kenski, K. and Stroud, N. [6] in their research found that the association between Internet and political participation and online exposure was positive and significant.

Smith, K. [7] in his study revealed that social media has played and will continue to play a significant role in political campaigns and enhancing the political knowledge.

Mohamed Haneefa K. and Sumitha E. [8] in their study reached to this conclusion that a majority of the students were aware of social networking sites and use these sites for friendly communication and Orkut was the most popular and used social networking site than Facebook and MySpace.

Husein, A. et.al [9] in their research paper indicated that usage of SNSs is significantly impacts on their political, social and culture interest and also influences their ideas, thought processes and their level of participation in socio- political activities.

Previous studies have shown rapid acceptance of SNSs by youth and their influence on their social as well as political behaviour. So, there is an emerging need to continuously collect, monitor, analyze, summarize, and visualize politically relevant information from social media.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
The objectives of this research are:
➢ To study the role of SNSs especially Facebook and Twitter in political communication.
➢ To study the role of SNSs, especially Facebook and Twitter in political campaigning.

HYPOTHESIS
H0. There is no relationship between social networking sites and political communication.
Ha. SNSs are positively related to political communication.
H0. There is no relationship between SNS and political campaigning.
Ha. SNSs are positively related to political campaigning.

METHODOLOGY
A survey of 150 college students of Gurgaon district is conducted using combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. The data is analyzed using correlation and percentile technique. Secondary data resources has been also used where ever required.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
Most preferred Social networking site
The primary data reveals that Facebook is by far the most preferred Social Networking Site among youth. 41.7% of male and 57.8% of female respondents choose Facebook as their single preferred SNS. This could be attributed to the fact that Facebook is also the most popular SNS worldwide because it is easy to use and it provides an opportunity to connect and even reconnect with one's friends in a virtual space. Only 1.1% of the female respondents identified Twitter as their single preferred SNS. A small percentage which is 3.3% of male and 12.2% of female respondents

identified Other SNSs as their preferred SNS. 26.7 % of male and 16.7% of female are using both Facebook and Twitter. 28.3% of male 12.2% of female respondents are using Facebook, Twitter and Other SNSs.

I share my ideas openly with everyone on Twitter
The data analysis shows that 25.0% of male and 7.8% of female respondents are strongly agree that they are sharing their ideas openly with everyone on Twitter. 36.7% of male and 23.3% of female are also supporting the same view. 4.4% of female are strongly denied the statement. 8.3% of male and 17.8% of female are also disagreeing with the same statement. 30% of the male respondent and 40% of female respondents are not sure whether they do share their ideas on Twitter to everyone or not.

I share my ideas openly with everyone on Facebook
The primary data reveal that 23.3% of male respondents and 7.8% of female respondents are strongly agreed that they are sharing their ideas openly with everyone on Facebook. 56.7% of male and 37.8% of female are also agreeing with the same while 3.3% of male and 10.0% of female strongly deny the statement. 6.7% of male and 25.6% of female disagree with same statement. 10.0% of the male respondent and 15.6% of female respondents are not sure whether they share their ideas openly with everyone on Facebook or not. Only 3.3% female respondents have not given the response to this question.

I use Facebookand Twitter for Chatting or Messaging
The analysis shows that 45.0% of male and 28.9% of female respondents strongly indicate that they are using SNSs to chat with their family and friends. 53.3% of male and 56.7% of female respondents also agreeing with the same statement. Only a small segment of sampled population denied that they are using SNSs such as Facebook or Twitter to chat or to send messages to their dear ones.

Reliability of information available on SNSs
The data shows that 51.7% of male and 27.8% of female respondents are find the information reliable which is provided over SNSs. 11.7% male and 5.6% of female respondents also support this statement strongly while 6.7% of male and 12.2% of female respondents find the information not reliable. 34.4 % of female and 18.3 of male participants are not sure about reliability of news or information available on SNSs.

Facebook and Twitter: A New Vote Bank for 2014 General Elections
The analysis shows that 70% of the male respondents and 50% of female respondents strongly agree with the statement that a SNSs user works a huge vote bank for general elections. 21.7% of the male and 35.6% of the female respondents also agree with the same statement. Only a small percentage of female

respondents strongly deny SNS users as vote bank. Only 3.3% of male and 5.6% of female participants indicated that SNS has not to be vote bank for general elections.

SNSs are the Right Place for Political Campaigning

The primary data reveals that 70% of male respondents and 48.9% of female respondents are strongly believed that SNSs are the right place for political campaigning. 23.3% of male and 28.9% of female respondents also agree with the same statement. Only 5.0% of male and 8.9 % of female respondents disagree with the same statement.

CORRELATION BETWEEN SNS AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING VARIABLES

Pearson correlation coefficient for the members of SNSs are positively associated with all the variables i.e. gender, ideas sharing, Facebook surfing, photo sharing, political campaigning, reliable sources of information and vote bank for General election.

Only few of the coefficients are significantly associated with the Social Networking Sites (SNSs). SNSs are used to share the ideas, photos, political campaigning and reliability of contents significantly at 1 percent and 5 percent level of significant respectively.

CORRELATIONS MATRIX

		Gender	memberofSNS	Ideas	Facebook Chat	Photo	Campaign	Reliable	Votebank2014
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N	150							
memberof SNS	Pearson Correlation	.066	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.422							
	N	150	150						
Ideas	Pearson Correlation	.168(*)	.222(**)	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.006						
	N	150	150	150					
Facebook Chat	Pearson Correlation	.126	.212(**)	.289(**)	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.009	.000					
	N	150	150	150	150				
Photo	Pearson Correlation	.165(*)	.171(*)	.080	.607(**)	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	.036	.330	.000				
	N	150	150	150	150	150			
Campaign	Pearson Correlation	.185(*)	.052	.133	.391(**)	.294(**)	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.527	.104	.000	.000			
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150		
Reliable	Pearson Correlation	.233(**)	.113	.290(**)	.151	.069	.024	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.170	.000	.064	.399	.774		
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	
Votebank 2014	Pearson Correlation	.095	.167(*)	.127	.284(**)	.398(**)	.666(**)	-.001	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.248	.041	.122	.000	.000	.000	.992	
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

On the behalf of data analysis and results the study concludes that majority of respondents accept that Facebook is by bar most preferred SNS for them. This justifies the decision to pick SNS sites for this study with special focus on Facebook and Twitter.The sharing of ideas, opinions, liking the wall status as well as tagging or poking friends with the political content over these SNS can be a valuable tool of political campaigning. The findings reflects that majority of respondents share their ideas openly with everyone on Facebook in comparison of Twitter. This study also reveals that these SNS can best utilize to disseminate information or political agenda or political ideology of political parties.

This analysis indicates that SNSs users are using these sites because they found the information that is provided over it, is reliable. So the political parties have the best opportunity to disseminate the information or their agenda over these SNSs because SNSs users take it as reliable information.Overall majority of the respondents believed that SNSs users will be a vote bank for political parties in upcoming general election.Results of correlation reveals that the SNS are widely using for chatting/ messaging, sharing of videos, political content etc. The dissemination of information over these (Facebook /Twitter) SNSs is positively associated with Political campaigning. A majority of the respondents believed that SNS is the right place for political parties to political campaigning because it has vast user base as well as they are more frequently used for chatting/ massaging, sharing or liking, tagging that are tools of dissemination information or communication.

All political parties now have their presence on social media, and maintain their party website detailing the activities and programs of the parties. Majority of politicians have their Twitter account or Facebook pages. In the recent General Elections, Narendra Modi effectively used the social media to connect with online citizens. Besides being active on Twitter and Facebook, Modi also went for a live chat on Google plus with people. By going online for live chat, he became the first Indian politician to do so. Through his social media campaign, he was able to capture the first time voters, the youth, who certainly are more attuned to digital culture. At the same time, the middle classes are also quite active on social media. He has also been able to connect with the youth because of his style of political campaigning and his social media skills. Because of his techno- savvy personality and active online interaction with people, his popularity rapidly increasing among youth voters.

REFERENCE

1. Danah M. Boyd/Nicole B. Ellison, Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship, Michigan State University(2007) p-1
2. http://adelinapeltea.com/2014-the-state-of-worldwide-Internet-social-media-and-mobile-penetration/http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/social-digital-mobile-around-the-world-january-2014
3. Axford, Barrie, and Richard Huggins. New Media and Politics. London: Sage, 2001.
4. Greyes, Natch. "The Untapped Potential of Social Media: A Primer for Savvy Campaigners." Campaigns and Elections (2011).
5. Kucinich, Jackie. "Direct Message to Politicos: Think Before Clicking 'Tweet'." USA Today 18March 2011. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO.
6. Kenski, K. and Stroud, N. (2006). "Connections between Internet Use and Political Efficacy, Knowledge and Participation" Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 50(2), 2006, pp. 173–192.
7. Smith, Kristian Nicole, (2011), "Social Media and Political Campaigns" University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects online available at http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2442&context=utk_chanhonoproj
8. Mohamed Haneefa K. and Sumitha E.(2011). "Perception and Use of Social Networking Sites by the Students of Calicut University" Journal of Library & Information Technology, Vol. 31, No. 4, July 2011, pp. 295-301
9. Husein, A. et.al (2013), "The Impact of Social Network Sites to Determine Student`s Orientations: Field Study on Jordanian Private Universities" published in international Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology Vol. 3 No. 4; April 2013.