

MBA Dissertation: The Effect of Social Media on Individual Voters in India

Student Name: Neha Malik | Student No: 1720850 | Course: MBA in Marketing | Supervisor: Prof. John Staunton

Module: Research Methods 2 | Module Code: B9RS106 | Professor: Brid Lane |
Word count: 18000

Declaration

I declare that all of the work in this dissertation is completely my own except for the words have been placed in inverted commas and referenced from the original source. Furthermore, texts cited are referenced as such and placed in the reference section. A full reference section is included within this thesis at the end.

No part of this work has been previously submitted for assessment in any form, either at Dublin Business School or any other institution in Ireland or any institution in India.

Signed: 

Date: 22- August-2014

Table of Content

Acknowledgement.....	4
Abstract.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Background of the study.....	6
1.2 Problem Discussion.....	7
1.3 Statement of Problem.....	8
1.4 Research Questions.....	9
1.5 Summary and Hypothesis.....	9
1.6 Significance of the study.....	10
2. Literature Review.....	11
2.1 Literature Introduction.....	11
2.1.1 Defining Social Media.....	11
2.1.2 Social Media and Politics.....	11
2.1.3 Rise of Social Media in Indian Political Campaigning.....	12
2.2 Changes in Political Environment.....	14
2.2.2 Participation Effects.....	15
2.2.3 Voters Choice.....	16
2.3 Ethical & Philosophical Assumptions.....	16
2.4 Engaging the Voter.....	17
2.5 Social Media Effect.....	18
2.6 Public Interest.....	18
2.7 Literature Conclusion.....	18
3. Methodology.....	21
3.1 Scope of the Study.....	21
3.2 Research Philosophy and Design.....	21
3.3 Research approach and Choice.....	24
3.4 Selecting Respondents.....	24
3.5 Research Ethical Considerations.....	25
3.6 Data Analysis Procedures.....	27
3.7 Validity and Reliability.....	27
3.8 Limitations of Methodology.....	28
4. Data Analysis.....	29
4.1 Main results from the quantitative survey.....	29
4.2 Analysis of Q: 1 to Q: 16.....	29
4.3 Hypothesis.....	46
5. Summary and Conclusion.....	48
5.1 Limitations of the study.....	48
5.2 Conclusion.....	48
5.3 Recommendations.....	50
6. Learner Engagements and Reflection.....	52
7. Bibliography and Appendices.....	55

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to a number of people who helped me to start and complete this dissertation. I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. John Staunton for his valuable input. I would also like to thank a my finance lecturer, Prof. Michael Keally, for his valuable advice and support towards the second semester end.

I would like to acknowledge the students and staff of the Dublin Business School for their help and support during the research period. I would also like to make a huge thank you to the citizens of india who actually took out the time to answer my questions and furthermore share honest feedback voluntrarily.

I would like to especially thank my parents for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout course of MBA in Marketing. Finally, last but not least, I would like to thank my batch mate and friend Waseem Akram for sticking with me throughout the dissertation period and helping me with the submission process at the end.

Thank You all!

Abstract

The Problem: Today the idea of social media usage is drastically different from the media usage of an era ago. Before the users considered social media as a new technology medium however now they consider it as a source of information and think it to be reliable medium. In 2014 Indian lok-Sabha elections, the social media platforms became a medium for Indian vote casters to find about the Prime Minister candidates. As a result, Prime Ministers political campaigning also used social media to target these citizens effectively. Mr. Modi who is currently Indian Prime minister established social media as an essential part of the political campaigning. This research studies whether political campaigns that are more social media savvy ultimately garner more votes. Secondly, the study also seeks to ascertain if use of Facebook and Twitter for sending messages to potential voters for their support – can positively affect only the younger persons possibility to cast a vote or it has affect on all age groups.

Methodology: The sample size for this study was 150 Indian citizens who were above the 18 years age who agreed to take part in the quantitative element of this research investigation. The research was conducted using a cross-sectional quantitative (Survey Questionnaire) design. Survey methodology is behavior-oriented research that focuses on the actions of the respondents. The overall research approach is deductive in nature, as its main aim is to explore the previously researched phenomena's from a new and a different perspective and test the hypothesis that have been based on the literature review of this research. Probability sampling technique has been used to identify the sample from the overall population.

Conclusion and Recommendations: The research shows that due to the presence of social media in Indian politics and political campaigning, the influence on individual voter behavior is limited. Respondents still find the traditional communication mediums like Television, Newspaper & Magazines and Public opinions to be significant and essential in comparison to receiving or reading updates on social media about political candidates. However, it is evident from the survey findings that the major portion of the active users on social networking websites became heavily reliant on social media for seeking updates regarding political leaders. Moreover, they consider it is very important for a political leader to have a profile on these social networking sites. The scope of use of social media in Indian politics is extensive if utilized strategically. Lastly, although twitter has most number of registered users in India, as per the survey response Twitter is the site, which is never used even once a month by most of the respondents.

1. Introduction

Social Media provides the benefit of being instantaneous, precise and target specific. Social media has gained popularity worldwide in recent years, however, the concept is not new. During the mid 90's with widespread adaptation of personal computers users were also attracted to services like chat rooms, newsgroups and instant messages (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004). What is new is the expansion of social media (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter & Instagram) and it's use for more than just means of socializing on Internet.

Initially the messages on these social medium platforms were considered insignificant and were more often overlooked. They were just a means of either marketing to a targeted group or posting statements describing regular personal activities to listed friends on the network. In late 2006, when Twitter was launched, its creators stated that the purpose of tweets was to tell one's followers what they were doing (Jackson & Lilleker, 2011). However, social media in the second decade of the 21st century is used not just for triviality but is also used for disseminating serious social and political messages to the targeted audience.

The influence of the use of social media sites on citizen's behavior in Indian political matters has recently become more visible than before. In September 2013, a relatively small leader of BJP political party Narendra Modi announced his candidacy for Prime Minister of India. Almost 9 months later, that small politician became the Prime Minister of India. Modi's party gets the credit for actively engaging masses on social media when mainly all of the politicians were busy emphasizing the emerging social media tools as "waste of time" and impersonal way to connect to masses. Therefore, Modi's political campaigning was unorthodox; his campaign success has frequently been credited to his ability to inspire the people along with his public speaking. However, his use of Internet and social media for engaging individual voters in India provided him with the level of support that most candidates never see. He is considered to be India's first social media prime minister (Financial Times, 2014).

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media now is playing a significant new role in Indian democracy as well. A research done by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB) in 2013 highlights that 74 percent of all active Internet users in India use social media. According to the report, 77 percent of the users use mobile for social media (Iamai.in, 2013).

Usage of social media in Indian political world is a fairly new idea. For instance, estimations suggest that in 2009, there were just 2 million users of Facebook in all of India and an insignificant number on Twitter. Therefore, throughout the general

election of 2009, social media usage in India was minuscule. However, today around 93 million individuals use Facebook and 33 million accounts are set up in the country on Twitter, this indicates that the Indian people are considering social media as considerably important in the way they move forward as a broader community (Socialmediatoday.com, 2014). As a result of this rise in online communication, the key political parties have increased their online presence. The significance of social media can be seen from the example of BJP's prime ministerial candidate for 2014 elections, Narendra Modi, who was among the first Indian politicians to set up a website and who now has Twitter, Facebook and Google+ accounts for his political campaigning.

According to a study done in October 2013 by IAMAI and Mumbai-based market researcher IMRB International, the major political parties are allocating around 2-5% of their election budgets for social media (BBC News, 2014). Taking into consideration the above facts, it can be said that the revolution in information – Internet, Mobile and Social Media is vitally changing traditional marketing campaigns, which can be adjusted to new technologies.

Social media is allowing the citizens to organize themselves easier, faster and better. This has nurtured an incredible ability for politicians and citizens in India to have personal conversations with each other. The traditional form of addressing large rallies of people in India by political leaders on various political issues is now very quickly being replaced by a simple tweet on Twitter or a post of Facebook.

Politicians in India are following the words of Sey and Castells (2004) who wrote, The Internet can, indeed, be an appropriate platform for informed, interactive politics, stimulating political participation and opening up possible avenues for enlarging decision making beyond the closed doors of political institution (p. 363).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Although social media is growing in India, the weak Internet infrastructure is a reason for dissent. Most of the people in India's rural areas still lives in an offline world of text messaging and faxes with no or minimum access to internet. A report by McKinsey found the rural Internet penetration rate to be just one twelfth of urban Internet penetration rates. One of four people in India has never used the Internet; they are just beginning to use a mobile. The impact as of now remains limited largely to urban areas and well-off sections of the society.

When discussing social media it is important to highlight the notion of anonymity, which has become an issue for online communication. Some politicians have been accused of boosting their popularity on social media with associations to followers who don't exist. Meanwhile, the Indian government has used the 2008 Information Technology (Amendment) Act to increase monitoring and censorship of social media.

In 2012, two women were arrested after posting a comment on Facebook that infuriated the politicians in Mumbai. Journalists have had their Twitter accounts disabled, and cartoonists whose works poke fun at officials have had their social media accounts closed.

Social media also raises the issue of authenticity. It is difficult to establish if political leaders are writing the information themselves or is the data being posted online on their behalf from specialist they have hired to influence voters. Are Indian voters considering this fact while engaging or they are overlooking it?

Moreover, in the political domain it is important for the competing parties and candidates to observe changes in information and communication flows during elections. In such scenarios some groups get informed differently. There are also many risks associated with it like lack of proper information; an overkill of information or even misinformation and manipulation may enter the realm of information exchange to people. It is therefore important to find out what the impact of the use of social media platforms have been or is or could be on electoral decisions of Indian citizens.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The use of social media in Indian politics is growing and it shows sign of future upsurge. Furthermore, there is abundant research to show the importance of social media in political activities in India. However, what is less studied is the use of social media in influencing an individual Indian voter and getting him/her to cast a final vote. This research therefore will investigate the use of the two social media tools - Facebook and Twitter in particular, as a means to influencing and encouraging individual voters in India to cast a ballot in general Prime Minister elections (Lok-Sabha).

Also, with this research I will try to evaluate the impact of the latest usage of social networking platforms (from now on SNPs) on the voting decisions of Indian citizens by looking for effects between various age group voters.

For this thesis, the major focus will be on Indian Lok-Sabha elections of 2014 for Prime Minister selection. I will focus on two sides within the decision making process of Indian voters: the decision of first time voters to participate in the elections (electoral participation) and the effect of SNPs on various age groups (electoral choice). Both aspects are important signs for the health of the election process, although in different ways. The first indicates voter turnout of existing voters and new first time voters, and thus the acceptability of the elections. The second indicates that voters are either waiting on information they are lacking or that they are disturbed by the information they are receiving, thus indicating the importance of information flows during elections for different age group people.

1.4 Research Question and Objective

This research question for this research thesis is:

Main Question: *What is the effect of use of social media in political campaigns on Individual voters in India?*

To further address this question, the following three sub-research questions were researched:

Sub-Questions:

1. *Is social media increasing voter participation in elections?*
2. *Does social media have influence only on younger generation during elections?*
3. *Is Social Media successful in engaging the first time voters in elections?*

The objective of this research is to examine the factors that are responsible for influencing Individual voters and also, the analysis of how social media users utilize social media networking for political purposes. The research will also help in understanding if social media actually have any impact on Indian individual voters and help them decide their final casting ballot.

1.5 Summary and Hypothesis

The evolution of social media has caused different opinions about the effect it has during political elections. As these technologies evolve and change, their use by citizens also evolves and changes. As a result it become increasing challenging to measure the influence these sources have on individual voters. These issues contribute to the lack of acceptance for whether or not social media is an effective tool for targeting voters during election in India.

During 2009 lok-Sabha elections in India, social media was not used for election campaigning. However, the 2014 elections saw the increased use of social media platforms. It revolutionized the election process. However, how effective the social networking sites use was is yet to be analyzed. Furthermore, moving forward, how will social media sources influence the outcome of Prime Minister political campaigns? Will social media have any kind of influence? Specifically: what kind of effect do social media have on voter choice?

I draw the hypothesis constructed in this research from the existing literature on social media's role in electoral participation, voter behavior and on general politics. Based on the past research and the trends in India, I hypothesize that:

H1: The existence of social media in a political campaign will positively affect participation among voters aged 18-35.

H2: The presence of social media in a political campaign will positively affect support of that candidate among voters 18-35.

These both hypotheses are based on the literature facts and arguments presented below in the research.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Firstly, given the proximity of the Lok-Sabha general elections for selection of India's Prime minister candidate, which were held in 2014, it is the right time to identify broad trends in social media, which are and have influencing power on the voter's behavior. This data would also be of significance to political campaigning heads, future political contenders and election commission of India.

The research can help them formulate their strategies for future upcoming elections. The research will also help to improve the public understanding of what role social media plays in a election campaign in today's scenario. Social media is a latest development in Indian political scenario but has great potential for growth. All the stakeholders will have keen interest of such kind of a research.

2. Literature Review

This section critically assesses the available literature on and around the research topic along with various studies that have been carried out previously and are relevant to this research. The literature in electoral politics assists in providing explanations to the differences and variations in social media usage amongst politicians of different countries. The common assumption in the literature is that politicians desire to win and later seek a re-election.

2.1.1 Defining Social Media

Over the years many authors and experts like Graber (1996), Morris (2002), Han (2008) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have looked at the social media's impact and influence, few have actually provided an acceptable definition of the term of new media. In basic sense, new media is the digital communication technology that is continuously evolving and developing and has uncertain terms and uses (Peters, 2009). It is associated with technology relating to the Internet. Social media can be considered as a type of new media. However, it is essential to note that social media might be characterized as a type of new media; it has its own distinctive features.

Social media use social networking websites as its form of prime communication. The social media has been defined by Boyd and Ellison (2009) as: *“We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p211)”*. There are many more definitions, which exist in order to explain the term, however this is the most clear one of all.

Social media is an online system that lets people to share information with other people they choose and the new people they make friends with. For this dissertation, social media is considered to be the technology that utilizes peer-to-peer interaction and will be referred as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn.

Most of the individuals are aware of the different tools and communities of Internet based social media – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Blogs, Google+ and LinkedIn etc. These tools are also known as web 2.0 tools and these have developed rapidly over a short span of time and these kinds of functions are getting generated every year.

2.1.2 Social Media and Politics

Over past two decades, one of the most vital developments associated to digital media has been the rise of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and Instagram. Since the introduction of the first social media

applications in the late 1990s, the sites have attracted over a billion active users worldwide, several individuals from these have incorporated digital social interactions into their everyday lives. The social media has changed the traditional marketing landscape significantly since its occurrence.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), in general sense, social media are the networking sites, which are internet-based applications that allow the users to create a public profile within the secure and closed system, have a list of users whom they have relationship with and are able to view their own friends list and that of others within the system.

The successful U.S presidential campaign of Barack Obama proved social media to be an integral part of the campaigning kit (Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sander & Welp, 2012). Various platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter specifically were used to pass on the opinions and views of the Obama on important issues to his followers and supporters. The tools were used to a great extent to win over the voters and keep the supporters updated. Some analysts even attribute the victory of Obama to his online strategy (Tumasjan et al. 2011). Similarly, social media became the driver for the British elections during year 2010 and were considered to be ‘the first social media elections’ (Arthur, 2010). Later in year 2011, social media entered the Dutch politics also, where political parties used social media platforms for campaigning during their general elections.

The politicians are not only the one who had made use of social media for their gain. Activism groups and politicians have tapped in social media to raise money for political purposes over the years. Activists in Jan 2001, during the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, supporters in the Philippine Congress voted to set apart key proof against him and less than two hours later activists organized a major protest with use of social media. This is recognized to be the first event where a national leader was forced out with use of social media (Safranek, 2012).

These developments are interesting to see as they indicate how social media is gaining significant place in political campaigning worldwide. Seeing this trend, my research interest lies in the social media have effect and influence on individual voters.

2.1.3 Rise of Social Media in Indian Political Campaigning

India’s large and increasing population along with the increasing mobile density, especially in urban areas, has stirred a remarkable growth in the number of people online. Moreover, as the middle class in the country expands, more and more Indians are expected to get online. The number of social media users is also increasing. However, the traditional media is still significant in India. Indian metro cities are the centers for the digital outburst but the effects are yet to reach the more rural parts of

the country.

Social media is such a comprehensive terminology that it covers a large range of networking websites. However, the one of the similarities between these websites is that it allows an individual to interact with the website and interaction with other people. Several of the social media websites are:

- **Social Bookmarking-** it relates to the people by marking websites and searching through websites bookmarked by various other people.
- **Social News-** Networking by voting for articles and marking and discussion on them.
- **Social Networking-** it includes addition of friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups as per personal likings and having discussions in forums.
- **Social Photo and Video Sharing-** Networking by sharing photos or videos with contacts and remarking on the other user submissions.
- **Wikis-** addition of the new articles and checking existing articles.
- **Blogs -** A type of website which is typically upheld by an individual with regular entries of observations, explanations of events or other material such as visuals.

The social media is not just limited to these broad categories. Any website that invites individuals to interact with it and network with other existing or new users comes under the definition of social media. These sites unlike all other sites have its own importance and use.

The use of social media for political agendas in India is a new concept. However, the rise in the use of social media in political campaigns in India cannot be overlooked now. India's main political parties – 'The Indian National Congress' and 'The Bhartiya Janta Party' are tapping into the social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. They are doing so to out-innovate each other. There are two main important drivers that have led to the adaptation of social media by political parties in India. Firstly, to reach out to millions of potential voters who otherwise are difficult to meet in person and secondly, to tap into 90+ million Facebook users who are expected to influence election results in year 2014. This year alone there are over 100 million first time registered voters in the country.

Political information exchanges have been driven not by the government but by third parties, which is mostly the citizens and the foundations or non-profits organizations looking for encouraging the increased participation of young generation in Indian politics. Therefore, social media used in politics is bringing together the public through its rapid and two-way interaction.

The Internet and social media usage is certainly an evolving force in Indian politics, this gives rise to a key question: whether this rise is good for Indian politics or not.

While discussing the effect of the Internet on politics, Nelson (2010) argues that the Internet's power to disseminate information has created an environment in which any individual can possibly find and motivate like-minded people to take political actions.

Additionally, just how effective the use of social media can be on the electoral front in India was displayed when the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Party won and got elected in power for Delhi in December 2013. As many people have ability to influence their families, that's what happened here, when kids who were active on social media asked their parents to vote in favor of AAP party instead of congress after reading facts on social media. Moreover, the report released by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and IRIS Knowledge Foundation stated that of India's 543 constituencies, 160 could be called as high impact in the forthcoming elections for year 2014. Social media in the next general elections will most likely influence these high impact constituencies where the Facebook users account for over 10% of the registered voting population (Indexonensorship.org, 2014).

Since independence for many years, election campaigns in India were designed around public rallies, public welfare schemes, and public related events or in the form of television or radio advertisements. Therefore, with political discussion now taking place on social media sites such as Facebook and twitter give rise to a relevant question: could activities on these sites be a predictor of election results and prove to be an actual game changer by influencing voters in India. And is the use of these sites as a platform for political deliberations effective. And if so, to what extent can it be influencing in changing the decisions of the Indian registered voters.

Colin Delany stated in the Huffington post article, that in political world the Internet could be used in many ways. It is highly adaptable and the use of it depends on the purpose it's being targeted for. For instance; it can be used for fundraising, recruiting, mobilizing people, grassroots organizing, advertising, messaging and geographic targeting. This is currently happening in India, as political parties and candidates are trying to use the Internet to enroll new members, create larger volunteer bases, and ask the Indian citizens for donations in addition to influencing them for casting their votes in their support.

During 2014's Indian lok sabha general elections, the political leader Mr. Narendra Modi made use of social media to a great extent as compared to the opposition leader Mr. Rahul Gandhi. Many people are attributing the win of Mr. Narendra Modi to adaptation of technology of social media. For instance, the victory message by Mr. Narendra Modi was the highest re-tweeted message on twitter in Indian history.

2.2 Changes in Political Environment

The restructuring of social media's inter-personal communications is revamping the political environment. The major change is an increase in public participation.

Secondly, the communications between the government and public have changed to direct contact from indirect communication. The pace at which public opinion develops today is faster than that in the past. Instead of depending on the mass media, the citizens can directly express views and opinions to the politicians on Facebook or Twitter. The political likeliness for a political party or political candidate is not simply a result of Internet or social media usage. There are also prehistoric signs of psychology and similarity that shape political views and beliefs among citizens. Finally, the citizens is the main force for public opinions unlike in past when the government or few opinion leaders could dominate public discourse. Social media has paved the way for citizens as being journalists and made it challenging for the officials to control the information. For instance, Twitter first posted the news of the death of Osama Bin Laden even before the US government openly confirmed it.

The political leaders are now aware of the fact that they will be increasingly judged by the information they provide on social media networks to the public. Moreover, it also not shocking in today's scenario, that's citizens are more likely to vote for leaders who are part of or member of their own views and beliefs.

India has been one of the most forward-thinking countries in relation to its resources in the past 10 years and this shows, as in the last election social media was not really evident in the country at all. However, today the Facebook has 93 million users and Twitter has 33 million accounts set up in the country, which suggests that the Indian people regard social media as enormously imperative in the way they advance as a broader and wider society (Socialmediatoday.com, 2014).

Many of the government official associations have also been seen in the past leveraging social media networking sites. As a part of DoT's first project, Ministry of external affair became the first organization to join social media in year 2011. It was started with the objective of reaching to Indian citizens and creating a positive impact on the population. However, today various other bodies like traffic police in various cities like Chandigarh, Bangalore and Delhi have made use of social media websites.

2.2.1 Participation Effects

Participation effects refer to those sways, which generally convince individuals to participate in a political campaigning and voting process. As per Claasen (2007) as per a model, citizens participate in a political process when their vicinity calculations display a non-zero policy stake in the election outcome. In other words, if an individual realize his personal beliefs are not being challenged by either of the candidate in the election, they will not participate. However, if individual realizes a leader challenges his personal beliefs, they will be willing to participate in the election.

Claasen (2007) from the studies eventually established that extreme policy motivated individuals participated in the political process because of their extreme views regardless of the election, whereas vicinity motivated individuals only participated when they had a alleged stake in the outcome of the election.

Moreover, American citizens continue to show increasing interest in various political discussions and expanding their dialogues to social networking sites and various other Internet news and broadcast sites, there continues to be a decline in voter turnout of US presidential elections. Various variables are being studied to find out the reasons for this participation effect. According to Han (2008), education is the main important variable followed by income of the participants. An increased level of both the variables raises the likelihood of voter participation in elections.

2.2.2 Voters Choice

These choices refer to those sways, which generally persuade an individual to cast a ballot in favor of any particular political leader. The voters relate their own views on issues to those of each of the parties and support those parties whose positions are most similar to or generally in the same direction as their own opinions.

When an individual voter has made his decision of casting a ballot of his own will, another important decision making process takes place inside his/her head – what candidate or political party to vote for? In this decision making process, information exchange plays a vital role. In this situation two encouragements can be identified – first is obviously the information exchange process related to the party or candidate to choose and second is more related to the decision making process inside a persons head.

Sabato (1981) has reported that, during an election, each and every individual voter has five primary choices. First is voting in favor of either party's candidates. Second and third choice is voting against the either party nominees. Finally not voting at all for any political candidate (p. 325).

Essentially, high turnout levels are not the sole realistic facts that theories of voter turnout should address. Without being comprehensive Benny Geys (2008) mentioned several other reasons effecting voter choice. Firstly, main elections tend to attract more voters than secondary parliament elections. Secondly, some people have a greater prospect of showing up at the voting polls. This holds true for richer or more-educated individuals and women. Younger voters, as well as the elderly are less expected to cast a vote. Thirdly, people try to refrain to a large extent because they are feeling separated, that is, they feel that no party represents their ideas and beliefs. Fourthly, voters are more likely to show up under comparative election systems and when the political candidates are in a highly competitive race. And lastly, voters fail

to cast vote for their true favorites in order to cast insincere or strategic ballot.

2.3 Ethical and Philosophical Assumptions

The discussions around the advantages of social media are centered on its ability to bring together the individuals who share common beliefs and opinions. The ability that allows the individuals from various parts of the country to associate over various causes and concerns. However, social media messages as with any medium of communication can be influential but can they always be accounted for to be truthful and authentic. There never is guarantee of what is delivered through the social media channel and if it is authentic or real. Social media as an instant medium of communication appears to send what the respondents wants to hear irrespective of the facts. This is a cause of concern for ethical voters in the country.

Moreover, the users of social media like to visit sites and engage in conversation and discussion forums that assert their current beliefs and viewpoints (Burger & Bruns, 2012). As an outcome of this, there is a need to look at ethical implications of how social media is used by the Indian political contenders to influence the individual voters and persuading them to caste their votes. Social media platforms are instant and direct medium of communication and information exchange, contenders can particularly sometimes feed the participants what they want to hear and when they want to hear irrespective of the truth and the complete facts.

Therefore, if social media involvement is achieved by simply telling to the supporters and followers what they wish to hear, the use of social media to influence individuals might lack proper ethical component. As the influence of social media is continually rising, because of this influence it has a responsibility of clarity, balance and integration. This is appropriate, as now social media is gradually becoming a major source of information in political systems in India.

As a consequence of this, it is vital to look at the ethical implications of how social media platforms are being used to encourage and influence citizens. It can then be examined if the ethics of social media consents for influence of its member participants. These ethical views would direct that social media because of the influence it has on its members, assumes a charge for clarity, balance and integrity as its influence is continuing to grow over the time. This is especially true as social media turn out to be major source of information for political systems around the world and is on boom in India currently since last general elections.

2.4 Engaging the Voter

Also, one of the struggles in encouraging online contributors in a political forum and various discussions to vote is keeping them engaged over the time period. The bond between a registered voter and the political parties is one of the most important

features of modern democracy; influencing voters and how they interpret politics, reaching decisions, assessing the government performance and finally how they participate in the political process. According to Dale and Strauss (2009), for some elections if it is ensured that voters are paying attention to the messages that will persuade them to vote, the turnout strategy will prove to be successful.

Most of the Indian political contenders are using the social media to create awareness, however there still are many of them who are still pursuing traditional media for campaigning. For instance, Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister candidate of the current ruling party in India is not using the social media currently to influence the voters.

According to Gulatti and Williams (2011) - education, income, culture, age and urbanization are all possible influences on a candidate's Internet use. Around, one in three young voters under the age of thirty-six rely on the Internet as their primary source of attaining political information (Panagopoulos, 2010). However, Kushin and Yamamoto (2011) suggested that the growing online political behavior has been relatively accelerated by the latest emergence of new interactive and media rich websites.

However, the critics, suggests that the Internet and social media tools will not create substantial political impact in India. They often argue that the majority of Internet users are from urban metro cities in the country, and it is the citizens in the villages and rural areas with limited Internet connectivity who hold the major power in determining the face of elections. This however, is a generalization of available indicators and evolving trends.

2.5 Social Media Effect

The effect of social media on political candidate estimate has become an increasingly important issue as the Internet has become an extensively used communication medium throughout the world. According to Tolbert and McNeil (2009), suggested that the internet become more widely used information tool for gathering political candidate information, therefore voters are more likely to be properly informed and later participate in the political process. To sum it up all according to them, Internet can become the medium to fill the void, which television and broadcast news could not.

During 2008 US presidential elections, social media proved to be an effective medium for a presidential candidate to distribute information. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010), tried to establish if social media had an impact in actual on political self-efficacy and involvement. They also established that from 1996 to 2008 year, the percentage of Americans who got political information online increased from 4% to 40% (Rainie, 2007; Smith & Rainie, 2008). The dependence on Internet information for politics has

been more popular among the younger generations. In total 27% of young adults under the age of 30 said to receive the campaign information from various social networking websites compared to 4% adults between age group of 30 to 39 years and only 1% in age group above 40 (pg. 612).

In a political campaign, social media platforms like Facebook, provided voters to become more politically engaged with candidates. If strategically used its an skill that has lasting effects.

On the other hand, a huge amount of research has been concentrated on the negative social and political impact that social media (internet) may have. According to Nguyen and Alexander (2010), the spread of Internet with people encouraging them to increasingly share space, was, is and will continue to have a negative impact on the individual and social consciousness. They asserted that on the Internet the boundaries and identity formulation all dissolve (Earl and Kimport 99).

According to Cornell University's Steven Strogatz, social media sites can make it more challenging for an individual to differentiate between the significant and meaning relationships of the real world, and the numerous casual relationships formed through social media. If an individual focuses on such non-meaningful relationships the most of the important links, news and meaningful relationships will be weakened (Small Business - Chron.com, 2014).

2.6 Public Interest

The chief Executive of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, Prof. Tim Unwin, advised that a cautionary approach should be taken towards social media. According to him, the technology, which is still not universally accepted in political processes, will not create democracy however; it can be used to help democratize a country. If the social media is not used appropriately, it can lead to damaging errors and can in fact challenge democracy. He also emphasized that social media can be misused as it has the power to change the information flow on instant basis and this may not operate in best interest of the people or democracy of India. This can be counter-democratic citing the examples of rioting in parts of United Kingdom, which has been fuelled by the use of social media (Plenary, 2014).

2.7 Literature Conclusion

As a part of political communication source, social media is a recent phenomenon in Indian political scenario. The literature review of this study suggests that though the use of social media indicates potential of encouraging voter participation in India, the evidence that could support this argument is yet to be seen, as many of the Indian politicians have recently adopted social media as a tool for politically campaigning.

From various instances in India it is evident that Twitter and Facebook can inspire citizens to protest in streets, but it is not known and clear yet if the use of these same mediums can actually draw the voters out to cast their ballots in an election. Various theories are showing that the Internet and social media tools is influencing views of the citizens in similar ways to print media in India. However, this influence is not always in favor of the citizens as often it serves the interest of the power, stability and cultural status for political contenders.

Existing empirical evidence indicates that Internet is certainly connected with political outcomes; this even includes situation political involvement, political efficacy, knowledge and participation (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Therefore, it is important to determine if the use of Internet and especially social media (Facebook and Twitter) can positively affect the political outcome in India as well by increasing the voter participation in Indian general elections. Specially, in 2014 Indian general elections where over 150 million first-time voters between the ages of 18-23 years were expected to cast their votes (Swamy, 2014).

Overall it can be concluded from the literature review that part played by social media in I political campaigning in India is quite small, however, the influenced it has is yet to be measured. This cannot be generalized and said to be a result of economic factors rather it is a result of various other competing factors in play. There have also been literature on cases where is one candidate of a political party has exceled in use of social media for his benefit and other politicians have failed to accept the emerging media as a medium of communication exchange and PR tactics.

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Study

In Indian democracy, elections finalize political decisions. Since independence, around 15 Lok Sabhas have been formed through elections. Indian political contests range from local races involving a few thousand people, to prime minister elections that include over eight hundred million registered voters (The Independent, 2014).

Elections are evidently vital to the political campaigns and candidates, who are running with the objective of getting victory, which are receiving a majority of the votes. To achieve this, candidates must have their followers and supporters both cast a ballot, and cast it in the favor of the contender. This research therefore, examines what influence Facebook and Twitter had on voters when, as a social media platform was used to send specific messages asking individual voters to cast their ballot during 2014 Indian general lok sabha elections.

The research is limited to the scope of registered voters in India who use Facebook and Twitter as a social networking tool. The scope of the research does not include unregistered voters who have not previously casted a vote or do not cast a ballot currently. The research also does not include the discussion on political parties strategies, political campaigns and parties standing on social issues. Although these play a role in influencing individual voters and their decision to vote, are outside the scope of this research.

The scope of the study is limited to only two social media platforms, which are Facebook and Twitter and particularly in all Indian states. However, the data is also gathered for two other social networking sites – Google+ and LinkedIn to have a broader interpretation scope.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Design

According to Evert Gummesson (2003, pg. 482-492), all research is interpretive in some way.

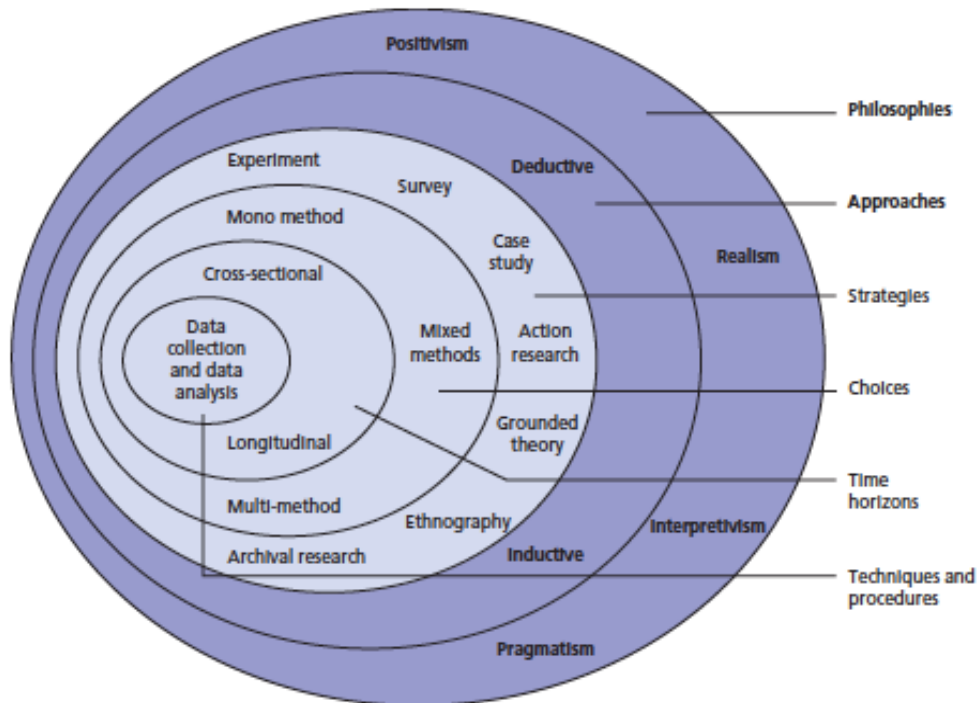


Figure 4.1
The research 'onion'
Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lawts and Adrian Thornhill 2008

However, the layers of research onion diagram (figure 4.1) identify two kinds of different philosophies that can be used in the kind of research I am pursuing. The area of research I am interested in for this research is often a mixture between positivism and interpretivism, as I am trying to determine the influence of social media on individual voters in India. Therefore, in this research the quantitative research methodology adopted to collect primary research data can be said a mixture of these two as it gave me flexibility.

As the quantitative research is generally associated with the positivist/post positivist paradigm, this research is based on the research philosophy of positivism. The post-positivism research philosophy recognizes other research viewpoints and is more realistic about objectivity and the self-report quantitative questionnaire reflects the subjective thoughts and feelings of the respondents so it may not fully reflect the actual reality. It is also important to note that use of two philosophies helped me to broaden the scope of the study, however the post-positivism philosophy is the one that had more weight during the research.

The research employed the survey approach as the research strategy and the method to provide answer to the main research question. Survey research approach is a

method of gathering information by asking questions. Survey methodology is behavior-oriented research that focuses on the actions of people using among other tools, survey questionnaires to describe behavior, such as voting (Rubin, Rubin & Piele, 2005).

The study will use the research questions to narrow the scope of the study. It is based on quantitative data, in specific on the analysis of variables. The results will be numerical and the goal will be to generalize the results received. In this research a survey questionnaire will serve as the data collection method for this thesis. The survey belongs to the non-experimental research methodologies.

A cross-sectional interpretive study design was used in this quantitative component of the research.

This type of study uses diverse groups of people who adapt in the variable of concern, but share other characteristics such as social status, economic status, educational background and culture or origin. Cross-sectional studies are observational in nature and are well recognized as descriptive research and not for causal research. During this type of research the researchers record the information that exists in a population sample, however the findings in form of raw data is not manipulated. This research design is beneficial in determining the characteristics of the sample and not the cause and effect relationships between the variables. Therefore, this design can be used to often make inferences in context to the relationships while gathering preliminary data in order to support the future research study.

Cross-sectional survey was helpful in assessing the practices, attitudes, knowledge's and beliefs of the selected population. Through this research I attempted to study what is going on in the research area rather than studying the change and development for future. The dissertation is a snapshot taken at a particular moment and does not attempt to study the change and development of social media's increasing influence through time on voters in India.

Also, the objectivity is very important in quantitative research therefore, while researching great care was taken to avoid self-presence. Personal opinions and viewpoints were not included in the survey questionnaire and while canalizing the data personal beliefs were kept aside.

The survey was conducted both electronically and manually. The link was sent to the users using Facebook and LinkedIn and few users were randomly selected to fill out the survey forms manually. SPSS software was used during the process of analysis. To prepare the survey questionnaire online and gathering quantitative data - 'Quick Survey' website was used (<https://www.quicksurveys.com>).

3.3 Research Approach and Choice

Saunders et al. (2009. P124-127) have identified two kinds of research approaches that can be used for a research deductive and inductive approach. This research approach is deductive in nature, as its aim is to test the theories that have been identified and developed in the literature review through quantitative research. It is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences. This approach will help to explain casual relationships between variables. This will ensure the research is highly structured in methodology and most important is reliable.

According to Saunders et al. (2009. P152), the researchers always have a choice between three research methods – *mono-method, multi-method and mixed method*. The mono-method is a single data collection method. Multi-method makes use of more than one data collection method along with a correspondence analysis process to answer the question. Mixed-method is a data collection method where both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection are used during the same research at one particular time. For this research I have used single data collection method technique. The survey has been administered for the purpose of gathering data. Hence, the research method choice is mono method.

3.4 Selecting Respondents

All the registered individual voters above the age of 18 years make to be the population for the purpose of this research.

The probability sampling/representative sampling technique of stratified random sampling was used for collecting data in this research. In the research, every individual from the population had the same chance of being selected in the sample. The registered voters above the age of 18 years were randomly chosen from all over India and majorly divided into four regions – North India, South India, East India and West India. First the sample chosen was divided into different strata, in this case separating out young generation from older to study the effect of social media on them separately. Then the random sampling technique was applied to each of the two groups separately, using the same sampling interval in each group. The sample did not include the non-registered voters since they cannot vote in the elections, therefore their response would only be a bystander.

As the research was based on social media, it appeared apt to use social media to diffuse the survey. Furthermore, by doing so, I was sure that the respondents had the familiarity with social media portals and tools. The respondents were selected without personal biased, as they were unknown people who chose to answer the questions in various forums on social networking sites.

In order to have more answers to the survey, I have also made use of the snowball method by asking the respondents to share the survey link with their own network of contacts on social media or otherwise. This helped me to collect more data in specified time.

Sample size: As per Barrett (2007), a sample size greater than 150 is essential in order to enable an in-depth investigation during the research. Larger sample sizes generally lead to increased accuracy when estimating the unknown parameters and variables. There is only 4.5% chance in terms of margin of error when the sample size is chosen to be 500 (Niles, 2006). Therefore, in order to have confidence in the survey results, a large sample of around 150 respondents was chosen for this research. Given these considerations, its not shocking that the final sample size is a matter of judgment as well as calculations.

In total, a survey with 101 male and 49 females was conducted with various age groups above 18 years of age in 4 major regions of India – East, West, North and South India. Majority of the respondents were male in the study as India is a male dominated society (Swain, 2009).

All these respondents were registered voters in India. The respondents varied in age group to determine the effect on various generations. The respondents were a balanced mix of working professionals, college students, entrepreneurs, unemployed citizens and retired Indian residents. These respondents were not chosen on the basis of their usage level of social media rather it was determined as a result of the research.

3.5 Research Ethical Considerations

As per Kimmel (1996), there are various ethical issues that can have importance during the research. In any kind of social research studying behavior and patterns, the survey must be performed with a consideration to ethical requirements. As survey research involves individuals, the basic but highly important concept of do no harm should be followed, as survey research is an invasion of privacy for these individuals by asking them their personal beliefs and opinions (Neuman, 2006). They are more likely to share the required information when asked on the basis of trust and while maintaining the integrity and respect for the respondents. Therefore, it is important that the respondents take part in the research of their own willingness and provide informed consent. The respondents in this research were not exploited in any manner whatsoever. Additionally, attention was given at the places where the true nature of a question was withheld purposely from the respondent to encourage an honest answer.

This complete research was conducted using a cross-sectional quantitative overall research design and majorly various online portals were used to reach out to the respondents. Therefore, in this research confidentiality was treated seriously, as a result of which the identity of the respondents will be kept anonymous. This ensured that respondents could share their opinions honestly and freely. Furthermore, the

respondents were assured in the survey link that their responses would also be treated anonymously. Prior to the start of the survey, the respondents were also informed that their participation in the research is entirely voluntary; they are not required to be part of the research if they wished not to. It was explained that the estimated completion time for the survey will be around 5-7 minutes and the survey questionnaires will be quantitative in nature containing 16 questions in total (Appendix 1).

Moreover, the data and its analysis were strictly used for academic purposes only and will in no way whatsoever be used for any other purpose. The respondents who requested for a copy of the survey findings were explained the confidentiality clause of the research.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study used the quantitative methods of data collection. The research used both the Primary and secondary research data. As a primary source the data was gathered for the purpose of this study directly from the respondents through a survey questionnaire with close-ended multiple-choice questions with ordered responses. To ensure accuracy of the results, importance was laid on proper survey construction. Further, the instructions to fill and submit the survey were presented at the start of the survey. In the survey questions a five point Likert type scale was used to establish the intensity of agreement and disagreement from the respondents. The scaling allowed for establishing of the intensity of agreement is considered to be an important factor by Neuman (2006) in voting decisions. Moreover, the survey's numerical style permitted the statistical analysis of the survey results.

The use of this primary data collection allowed me to address specific concerns to citizens about their use of social media and how these platforms specifically influence their final election voting decision-making process. This was the critical part of the dissertation as it's the base of the findings.

Furthermore, using primary data provided me better control on the gathering of the information from respondents. Data collection has started in July, 2014 and ended in Aug 2014 giving respondents a time frame of 20 days to complete the survey. For creating the survey questionnaire I used the 'questionnaire comparison' form given to me by my supervisor. This form assured that all questions designed are related with one of the three sub-questions of the research (Appendix 2). It was a tool to compare the questions and match them with research objectives.

Respondents were invited to fill the survey online by emails and links were sent through posts on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn on individual basis to many. Moreover in order to gather addition answers from the respondents, I had also administered the survey questionnaire on various discussion

forums on LinkedIn and Facebook, which were specifically having people interested in Indian politics and voting patterns. This was done by registering on certain closed forums and asking people to be part of my research by answering the survey questions. These forums were:

- Indian Political Discussions (on Facebook)
- I Hate my Government (on Facebook)
- Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) (on Facebook)
- Indian Politics Enthusiasts (on LinkedIn)
- India Leadership Network (on LinkedIn)
- Young Indian Force (on LinkedIn)
- Indian Politics (on Twitter)

The choice of targeting citizens in these forums was a strategic move to attract unknown people who are familiar with social media and have knowledge of politics in India. This was done to avoid personal bias, as its often said people around us share our views that is the reason they are part of our network contacts. I was thus sure that I will be able to collect valuable data from citizens with minimum margin of error. These forums are highly actively and with big member groups. Therefore people in these forums had a greater chance of answering the survey questions in time span of 20 days.

The respondents filled few survey questionnaires manually who were not technology savvy and did not use computers often. These people were random selected in Metropolitan Mall, Gurgaon during the span of a day. This ensured that people who are of age group above 45 were also involved in this research. In addition to filling the survey, they also voluntarily shared their feedback about how social media is effecting their generation and the role it plays in election decisions. This was a plus point as my survey questions were close-ended and has no scope of cross-examination.

Secondary resources included collection of information from already published articles, journals, and any other available literature along with the key trends and results published by Simplyfy360. It is a social media monitoring and social media analytics tool for all kinds of social media requirements especially in India (<http://simplify360.com>).

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

The online survey was administered through the combination of a survey website and a software. The website used was Quick Survey by Toluna, a web based provider of survey solutions. For targeting 200 respondents two survey links were generated on this site using separate email ids as the site had limitation of respondents to maximum

of 100 in one link. The questionnaire had 16 questions in total and took a respondent approximately 4-5 minutes to submit it online.

To have accuracy in the results of the research; significance of the creation of proper survey questionnaire cannot be overstated. Survey research samples several respondents who answer the similar questions, assessing variables from past behaviors and experiences (Neuman, 2006). Therefore, the survey questionnaire used in this research had all questions as close-ended with ordered responses. The questionnaire used for the research is attached in Appendix 1 below. Respondents had the access to the survey for a period of 20 days beyond which the survey link was closed. The survey was deployed to the selected sample in various batches over a month's time for numeric and statistical analysis accuracy in data.

Since the survey had used various measurements levels, the analysis provided categorical responses but also ordinal responses (such as 5 point Likert Scale) I decided to use Microsoft excel software to analyze the data for most of the questions. However, in order to prove the hypothesis in the research use of SPSS software was made in order to maintain authenticity.

The use of Microsoft excels and it's various charts along with SPSS software was made for collecting the raw data from the survey and later interpreting and analyzing the results to answer the survey's main research questions.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

With any kind of research, it is important that the measurement and analysis are valid and reliable. Saunders et al. (2009. p188) has stated that validity is concerned mostly with finding out if the results of the research are really about what they appear to be about. Validity is of two kinds – Internal validity and external validity. Sometimes generalizability is referred to as external validity. One of the difficulty of this research is an extent to which the results of the survey are generalizable; that means whether the findings will be applicable to other research.

Reliability in a research refers to the extent to which the research data collection and data analysis technique will generate consistent results. Sometimes, the use of multiple indicators is essential to measure the same thing to represent internal consistency. Moreover, participant bias and observer bias are a common threat to reliability of a research, as these may lead to different analysis through various tests.

The right balance and combination of validity and reliability is vital for this research. Validity and Reliability increases the internal validity of the research and ensures no other possible results can be derived from the data.

3.9 Limitations of Methodology

During the process of writing this dissertation I encountered few things that proved to be a limitation for the research study. The time constraint was one of the big limitations. For the course completion the research was to be completed within the three-month time span. In order to complete the dissertation a quantitative survey was required to be conducted and learning the use of SPSS software was necessary, and doing so during this short span of time proved challenging. As a result, in-depth analysis covering a larger sample size was not possible and secondary research was also limited to 17 journals and articles in total.

Secondly, there were no follow up questions involved in addition to main 16 questions and neither there was scope or the possibility to add comments in the survey questionnaire; this was a limitation from the perspective of the research survey as the answers provided a yes or no answer to the questions and lacked the reasons behind saying the answer. The respondents read each question differently and therefore accordingly replied based on their own interpretation of the questions; therefore there is a level of subjectivity that is not acknowledged.

Another constraint has been the geographic distance between my supervisors since my return to my home country in last month of the research period i.e. Aug 2014 owing to family emergencies. As a result of this the feedback was limited. Also, due to the inconsistency in Internet penetration across the country, some citizens who were on holidays during election period and later face challenges in accessing the Internet as a result delaying the survey closing date.

However, to address the portion of these limitations of the study during the survey, closed ended multiple-choice questions were used in the survey giving the respondents a fair idea of what the question means.

4. Data Analysis

Main results from the quantitative analysis:

This section of the research shows the findings from the primary data that was secured through online questionnaires among Indian citizens who are above the age of 18 and are eligible to vote. The findings are compared against each other to generate various conclusions.

The first two questions of the quantitative survey provide the demographic profile of the respondent.

Q 1: Description of the Sample

The sample used for my research is made up of 160 respondents representing citizens from 4 major regions of India – north India, East India, West India and South India. However, the target population for the research was citizens who are 18 years and above. From the 160 respondents who participated in the quantitative online survey 10 respondents were not eligible as per the sample size as they were under 18 years of age. Therefore, the data of these 10 respondents is not captured in the survey results underneath and only 150 respondents survey responses were analyzed for the purpose of this research.

As seen in figure 1 below, 67% of respondents are between 18-35 years old. This indicates the younger generation citizens of India. Around 33% of the respondents are above 36 years of age in this analysis.

Age Group	18-24	25-35	36-46	47-60	60 & above
Respondents	43	58	27	13	9

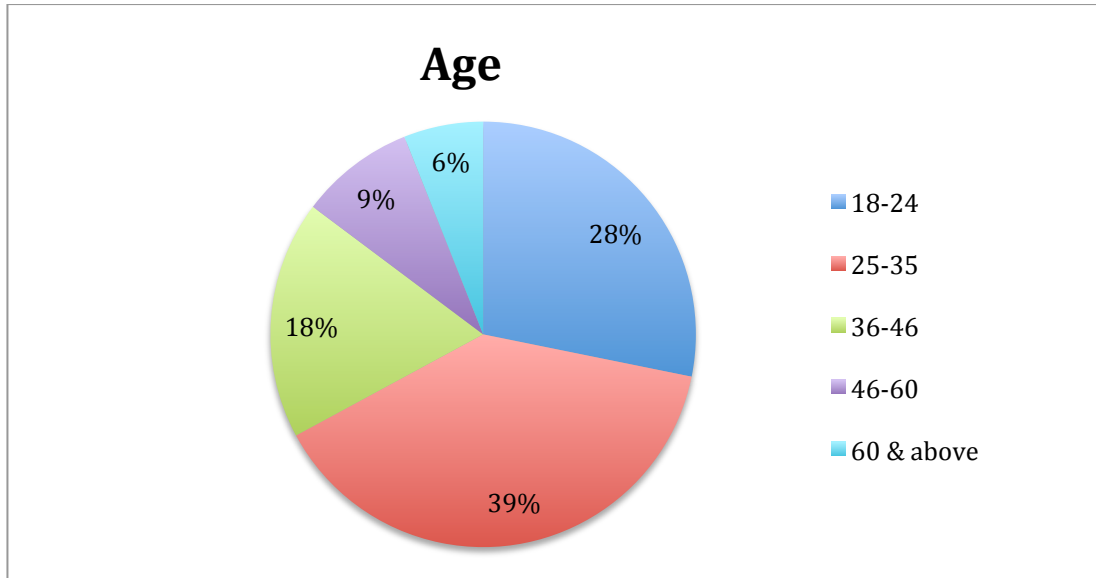


Figure 1: Age categories of the sample (Q: 1)

The gender profile indicates that out of 150 respondents, 67% of the respondents are male and 33% are female. Majorly these respondents are for north side of India.

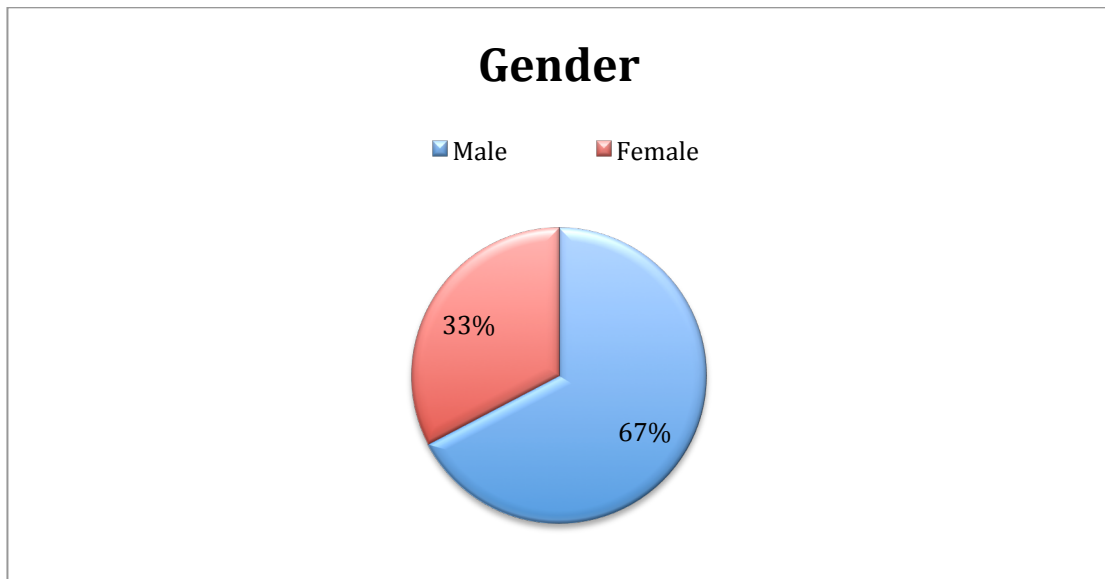


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents (Q: 2)

Q 3: Which parts of India do you belong to?

The figure 3 below displays that the male and female citizens who participated in the survey are majorly from North India followed by south India. However, the survey was circulated in equal proportions to all the four regions of India. According to IAMAI findings in Nov 2013; Mumbai city part of west India has the highest Internet penetration followed by Delhi, which is part of North India.

Overall around 150 people were sent the survey links in North India and nearly 50 people in west India were sent the links to fill the survey questionnaire on social media. The response rate from North India was highest around 72% for men and 91% for women, which proves the finding of IAMAI that there a lot of active users of internet in this region and they use social media frequently. However the west India region, which has highest active users, showed low response rate to the survey. It can be considered that although Internet penetration is high in this region the usage of social media is not that regular.

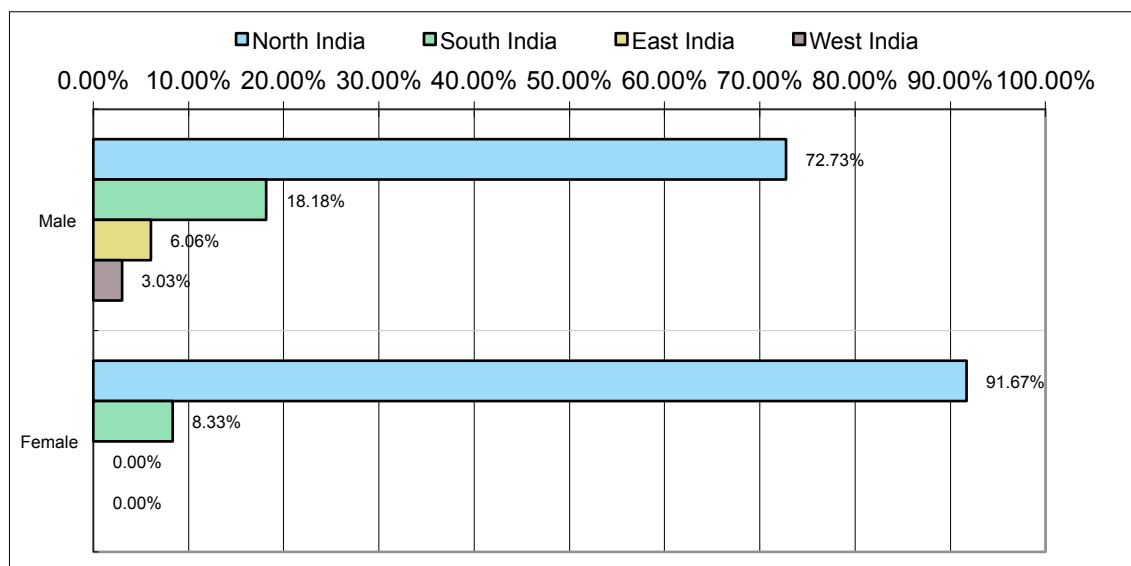


Figure 3: Region of the Respondents (Q: 3)

Q 4: Occupation of the Respondent?

It can be seen from Figure 4 included below, the major 55% of the respondents are working professionals doing some kind of job. These people are the ones who take more interest in general discussions and forums online on social media compared to other citizens. As these are the individuals who get affected most by any policy change in general.

Occupation	Total Respondents	Male	Female
Student	27	18	9
Entrepreneur	22	16	6
Employed	83	64	19
Unemployed	12	1	11
Retired	6	2	4
Total	150	101	49

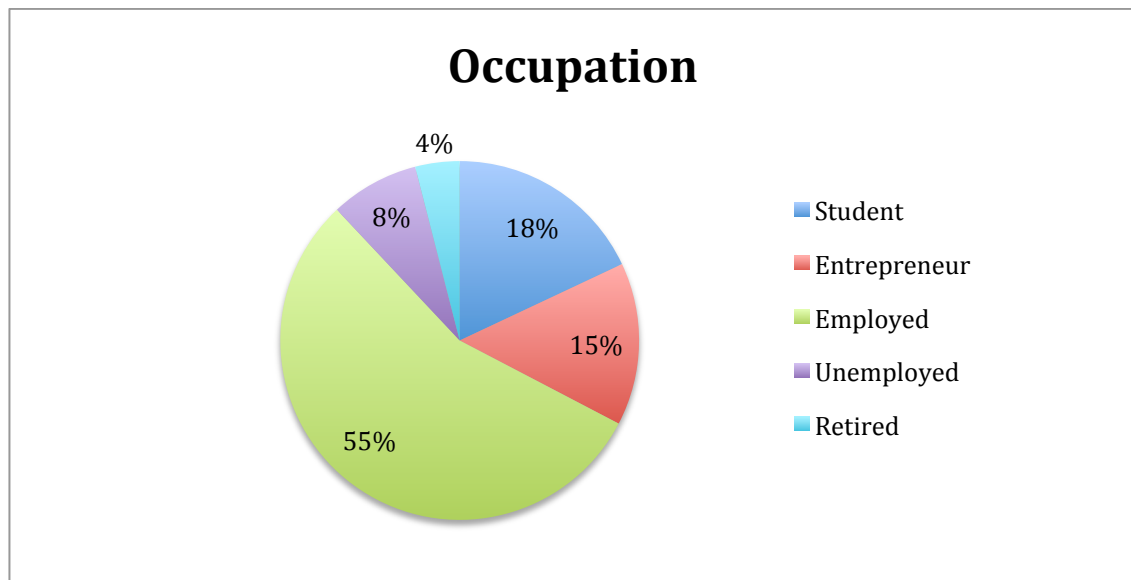


Figure 4: Occupation of the respondent (Q: 4)

All the respondents who participated in the survey are educated professionals. The results have highlighted the people from above the age group of 36 years as students. This indicates that education is an important variable when it comes to social media usage.

Q 5: Which social media platforms are you active on?

Figure 5 from below shows that 92% of the respondents access Facebook, 70% confirmed to being active on LinkedIn, 30% on Twitter and 36% being active on Google+. This indicates that popularity of Facebook is the strongest in social networking platforms as compared to Twitter, LinkedIn or Google+. Also, 2% of the respondents are the ones who are not using any of the social media platforms making them the non-active group on social media. These are the respondents from East India region, indicating that other parts of India citizens use social media sometime if not always.

	Total (% & freq col) 100.00% (150 Respondents)	
Linkedin	70.00%	105
Facebook	92.00%	138
Twitter	30.00%	45
Google+	36.00%	54
Do not use social media	2.00%	3

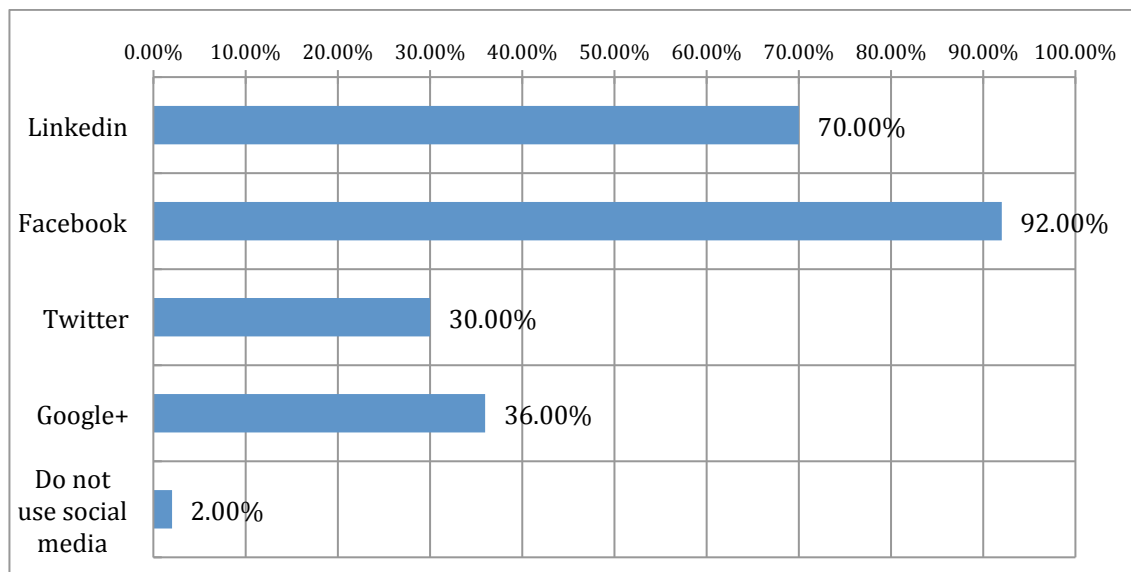


Figure 5: Social Media sites accessed by consumers (Q: 5)

Q 6: How often do you use the following social platforms?

According to the data in figure 6 below, Facebook is the social networking site that is accessed on daily basis compared all other three social networks. It is interesting to note that 35% of the respondents never visit twitter. Comparing this data with result of Q.6, although 30% of the respondents are registered on Twitter but they choose not to visit it ever. Daily usage of linked is 24% by the respondents and nearly 17% of the respondents use Google+ also on daily basis. Google+ is the second social media platform that is never visited by the individuals of this survey.

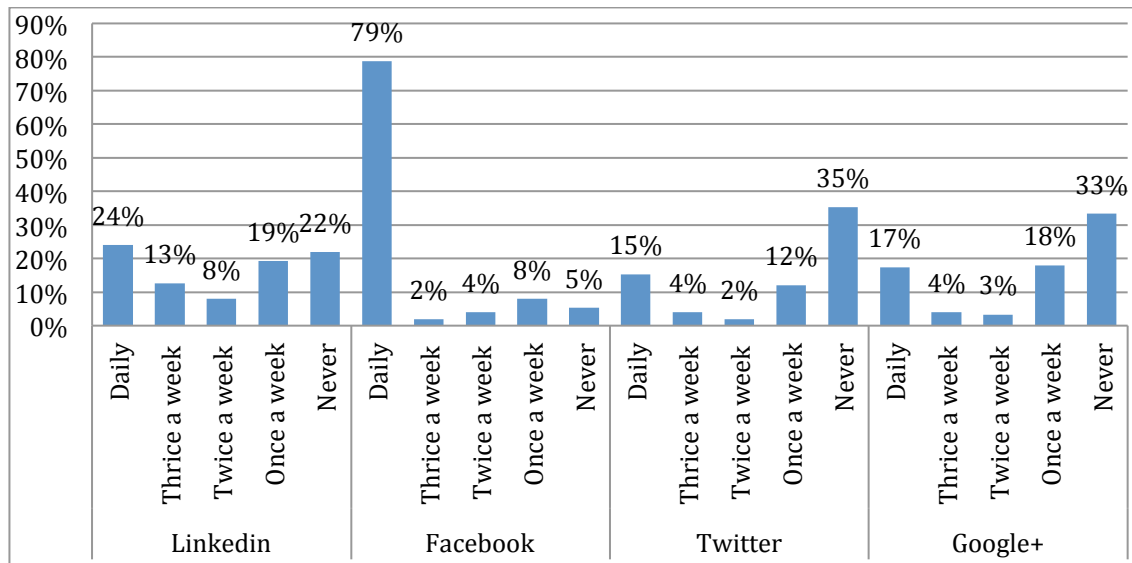


Figure 6: Frequency of social media usage (Q: 6)

The users in age group of 18-34 are the peak users and is the most active social media users group according my research. Every single respondent between this age group visits these 4 social media sites on daily basis. The research shows an interesting fact that of users above 46 years age are also majorly active on social media sites. More than 58% of the respondents agreed to make use of at least one of these social networking platforms on daily basis.

Q 7: Did you ever vote before 2014 general elections?

The figure 7 represents that from the 150 respondents; over 2% of the citizens were not the registered voters for 2009 general elections. These are the first time voters for 2014 Indian general elections. Overall 72% of Indian citizens among the respondents have voted prior to 2014 general elections. This means they are aware of the process of political campaigning and are used to some or the other form of communication medium for receiving political updates. Around 26% of the voters have not voted before 2014 elections. The reason behind this is either they were not 18 years of age during 2009 elections or they choose not to participate deliberately or were not able to cast a ballot owing to any situation. Although being registered voters, it does not mean that individuals for sure are exercising their right to cast a ballot.

Survey findings reveal a significant relationship between those with Facebook and twitter accounts and registered voters. A relatively low 30% of survey participants had a Twitter account, but of those, 70% were registered voters and represent little more than one-third of 18-34 adult populations. This discloses that a large segment of the population is not reached by this medium despite having a broad awareness among the consumers.

The social media messages had a positive impact on these first time voters who wanted to hear the views of leaders they supported directly from the source.

	Total (% & freq col)	
	100.00% (150)	
Yes	71.74%	120
No	26.09%	23
Not eligible	2.17%	7

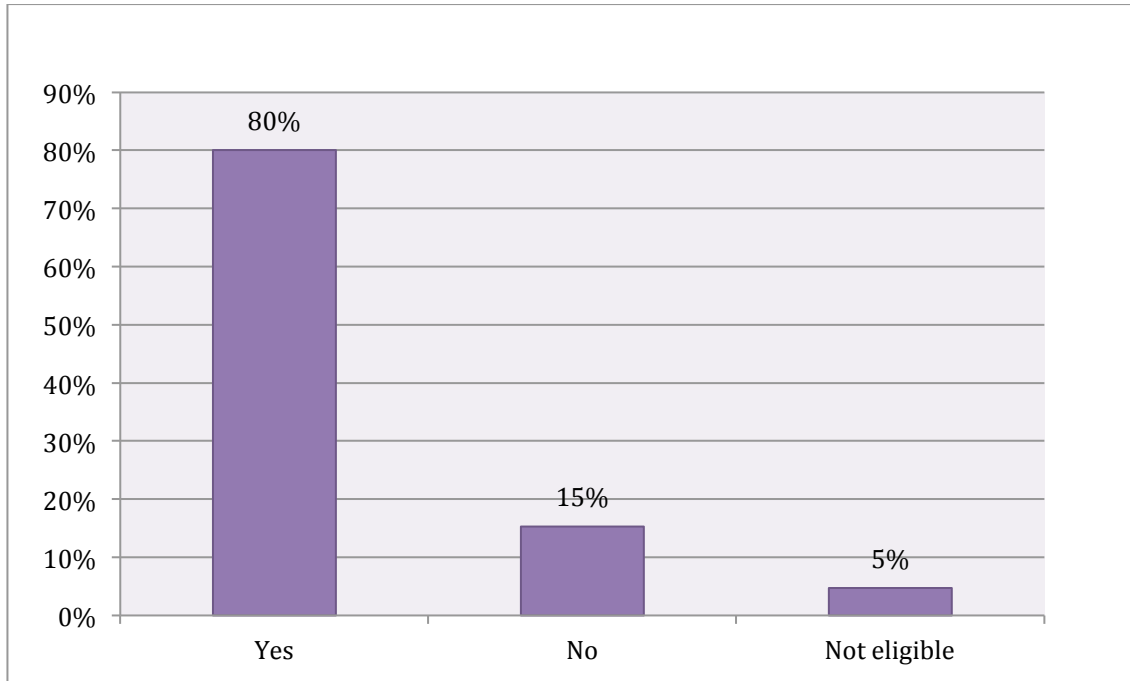


Figure 7: Respondents voting before 2014 (Q: 7)

Q 8: Did you vote in 2014 general elections?

This survey indicated a representative sample of voter turnout rate. Around 75% respondents specified that they have voted in the 2014 Indian general elections and around 25% said to have abstained from casting a ballot. However, according to Tourengeau & Yan (2007) it is common practice to find higher claimed turnout rates than the actual participation and this is owing to the social desirability and wants to please the researcher or is due to the combination of this along with certain memory problems.

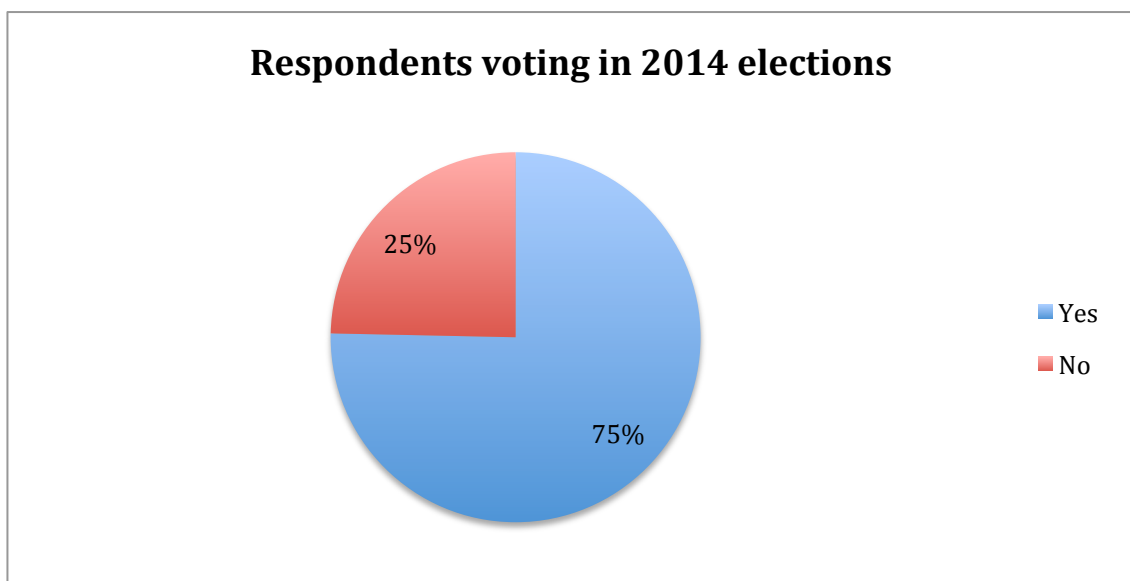


Figure 8: Respondents voting before 2014 (Q: 8)

According to Brody and Sniderman (1977), voter turnout in elections lasts over time. A citizen who has voted is more likely to vote in the future elections. However, this pattern is a widespread phenomenon, but it is really inadequately understood. On one hand a voter may turnout out of a habit formation to cast a ballot whereas on the other hand he may repeat the decision of voting or abstaining from voting merely because his/her cost of benefits of voting are static over the time. However, when voting is done on the basis of a habit formation, the likelihood of repeat voting in future is tremendously increased. Habit formation is directly related to the voter turnout persistence.

Q 9: What would be most appealing to you when deciding to vote for a certain politician or political party? (1 is most appealing and 5 is least appealing)

It is clear from the figure 9 below, that 40% of the respondents choose Television to the most appealing medium when they are deciding to vote for a politician or a political party followed by updates on social media (36%), newspaper and magazines (33%), public opinion (17%), leaving Radio to be least appealing on the likert scale with (30%). Seeing that Television and Newspaper/Magazines are among the top three appealing choices to the consumer, it can be concluded that traditional media is undoubtedly playing a significant role in shaping the political views and opinions of Indian citizens. Despite traditional media being preferred more, it is clear that content on social media does have an influence on the voting decision in some or the other way.

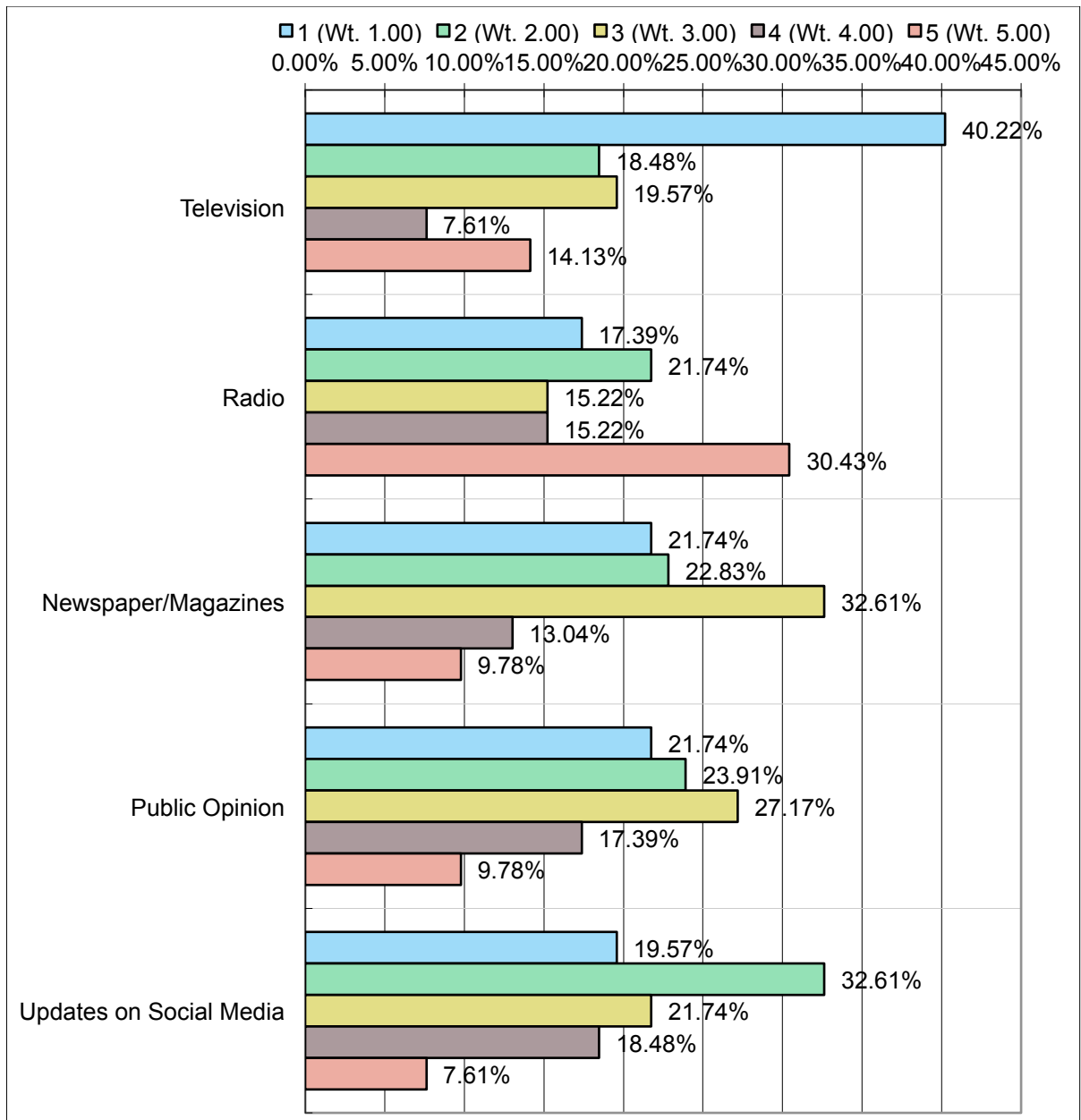


Figure 9: Effect of various mediums on respondents (Q: 9)

This figure 9 also indicates a disproportion between the age categories in both social media and traditional media use for political purpose in India. This disproportion is clearly visible in the results. When comparing age against the social media appeal, younger generation pops up on the top of the result. The overall level of viewing politically concerned with information through traditional mediums still seems to be high for older generation above the age of 35 years. This appears to happen more often through television and newspaper as compared to radio.

To conclude, younger voters turnout was more strongly effected by accessing political news and contents on social media and older generation is effected to vote more through mediums like television.

Q 10: How important do you think it is for a politician or a political party to be active on social media platforms?

42% of the respondents think it is very important for a politician or a political party to be active on social networking sites. Merely 1% of the respondents think it is not important for politicians to make profiles on social networking sites and share updates and their views with the users online. 11% of the respondents consider this to be important.

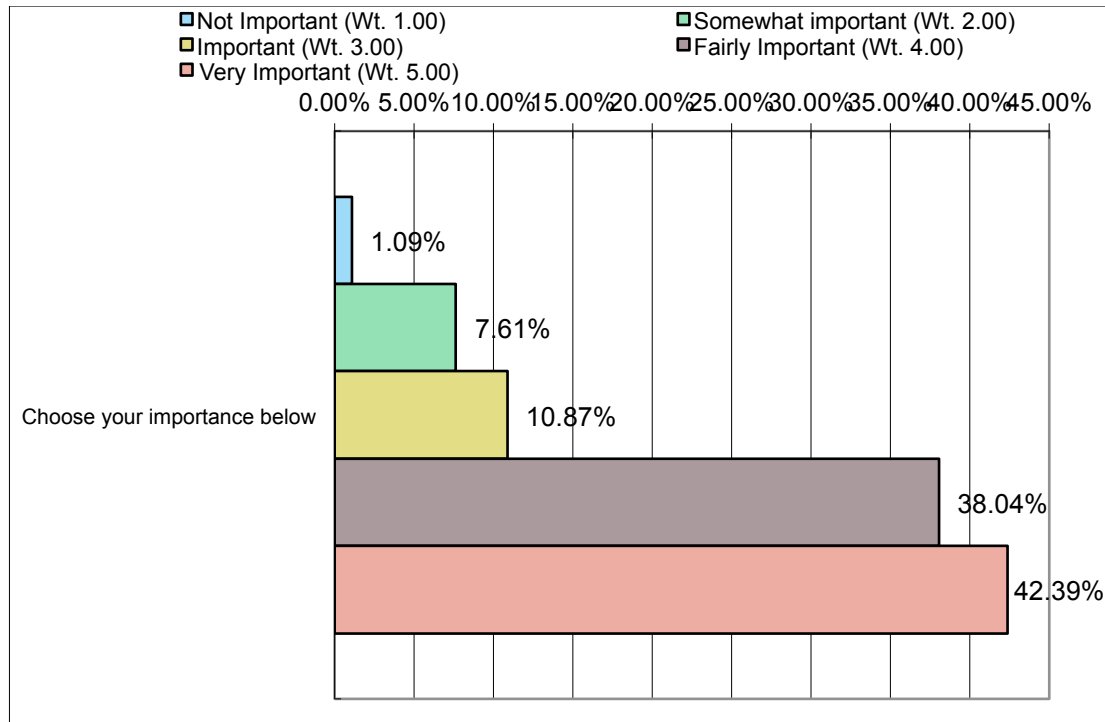


Figure 10: social media and political parties profiles (Q: 10)

Various studies in part have shown that numerous methods for mobilizing potential voters have failed or rather had shown disappointing impacts. However, the respondents agreeing to the fact that it is important for political leaders to have profile on social networking sites is huge, as this means that social media is a feasible channel of marketing and is well accepted by the general public in India on wider scale.

Q 11: Do you follow political campaigns on social media?

As seen in figure 11 below, 61% of the consumers said that they follow political campaigning on social media platforms. This use of social media for gathering political information is highly promising.

Accessing political content from social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ shows the signs of increased chances of a voter turning out for

next elections to cast a ballot. The effect of accessing the political content on social networking sites seems to be larger for the male respondents as compared to female respondents in this survey finding. However, the difference is minimal between the two genders.

	Total (% & freq col)	
	100.00% (150)	
Yes	61%	92
No	39%	58

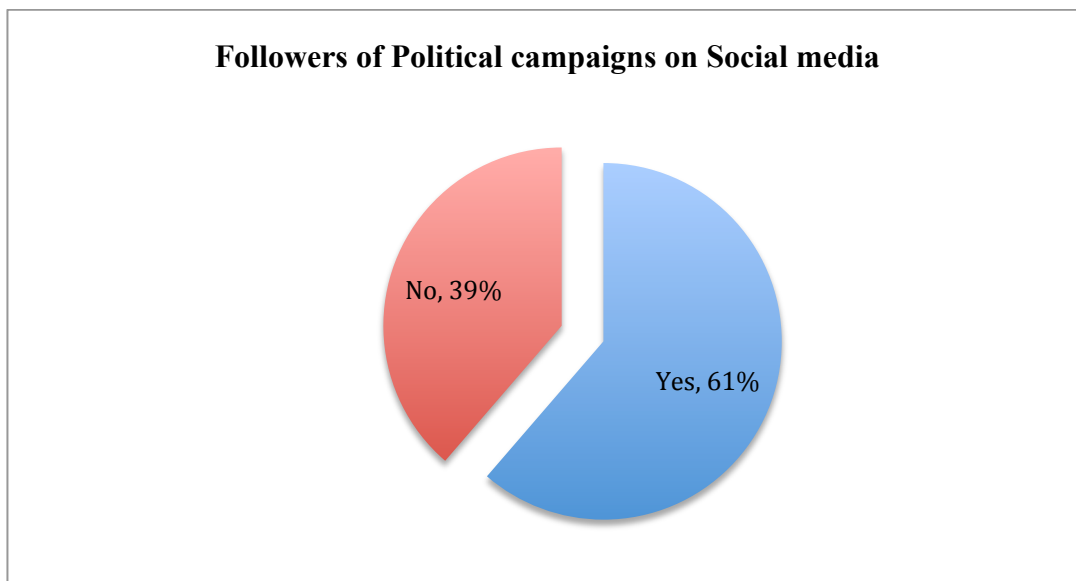


Figure 11: Political campaigning on social media (Q: 11)

Q 12: Were the candidate’s profiles or pages on social media helpful in learning more about them during 2014 general elections?

From the figure 12, it is visible that nearly 60% of the respondents felt social media helped them in learning more about the candidate and opposition leaders during 2014 general elections. However, major portions of the respondents i.e. 29%, were unsure if social media helped them in any way to gain more knowledge of the political candidate.

This research also shows that obtaining political information through online forums on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can stimulate political engagement.

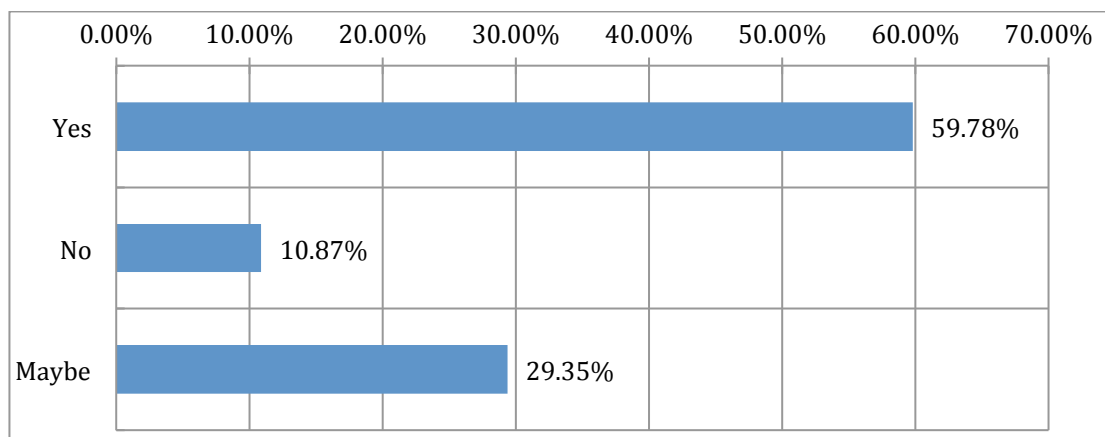


Figure 12: Use of political profiles on social media (Q: 12)

Q 13: Did you become reliant on social media for political updates during 2014 general elections?

The quantitative survey analysis results show that 53.26% of the respondents who are active on social networking sites relied heavily on social media in order to gain information about main political candidate and opposition leaders. However, from the survey above it is evident that the respondents utilized Facebook much more than other types of social media platforms. 79% of the respondent's used Facebook on daily basis.

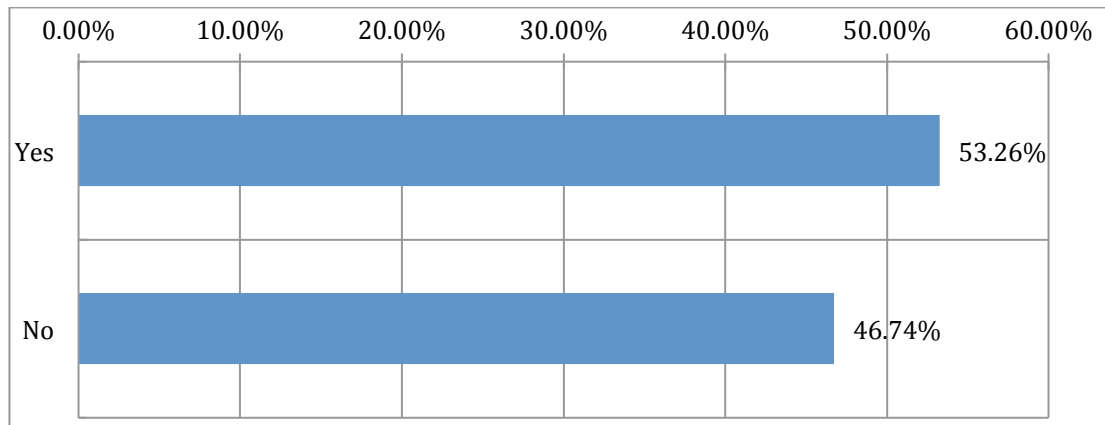


Figure 13: Reliance on social media (Q: 13)

Social media is breaking preset notions and boundaries. It is helping the individuals to extensively access the profiles of politicians, look into their personal beliefs, opinions and viewpoints under a microscope.

Q 14: What inspired you to vote in 2014 general elections?

Figure 14 from below, indicates that the main reasons the respondents of this survey felt inspired for voting in year 2014 was the political part leader candidacy. 53% of the respondents agreed to this. Although around 53% of the active social media users were reliant for political news on social media platforms, they were not inspired by the updates and news to cast a ballot at the end. It can be interpreted although consumers choose to read the information on social media, it did not influence them to cast their deciding vote during the last elections.

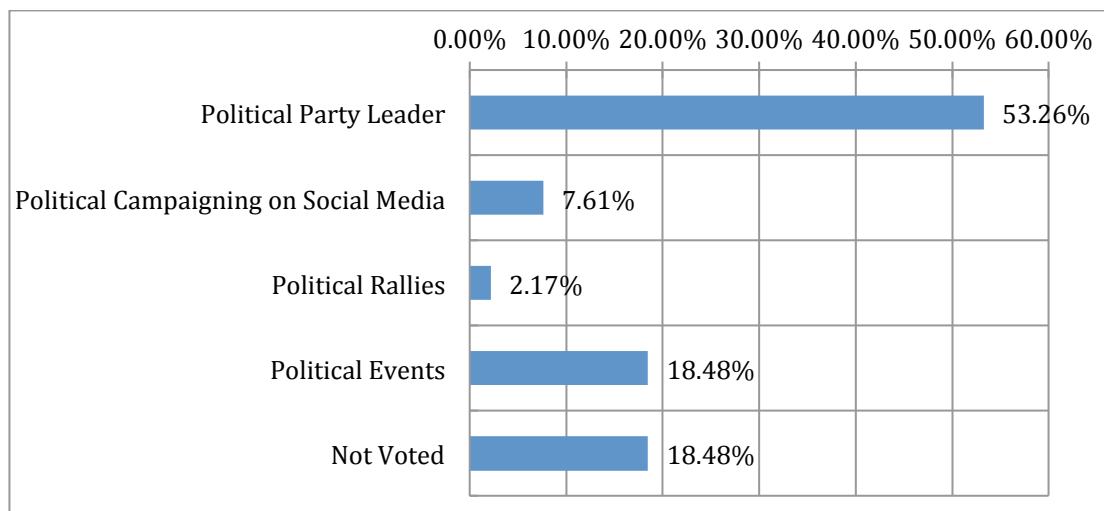


Figure 14: Inspiration of 2014 elections (Q: 14)

As seen in the figure above, politician’s personal personality was related with his electability.

Q 15: Would you be influenced to vote for a particular politician based on the content you have read about him/her on social media?

As presented in figure 15 below, 60% of the respondents would be influenced to vote in favor of a particular politician on the basis of the information and content they have read on social media about him/her. This is an interesting fact to note from the perspective of future elections, as even though the candidate inspired the respondents in last election of 2014 himself and not what they read about him on social media, in future the citizens can be motivated through these social mediums to cast their final votes. There is a huge potential for politicians to explore on social media.

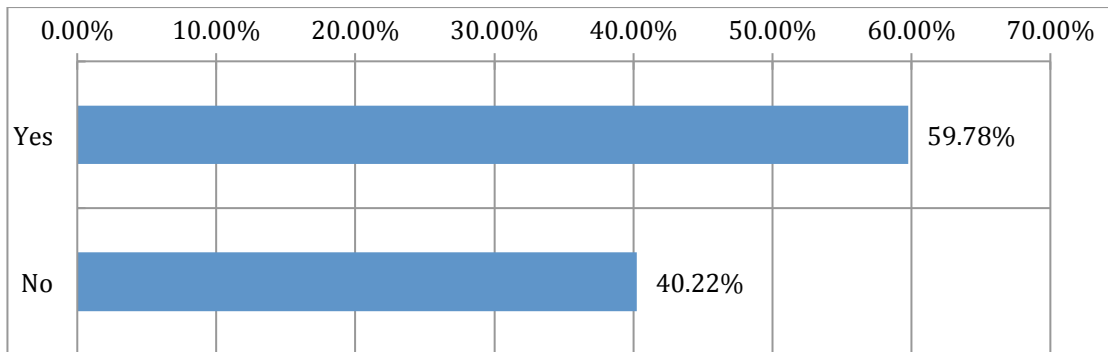


Figure 15: Influence on voting decision (Q: 15)

Q 16: Would you withdraw your support for a particular candidate and vote for the opposing candidate after reading something on social media?

As per the figure 16 graphical data, only 32% of the respondents agreed to withdraw their support for the candidate they like and vote for the opposing candidate after reading something negative about their candidate on social media. Around 68% of the voters have said to stick to their candidate even after negative publicity on social media. This indicates that citizens have their own opinion on political matters and they are not easily altered through some feeds of social media. Therefore, even if an opposition leader tries to misuse social media to influence voters to cast vote in their favor through manipulation it would not work.

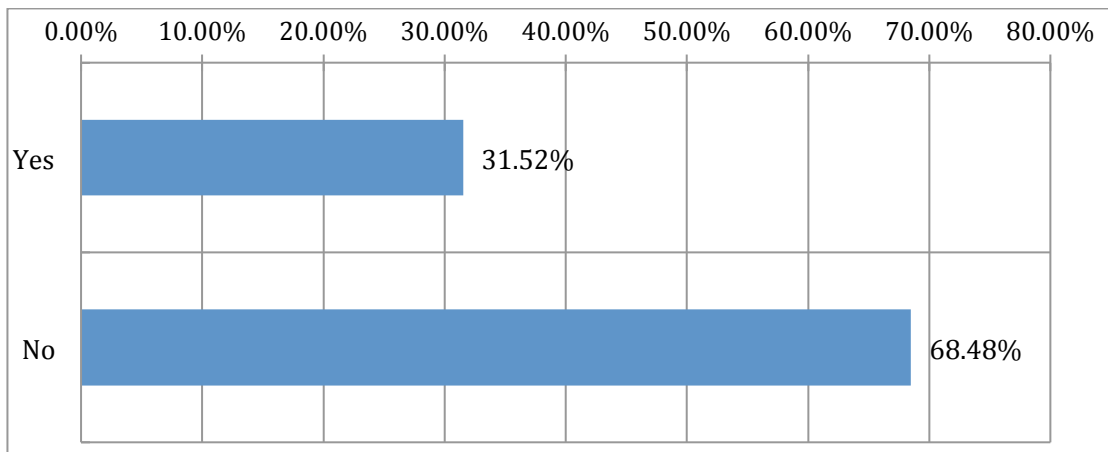


Figure 16: Effect on voting decision (Q: 16)

The voters have the filters to understand and interpret the data provided to them. They are not getting under the influence of negative publicity. It has often been said that the most disliked candidates surprise and wins the elections often as compared to the liked candidates.

Hypothesis

The correlation statistics did not display any encouraging results. The relationships between social networking site use and individual participation showed no significant correlation or strong direction in this research sample.

H1: The existence of social media in a political campaign will positively affect participation among voters aged 18-35.

In order to test this particular hypothesis two questions were asked during the quantitative survey online – first the age of the respondent and secondly what inspired him to vote during the 2014 general election. Additionally another question was asked if the respondent had voted before 2014 elections. This was done to analyze how many first time voters were part of 2014 elections and how many among them were young adults and how many of those young adults got inspired to vote as a result of political campaigning on social networking sites. These categorical variables and scale variable, which were compared against each other to test the hypothesis.

The survey analysis results conclude that hypothesis one is supported by these results. All the voters who were answered being inspired and motivated in 2014 general Lok-sabha elections fall under the age group of 18-35. All the other respondents above the age of 35 were either motivated to vote because of the political party leader, political rally, political event or they did not vote at all. The presence of social media in political campaigning positively influenced the population between 18-35 years age group. This occurred as many of the voters were first time voters and they looked up to social media for information on the candidates. The male voters were influenced more by social media updates compared to female voters.

H2: The presence of social media in a political campaign will positively affect support of that candidate among voters 18-35.

In order to test this particular hypothesis two questions, which were asked, were based on support decisions choices of individual voters in India. Two scenarios were presented to the respondent. First, if the respondent reads something about a political candidate online on social networking sites, which reflects a positive view, will he be influenced to vote in favor of the candidate? Second, if the respondent came across negative content about the leader he supports on social networking sites would he withdraw his support for him and vote for the candidate in opposition.

With the results from the survey analyses it can be concluded that the findings do support this second hypothesis that the presence of social media in a political campaign will positively affect the support of that candidate among voters between age group of 18-35. From 150 respondents around 53% of the voters from 18-35 years

age group stated that they would not change their decision of their support for a candidate even after reading a negative review of him on social media sites. Furthermore, around 61% of the voters from 18-35 years age group stated that they could be influenced to vote for a candidate on basis of the content they have read about him/her on social networking websites.

Summary and Conclusion

Limitations of the study

All research's has limitations that are intrinsic in both their design and execution. This research is not any exception. Although the survey was distributed in overall India, the number of respondents who submitted the survey online and manually was a total of 150, a small number. Moreover, as with any other form of survey distribution, Internet surveys have limitations. Obviously it could reach only those people who had online accounts on social networking sites or emails. This is a random survey, however random only among this pre-selected population size.

There also was an underrepresentation of older generation nearly around 14% of the total population size, which can be challenging in order to conclude something about this group in general. However, overall the internal validity of this sample size can be considered to be higher than the external validity.

Conclusion

Social networking websites are becoming more and more extensively used as a latest channel for posting, finding and sharing information and content in India. This research highlighted that these innovative developments are embraced more by younger generations while older generations are still lagging behind in India. In the intelligence exchange process, which is necessary for an election political campaign, traditional media and public opinion still take a significant position in India. Social media updates still are in its nascent stage of growth. Not only the scope of online social networks is larger and undoubtedly with more contradictory opinions but also the political communication reaches people in a different way. Messages and the information and opinions can come through numerous times a day either by friends, relatives or unknown persons.

In this research I focused on the potential value of social networking sites use and activity on electoral voter engagement and participation. The survey was analyzed using Microsoft excel and SPSS, it has highlighted some interesting results and findings. Firstly, the number of respondents who are actively using one or more social networking sites is huge and has increased potential of growth in future from political aspect. Most of the respondents stated to be using these social media websites on weekly basis or even more often and on daily basis. This is the very first step for social networking sites to be influential. However, there is an age prejudiced in the respondent's sample size, which is even more strengthened by the already higher usage and activity level of younger generation in India.

Secondly, although most people don't seem to be influenced by the political news and content on social media sites, they became heavily reliant on the political updates of

social media during 2014 general elections. They make a note of and observe political content on these sites on regular basis. The respondents did not agreed to consider social media updates to be appealing to them after television being the first medium of information in terms of appeal. They showed trust in traditional media compared to new media. However, this development is the second step for social media to be influential on voter's decision-making process. I expected much diverse opinion from respondents in terms of the mediums that appeal to them, however, the survey resulted in close ties between traditional medium and new mediums.

Thirdly, the participation in elections was not related to being a member of any of the social networking sites or being an active user of these platforms. Although social media bridges the age gap, does not discriminate between different demographic groups or political engagement of users, it does not appear to be having influence on changing the final casting vote of a citizen in India. At least during this research no such proof was found for it. The reason behind this might be taken from the fact that social media did not inspire or motivate the citizens during 2014 general elections to cast their final ballots; it was the candidacy of the BJP leader, which motivated them. This was the strongest influenced that decided the outcome of the result during the latest elections.

Fourth, the choices of support of citizens are not altering easily. They stated that they would still be supporting the candidate they like even if something negative is published about the candidate on social media sites. They will not shift to cast a vote in favor of the opposition leader from this event. But the respondents considered it to be of utmost important for a political leader to have a user profile on these social networking sites.

The survey did a good job of apprehending the core of the research issue. Overall from this research it can be concluded that use of social networking sites in latest elections of 2014 had limited effect on individual voters. The younger generation was influenced more on political matters as compared to older generation. Moreover, the survey has indicated that social media was highly successful in engaging the first time voters in election as these voters are young adults mainly who have recently turned 18 and their usage activity of social media is regular, it would be more accurate to say that they use social media on daily basis. However, social media did not considerable increase voter participation in elections. The respondents mainly chose to vote on the basis of the political leader who was running during this election however, respondents certainly relied on social media for regular updates and news feeds. Also, both of the original hypotheses are supported by the survey result findings.

The younger generation adults who are fed-up with issues that does not line up with there believes are more receptive to social media encouragement during elections.

Social networking sites offers political candidates and parties a new possibility and

option to market themselves, which could be more valuable in long run as compared to use of traditional communication and marketing mediums.

Recommendations

As the most of respondents described that the content they have read on social media site would have no effect on their action of final voting, further study could investigate why this has transpired, and if these mediums were to be used in future political campaigns to encourage voting, can the response be improved. Also, this research could include not only what messages are effectual to encourage voting but also which other social media sites are successful. However, it would be important to know the demographic structure of these social media sites. It would also be important to learn if messages intended to encourage voting have the same weight on each of these social networking sites.

The practical implications of this survey finding are vast. Currently the political campaigns makes decisions on the basis of cost incurred to receive a vote by using various mediums. However, as social media is relevantly new the figures of how much it costs in actual to receive a vote through this medium is not available. This study provides a general framework of how individual's behavior is affected by social media and the level of importance of tool for them. Hence, estimations of cost can be made on the basis of this.

Social media should be a significant constituent of a 360-degree election campaign. Mere presence should not be maintained on social media platforms, rather it should be utilized to understand and identify what political topics are in discussion and in what context politicians and public is monitoring the parties.

- Sentimental analysis on various political issues and viewpoints will give a better idea to the politicians on topics they should choose to highlight and talk about.
- The research showed even though they do not trust every single detailed about a political leader they like on social networking sites, they still consider it to be very important for the politician to have his profile on the networking sites. It is hence an important channel for political leader to publicize his viewpoint to general public.
- Campaigns could be launched to encourage voter participation among that as various studies over time has showed a relation between interests of parents in politics with likelihood of a child to vote in future. This is because in such as situation parents will talk to their children about politics and importance of casting a ballot.

Future Research Questions

There are various questions, which this study did not seek the answers to, however they have come up as a result of the survey findings. Firstly, the forthcoming studies could inspect whether accessing political content on social networking sites increases the probability that a voter will vote for a specific candidate. In other words, does social networking sites motivate people to vote for the candidate they already selected or does it inform the voters of the assessment to choose a particular candidate.

It will also be interesting to do an in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the survey responses received. In simpler words, it refers to the explanations behind the questions where unusual responses are received.

Learner Engagement & Reflection

This section of the dissertation is dedicated to reflection on various theories, concepts and their application in the duration of this research project.

The overall MBA postgraduate course and the dissertation process provided me with the academic knowledge; it also certainly allowed me to gain personal knowledge that will be useful as an individual and for my upcoming career.

Learning Style

In relation to the learning style there are two prominent theories, which are mentioned in the literature (Businessballs.com, 2014). Kolb's experimental learning styles theory (1984) and Honey and Mumford (1986). David Kolb highlighted the significance for a learner to use a variety of learning styles and proposed that effective learning should advance around a cycle. The four distinct learning styles that Kolb mentioned are - Concrete Experience - (learning by doing something), Reflective Observation - (thinking about what has happened), Abstract Conceptualization - (drawing conclusions) and active Experimentation - (testing of theory in future). These four learning styles are similar to Honey and Mumford (1986) preferences of learning – Activist (who learn by doing), Theorist (like to understand the theory behind the actions); Pragmatist (experiment theories in real world) and Reflector (learn by observing and thinking about what happened).

In order to maximize my personal learning I tried to understand my learning style. Most people follow these styles and depending on the activity learning style could be adapted. I believe my main learning style to be concrete experience, as I usually learn things by personally doing them. Overall in the dissertation, I have used four styles of learning. The literature review made me use reflective observation, active experimentation and abstract conceptualization. As there was need of understanding what has happened in politics in India from the perspective of social media aspect and if the theories can be tested in future. Finally I have used my preference style that is Activist. This was used while making the survey questionnaire, disseminating it to the participants and later analyzing the findings through use of graphs and charts.

Thanks to MBA course I have realized that overall in life and otherwise I need too use much of my dominant learning style. Also, combining it with other learning preferences can be helpful.

Individual Achievements

During the MBA course I had to prepare assignments for many subjects. I had to put a lot of effort into these assignment completions as all were new subjects and being and

Indian student the international study pattern was new to me. However, the efforts were not in vain as I managed to get good results. During this dissertation I have exhibited the significance of building a solid network of contacts. The 150 respondents are now members of my own network of contacts. The fact that I managed to survey people across all over India from four main regions in my sample was an important achievement for me, as it showed the diversity in networks. This is important for me, as I want to work in customer relationship management field in future and I will be able to utilize this learning during that work.

Problems Tackled

There were few problems that were encountered during the programme and the dissertation.

All along the year I faced the issue of shortage of time as the course was for a year and there was too much to learn. Therefore, I had to find better ways to manage my time efficiently. During the time span when I was working on my dissertation I was also working as a marketing intern in an IT organization. Due to this sometimes there was insufficient time for the dissertation. To handle this situation I decided to utilize the time during my travelling and waiting period during the meeting to read up literature, journals and articles related to my dissertation topic. Also, I gained input from my co-workers on techniques of designing the questionnaire. This practice overall helped me to understanding importance of time management and work faster on my thesis.

This is the most important assignment for MBA course and before this course I have never worked on a thesis. Therefore, I found it challenging to complete, as everything related to this dissertation was a new concept. Especially learning of SPSS software was the most difficult task of the entire dissertation. For collating data on the software I had to attend two lectures in college and a lot of issues were faced in finding appropriate journals related to the study. However, as a result of this I understood the Dublin Business School e-library completely and gained understanding of a new survey analysis software SPSS, which will be valuable in Data analyst role in future.

Overall Learning's

I am an individual who learns by things, commit my own mistakes and draw conclusions from those and rectify those errors for future work. This sometimes was hard, as I work better alone and doing MBA means working among groups and placing your trust in your batch mates work to deliver a assignment on time. This is how I realized that collaboration is highly important and it paid of for me to complete my dissertation as well. I learnt that I cannot mange everything own my own, hence during my dissertation period, I reached out to my supervisor and friends if I was stuck on understanding a concept or needed a suggestion or advice.

A lot of individuals have told me over my life span that persistence is my key strength. However, I felt it was tested through the course and most during the dissertation period. As I often felt lost in assignments and the dissertation seemed to be not moving at a regular pace, which made me push myself even harder. This is a life lesson I have learnt.

The most essential thing, which I learnt from this course and specifically from this dissertation, was organization. During the dissertation, more I kept my notes, journals and write-ups organized, better I could work on it. This made me realize organized things function smooth.

Finally, last by not the least, most important of all I learnt time management skill. This skill has improved for me over the time span of a year. Different assignments and different projects thought me a new and smart way of handling things for better. Working with new different people often helped me gain understanding of the things I required to change in my working style to increase my personal working efficiency.

Conclusion

This section made me self-reflect on my learning's and to be honest I would not have done it otherwise if not for the purpose of the dissertation. Writing this section has made me realize how far I have grown compared to when I started at Dublin Business School. This self-realization was really valuable and much needed. It also made me understand my own skills and the new skills that have gained along the way.

Bibliography

Books

Anderson, C. and Stephenson, L. (2010). *Voting behavior in Canada*. 1st ed. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Charlton, S. (2010). *Comparing Asian politics*. 1st ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Field, A. (2005). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. 1st ed. London: Sage Publications.

Rubin, B. (1977). *Media, politics, and democracy*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Riley, M. (1988). *Power, politics, and voting behaviour*. 1st ed. New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. 5th ed. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.

Journals

Achterberg, P. and Houtman, D. (2006). Why do so many people vote ‘unnaturally’? A cultural explanation for voting behaviour. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(1), pp.75--92.

Boyd, D and Ellison, N, (2009). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), pp.210--230.

Claassen, R. (2007). Campaign activism and the spatial model: Getting beyond extremism to explain policy motivated participation. *Political Behavior*, 29(3), pp.369--390.

Dyrby, S. and Jensen, T. (n.d.). Exploring Affordances of Social Media Use in Election Campaigns: What Political Parties Want to Facilitate, Project and Create.

Fenton, N. and Barassi, V. (2011). Alternative media and social networking sites: The politics of individuation and political participation. *The Communication Review*, 14(3), pp.179--196.

Geys, B. (2008). 'Rational' theories of voter turnout: a review. *Political Studies Review*, 4(1), pp.16--35.

Han, G. (2008). New media use, sociodemographics, and voter turnout in the 2000 presidential election. *Mass Communication & Society*, 11(1), pp.62--81.

Kushin, M. and Yamamoto, M. (2010). Did social media really matter? College students' use of online media and political decision making in the 2008 election. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13(5), pp.608--630.

Otago.ourarchive.ac.nz, (2014). [Online] Available at: http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/1451/negative_advertising.pdf?sequence=3 [Accessed 9 Aug. 2014].

Peters, B. (2009). And lead us not into thinking the new is new: a bibliographic case for new media history. *New Media & Society*, 11(1-2), pp.13—30

Safranek, R. (2012). The Emerging Role of Social Media in Political and Regime Change. *ProQuest Discovery Guide*.

Shirky, C. (2011). Political Power of Social Media-Technology, the Public Sphere Sphere, and Political Change, *The Foreign Aff.*, 90, p.28.

Tolbert, C J & McNeal, R (2009). Unraveling the effects of the Internet on political participation, pp. 175-186

Tourangeau, R. and Yan, T. (2007). Sensitive questions in surveys. *Psychological bulletin*, 133(5), p.859.

World wide web

Albirini, *Abdulkafi*. (2008). "The Internet in developing countries: A medium of economic, cultural and political domination". *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology*, 4(1), 49-65.

Beaubien, G 2012, 'Social media use in political campaigns will continue growing', *Public Relations Tactics*, 19, 12, p. 10, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 7 April 2014.

Blessingwhite.com, (2014). *Employee Engagement Research Report Update – Jan 2013 - BlessingWhite*. [Online] Available at: <http://blessingwhite.com/research-report/employee-engagement-research-report-update-jan-2013/> [Accessed 6 Aug. 2014].

Businessballs.com, (2014). *kolb's learning styles, experiential learning theory, kolb's learning styles inventory and diagram*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm> [Accessed 16 Aug. 2014].

BBC News, (2014). “*India's social media election battle*”. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26762391> [Accessed 2 Apr 2014].

Chilkoti, A. (2014). Narendra Modi to be India’s first social media prime minister. *THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD*, p.1.

European Parliamentary Research Service, (2014). The role played by social media in political participation and electoral campaigns. [Online] Available at: <http://epthinktank.eu/2014/02/12/the-role-played-by-social-media-in-political-participation-and-electoral-campaigns/>[Accessed 9 Aug. 2014].

Econsultancy, (2014). Could chaos theory explain patterns of influence on social media? [Online] Available at: <https://econsultancy.com/blog/63572-could-chaos-theory-explain-patterns-of-influence-on-social-media-i-ayl4pt19kie6ju> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2014].

Gummesson E. (2003). All research is interpretive! *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 18 (6/7), pp. 482-492. Available at: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=856881> [Accessed: 20 Dec 2013]

Indexonensorship.org, (2014). *India obsessed with social media role in elections - Index on Censorship | Index on Censorship*. [online] Available at: <http://www.indexonensorship.org/2014/05/india-obsessed-with-social-media-role-in-elections/>[Accessed 6 July. 2014].

Iamai.in, (2013). ‘*IAMAI: Media: Press Release*’. [Online] Available at: http://www.iamai.in/PRelease_detail.aspx?nid=2912&NMonth=3&NYear=2013 [Accessed: 3 Apr 2014].

June, P, Hong, C, & Sung-Min, P 2011, 'Social Media's Impact on Policy Making', *SERI Quarterly*, 4, 4, pp. 125-129, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 April 2014.

Noel. A. Bermudez (2012). ‘The Effects of Social Media’. Available at: http://online.gonzaga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Exemplary_Thesis_Bermudez_12-1-12.pdf [Accessed: 3 Apr. 2014].

Neuman, W. (2006). *“Social research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches” (6th Edition)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nytimes.com, (2014). ‘Log In - The New York Times.’ [Online] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/opinion/social-media-in-indian-politics.html?_r=0 [Accessed 3 Apr. 2014].

Neuman, W. (2006). *“Social research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches” (6th Edition)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nytimes.com, (2014). Log In - The New York Times. [Online] Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/us/politics/social-networks-affect-voter-turnout-study-finds.html>[Accessed 7 Aug. 2014].

Plenary, F. (2014). *The role of social media in modern-day politics*. 1st ed.

Swain, S. (2009). An Enquiry into the Functionality of the Dominant Ideology of Gender in Traditional Hindu Society. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1(2), pp.435—448. [Accessed 25 June 2014].

Swamy, R. (2014). *Did Social Media Really Impact the Indian Elections?* [Online] NDTV Gadgets. Available at: <http://gadgets.ndtv.com/social-networking/features/did-social-media-really-impact-the-indian-elections-527425> [Accessed 4 Aug. 2014].

Socscistatistics.com, (2014). *Easy Chi-square Calculator*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare/Default2.aspx> [Accessed 17 Aug. 2014].

Small Business - Chron.com, (2014). *The Negative Effect of Social Media on Society and Individuals*. [online] Available at: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/negative-effect-social-media-society-individuals-27617.html> [Accessed 11 Jul. 2014].

Sciencebuddies.org, (2014). ‘Sample Size: How Many Survey Participants Do I Need?’ [Online] Available at: http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_ideas/Soc_participants.shtml [Accessed 3 Apr. 2014].

Socialmediatoday.com, (2014). *“Indian Elections | Politics & Social Media | Social Media Today”*. [Online] Available at: <http://socialmediatoday.com/alexsmithsmf/2321696/politics-and-social-media-combine-indian-elections> [Accessed 3 Apr. 2014].

Sayantani Satpathi (2011). “The impact of the electronic media on the modern Indian voter: a study of the post liberalization era”. *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition/ Summer Issue / June 2011*, p. 5-2z

Socialmediatoday.com, (2014). *Politics and Social Media Combine in the Indian Elections*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/politics-and-social-media-combine-indian-elections> [Accessed 8 Jul. 2014].

The Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS), (2014). “*Is the Internet becoming a New ‘Political Mantra’ in India?*” [Online] Available at: <http://cgcsblog.asc.upenn.edu/2014/02/14/is-the-internet-becoming-a-new-political-mantra-in-india/> [Accessed: 3 Apr. 2014].

Takaragawa, S, & Carty, V (2012), 'The 2008 U.S. Presidential Election and New Digital Technologies: Political Campaigns as Social Movements and the Significance of Collective Identity', *Tamara Journal For Critical Organization Inquiry*, 10, 4, pp. 73-89, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 April 2014.

VOA, (2014). Social Media Played Big Role in India’s Election. [online] Available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/social-media-emerges-as-a-key-tool-in-indias-election/1931238.html>[Accessed 2 Aug. 2014].

Wasswa, H. (2014). “*The role of social media in the 2013 presidential election campaigns in Kenya*”. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/5317555/the_role_of_social_media_in_the_2013_presidential_election_campaigns_in_kenya [Accessed 15 Apr 2014].

Www2.le.ac.uk, (2014). *Honey and Mumford — University of Leicester*. [Online] Available at: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/training/eresources/teaching/theories/honey-mumford>[Accessed 16 Aug. 2014].

Appendix 1

Survey

Message: I am currently pursuing my Masters degree in marketing field from Dublin Business School, Ireland. As a part of this course I am doing my dissertation on - '*The Effect of Social Media on Individual Voters in India*'. I would request you to participate in this academic study, which aims to understand if social media is able to increase voter participation in India's general elections. Furthermore, the study aims at examining if social media only effects the younger generation in India.

The information that you provide in this survey will be held in utmost confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. The survey consists of 16 questions in total and will take only 4-5 minutes to complete. Your participation is highly appreciated.

1. How old are you?
a. 18-24 b. 25-35 c. 36-46 d. 47-59 e. 60 & above
2. Select:
a. Male b. Female
3. Which Part of India do you belong to?
a. North India b. South India c. East India d. West India
4. Your Occupation?
a. Student b. Entrepreneur c. Employed d. Unemployed
e. Retired
5. Which social media platforms are you active on?
a. LinkedIn b. Facebook c. Twitter d. Google+
e. Do not use social media
6. How often do you use the following social platforms?

	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Thrice a week</i>	<i>Twice a week</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>Never</i>
LinkedIn					
Facebook					
Twitter					
Google+					

7. Did you ever vote before 2014 general elections?
a. Yes b. No c. Not eligible

8. Did you vote in 2014 general elections?
 a. Yes b. No
9. What would be most appealing to you when deciding to vote for a certain politician or political party? (1 is most appealing and 5 is least appealing)

	1	2	3	4	5
Television					
Radio					
Newspaper/Magazines					
Public opinion					
Updates on social media					

10. How important do you think it is for a politician or a political party to be active on social media platforms?
 a. Not Important b. somewhat important c. Important
 d. Fairly important e. very important
11. Do you follow political campaigns on social media?
 a. Yes b. No
12. Were the candidate's profiles or pages on social media helpful in learning more about them during 2014 general elections?
 a. Yes b. No c. Maybe
13. Did you become reliant on social media for political updates during 2014 general elections?
 a. Yes b. No
14. What inspired you to vote in 2014 general elections?
 a. Political party leader b. Political campaigning on social media
 c. Political rallies d. Political events e. Not voted
15. Would you be influenced to vote for a particular politician based on the content you have read about him/her on social media?
 a. Yes b. No
16. Would you withdraw your support for a particular candidate and vote for the opposing candidate after reading something on social media?
 a. Yes b. No

Thank you for completing this survey. Once more, your anonymous participation is highly valuable and much appreciated.

