

CHAPTER – I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Political communication or campaign through social media is now turning into a basic paradigm of Indian elections. For politician, the election is not about getting elected; it is about getting socially elected. Social media has changed the way people think, write and react but political pundits believe it has also influence the way people vote. Most of the political parties are aware of the pulse and the impulse of the public on social media timelines, which is why more and more politician are realising the importance of social media as an electoral tool. As a result, for the general election, digital strategies have become central to planning political rallies and party manifesto are no longer conspiracies of a coterie but are laid bare in the public eye, if not crowd-source to voters at large. Canvassing demand a party's interactive presence on social platform like twitter, Facebook, You tube, Google plus. And so for anyone wanting to read the sentiment of the people, the notion of the dipstick survey has been replace by a tweetstick survey.

Social media connects people and gets them talking and sharing is one thing. But it become more meaningful when it allow campaigner to know the voters, target a specific audience, splice demographics, mobiles support, and urge people to participate. When some of these people actively engage in political debates, they become a great tool in spreading the word and influencing opinion.

With increasing knowledge of the computer and internet and invention of many devices in information communication technology (ICT) politicians as well as the electorate. were now familiar with use of blogs, websites and other social media platforms for communicating political issues. The new media are not only empowering people but they are also democratizing human relations. The use of the internet by politicians to communicate with their constituencies has extended the concept of 'mediatization'¹ of politics in developing countries. Increasing use of the internet or new media has inspired tremendous and influential innovations in political

campaign communication. During elections they are now useful tool of servicing the political system by providing information, discussion and debate. Political gladiators of all shades of opinions, ideologies, intents and goals use the media with the belief that political communication through media exerts pressure or influence on people's perception and behaviors as needle effect of media messages

Social media is emerging as a substantial promotion tool during elections by the political parties to connect and express their vision, to influence voters, to achieve its objective to help them increase their visibility or to gain majority. The perception of Indian people towards the modern marketing tools in politics remains unexplored. Social media is not only the current generation's line of communications technologies but it has also changed daily activities and connected people in a manner never before possible. In the same manner, social media has also transformed politics in India and globally. Social Media marketing have created a new dimension in online advertising and political marketing resulting in easy access for the parties and political leaders or institutions to keep in touch with the people understanding their needs, wants and behavior. In this paper, the influence of social media on voter's behavior and how political marketing takes new dimensions is discussed.

In the 21st Century, Social media have become an essential space of public communication. Every organization which provides products and services irrespective of whether it is big or small have recognized the privilege of social media to reach the customers. Marketing activities had been highly traditional earlier, but due to the increasing number of users in Internet there is a positive trend towards digital marketing. This trend has been catalyzed to a great extent by social media and the business marketing strategies. Increasing active users in social media has provided new opportunities to marketing strategists to target an emerging section of society that is heavily influenced by social media. Social media is a novel platform and a tool to help countries and its societies to create, express, share their thoughts and ideas without barriers. In the recent years, Political parties in India have also taken up this space understanding the success stories of corporates reaching the customers more easily and quickly.

The term 'Political Marketing' was first coined by Kelly in 1956. Political marketing can be described as a process by which political candidates, events and ideas directed at the voters and gain their support understanding the voters' behavior. Wring (1997) defines political marketing as "the party or candidate's use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes". D Eisenhower, 34th President of USA was the first to apply political marketing into practical terms in the election campaign of 1952. In the world's largest democratic country, elections are considered to be the festivals of democracy.

The political sphere is also not an exception. Political sense of a human being in a country like India is very much significant because it is the largest democratic country in the world. India, with a population of more than one billion (presently 1.252 billion as of the record of 2013) enjoys the political taste of every human being through universal adult suffrage policy which means whenever an Indian citizen attains the age of 18 years, he or she is entitled to cast his / her vote in favour of any registered political party, who are participating in the general election. Therefore, politics and political knowledge are considered as most significant part of citizen life in India. Political sense among the Indian citizens grows through proper cultivation of the same through regular acknowledgement. In order to woo the Indian citizens regarding the awareness of political issues, nowadays the political parties and their leaders also try their best to use any kind of possible and sophisticated means to reach with their agenda. Social media network is considered one of the means to reach the Indian citizens. Earlier, it was the political web pages of different political parties in order to make an influence among the viewers. But in this competitive world, where everyone is just rushing after success, political parties and their leaders start to make personal contacts through social networking sites. Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp – all are infested with certain qualities that can easily generate political awareness among the followers of those sites. It is believed that if anyone has failed to make an impact nowadays through social networking sites, he / she cannot get that much importance among white-collared class as the same is being utilised for a special section of the

society. Here the word special section is used to denote the educated class who are considered digitally educated and well aware of the technological changes happened through the world. In the last Lok Sabha election in 2014, it was found that a thunderous revolution took place through internet based applications in order to generate and spread political message among different sections of the society. ‘Ab ki baar Modi Sarkaar’ or ‘India Against Corruption’ like messages or special web pages have been found in volume of numbers as well as a huge number of followers in Facebook. Therefore, social media networking site in the guise of Facebook has been utilised as a political platform to sell the political message to the target audience. Here the term ‘audience’ has been used to justify the users of the particular social networking site as they are able to see and view or even listen to the message posted in the Facebook. Even in Twitter, the followers can easily get to know the tweets of the famous politicians or the most updated version of their liked ones. Not only that, the feedback procedure is instant. If the message is not liked by the followers or viewers, they can immediately respond back; and sometimes, leave comments with caricature. Therefore, in the social media platforms, response is immediate. It is not practiced in the print media or in the audio visual media to that level of extent. One of the significant positive sides of this social networking sites that its limitation cares no boundary. Throughout the world, wherever one goes, he or she can visit the Facebook pages or twitter account and easily comes to know about the updates. Therefore, the subject creators on political aspects in Facebook or Twitter, can easily consider their followers as customers of their contents. One of the charming points is the unknown followers and supporters whom the content-creator does not know earlier. There are many supporters or followers whom in technical term we generally refer to as ‘Friends’ and whom we really do not know from earlier. But the widespread revolution of internet and communication has turned the entire world into a miniature. Social media is just a bedecked feather in the system. People throughout the world irrespective of geographical boundary know each other and would come into contact of each other through social media networking sites, especially here we would consult regarding two worldly known major social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Now we do not have to think whether it is feasible to send any message to anyone sitting in crores of kilometers away. The information and communication

revolution have turned the same possible in these days. One of the interesting features of using the social media networking sites for spreading any kind of message is its affordable costing. Only a minimum charge is needed to pay the internet charge which is necessary to maintain a wide network with vast of population.

The marketing events in political elections begin from wall campaigns, public meetings and even door to door campaigns. Since all these are routine events, marketing in the election process takes a reform. Internet has showcased their democratizing potential by creating access to information and lowering the barrier of public participation in sharing their opinion. Low cost of managing social media helped the political parties to design new strategies for the political candidates through new methods of campaign. The impact of social media in Indian was first highlighted during the Mumbai Terrorist attacks in 2008 when timely information was shared through Twitter. In 2009, on the eve of national elections, social media was used in India for online voter registration and transparency campaigns started. It was the first time political parties tried to reach out to voters through social networking websites. In the past two decades, one of the most vital developments associated to internet has been the occurrence of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. Social media cites Arab Spring Movement that began in late 2010 that changed the political scenario in many countries all over the world. The contribution of the social media and democracy to the events of the Arab Spring has led to idea that open access and a free Internet can eventually turn out to be a good medium. The social media has changed the traditional marketing landscape significantly since its emergence.