EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY : A STUDY OF DELHI ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2013

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ABSTRACT

The electronic revolution has made Social media one of the important tools for advertisement in an election. Social media has become a potent tool of expressing opinion worldwide. Even in an emerging economy like India, its growing impact is discernible. Its rise in popularity has made political parties think of its use as a means of both gauging and creating public opinion. The Delhi assembly in 2013 is a case in point. The present study aims to examine the impact of social media on public opinion, its significance as a measure of popular opinion and how it predicts popular opinion with the help of an evaluation of popularity on Facebook and its relationship with electoral outcomes. For this research 4,500,000 likes of Facebook fan page for the month of December 2013 were taken into consideration along with the Political parties namely Indian National Congress (INC), Bhartitya Janta Party (BJP) and Aam Admi Party (AAP), contesting for Delhi Assembly election. Linear Regression analysis method was used to analyze the secondary data, the result indicates that 'Facebook likes' of political parties and votes gained by political parties in Delhi Assembly election 2013 are positively correlated.

Key Words : Prime time News coverage, Election campaign, Indian politics, Election Prediction

INTRODUCTION

Every new and prevalent communication technology, especially those involving the internet and Social Media has attracted the attention of both pundits and academics researching mass communication and public opinion. Social media is primarily known for the trending topic related to celebrities, brand, and pop culture. Still, in the recent years, political uses of the social networking sites have also come into the public spotlight (Skoric, M. et.al 2011). For instance, the usage of social networking site in 2008 Barack Obama's presidential campaign has been frequently described as the first electoral campaign in which decisive impact was observed (Smith, 2009). During the year 2013, Delhi, the capital of India, witnessed the assembly election.

The Delhi assembly election is one of the important exercises to form the government in Delhi state and thus to elect Chief Minister for the state. This election is held in every five years when the incumbent government is nearing completion of the term. The Delhi assembly elections were held in 2013 for 70 assembly seats. To form government a party must win minimum 35 seats or prove its majority with the help of alliances. The 15-year rule of the Congress in Delhi came to an end after the results of the 2013 Delhi Assembly elections were announced. Though the results resulted in a hung assembly with no single party winning a clear majority, the elections gave rise to the prominent position played by the debutant Arvind Kejriwal-led nascent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Kejriwal's

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singular victory in the New Delhi constituency, coupled with the 28 Assembly constituencies that it bagged, had surprised all political rivals including the Congress and the BJP.

Entry of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2013 Delhi Assembly Election

The Delhi elections have historically been a battleground of two players - the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with the former gaining the upper hand in the last three elections. However, the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had complicated the equation. AAP was launched in November 2012 by activist Arvind Kejriwal, who was central to the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement of 2012 before he separated to form his own party. Although he was not considered a major threat by either INC or BJP, his extreme popularity and clean image had given in Delhi Assembly election an unexpected twist.

ELECTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There was a significant change in the Assembly Election 2013 as compared to that 2008. This change is accredited to therole played by the social media during the elections. The significance of social media can be understood by a recent report which has pointed out that, Q. Social media users among internet users in India is around 84% which comes in figure to around 110 million in 2014. (Estatsindia. 2013). Social media is a form of "online application, platform" and media which facilitates interaction, collaboration, and sharing of content.(Palmer and Lewis-Koening 2009) In politics, the most significant example of social media is its use by different political parties in Delhi assembly election 2013. Facebook played a major role, candidates and political parties competing with each other in spreading their messages to voters through this medium in addition to the traditional media (Webfluenze 2014). Facebook has also been interesting for a politician and political parties those who are on social networking site. McCreery and Smith (2011) found homogenous ideological clustering within Twitter, such that

Twitter users were frequently exposed to political beliefs that they already held. According to Kim (2011) the three main uses of Twitter in 2010 Korean elections were political information-seeking, entertainment, and social utility. Even during elections, people use Twitter for a variety of reasons, and use is not monolithic despite the specific focus of any particular piece of research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently, many studies have examined whether the content and structure of twitter can be used to predict the result of election in Germany (Tumasjan, A. etal.2011), Portugal (Fonseca. A 2011), United Kingdom (Tweetminister, 2011) and the United States (Nowak, A. et.al 1990 and Himelboim, I. et. al 2011). The predictive power of tweets was weaker in several cases, although still better than chance (Metaxas et al., 2011). Twitter messages commenting on parties and candidates showed little, if any, systematic relationship with subsequent votes on the day of the electionaccording to some researchers (Jungherr, 2013; Tumasjan et al., 2010; Effing et al., 2011). However, it has also been seen that politicians with higher social media engagement got relatively more votes within most political parties (Effing et al., 2011).Nevertheless, there are recent electoral results from India that prove that political outcomes and voters behavior can be predicted on the basis of data extracted from social media (DiGrazia, J et.al. 2013). Study on tweet followers and vote share gained by political parties related to Delhi Assembly elections 2015 shows that there is positive correlation between Tweet volume and vote share (Safiullah et al., 2016). Some observers suggest that candidates scoring high in conversation on social media metrics (Facebook friends or Twitter followers) do not claim electoral success (Metaxas, P. T., Mustafaraj, E., &Gayo-Avello, D. (2011, October).The outcome of Delhi Assembly elections 2013 is a case in point.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In this study, we aim to test whether the

Facebook likes could be used to predict the outcome of the elections, taking into account the specific political context and electoral system of India. The research questions are designed to address 2013 Delhi assembly level electoral outcomes. The following hypothesis was formulated.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between popularities of Political parties on Facebook and vote gain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a total of 4,500,000 Facebook fan pages like for three Indian political parties namely Indian National Congress(INC), Bhartitya Janta Party (BJP) and Aam Admi Party (AAP), contesting for Delhi Assembly election. We have considered political parties popularity on Facebook by taking into consideration the Facebook fan pages likes for the month of December 2013 of political parties who designed all marketing activities for their candidate and facilitate with human resource and finance and even provided a marketing consultant to the candidate for campaigning. The ideology of political parties was more extensively advertised by ground level party's workers then the candidate's face. The data pertaining to 'Facebook likes' of political parties that were collected from webfluenz(website) and the number of votes gained by political parties were taken from election commision reports. The relevant statistical analytical techniques wereused in the study.Linear Regression analysis method was used to analyze the secondary data, with the help of SPSS 20th version as a software package.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
Table 1: Model Summaryb

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.969a	.940	.879	117222.29807	1.258

a. Predictors: (Constant), Facebook likes   b. Dependent Variable: Votes

The linear regression model table shows the summary and overall all fit statistics. The adjusted R2 of our model is 0.879 with R2 = 0.940 that means the linear regression can explain 88% of the variance in the data.

Table 2: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	213422098968.145	1	213422098968.145	15.532	.027b
	Residual	13741067164.522	1	13741067164.522		
	Total	227163166132.667	2			

a. Dependent Variable: Votes   b. Predictors: (Constant), Facebook likes

Table 3: Coefficientsa

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1406388.608	233339.092		6.027	.047
	Facebooklikes	.587	.149	.969	3.941	.027

a. Dependent Variable: Votes

In table 2, P-value is less than .05 so the hypothesis will be rejected. In our study, the significant value is 0.027 which shows there is a significant impact of Facebook likes on the vote gained by political parties. thus, it can be assumed that there is a linear relationship between the variables in our model.

The coefficient of 'Facebooklikes'is positive and highly significant (p<0.05, p<0.01 respectively). This finding indicates that a party can gain a higher number of votes in elections if political parties attract more 'Facebooklikes'through parties well-developed and well equipped social media plan.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this paper, we posed a question about the relationship between popularity of political parties on Facebook and vote share. Overall, our results suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between the popularity of political parties on Facebook and vote share. However, the size of the effect is significant which means high popularity on Face book results in higher vote share. Social media has already emerged as a tool in political advertising in 2008 US presidential election. The social media has also affected the Delhi assembly election 2013 and the most leverage party was BJP that emerged as highest seats and vote gainer in the assembly election. With the highest popularity on Facebook BJP managed to secure 32 seats. And the newly born Aam Aadmi Party emerged as second highest vote and seat gainer in the state.With the second highest popularity on Facebook AAP manage to secured 28 seats and the congress the incumbent state government with the third most famous political party on Facebook could manage to secured only 8 seats as in the Delhi assembly election 2013. And that is the worst performance of congress party as compared to 2008 elections. So our model proved with this result. Thus the role of the social media and its effect cannot be ignored after this search work.

The candidates and political parties would be well advised to invest more heavily in social media especially on Face book when the election race is likely to be tight. Moreover, the strategy for election on social media has to be made early in the campaign phase, because switch in the size of Facebook user would have a greater effect over longer time horizons.

The findings are important for both political parties and academicians. Political parties can use the results to identify and implement Facebook popularity 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 tweets capability on total vote gained in the election. On the basis of the analysis of the study, we can conclude that tweets capabilities play an important role in gaining votes in elections.

The importance of this study can be observed by understanding the paradigm shift in election advertisement and campaign on social media. The election advertisement and campaign have changed their orientation from the traditional mode of advertisement to modern techno-savvy supported, Individual to Party- ideology centric and not limited to the boundary but to broad reach with the advent of social media. Now a days political parties across the globe in almost all the democratic countries are hiring a consultant, ad agencies and establishing party media cell, IT cell for the advertising and campaign on social media with the objectives to influence more and more voters who use social media and to increase vote share in the election. One of the reasons why social media is so attractive to political parties is that it is very much cost effective.

The result of this study may be useful for the political strategist and political parties to understand the importance of parties' popularities on Facebook fan page in vote shares. Election campaign on social media like Facebook, provide different means to express their opinion through Texts, pictures, videos, comments likes and dislikes. The expression of the user can be encouraged or discourage by users' fan on

Facebook which can be bearing a risk of affecting vote bank.

The managerial implication for this study could be understood in terms of cost. There is a very low cost to the individual Twitter user associated with following a given political candidate. It takes little effort or time to like or dislike on theFacebook page. The only cost may be social - where the users own followers might disagree with the user's choice of candidate. Given the low cost associated with making a connection with social media, the quality of that connection (or the number of such connections) as a signal of popular support is likely to be low because it essentially represents a very weak form of engagement between the candidate and each user. Furthermore, users may follow many candidates and not just their preferred candidate, including candidates in electorates that they are ineligible to vote in. Thus, the number of social media connections may not necessarily directly relate to voting behavior, though it can be indicator

Social media claim low costs in adding a candidate to a user's social network, and if compared with other media user cost to Facebook is low (Cameron et al., 2014). This is because Facebook provides very transparent network structure, in which all of a user's friends can see which candidates they are friends with. Given the high cost of conventional political advertising, the social media can be a very useful tool for political parties.

Also, it could be argued that Facebook is not more entrenched in daily lives of Delhi voters, so users need to put more energy to make theFacebook page more attractive and informative. Accordingly, we would expect Facebook to denote a greater level of engagement, therefore, be more predictive of actual voting behavior, which is what we observe in the data. Based on these results, candidates may gain an advantage by concentrating more effort on specific constituents through Facebook, where engagement is a greater indicator of voter interest.

Finally, the change in the number of aFacebook fan page is more statistically significant, the longer the period over which the change is considered. This potentially demonstrates the impact of political campaigns on social media engagement and voting behavior. It also shows that candidates would be best served to invest in social media early in their campaigns if they expect the election to be closely fought. Themicroblogging can be used as a part of their overall political marketing strategy.

There is, some theoretical support for considering more explicitly the effect of the structure of social networks or more especially Facebook on election results in future research. For instance, Conitzer (2012) found that more connected voters (those with a denser set of social network connections) may be better indicators of group voting behavior than the inferior quality of network size or change in network size variables used in this analysis.

LIMITATIONS & SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has some limitations. The major limitation is the number of Political Parties and Facebook fan page was considered is rather small then compared to the total active social media users and span of social media platform. A large number of parties and their Facebook fan page yield more accurate findings and so, further research could replicate this study, with the hope that more political party can implement social media strategy. Hence, the findings and conclusions drawn from this research are the representation of the volume in Facebook fan page during elections and findings may not generalize to other geographic regions or culture. Further studies can also examine the proposed relationships in media. Further studies can carry out in comparing different social media follower, friending, like and dislike in a relationship with election outcomes. Hence, the findings and conclusions drawn from this research are the representation of the tweets during elections and findings may not generalize to other geographic regions or culture. Further studies can also examine the proposed relationships in media.

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