

Impact of Digital Media on Voting Behavior of Youth in India

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Abstract:

This study endeavors to examine the intensifying and rapidly evolving link between digital media and voting behavior of youth in India on the eve of Industrialization 4.0 and information age facilitating colossal yet smooth transformation from citizens to netizens by employing the statistical tool of linear regression analysis and content analysis of qualitative sort in order to explore the relationship between independent variable i.e. digital media specifically whatsapp, instagram, YouTube using sophisticated technologies like algorithmic curations to increase user engagement and voting behavior as dependent variable and to gauge other valuable insights about the key demographic i.e. youth respectively, operating on primary datasets collected using survey it seeks to answer essential questions about the magnitude of impact of digital media on youth in terms of their voting behavior.

Keywords: Digital Media Or Social Media, Voting Behaviour

INTRODUCTION:

Social media is a kind of digital technology which acts as a platform for its users to create and exchange their opinions, ideas, and views about events happening worldwide and plethora of other things, being a virtual community of more than 5 billion people it also allows people to showcase their artistic abilities, talent and passion thus acts as a marketing tool for commercial corporations and enterprises as well,

Some of the most popular social media platforms are namely Whatsapp, instagram, youtube Facebook, twitter and so on engaging all sorts of users across the globe.

Voting behavior is basically a field of study concerned with voting intent of people and factors and determinants associated with it. The analysis of voting behavior is known as 'psephology' derived from the Greek word 'psephos' i.e. a pebble which was used in ancient greek society to arrive at their respective voting decision.

There are three major research schools associated with scientific study of voting behavior as follows:

- The sociological model: it is often identified as "school of Columbia" with the main reference in applied bureau of social research of Columbia university emphasizing heavily on the influence of social factors with significant publications such as

"the people's choice" by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944 and "personal influence" by Katz and Lazarsfeld.

- The psychological model: it is often identified as "school of Michigan" which assumes party identification as the main factor behind the behavior of voters along with publications such as "the American voter" by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960)

- Rational choice theory: it is also known as a model of economic voting and sometimes school of Rochester along with the landmark work i.e. "an economic theory of democracy" by Anthony Downs (1957) emphasizing on rational choices, information, uncertainty and so on.

Apart from aforementioned generalized theoretical models, voting behavior has a very peculiar character in terms of its determinants varying country to country as most of the previous researches suffer from ethnocentrism and revolve around western democracies

Thus It is vital to consider specifically regional, local and national factors (caste, class ,religion ,gender, media and so on showcasing an inclination towards identity politics) while studying the voting behavior of youth in a country like India.

Literature review:

The character of political communication is rapidly evolving and unlike conventional media like television the reliance on social media by authorities across the globe and India as well also witnesses an increasing trend considering the user engagement which comprises a large fraction of their target voters.

IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA:

Several studies like (Biswas et al., 2014) accentuated on the pervasive effect of social media with ever increasing the number of users forming virtual communities across various platforms like Facebook, twitter, linkedin transforming the entire gamut of social networking and interaction. The use of social networking sites as a means of communication has become a widely popular phenomenon given the tech savvy youth population in case of India and worldwide. However social networking sites have multiplicity of effects across the spectrum from positive to negative

POSITIVE IMPACTS:

Increased and rather fast connectivity

Variety of platforms

Updated news and information

Facilitating smooth access and interaction across the web and so on

NEGATIVE IMPACTS:

Along with the positive impacts of these social networking sites emerging as an alternative to conventional media like television there are some negative impacts as well like:

Hate speeches subsequently causing hate crimes

Misinformation

Cyber attacks

Privacy violations

Bandwagon effect or promoting herd mentality resulting in lack of authenticity or originality in terms of opinion

Previous researches also demonstrate that there have not been enough studies regarding the impact of these platforms on society, polity, economy etc across the world

POLITICISATION OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

There have been researches suggesting that not only commercial corporations but political parties and organizations are increasingly employing and leveraging the social media platforms for multiple objectives on account of the kind of utility and effectiveness these platforms hold in 21st century.

The objectives are as follows:

Mobilization or systematic manipulation of public opinion aligning with their respective agendas, interacting with mass public as well

Mass messaging and micro targeting

political campaigning: it was observed that ever since 2014 general elections the two most significant political parties namely the Indian national congress and Bhartiya Janta party are successfully running their digital political campaigns in order to woo their target voters which comprise a large fraction of youths who are frequently active on these platforms or

social networking sites(Mahapatra & Plagemann, 2019).

The usage of social media increased in India to a large extent after Barack obama's social media campaign (across platforms like Facebook and Twitter) of 2008 successfully worked out in his favor subsequently resulting in him winning the presidential election,

However in India it was first used in the movement namely "India against corruption" in the year 2011 for mass mobilization , broadcasting information and organization of protests. (Biswas et al., 2014)

Studies like (Srivastava, 2020) emphasized on India's 16th national general elections held during April and may 2014 and crucial role of social media by stating reports published by "the internet and mobile association of India"(IAMAI) and the Mumbai based Iris knowledge foundation which predicted that facebook users will

have tremendous impact over the results of polls in 160 of India's 543 constituencies and the reason for this is the youth of India.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR

In Indian context there have been studies like (Sharma & Parma, 2017) which emphasized on proving statistically significant difference between demographic characteristics like age, education and voting intention on the basis of comments, tweets, follows on social media by politicians, and (Lata, 2020) emphasizing upon positive link between SNS (social networking sites) and voting behavior of youth in India. To sum up previous researches emphasized heavily on the impact of social media among youths along with increasing instances of politicization of these digital platforms and also on the evolving link between voting behavior and social media in a variety of contexts,

However most of those studies referred to Facebook and Twitter as widely popular social media platforms while in 2024 there are several other platforms forming alternative virtual communities like whatsapp, instagram and youtube having 2.78 billion, 2.49 billion and 2.04 billion estimated monthly active users (MAUs) respectively.

Methodology:

This study is based on a descriptive research design with amalgamation of both qualitative i.e. content analysis along with quantitative form of analysis i.e. linear regression analysis using Microsoft excel and its enabled tool pack on two independent variables and one dependent variable all measured on a linear scale Obtained from primary datasets based on a survey conducted on fifty respondents belonging to key demographic that is relevant for the study, therefore non probability sampling was used. The sample size is deliberately kept small for better quality control and accuracy aligning with objective of intensive inclination and requirements of this study.

Independent or predictor variables are the measures of impact of social media with reference to whatsapp, Instagram and youtube

X1 = POLITICISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

X2= IMPACT OR DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Dependant variable as a measure of voting behavior

Y= CHANGE IN VOTING DECISIONS

Objectives:

In specific terms the objectives are as follows:

As far as the quantitative part of analysis is concerned that is linear regression in this case to understand the impact of social media with reference to whatsapp, instagram and youtube on voting behavior of youth in India,

There can be two alternative hypotheses against the null hypothesis:

H0: there is no statistically significant relationship between two predictor variables namely POLITICISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA and IMPACT OR DEGREE OF INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA on the dependent variable namely CHANGE IN VOTING DECISIONS as a measure of voting behavior.

H1: there is statistically significant relationship between predictor variable namely POLITICISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA and dependent variable namely CHANGE IN VOTING DECISIONS as a measure of voting behavior.

H2: there is statistically significant relationship between predictor variable namely IMPACT OR DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA and dependent variable namely CHANGE IN VOTING DECISIONS as a measure of voting behavior.

Apart from aforementioned quantitative part there are certain other objectives as well on the qualitative part in order to gauge some insights about the key demographic like their usage patterns, common characteristics and idiosyncrasies With reference to whatsapp ,instagram and youtube .

Data analysis:

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.443957
R Square	0.197098
Adjusted R Square	0.162932
Standard Error	2.282164
Observations	50

Table1: as given in this table,

An R squared value of 0.197098 means that approximately 19.7% of the variability in the dependent variable i.e. change in voting decisions can be explained by two independent variables namely politicization of social media and impact of social media collectively and adjusted R square value of 16.29% indicating that even though there is some sort of cause and effect or explanatory relationship but there could be other relevant predictor variables as well in this context which can be incorporated in further studies.

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	60.09127	30.04563	5.768831	0.005749
Residual	47	244.7887	5.208271		
Total	49	304.88			

Table2: as given in this table:

The F-statistics p value of 0.05749 indicates that the overall model is statistically significant meaning that at least one of the independent variable (politicization of social media or impact or degree of influence of social media)has a significant relationship with the dependent variable(change in voting decisions due to social media)

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.406149	0.904784	2.659363	0.010671	0.585958	4.226339	0.585958	4.226339
POLITICISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA	-0.0499	0.169766	0.29391	0.770123	0.39142	0.29163	0.39142	0.29163
IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA	0.475797	0.160585	2.962896	0.00477	0.152741	0.798853	0.152741	0.798853

Table3: as given in this table:

Intercept: the p value of the intercept is 0.01067 suggesting that the intercept is significantly different from zero Indicating that even that when both independent variables are zero, the dependent variable (change in voting decisions) has a significant non zero baseline value.

X1= POLITICISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA: the p value of politicization of social media is 0.770123 which is much greater than the significance level of 0.05. This suggests that politicization of social media is not a

significant predictor of change in voting decisions therefore considering the cause and effect relationship between dependent and independent variable null hypothesis H0 seems to be correct in this case.

X2= IMPACT OR DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF SCIAL MEDIA: the p value for impact of social media is 0.0477 which is less than 0.05 indicating that this independent variable is a statistically significant predictor of change in dependent variable i.e. change in voting decisions due to social media.

Summary:

To sum up the overall regression model is significant, but only the impact or degree of influence of social media i.e. X2 is a significant predictor of change in voting decisions as a measure of voting behavior i.e. dependent variable or Y.

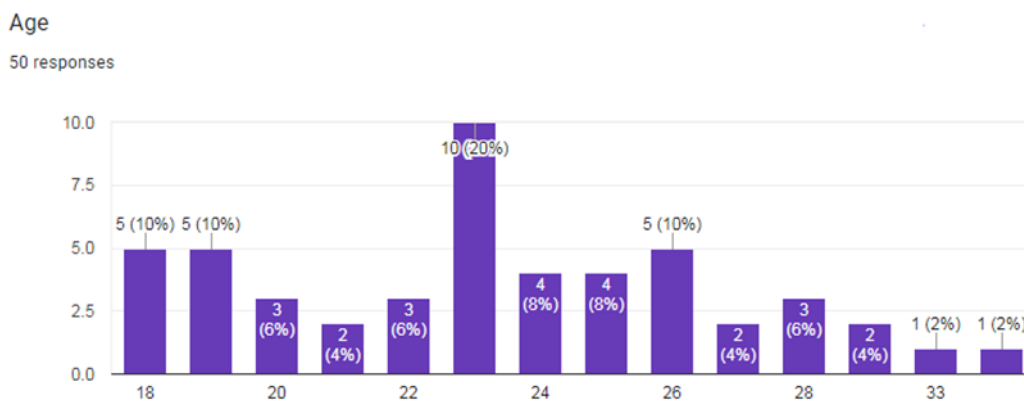
H0 hypothesis holds to be true in the case of variable X1 hence H1 hypothesis is rejected.

H2 hypothesis holds to be true in the case of variable X2 as a predictor variable for Y i.e. dependent variable hence null hypothesis is rejected in this case.

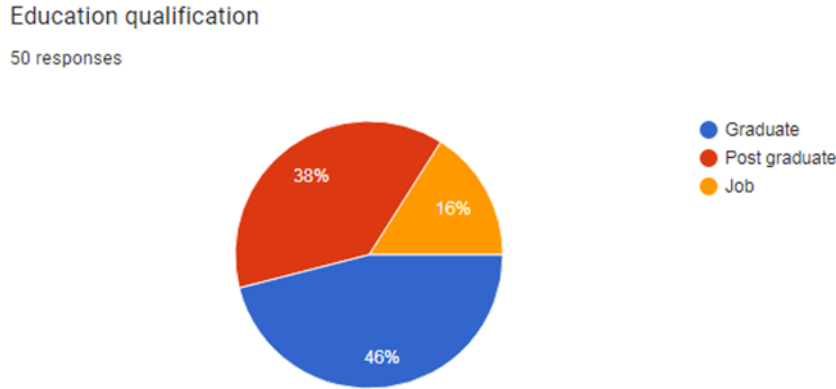
The model explains about 19.7% of variance in the dependent variable, suggesting that voting behavior is a very vast phenomenon which can be explained by multiplicity of factors in both general and specific terms falling within this context as well.

As far as the qualitative content analysis is concerned as given in the graphs given below indicating the age that is target youth population in India ranging between 18-35 years and education background ranging from graduates, post graduates to working professionals as key demographic features, apart from that high amount of user engagement and popularity of social media platforms can be seen which is quite evident in graph3 indicating daily activity span of youths across these platforms namely whatsapp, instagram and youtube on a collective basis. there were several idiosyncrasies regarding the respective preference of respondents representing the youth population about particular social media profiles or pages across these platforms like beerbiceps, FirstPost,Reddit, Wire, NDTV news,lallantop,

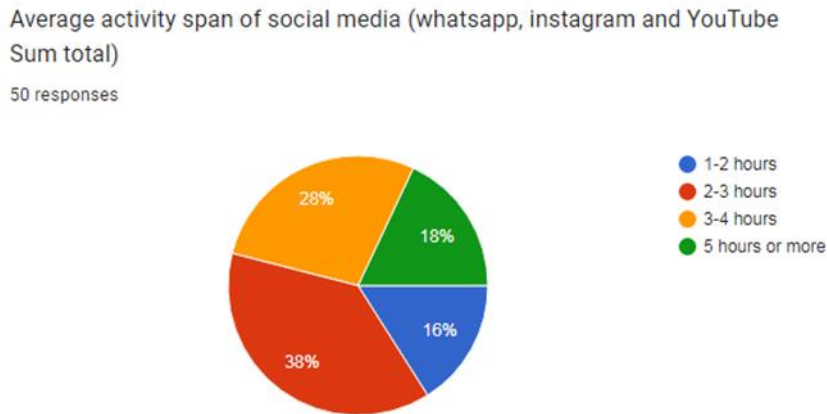
Faye Dsouza , Dhruv Rathee etc being recurring names on their lips reflecting upon their popularity and influence among youngsters in India.



Graph1: age group of respondents –typically ranging between 18-35 years representing youth population of India



Graph 2: education background of respondents – majority of them i.e. 46% were graduates ,38% were post graduate and 16% of them were working professionals.



Graph 3: Average activity span regarding social media platforms namely whatsapp,instagram and youtube collectively on a daily basis – indicating popularity of these platforms while 38% of them spend 2-3 hours, 16% of them spend only 1-2 hours,28% of them spend 3-4 hours and 18% of them spend considerably high amount of time i.e. more than 5 hours.

Conclusion and implications:

On a concluding note the analysis anchored around the impact of newly rising social media platforms namely whatsapp, instagram and youtube on voting behavior of youth in India, since the analysis was an amalgamation of both quantitative and qualitative sort forming a descriptive research design altogether,

For the quantitative linear regression analysis there were two sets of alternative hypotheses namely H1 and H2 among which only H2 was accepted against the null hypothesis i.e. H0 indicating a statistically significant relationship between independent variable i.e. degree of influence or impact of social media and dependent variable i.e. change in voting decisions due to social media as a measure of voting behavior, however overall model was statistically significant explaining variance of 19.7% of variance in dependent variable making it a modest fit which is understandable considering the vast phenomenon of voting behavior affected by multiplicity of factors in various contexts along with underlying implication for further researchers to incorporate other relevant factors as well in the given context.

The qualitative content analysis was simply to gauge insights about the key demographic that is their age (18-35 years) and educational qualifications ranging from graduate, post graduate and working professionals and dynamics of user engagement which was very high in terms of their daily activity span and frequency of usage and several idiosyncrasies regarding their preferences of channels or pages across these platforms. It also has

an underlying implication considering enormous popularity of these social media platforms among youths on policymakers, politicians or authorities to leverage these digital media platforms as barometers of public opinion thus capable of guiding their policies and decisions and as tools of political communication to minimize dissent and maintain public support as well.

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