The Use Of Social Media In Indian Elections: An Overview

Aijaz Ahmad Mir[1] , Dr A.Nageswara Rao[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500032

[2]Assistant Professor, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500 032

Correspondence author:
Aijaz Ahmad Mir, Research Scholar, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500032.

Abstract

This paper studies the use of social media in the Indian Lok Sabha and assembly elections. This study focuses on using social media in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and its impact on voters. Besides, the paper also discusses the extensive use of social media in last assembly elections held in different Indian states during the COVID-19 pandemic. The onset of the pandemic has forced politicians and political parties to turn to social media for virtual campaigning. This paper covers the role of social media in the assembly elections in UP, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, West Bengal, and Kerala. In recent years, Indian politicians have significantly relied on social media for campaigning during elections. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Election Commission's temporary restriction on rallies, the use of social media in assembly elections grew considerably. This paper also highlights social media usage in the recent 2022 assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Lok Sabha elections, assembly elections, Covid-19, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Gujarat

Introduction

The beginning of the internet in the 1990s onwards gave rise to the digital and networked population around the world(Kahn 2021). The invention of ICT and Web 2.0 has provided people with many opportunities. The internet and social media revolution have affected various fields of life, and politics is not immune to it. Over the last decade, the digital population of India have been growing. India is the world's largest democracy and has the most significant proportion of young people. The Internet and Mobile Association of India states that India is the second country with the most internet users. In the recent decade, the significance of social media in politics has increased in India and across the globe. According to (Kaplan and

Haenlein 2010) "Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." According to(Boyd and Ellison 2007) social media are internet-based technologies that allow users to create a public profile within a secure and private system. Social networking helps users form relationships with other users and see each other's friend lists within a system. Social media is used not only for making friends, but now politicians worldwide are using it for political communication to attract voters. The emergence of ICT and Web 2.0 has given rise to new media communication. Previously, the dissemination of information was dominated by traditional media like TV, newspapers, etc., but now it has become more democratized through social media.

American President Obama was the first politician who successfully used social media for his campaigning and communication during elections. He successfully won the US presidential election through the effective use of social media. Again, in the 2012 US election, Obama's high engagement with his followers through social media helped him to lead a victory. Social media significantly mobilized the people against their monarchical rulers in West Asia and North Africa during the Arab Spring. Apart from these countries, social media has also facilitated various social and neo-social movements in various countries, including India.

The first-time social media started gaining prominence in Indian politics was when Mumbai was attacked in 2008. At that crucial moment, it was through social media that people in India and abroad were getting updates regarding this incident. Social media was used in the 2009 national election to engage people politically. It was also the first time that Twitter was used for diplomatic purposes by the Indian Foreign Ministry. The significance of social media in Indian politics was further raised when Anna Hazare started an anti-corruption movement. It was through Facebook and Twitter which transformed Anna Hazare's struggle into a mass movement (Kattakayam 2011). Social networking sites, particularly Twitter, were used as a platform where women raised their voices against sexual harassers. The global women campaign inspired the MeToo movement in India, and it was through Twitter that women joined this movement. Social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, played a pivotal role in mobilizing the citizens of Delhi to protest the Delhi gang rape case known as Nirbhaya. The heavy protest by students, political opposition party members, and NGOs forced the government to arrest and bring harsher laws against rapists (Padhiyar 2019). Recently, politicians in India are becoming more tech-savvy and realizing that social media could be an effective medium to reach out to voters. The prominence of social media touched the skies during the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The way BJP competently exploited social media during these two elections forced the other political parties to adopt these online platforms as a part of their campaigning. It is difficult to think about election campaigning without accommodating digital media. The political parties that utilize social media effectively during elections can make a favourable impact on their constituencies. This paper discusses the role and usage of social media during Lok Sabha and assembly elections in India.

Objectives

> ➢ To study social media usage during the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
> ➢ To study the role played by social media in Indian assembly elections during the pandemic and non-pandemic phase.

Methodology

This paper is entirely based on secondary data sources. The author mostly relied on secondary data such as books, research articles, governmental websites, and newspaper articles. Based on secondary data, arguments were built to discuss the usage and role of social media in Indian Lok Sabha and assembly elections.

Social media and Lok Sabha Elections

The use of social media for political purposes has increased in India since 2012. It has further increased with the onset of the 2014 Lok Sabha election. Political parties enormously used social media platforms during the elections. BJP was at the forefront of social media during the elections. The party effectively used social media and had the edge over all other political parties (Rajput 2014). Digital media is becoming more routinized for campaigning and political communication in India. It is stated that social media played a vital role in the massive victory of the BJP in the 2014 election(Rao 2020). Social media's smart and effective use also helped the BJP in the 2019 Lok Saba election. Seeing the potential of social media in attracting voters, other political party leaders also made their accounts on social media. Since then, various political parties have maintained their social media accounts and websites to keep themselves connected with voters. There are various Facebook and WhatsApp groups of various political parties. They create and maintain such groups to affect public opinion and grab voters' attention. Social media is also being misused to spread fake and divisive content.

Two months before the 2019 Lok Sabha election, BJP, INC, BSP, and SP were sharing junk news and divisive content through their WhatsApp groups(Narayanan et al. 2019). There were more than 9 lakh volunteers 'cell phone pramukhs' who were creating WhatsApp groups to disseminate the development programs, policies and achievements of BJP and Narendra Modi. The opposition party, Congress had also been using WhatsApp groups to send their messages to voters. Congress had launched the 'Digital Sathi' app, which used digital media to connect directly with voters in polling booths. Despite WhatsApp's efforts to stop the misinformation campaign, this platform was widely misused during the 2019 election. Thus, various political parties were operating WhatsApp groups to manipulate public opinion. The extensive usage of WhatsApp during the 2019 Lok Saba election was dubbed as WhatsApp elections. The research demonstrated that WhatsApp has the potential to manipulate political messages, and the platform was being used to spread misinformation campaigns during elections(Anon 2019)**.**

Political parties use social media to promote their political fame and messages among their supporters. People also use to engage with political issues and discuss them on social media(V et al. 2015). The political parties in India are changing their strategies to connect with the maximum audience during elections. The Indian youth are spending a considerable amount of time on social networking sites. One study showed that 65% of Indian social media users think

that social media is a significant source of staying updated (Krishnan 2019). Now the trend is changing: youth in urban and rural areas are spending their maximum time on social media. Keeping these developments in view, political parties are increasing their presence on social media. These new platforms have become a powerful tools for politicians to reach out to many citizens. Tech-savvy candidates from urban constituencies have been using this platform to attract first-time voters(Kanungo 2015).

Twitter, a microblogging site, has played an essential role in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been using Twitter since 2009 when he was the chief minister of Gujarat (Chaturvedi 2020). While his opponent Rahul Gandhi started using Twitter after his defeat in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. Rahul Gandhi finally realized the significance of Twitter in engaging with the audience. After the defeat, the Congress party has made significant progress in using digital platforms, regardless of its shortcomings (Khosla 2018). During the 2019 election, the tactical use of social media made Rahul Gandhi, a genuine political competitor at the public level(Antil and Verma 2019). Despite that BJP was still ahead of all the other parties at the national level(Rao 2019). Narendra Modi is a dominant force on Twitter. He even used Twitter to engage with celebrities, like taking selfies with them and also performing community action(Pal, Chandra, and Vydiswaran 2016)**.** Ronojoy (2019) examines that Twitter significantly creates political influence and promotes a politician's brand and profile. After the election announcement in 2019, Modi launched the' Mai b Chowkidar' campaign, and it yielded better results than Rahul Gandhi's ' Chowkidar Chor hai Campaign'.

Parties now use Twitter, a microblogging service, to reach out to voters. One study found that new and upcoming parties choose Twitter for popularity and media validation, while old parties use it to complement their offline techniques (Ahmed, Jaidka, and Cho 2016). The political parties' presence on social media has shown some positive results in their favour compared to those who are absent from social media during elections. The party's electoral performance is correlated with its Twitter interactions with first-time voters. Consequently, Twitter has been a novel microblogging platform that politicians utilise to entice people during elections.

Social media has become a trailblazing forum for political leaders to connect with the electorate. In 2014, just before the elections, political parties, namely Congress, AAP, and BJP, were using Google Hangout to answer party-related queries. Thus, Google Hangout served as a source for these parties to get feedback from the general public. Facebook had added the ' I am a voter' feature to remind users about election updates, and about 23 million youth were expected to vote in 2014(Reuters 2014). Times of India also mentioned that games like' Modi Run' and ' Kursi Cricket' were made accessible to the google store to grab the voters' attention for a party.

When Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India, he had 16 million likes on his personal Facebook page, the second highest for any political leader in the world (Ali 2014). NDTV (2014) reported that since the 2014 elections were announced till its end, twenty-nine million people in India have engaged in 227 million posts, comments, and discussions. This represents two third of all regular Facebook users engaged on Facebook, and around 13 million

citizens have mentioned Modi in their posts on Facebook. BJP IT cells were highly active on social media during the Lok Saba elections of 2014 and 2019. In the 2014 election, BJP IT cells were operating online promotion campaigns with automated responses where a user who tweeted a particular hashtag would get a personalized message from Modi. BJP also conducted a Yuva SMS quiz on Facebook and Twitter, where users needed to send back responses through SMS.

Instagram is a famous social media platform for young people in India. Politicians in India have also shown their presence on Instagram. On Instagram, political leaders share their softer side with the young audience(Dua 2019). Narendra Modi is also dominant on Instagram, with around 71.3 million followers as of December 2022. Modi is the most followed politician worldwide on Instagram. However, on Instagram, politicians mostly show their human side rather than their political side.

Some studies and reports showed mixed pictures of social media both as a game changer and not a game changer during the 2014 and 2019 Lok Saba elections. Digital Marketing firm conducted a survey that showed that political messages on social networking sites affected roughly one-third of first-time voters during the 2019 national election(PTI 2019). One study found that social media was not a game changer in the 2014 Lok Saba elections but raised several other significant issues(Kanungo 2015). Another study by (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies 2019) revealed that social media was not a game changer during the 2019 Lok Saba elections. It also revealed that social media exposure could hardly impact voters' voting behavior, but social media exposure increased political participation during the 2019 elections.

Social media and Assembly Elections

During assembly elections in India, social media serves as the best medium for communicating with voters. The onset of the pandemic has forced politicians and political parties across the globe to opt for virtual rallies. During the pandemic, politicians heavily used social media to communicate with their constituencies. Due to the pandemic, the legislative assembly elections in multiple Indian states in 2021 and 2022 were primarily digital. India's election commission has limited physical rallies, so parties and candidates have had to rely more on digital media. The BJP, the most tech-savvy political party, turned to digital media in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. According to Amit Malaviya, the BJP's IT head, PM Modi addressed several virtual rallies in which thousands of people participated(Shekhar 2022). These digital rallies were watched by millions of people on their social media accounts.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held similar digital rallies at various periods and in several places, such as during the assembly elections in Bihar and West Bengal. The BJP has made adept use of social media in assembly elections. The party used these platforms to disseminate its welfare programs at the local level. BJP cadres were well-trained in utilising social media. The BJP won the UP assembly elections with a thumping majority. The party has great central and state leaders and a professionalised social media team. The BJP's social media team played a vital role in the UP assembly elections by remaining in the shadows of the public gaze. The

party's social media team reached out to the people through songs, slogans, cartoon videos, and pictures shared on social media.

The slogans such as "Jo Ram laye hai hum unko layenge"(One who has brought Ram, We will bring them), "Farak Saaf Hai"(Difference is visible), "Jo Kaha So Kiya"(What was said was done), "Na Bhoole hai na maaf kaarenge, SP-BSP ka Supda Saaf Karenge", "Soch Imaandar, Kaam Dumdaar Phir Ek Baar BJP Sarkar(khan 2022). These were the famous slogans campaigned by BJP in the 2022 UP assembly elections. Ankit Chandel, UP's Social media head for BJP, said all these slogans contributed to the winning of BJP in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress party has also organized several virtual rallies in Uttar Pradesh and the party reached up to 5 crore people. Rohan Gupta social media chairperson of Congress, stated that social media is an effective tool for gathering feedback from audiences which helps the party in making strategic decisions on social media(Shekhar 2022). The Samajwadi party led by Akhilesh Yadav also showed interest in using social media during the UP assembly elections. The SP employed social media to disseminate its views and to target the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. The party claimed that they were satisfied with both physical and online rallies. In Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati's BSP also chose virtual rallies to convey its policies and to counter the BJP, INC, and SP. In the 2022 Punjab assembly elections, BJP created over 17,000 WhatsApp groups to disseminate its views and programs across the state(PTI 2022b). In Punjab, the BJP created hashtags such as #NawaPunjab Bhajpa De Naal and #PunjabWithBJP to woo the voters. During the Punjab assembly elections, Congress also had an active presence on social media. The Congress had also created hashtags to woo the voters, such as #CongressHiAayegi, #LokaanDiSarkar etc. The Aam Aadmi Party, which came to power in Punjab, had successfully conducted online campaigns. AAP's campaigns were mostly centered around unemployment, inflation, the agricultural crisis, education and COVID-19 mismanagement(Dahiya 2022).

The Congress party, realizing social media's significance for campaigning during the pandemic, used multiple social media platforms to engage with voters. The party organized digital rallies through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to interact with the people. The Congress launched the campaign, namely "Priyanka Ke Saath Live" on Facebook, where she talked with the audience and answered their queries (Mishra 2022). Arvind Kejriwal had also launched a campaign, namely "Ek Mauka Kejriwal Ko" where he exhorted Delhiites to post videos in favour of AAP through their social media accounts. Kejriwal appealed to voters of other states to give his party a chance. In the Goa assembly elections, the Congress party's social media team consistently posted anti-BJP content to attract votes and generate discontent with the BJP government among voters. The Congress tried to expose the failures of the BJP government in Goa through its social media platforms. The Congress party attempted to bring attention to its accomplishments and the good things it has done for the people of Goa. In Goa, Congress managed two social media war rooms, each with a strength of 40 workers(Upadhyay 2022). However, BJP, the ruling party in Goa, had the edge over Congress. The BJP ran online and cadre-based campaigns in Goa to reach the maximum number of voters. In Goa, the BJP's social media team followed an efficient strategy by focusing on development, and the party avoided attacking Congress. BJP had three social media war rooms in Goa, each with a strength of around 25 workers (Upadhyay 2022). All the major political parties ramped up their social

media campaigns by employing strategies such as digital advertising, creating WhatsApp groups, and sharing video clips to spread the word about ongoing elections. Even though physical rallies were not allowed, there were times when party leaders went door-to-door to campaign in different parts of the country. When the elections were declared in Goa, the BJP emerged as the single largest party by securing 20 assembly seats(Economic Times 2022).

In the 2021 assembly elections in West Bengal**,** the BJP employed social media to connect with Bengali voters directly. The party had appointed Amit Malaviya as a co-convener in West Bengal. Malaviya's appointment gave a significant boost to the BJP's communication campaign. The ruling TMC in West Bengal needed to catch up on social media; the party utilized social media efficiently to attract voters. West Bengal is a stronghold for the TMC, and the party did everything it could to attack and smear the BJP.

On the other hand, the BJP tried to change the narrative in its favor by creating several Facebook pages critical of Mamata and the TMC. In West Bengal, TMC performed quite well on social media, and the party spent around Rs. 1.69 crores on digital advertisements. The spending of the BJP on digital advertisements in West Bengal was around 25.31 lakh, less than TMC, which stood for 1.69 crores (NDTV 2021). In the 2021 assembly elections, West Bengal political parties spent the most on Facebook political ads, around 3.74 crores, followed by Tamil Nadu at 3.3 crores, Assam at 61.77 lakhs, Kerala at 38.86 lakhs, and Puducherry at 3.34 crores(NDTV 2021). The ruling All India Trinamool Congress party headed by Mamata Banerjee easily won the 2021 assembly elections in West Bengal. However, the BJP became the formal opposition in West Bengal by winning 77 seats.

In Kerala's assembly election, the use of social media increased as physical rallies were restricted by the election commission due to an ongoing pandemic. Politicians campaigned and communicated with voters via digital media. In Kerala, popular professional singers lent their talents to party campaigns throughout the election season. The Sitara Krishnakumar sang "Urappannu Keralam," and Sooraj Santhosh wrote "Hridayapaksham" both of these songs were dedicated to the Left Democratic Front(Praveen 2021). These campaign songs were shared through multiple social media platforms.

Social media was a big part of the BJP's campaign in the 2022 Uttarakhand assembly elections. Every effort was made to reach voters at every level by the party. The party had created over ten thousand WhatsApp groups and Telegram groups across the state to engage with voters. As physical rallies were restricted, the BJP held virtual rallies daily in about three to four assembly constituencies. The party also effectively leveraged Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to connect with the people at the district and block levels. The BJP has started a campaign titled "Dev Bhoomi Ke Digital Yodha" to recruit participants and has appealed to young people to assist the campaign by becoming "Cyber Yodha.."(Deccan Herald 2022). The BJP won 47 out of 70 available seats in the Uttarakhand assembly elections, securing a solid majority (Bhakto 2022).

Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat are the two states holding the assembly elections in November and December 2022. The political parties are trying to reap the maximum benefits from these

elections. In Himachal Pradesh, the BJP and Congress have launched intensive social media campaigns against each other. The saffron party has launched several online campaigns such as "naya rivaj banayenge, phir Bhajpa layenge"(will establish a new custom, will bring back the BJP), "Himachal ki pukaar, phir ek baar imaandar doble-engine bhajpa Sarkar"(Himachal once again call for an honest doble-engine BJP government)(PTI 2022a). The BJP targeted Congress in Himachal by calling it "tukde tukde" gang i.e. Congress is divisive and the party even doubted the surgical and Balakot strikes. The Congress mocked the BJP's frequent assertions of a double-engine government by dubbing it a "trouble engine government." The Congress came up with another slogan in Himachal Pradesh "Vikas aur Vishwas"(Progress and trust) to woo the voters(PTI 2022a).

Both the Congress and BJP have been using local agencies and booth-level workers for their campaigning in the 2022 Himachal Pradesh assembly polls. The Congress came up with a slogan against the CM Jai Ram Thakur namely "Joiya Mama Sunda nahi"(Joiya Uncle is not listening)(Bhatnagar, Amil, Goyal 2022). The slogan has gained traction amid the continuing protests to implement the old pension scheme in Himachal Pradesh. This slogan has been the primary campaign tactic to target Thakur. The Congress has launched parody pages with caricatures of CM Thakur and hashtags #Voteforops on social media. To counter the slogan "Joiya mama sunda nahi" BJP came up with the hashtag "Congress ke karnaame"(misdeeds of Congress) to tarnish its image. Congress has managed three to four small agencies for content creation. The party used WhatsApp groups to reach out to the people. The Congress tried to highlight its promises and expose the failures of the BJP government in a hilly state. The saffron party also uses WhatsApp groups for sharing its content with the targeted voters. The BJP has around 1,500 specialists assigned to the task of content creation and sharing(Bhatnagar, Amil, Goyal 2022).

In Himachal Pradesh, Congress has also launched a campaign "Biodata do, Naukri lo" (provide your biodata and get a job) and "Idea 10 lakh ka" (an idea worth 10 lakh) to invite the people to contribute their best ideas for creating jobs in the constituency. The Congress candidate Asha Kumari from Dalhousie came up with the slogan "Sab pe bhaari, Asha Kumari"(Asha Kumari has surpassed all others). Another Congress candidate Vikramaditya singh from Shimla produced a slogan "Aapse Kiye har wade nibhaaye hain, abki baar nayi soch ke saath aaye hain"(We have fulfilled our word and returned with a new strategy)(Bhatnagar, Amil, Goyal 2022). BJP's official state Facebook page has 285k followers and the party raised the slogan "Himachal ki pukaar, phir Bhajpa Sarkar" (Himachal calls for the return of the BJP government again) and PM Modi has been its main campaign face. The Congress's official state Facebook page has 311k followers, and the party has chosen the slogan "Himachal ka Sankalp, Congress hi ek matra vikalp" (Himachal's resolution, Congress is the only solution) with Pratibha Singh its campaign face.

As of December 5, 2022, assembly elections are being held in Gujarat. The BJP has been ruling Gujarat for the last twenty-seven years. The BJP has created the most formidable social media army to defend its stronghold. The party has employed both online and offline electioneering methods. The BJP has been using social media extensively to disseminate its messages and

agendas to the public. The saffron party has recruited 100 students for digital marketing, and they are posting content about the party's achievements. The BJP has 10,000 workers assigned to its social media units and 50,000 volunteers across the state to help it expand its social media reach(Vaktaniya 2022). The BJP has divided its social media war room into four zones: Central Gujarat, South Gujarat, North Gujarat and Surashtra. Each zone is further divided into districts and major cities. The BJP claims that everything that is posted on social media regarding the party is monitored.

Conclusion

Social media is at the forefront when it comes to elections in India. Every major political party in India has made social media a central part of their campaigning during elections. Campaigning through social media is becoming inevitable and necessary in Indian elections, both in the Lok Sabha and the assembly. Since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the significance of social media for campaigning and communication has extensively increased in Indian elections. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections are another instance where politicians unprecedently used social media to woo voters. The significance of social media can be gauged by the fact that the Election Commission of India has banned physical rallies due to the pandemic, and social media was the only medium for politicians to campaign and connected with their constituencies. The assembly elections in several Indian states during the pandemic phase witnessed the widespread use of digital media by politicians to engage with voters. The post-pandemic assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh also witnessed the large-scale use of social media by political parties, especially the BJP and Congress, to connect with audiences on a large scale. The relevance of social media will considerably grow in the upcoming Indian elections, which is probably a good sign for Indian democracy. The Social media platforms have made communication more inclusive, democratic, and engaging in India.

ORCID iD

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2311-9461

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7562-8658

References

Ahmed, Saifuddin, Kokil Jaidka, and Jaeho Cho. 2016. "The 2014 Indian Elections on Twitter: A Comparison of Campaign Strategies of Political Parties." Telematics and Informatics 33(4):1071–87. doi: 10.1016/J.TELE.2016.03.002.

Ali, Idrees. 2014. "Social Media Played Big Role in India's Election." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.voanews.com/a/social-media-emerges-as-a-key-tool-in-indias-election/1931238.html).

Anon. 2019. "India Had Its First 'WhatsApp Election.' We Have A."

Antil, Anjuman, and Harsh V Verma. 2019. "Rahul Gandhi on Twitter: An Analysis of Brand Building Through Twitter by the Leader of the Main Opposition Party in India." doi: 10.1177/0972150919833514.

Bhakto, Anando. 2022. "Uttarakhand Assembly Election Results: The BJP's Winning Ways - Frontline." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/uttarakhand-assembly-election-results-the-bjps-winning-ways/article38453751.ece).

Bhatnagar, Amil, Goyal. 2022. "Himachal Elections: Parody Pages to Hashtag Battles, Parties Step up Their Social Media Game | Political Pulse News,The Indian Express." Retrieved December 7, 2022 (https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/parody-pages-hashtag-battles-parties-step-up-social-media-game-for-himachal-elections-8239290/).

Boyd, Danah M., and Nicole B. Ellison. 2007. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 13(1):210–30. doi: 10.1111/J.1083-6101.2007.00393.X.

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. 2019. "Social Media and Political Behaviour." 1–70.

Chaturvedi, Amit. 2020. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter Followers Cross 60 Million Mark | Latest News India - Hindustan Times." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/prime-minister-narendra-modi-s-twitter-followers-cross-60-million-mark/story-fEyzOaoFpRQlKu9LA3Q3rJ.html).

Dahiya, Himanshi. 2022. "2022 Punjab Elections: What Does AAP's Punjab Victory Tell Us About Its Soft-Hindutva Politics?" Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.thequint.com/punjab-elections/aap-victory-in-punjab-elections-hindutva-politics-bjp-narendra-modi).

Deccan Herald. 2022. "Uttarakhand BJP Using Social Media Platforms to Reach out to Voters | Deccan Herald." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.deccanherald.com/election/uttarakhand/uttarakhand-bjp-using-social-media-platforms-to-reach-out-to-voters-1075170.html).

Dua, Mansi. 2019. "Why on Instagram Modi, Rahul Share a Softer Side of Their Political Lives | Political Pulse News,The Indian Express." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/why-on-instagram-modi-rahul-share-a-softer-side-of-their-political-lives-5685623/).

Economic Times. 2022. "Goa Election Results 2022 Highlights: BJP Receives Support from MGP, Independent MLAs, to Form Govt - The Economic Times." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/goa-election-results-news-live-bjp-congress-mgp-pramod-sawant-digambar-kamat-poll-updates-10-march-2022/liveblog/90112747.cms).

Kahn, Robert. 2021. "Internet | Description, History, Uses, & Facts | Britannica." Retrieved November 28, 2022 (https://www.britannica.com/technology/Internet).

Kanungo, Neena Talwar. 2015. "India's Digital Poll Battle: Political Parties and Social Media in the 16th Lok Sabha Elections." Studies in Indian Politics 3(2):212–28. doi: 10.1177/2321023015601743.

Kaplan, Andreas M., and Michael Haenlein. 2010. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." Business Horizons 53(1):59–68. doi: 10.1016/J.BUSHOR.2009.09.003.

Kattakayam. 2011. "Social Networking Sites Helping Team Anna - The Hindu." Retrieved February 28, 2022 (https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi//article60483133.ece).

khan, Sameer. 2022. "Role of BJP's Social Media Team in Party's Victory in UP." Retrieved December

3, 2022 (https://www.siasat.com/role-of-bjps-social-media-team-in-partys-victory-in-up-2290785/).

Khosla, Sadhavi. 2018. "What Congress Needs to Learn from BJP in the Social Media Game." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.dailyo.in/politics/social-media-twitter-facebook-bjp-congress-narendra-modi-rahul-gandhi-27343).

Krishnan, Varun. 2019. "How Much Time Do Indians Spend on Social Media? - The Hindu." Retrieved November 30, 2022 (https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-much-time-do-indians-spend-on-social-media/article29201363.ece).

Mishra, Smriti. 2022. "Assembly Elections 2022: How Political Parties Have Created Their Very Own Metaverse to Get Voters' Attention Online | The Financial Express." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.financialexpress.com/brandwagon/assembly-elections-2022-how-political-parties-have-created-their-very-own-metaverse-to-get-voters-attention-online/2428062/).

Narayanan, Vidya, Bence Kollanyi, Ruchi Hajela, Ankita Barthwal, Nahema Marchal, and Philip N. Howard. 2019. "News and Information over Facebook and WhatsApp during the Indian Election Campaign." The Computational Propaganda Project (COMPROP) (May):1–8.

NDTV. 2014. "Social Media Changes Face of Indian General Elections." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.ndtv.com/elections-news/social-media-changes-face-of-indian-general-elections-560331).

NDTV. 2021. "2021 Bengal Election: Trinamool Spends More Than BJP, As Bengal Tops In Facebook Political Ads." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/2021-bengal-election-trinamool-spends-more-than-bjp-as-bengal-tops-in-facebook-political-ads-2398992).

Padhiyar, Raj. 2019. "Social Media and Politics in India: How This Secret Weapon Is Transforming ... - Raj Padhiyar - Google Books." Retrieved November 30, 2022 (https://books.google.co.in/books?id=sQWGDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

Pal, Joyojeet, Priyank Chandra, and V. G. Vino. Vydiswaran. 2016. "Twitter and the Rebranding of Narendra Modi." Economic and Political Weekly 51(8):52–60.

Praveen, S. .. 2021. "Kerala Assembly Elections | A Race to Dominate the Social Media Narrative - The Hindu." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.thehindu.com/elections/kerala-assembly/kerala-assembly-elections-a-race-to-dominate-social-media-narrative/article34245362.ece).

PTI. 2019. "Social Media Plays Key Role in Influencing First-Time Voters: Report - The Economic Times." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/social-media-plays-key-role-in-influencing-first-time-voters-report/articleshow/69295605.cms?from=mdr).

PTI. 2022a. "Himachal Pradesh Assembly Election: Himachal Pradesh Polls: BJP, Congress Launch Aggressive Social Media Campaigns - The Economic Times." Retrieved December 7, 2022 (https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/himachal-pradesh/himachal-pradesh-polls-bjp-congress-launch-aggressive-social-media-campaigns/articleshow/95416680.cms).

PTI. 2022b. "Pb Polls: Political Parties Battling It out on Social Media Platforms as Public Rallies Banned - The Economic Times." Retrieved December 3, 2022

(https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/punjab/pb-polls-political-parties-battling-it-out-on-social-media-platforms-as-public-rallies-banned/articleshow/88954022.cms?from=mdr).

Rajput, Himanshu. 2014. "Social Media and Politics in India: A Study on Twitter Usage among Indian Political Leaders." Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies 2(1).

Rao, Anuradha. 2019. "How Did Social Media Impact India's 2019 General Election? | Economic and Political Weekly." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.epw.in/engage/article/how-did-social-media-impact-india-2019-general-election).

Rao, Shakuntala. 2020. "Narendra Modi's Social Media Election Campaign and India's Delegative Democracy." Communication Review 23(3):223–41. doi: 10.1080/10714421.2020.1829306.

Reuters. 2014. "Facebook to Roll out 'I'm a Voter' Feature Worldwide - India Today." Retrieved December 2, 2022 (https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/facebook-im-a-voter-feature-narendra-modi-lok-sabha-polls-193616-2014-05-19).

Ronojoy, S. E. N. 2019. "From Chaiwala to Chowkidar: Modi's Election Campaigns Online and Offline." Economic and Political Weekly 54(51).

Shekhar, Kumar Shakti. 2022. "Assembly Elections 2022: How Political Parties Used Social Media for Campaign | India News - Times of India." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/assembly-elections-2022-how-political-parties-used-social-media-for-campaign/articleshow/89986416.cms).

Upadhyay, Pankaj. 2022. "Goa Polls: BJP, Congress Battle It out on Social Media to Woo Voters - India Today." Retrieved December 3, 2022 (https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/goa-assembly-polls-2022/story/goa-assembly-polls-bjp-congress-battle-social-media-voters-1906400-2022-01-30).

V, Meti, Kh, oba PK, and Guru MC. 2015. "Social Media for Political Mobilization in India: A Study." Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism 5(9):1–4. doi: 10.4172/2165-7912.1000275.

Vaktaniya, Saurabh. 2022. "Inside BJP's Digital War Room That Keep the Show Running for Gujarat Polls - India Today." Retrieved December 7, 2022 (https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/gujarat-assembly-polls-2022/story/gujarat-polls-bjps-digital-warriors-keep-show-running-social-media-2300944-2022-11-24?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=recirculation).