Role of Social Media in Indian Political Marketing

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the present era of electronic revolution when the social media has become the means and end of all communication, democracies are wondering if social media can be a valid indicator to predict elections outcome. With the increase in popularity and growth in the use of social media, the present study aims at examining whether the use of social media (Twitter) had an effect on the 2014 General elections outcome. For this research, a total of 9,666,360 social media buzz for 131 days from December 01, 2014 to April 09, 2014 of 12 Indian political parties has been considered. The result indicates that social media buzz has a positive and significant impact on the outcome of General elections 2016.

1. Introduction:

In the present era of electronic revolution when the social media has become the means and end of all communication even, political parties are also considering social media for their marketing and advertising purpose.Political marketing can be defined as "the application of mar- keting principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations. The procedures involved include the analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic cam- paigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in a society"(Newman, 1999, p. xiii).

Political marketing is not limited to the traditional marketing but it has also marked its presence on digital media. Social media is a form of digital media which provides a place for political mar- keters to create a political marketplace where candidates, govern- ment officials, and political parties can use social media to drive public opinion in the desired direction. Social Media has today become a very powerful tool for expressing opinions, views, and ideas and has become an influential tool of opinion creation. Ac- cording to Palmer and Koening-Lewis (2009), Social Media is an online application platform which facilitates interaction, collabo- ration, and sharing of content Web 2.0 technologies provide web experience from the buzz, that representing their engagement in information sharing.

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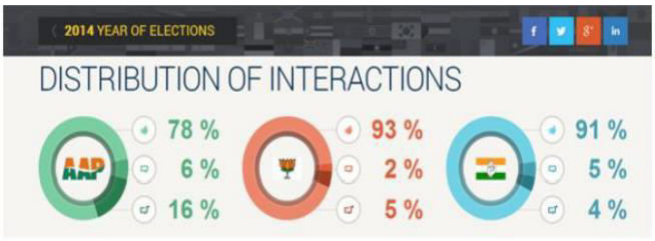
It is not limited to only readers of the content prepared by the site owners, but also, active content-generators to share their personal experi- ences, provide feedback, and express their sentiments in positive, negative or neutral (Luo & Zhang, 2013).

Thomas (2004) defines „Buzz Marketing as the amplification of *initial marketing efforts by third parties through their passive or active influence*".

Figure-1: Distribution of Interactions on Social Media



Twitter had its own „Tweeter Election" for general election 2014. A total of 56 million election-related Tweets were accounted till the end of the general election. Each poll day of general elections 2014 wit- nessed tweets ranging from 5.4 lakhs to 8.2 lakhs (Verma, 2015). The tweeter results indicate that the most popular parties and candidates were *AamAadmiParty's* (Delhi-based regional political party) *ArvindKejriwal*, Leader of Aam Admi Party and Chief Min- ister of New Delhi, BJP4India's (Official tweeter account of Bhar- tiya Janta Party) *Narendra Modi* and *Rahul Gandhi* (Vice President of Indian National Congress) from Indian National Congress India (National Political Party). *Mr.Narendra Modi* led with 3.97 million followers growing from his base by 21% as compared to his status on January 1st, 2014. *Mr. Arvind Kejriwal* raised to 1.97 million he made an amazing growth of 79% as compared from the beginning of the year. Indian National Congress India who entered late on tweeter had 178k followers but showed an incredible growth of 376% as compared to 37,357 followers what it accounted January 1st, 2014 (Wani & Alone, 2014).

Figure -2: Statistics of Social Media

2. Literature Review:

In the light of the rise of importance of the twitter during elections, it is very much important to find how it is influencing voters' behavior as the number of political parties and their workers have increased using tweeter account for campaign pur-pose. Politicians with higher social media engagement got rela- tively more votes within most political parties (Effing et al., 2011). The previous studies claimed that Tweets to parties and to candi- dates showed a systematic relationship with subsequent votes on the day of the election (Effing et al., 2011; Jungherr, 2013; Tumasjan et al., 2010a, 2010b). Twitter data predicted labor party gaining most seats in the hung parliamentary election which were found true (Burnap, Gibson, Sloan, Southern, & Williams, 2016).

Twitter messages commenting on parties and candidates showed little, if any, systematic relationship with subsequent votes on the day of the election (Effing et al., 2011; Jungherr, 2013). Twitter-based data collected from the 2010 US Congressional elections find a positive correlation in the past. But a recent study finds that there is no correlation between the results analysis and the electoral outcomes, contradicting the previous reports (GayoAvello, Metaxas, & Mustafaraj, 2011). Candidates' share of the free-text Twitter public has a larger correlation with their vote tallies than @mentions or hashtags (McKelvey, DiGrazia, & Rojas, 2014). Twitter replicates most of the existing inequalities in pub- lic political exchanges (Barber´a & Rivero, 2014). Social analytics using both volume-based measures and sentiment analysis are predictive (Bermingham & Smeaton, 2011). According to Mejova, Srinivasan, and Boynton (2013), there is a slight correlation between the evolution of sentiment between twitter and the actual poll. According to Skoric et al. (2012), there is a certain correlation between Twitter chatter and votes but not sufficient to make an accurate prediction. How- ever, in case of Indian parliamentary election 2014, volume of tweet and vote share is positively correlated (Safiullah, Pathak, Singh, & Anshul, 2016), and same in Delhi assembly election 2013, „Face- book likes" of political parties and votes gained by political parties is positively correlated (Safiullah, Pathak, & Singh, 2016).

Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis has been derived.

H1.Social media Buzz and general elections outcome is positively related.

3. Research Methodology:

According to Gayo-Avello (2013), there are mainly two approaches to voting inference in Twitter that has been commonly used there are tweets counting and lexicon based sentiment anal- ysis. Tweets counting method was the first one, originally proposed by Tumasjan et al. (2010a). In this method merely counting tweets of party or candidate were only comprised. In this study, we are predicting

seats against tweets count. For that, we have considered a total of 8,877,275 Social Media buzz counting which was taken into account from a time period of from January 01, 2014 to April 09, 2014 and this social media buzz count were collected from simplify 360° (A marketing research company). In this social media buzz, 12 Indian political parties were considered for analysis of general elections in the year 2014.

The most common method to measure accuracy in predicting vote share was the Mean Absolute Error (MAE). Although this is not necessarily to be the best option, especially since MAE values are not comparable across different elections. For instance, the Senate election in Kentucky U.S was correctly predicted with an MAE of 39.6% while an MAE of 6.3% produced an incorrect prediction in California (Metaxas et al., 2011). In spite of this obvious problem, MAE is a preferred measure among researcher that allows them to compare their method's performance against that of pre-electoral polls. To counter these deficiencies, Lewis-Beck (2005) suggested measures such as R2, standard error of estimate, or root mean squared error. Social media buzz by nature includes both positive and negative words of mouth. In the study, they are treated as the same. So in our study total of 8,877,275 tweets count (Table 1) has been taken into consideration from a time period of January 01, 2014 to April 09, 2014. The relevant statistical analytical technique such as regression analysis was used to analyze data as suggested by Lewis-Beck (2005), with the help of SPSS 20th version as a software package (see Tables 2e4).

4. Analysis and Interpretation:

The linear regression model table shows the summary and overall all fit statistics. The adjusted R^2 of our model is 0.78 with R^2 0.75 that means that the linear regression can explain 75.3% of the variance in the data.

The next table is for F-test, linear regression's F-test has the null hypothesis which states that there is no linear relationship be- tween the variables (R^2 0). The F-test is highly significant, thus, can assume that there is a linear relationship between the variables in our model.

The coefficient of media is positive and significant for seats won ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ respectively). This finding indicates that a party can achieve a higher number of general elections seats in an elec- tion if the party has a well-developed and well equipped social media planning.

5. Discussion and conclusion:

This research paper examines the relationship between social media Buzz of political parties on seats won in 2014 General elec- tions. The result indicates that social media Buzz relating to polit- ical parties did have a positive and significant effect on seats won in 2014 general elections by political parties.

There is very little consensus found in literature about which information to be considered as such electoral outcomes. Some researchers considered only the winners of the elections without any other consideration while other considered number of seats and some other researchers considered the actual vote sharing. Those predictions have been evaluated against vote rates.

Table -1: Social Media Buzz and No. of Seats Won by Political Parties

Party name	Social media	Political parties won seat in 2014 general election
BharatiyaJanta Party	5,799,330	282
AamAdmi Party	3,248,338	4
Indian National Congress	1,431,518	44
BahujanSamaj Party	55,186	0
Janta Dal United	43,577	2
BijuJanta Dal	39,644	20
DravidaMunnetraKazhagam	34,692	0
All India Trinamool Congress	32,938	34
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	26,266	9
Samajwadi Party	23,734	5
All India Anna DravidaMunnertraKazhagam	20,653	37

Source: simplify360◦ (2014); Election Commission of India: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx.

and also as dichotomous decisions (Metaxas et al., 2011). In this study, we are suggesting possibilities of pre- dicting seats against tweets count and for that, we have considered a total of 9,666,360 Social Media tweet.

In our study, the unit of analysis was electoral parties, not can- didates because political parties provide tickets to the candidates to contest election from constituencies, plan their election campaign and also bear election campaign expenses. The 2014 Indian general election was contested mainly between the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and INC (Indian National Congress). Parties contested elec-tions on the national issues like Corruption, Development, Religion, and Caste,

Women Safety/Empowerment, Economy, Inflation, and Employment (Simplify360 ◦ , 2014), and on their ideology. In 2014 Indian g e n e r a l election parties hired professional advertising

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0.887[a]	0.784	0.753	41.85,346	0.794	31.661	1	10	0.000

a Predictors: (Constant), media.

[b] Dependent Variable: Seats won by political parties in 2014 General Election.

Table 3: ANOVA result.

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	56,421.873	1	51,421.873	31.661	0.000
	Residual	18,771.044	10	1677.104		
	Total	75,192.917	11			

[a] Dependent Variable: Seats won by political parties in 2014 General Election. b

Predictors: (Constant), media.

Table 4: Coefficients.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.428	12.366		0.162	0.891
	media	5.668E-005	0.000	0.897	4.537	0.00

Dependent Variable: Seats won by political parties in 2014 General Election.

The practical implication of this result is that parties need to actively manage media buzz on social networking sites (tweeter) to stimulate its capability in managing more seats. Further, more research suggests an appropriate strategy in tweet and re-tweets can enhance the chance of winning seats in the election. It is, therefore, important that political parties need to deploy agents who can tweet and re-tweet comments which are most relevant to political party goals.

The findings are important for both political parties and aca- demicians. Political parties can use our results to identify and implement social media buzz capabilities with a reasonable expectation based on research evidence that these initiatives will be in alignment with their party's strategy. Academicians should be equally encouraged by these results for no greater reason than the demonstrated impact on social media buzz capability on seats won in the election. On the basis of the analysis of the study, we can conclude that social media buzz capabilities play an important role in gaining seats in elections.

This study has some limitations. The major limitation is that number of social media buzz considered is rather small compared to the total active social media users and span of social media platform. A large number of social media buzz and social media platform yield more accurate findings and so, further research could replicate this study with the hope that more political party can implement social media buzz strategy. Thus the study only investigates Indian social media buzz effect on seat won, hence, the findings and conclusions drawn from this research are the repre-sentation of the Indian social media buzz and findings may not generalize to other geographic regions or culture. In the present study, an attempt has been made to link the social media buzz at the party level. However, the point suggested by the

reviewer is valid and we will link the social media with the individual in future research.

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