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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the social media has become an inevitability for civil society across the globe, with an extensive range of stakeholders, including ordinary citizens, activists, non-governmental organizations, telecom companies, software manufacturers, and governments. The social media revolution in Indian politics is genuine, tangible, and increasing. The study shows that the rapid growth of social media platforms has significantly changed the working, communication, and electoral environments of Indian political parties. This study focuses on how social media platforms, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter, have changed political campaigning and engagement in India. Social media enables political parties to communicate directly with citizens, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. It also makes it easier for information, political messaging, and propaganda to circulate in real time. Social media has gained importance with the rise in the youth population in India, as they are the ones who use the internet the most in India. Furthermore, the study evaluates the extent to which Indian political parties strategically use social media during elections, emphasizing the platform's growing importance as a tool for voter awareness and political identity. To preserve a fair and unbiased political environment, social media's significant and extensive influence over Indian political parties demands responsible use and effective governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is based on communication and communicates with the real world. By encouraging users to take part in, comment on, and produce content to communicate with other users, the public, and the social graph, social media platforms enable the interactive web. Social media has become a vital instrument for citizens to discuss both national and everyday issues. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are more than just 21st-century internet breakthroughs; they are quickly becoming thought leaders and influencers (Kaur et al.2013).The global political scene has changed significantly in the past few decades due to the rapid advancement of electronic communication technologies, and India is no exception. Despite such developments, social media platforms i.e., Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and YouTube have become potent instruments that change how political parties interact with the public, communicate, and run campaigns. Social media has emerged as an important platform for political debate and the shaping of public opinion, driven by the increasing availability of smartphones and affordable internet access, particularly in the wake of programs like Digital India (Darshan & Suresh 2019). In earlier times, Indian political parties used grassroots campaigning along with access to mass media such as radio, television, and newspapers to reach voters. However, because social media enables political parties and voters to communicate directly, instantly, and interactively, it has upended these traditional

approaches (Biswas et al. 2014). This change has lessened reliance on conventional information gatekeepers and enabled parties to more effectively and strategically develop and distribute their ideas. Social media changed both the nature of political activity and the techniques of communicating about politics (Neyazi,2017).). To reach particular voter demographics, political parties today employ algorithm-driven content, customized advertising, and data analytics. Digital outreach, online mobilization, and narrative development through hashtags, memes, and viral content are becoming increasingly important components of campaign tactics. Social media's impact was most noticeable during big elections, when online campaigning significantly influenced voter attitudes and turnout. A change in perspective on how political parties perform and communicate with the public has been demonstrated by the increasing integration of social media into political processes. Analyzing present Indian politics and projecting the future of democratic participation in the digital era requires an understanding of this influence.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the study's major objectives:

1. To examine the Role of Social Media in Political Communication;
2. To analyse the Voter Engagement and Participation;

3. To study the Election Campaign Strategies;
4. To identify the Political Branding and Image Building;
5. To Study the Role of Social Media in Political Mobilization and
6. Evaluate the Ethical Implications of Digital Political Campaigning.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design: For this study, a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative research methods, was used to examine how social media influences Indian political parties comprehensively. **Data Sources:** The data was collected from Primary and secondary data i.e., Social media managers of parties, Academic journals, books, and reports, social media analytics, News articles and digital campaign archives. The study social media enhances the effectiveness of communication and engagement in politics, though it also requires responsible use, government regulation, and standard societal digital literacy. To better understand the changing dynamics between social media and political proceedings in India, future research can expand on this methodology by including longitudinal data and emerging platforms.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

To examine the Role of Social Media in Political Communication:

Social media has become one of the most valuable tools influencing political communication globally in the 21st century. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have transformed the production, dissemination, and consumption of political content. Social media allows political players and the public to communicate instantly, interactively, and widely, in contrast to traditional media like radio, television, and newspapers.

- The exchange of ideas, information, and messages about politics, public affairs, governance, and policies is referred to as political communication. Social media's decentralization of communication channels has completely changed this process. Instead of relying exclusively on intermediaries such as journalists or news organizations, it enables direct communication among politicians, political parties, activists, and citizens. The pace, reach, and accessibility of political information have all significantly enhanced as a consequence of this transformation.
- The ability of social media to enable real-time contact is one of its most important aspects in political communication. Political leaders have rapid access to information, can react to public concerns, and can sway public opinion. Leaders like Donald Trump and Narendra Modi, for instance, have successfully used social media platforms to interact directly with millions of followers, influencing political narratives and conversations in society.
- Social media has democratized political engagement by giving previously underrepresented or marginalised people and groups a voice. Online, citizens can organise campaigns, mobilise support, voice their opinions, and participate in political discussions. Digital campaigns and hashtag movements have become effective tools for raising awareness and influencing legislative decisions.
- There are also many difficulties associated with using social media in political communication. The quick dissemination of propaganda, fake news, and misinformation can skew public opinion and jeopardise democratic processes. Concerns about the quality and reliability of online political discourse are also raised by issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and echo chambers.

Political communication has undergone a major transformation thanks to social media, which has made it more instantaneous, participative, and extensive. Although it offers many opportunities for participation

and empowerment, it also poses challenges that call for careful oversight and appropriate use. Social media's impact on politics will remain a crucial topic of research and discussion as digital technologies advance.

To analyse the Voter Engagement and Participation: A prosperous democracy is fundamentally based on voter participation and engagement. They discuss ways people participate in politics, including voting in elections, attending political gatherings, engaging in public discussions, and staying informed about current events. Voter engagement highlights the ongoing connection between citizens and the political system beyond simply casting a ballot. In contrast, voter participation fundamentally guarantees that the government reflects the will of the people.

- Voting is both a civic duty and a constitutional privilege in democratic nations like India. Voter turnout is frequently used as a gauge of popular confidence in the political system and the efficiency of democratic institutions. While low voter turnout may indicate political indifference, ignorance, or discontent with the options offered, high voter turnout indicates active citizen participation and confidence in governance.
- Voter participation extends beyond elections. Participation in campaigns, community organising, political discourse, and advocacy is all included. Voters who are actively involved are more likely to be aware of policies, comprehend their rights, and hold elected officials responsible. Through programs such as voter education and awareness campaigns, organisations like the Election Commission of India play a critical role in increasing voter knowledge, ensuring free and fair elections, and boosting participation.
- Voter involvement and participation are influenced by a range of characteristics, including education, socioeconomic status, information availability, political consciousness, and trust in the election process. Social media and technology have also become effective tools for voter mobilisation in recent years, particularly among younger demographics, by increasing the accessibility and interactivity of political information.

Voter participation and engagement are crucial for bolstering democracy. They guarantee inclusive and representative governance, encourage accountability, and empower citizens to influence decision-making. Since individuals' involvement determines the country's future, it is the duty of both governments and institutions to encourage active participation.

To study the Election Campaign Strategies: Social media has revolutionised political communication and election campaigning in recent years. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter are now vital resources for voters, political parties, and politicians. Social media allows politicians and the public to communicate directly and in real time, in contrast to traditional campaign tactics like rallies, TV commercials, and print media.

- Using electronic platforms to spread political ideas, interact with voters, and sway public opinion are all part of social media election campaign tactics. These tactics include data-driven voter outreach, online community development, content production (including videos, memes, and live streams), and targeted advertising. Political campaigns can use algorithms and user data to customise messages for specific demographic groups, increasing the effectiveness and personalisation of communication.
- Social media has a big impact on elections because it affects how information is shared and used. It gives candidates more control over their narratives by enabling them to get around gatekeepers in traditional media. In addition, it enables citizens to actively engage in political discourse, exchange viewpoints, and rally support. This influence also raises concerns about false information, fake news, echo chambers, and the ethical use of data.

Social media political campaign tactics have a multifaceted and transformational impact. Its influence depends on citizens' critical engagement with the material they encounter and on how political players use these platforms. It will be crucial to strike a balance between ethical responsibility and innovation if social media is to support democratic processes rather than compromise them.

To identify the Political Branding and Image Building: Social media's explosive expansion has completely changed the political communication landscape, making it a key instrument for developing political branding and image. Bypassing the gatekeepers of traditional media, political leaders, parties, and candidates can communicate directly with the public through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This change has enabled more individualised and focused communication tactics, in addition to speeding up and expanding the reach of political messaging.

- By enabling leaders to project particular identities, ideals, and storylines, social media plays a critical role in building a political brand. Politicians can create an image that appeals to specific voting groups by carefully selecting postings, images, and interactions. For instance, depending on their campaign objectives, leaders may portray themselves as strong, personable, progressive, or traditional. In a highly competitive political climate, their ongoing online presence helps uphold their public image and keep them visible.
- Social media enables real-time interaction, allowing politicians to respond promptly to criticism, current events, and popular concerns. Although this immediacy helps control public opinion and foster trust, it also raises the risk of false information, backlash, and reputational harm. Positive or bad viral content can have a big impact on how the public views a political entity.
- Besides, social media enables real-time interaction, allowing politicians to respond promptly to criticism, current events, and popular concerns. Although this immediacy helps control public opinion and foster trust, it also raises the risk of false information, backlash, and reputational harm. Positive or bad viral content can have a big impact on how the public views a member of the political community.

Due to social media allows political actors and the public to communicate directly and in real time, it has completely changed political branding and image creation. It enables leaders and parties to create customised narratives, react swiftly to public opinion, and interact with a larger audience outside of traditional media outlets. Simultaneously, it has heightened competitiveness, raised the possibility of false information, and made public opinion more erratic and imagedriven. In the end, social media provides strong instruments for forming political identity and influence, but its efficacy hinges on sincerity, tactical communication, and the capacity to appropriately traverse the digital environment.

To Study the Role of Social Media in Political Mobilization: Social media has become a potent force in contemporary political mobilisation, changing how people interact with politics, obtain information, and participate in group activities. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have created new, instantaneous, interactive, and expansive platforms for political communication. In contrast to traditional media, social media facilitates direct communication between citizens and political actors, reducing reliance on intermediaries and enabling messages to reach a wide range of viewers quickly.

- Social media's capacity to influence public opinion and increase awareness is one of its primary functions in political mobilisation. These platforms are used by political parties, activists, and interest groups to highlight issues, spread information, and craft narratives that appeal to particular communities. Social media may amplify voices and draw attention to topics that might otherwise go unnoticed through hashtags, viral content, and targeted campaigns.

- Social media also makes cooperation and organising easier. It gives people the means to organise demonstrations, rallies, and campaigns in a timely and effective manner. Large-scale collective action becomes more viable with real-time updates and group communication tools that keep participants informed and connected. This has been demonstrated in several international revolutions where social media was crucial in uniting people.
- Political engagement and participation are other important factors. Social media makes it easier for people, especially younger people, to get involved in politics. Users can participate in conversations, distribute content, and voice their thoughts, encouraging civic engagement and political consciousness. Additionally, it enables grassroots movements to gain traction without significant financial resources.

Social media's ability to share information quickly, amplify a variety of viewpoints, and encourage group action has made it a potent instrument for political mobilisation. It enables political players to plan campaigns effectively, interact directly with voters, and instantly sway public opinion. However, since polarisation and false information can erode democratic processes, their impact also depends on ethical use. All things considered, social media significantly influences contemporary political engagement and participation.

Evaluate the Ethical Implications of Digital Political Campaigning: A combination of technologies, including social media, data analytics, and targeted advertising to influence public opinion, has revolutionised the way political players interact with voters. Campaigns can reach highly targeted audiences with tailored messages thanks to platforms like Meta Platforms and Google, making political outreach quicker, less expensive, and more effective than conventional techniques.

- Nevertheless, there are some significant ethical issues with this change. Campaigns frequently rely on vast amounts of personal data—sometimes gathered without express consent—to customize messages, raising significant privacy concerns. Data abuse can influence voter behaviour and erode confidence in democratic systems, as seen by the Cambridge Analytica incident.
- Misinformation and manipulation present another ethical dilemma. The deliberate or inadvertent amplification of inaccurate or misleading content on digital networks might influence voters' perceptions. Sensational or divisive content may be prioritized by algorithms built to maximize engagement, raising questions about justice and well-informed decision-making.
- Transparency and accountability are other issues. Digital advertisements, unlike traditional campaign tactics, can be challenging to track, making it harder for authorities and the general public to identify the source of certain messages. Unethical tactics like "dark ads" that target specific groups without public scrutiny may be enabled by this opacity.

By enabling greater influence, immediate communication, and data-driven tactics, digital political campaigning has revolutionized contemporary democracy. These benefits, however, are accompanied by serious ethical issues, such as the dissemination of false information, data privacy violations, manipulation through targeted advertising, and unequal influence over voters. These problems are made more difficult by digital platforms' lack of accountability and transparency. Therefore, even though digital tools can increase democratic participation, they must be used responsibly and in accordance with established ethical norms and legal frameworks to ensure that political communication is factual, fair, and respectful of citizens' rights. Integrity and imagination in coordination.

CONCLUSION

Social media has had a significant, revolutionary impact on Indian political parties, changing how politics is experienced, organised, and

conveyed. Political parties may now interact directly with the public, avoid the gatekeepers of traditional media, and mobilise support with previously unheard-of speed and reach thanks to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Campaigns have become more dynamic, data-driven, and interactive as a result, and political involvement has increased, particularly among younger and digitally connected populations. Simultaneously, the increasing dependence on social media has created significant obstacles. The proliferation of false information, fake news, and divisive content has raised concerns over the calibre of democratic debate. Algorithm-driven content and targeted political advertising can create echo chambers that subtly but effectively shape voter behaviour. The political environment has also become more complex due to concerns about data privacy, regulatory gaps, and the potential for digital tools to be used for propaganda. Social media interaction and coordinated activities can shape public opinion, both in favour of and against. These result in virtual democracy platforms where political parties and politicians are more receptive to the people and the government and authorities are forced to act. Declaring one's political beliefs and critiquing opponents with careful observation and analysis are essential components of political communication on social media. While opposition parties seek ways to circumvent this, the ruling government uses social media to reach the public with its developmental agenda. Social media creates a virtual world democracy. Although social media has enabled Indian political parties to reach a wider audience and increase election turnout, it also raises concerns that, if ignored, might threaten democratic principles. To ensure that social media remains a force for supporting rather than undermining India's democracy, a balanced approach that integrates technological innovation with ethical behaviour, digital literacy, and effective governance is necessary.

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