Political Campaign In The Era Of Internet: Politics Of Like, Comment And Share In Bihar Election 2015

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Abstract: The craft of political campaigning has experienced uncommon changes under the effect of innovative technologies. Political campaigning is no longer constrained to just persuading or convincing the voters to vote in favor of a specific candidate or party. It is likewise about creating awareness among people in general on different issues and over some undefined time getting them involved in public opinion formations.

Campaigns are concerned with directing, strengthening and activating the views of the voting public on the matters that has been raised by the political parties.

The idea of marketing has also transfused politics. The internet has provided a low-cost podium to the political parties to interact with the public.

Keywords: Politics, Campaign, Voters, Social Media, Impact

I. INTRODUCTION

A political campaign is a systematized determination which pursues to inspire the decision making process among the targeted audience (Campbell, 2008). In egalitarianism set up of governance, political campaigns often refer to voting movements, by which governments are selected or votes are decided. In contemporary political affairs, the most prestigious political drives are concentrated on general elections to elect the candidates for head of state or head of government, often a president, prime minister and chief minister.

Campaigns are concerned with directing, reinforcing and activating the opinions of the electorate on the issues that has been raised by the political parties. The success of the campaign is known only after when it fulfills the proposed objective of reaching out to the voters effectively. (Prasad: 404, 2003)

The art of political campaigning has undergone drastic changes under the impact of technology. Political campaigning is no longer limited to only persuading the voters to vote for a particular candidate or party it is also about creating awareness among the public on various issues and over a period of time getting them involved in public opinion formations.

The concept of marketing has also pervaded politics. The internet has provided a low-cost platform to the political parties to interact with the public. Internet can be used at any time, for a variety of purposes and has no geographical barrier. The American Presidential elections in 2008 and 2012 have shown the potential of this new medium –the internet to the world. Political parties and candidates are adapting to this medium at a rapid pace all over the world. Even in countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc. the political parties have their websites and are doing things in order to engage the public constantly in discussions. With only 22% of internet penetration in India all the major political parties in India have their website but are also present on the social media like Facebook, twitter etc. The social media offers a platform for short, crisp messages and comments from people; it can also be spread quickly without incurring any extra cost.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Internet is transforming politics all over the world. It has affected the ways in which the party/ candidate campaign or get in touch with citizen, popularize a policy or get support on any issue in a very direct and economical way.

Internet has given birth to "the new liberal citizen". The internet gives personalized result which one wishes for or desires. It is seen as a new revolution which has changed how the world communicates with each other. Glass (1995) calls internet as a byproduct of Department of Defense Advance Research Project Agency. Internet is dubbed as master medium (Selnow, 1998) as it is a hybrid of print, audio and video medium, which offers two way communications.

The early days of web 1.0 takes place from around 1995 to 2005 (Caramani) political communications via web include a role for the state through the establishment of government website .sign up email news bulletins began to appear more widely post-2000, allowing candidates and parties to target their message and to create a continuous and updated flow of information.

With the advent of web2.0 the democracy is returning to its basic form, where the people are free to share their opinion and is increasing political involvement. It is widely believed that Web2.0 is not only changing how people interact with each other but also how they participate in the government. It has turned the campaigning process upside down, from few to many, and more or less has changed the center of control.

The internet quickly transformed the way individual, organization, political institution and government communicates and negotiates political information and political roles. Some researchers feel that internet will change the way in which people interact with others in democratic process while others feel that it simply reinforce political communication.

Gibson and McAllister in their recent study conclude that though internet may not be equalizing people but it is indeed rebalancing the political process whereas on a flip side Norris (2003) is of view that the web has enhanced the power of existing elites and strengthened old political and media structure. Margetts in 2006 argued that internet provides government/political parties with a chance of uplifting and renovating internal organization and their ability to mobilize supporter.

The impact of internet on political campaign can be seen through two theories i.e. normalization theory and equalization theory. According to normalization theory the internet is not going to change the equation in political campaign between the political parties/ leaders. It will rather replicate the offline/ traditional pattern on line. Internet will not change/disturb the equilibrium of power structure. In support of this theory two arguments have been put forwarded. First the parties/ leaders with more budget will have an edge online in term of visibility, thus will reinforce the dominant character on line also (Margolis et al 2003). Secondly the cost of maintaining and building website is rising and only those political parties with big pockets will be able to use ever evolving tools (Margolis et al. 2003). The theory of normalization has been backed by various studies such as in 1996 US presidential election it was concluded by Margolis and colleagues as

"politics as usual", again in 2000 it was found that the online is perfect reflection of off line or real world (Margolis et al. 2003) in same way various other studies in different parts of the world over the time has supported normalization theory. Researcher has also concluded that candidates with greater economic back up have more sophisticated website when compared with smaller parties/candidates thus having an edge (Greer & LaPointe 2003).

Equalization theory has positive views on the effect of internet on the political campaigns. The academicians/ researchers are of the view that with the advent of internet the competition between the different political actors will become more or less equal when compared to off line campaigning. The internet by pass the traditional media barriers and can create a platform to get connected with voters. It not only lowers the cost of campaign but also gives controlling power with gatekeeping (here editor/state) (Coleman & Goetze 2001,). The political actors get more or less equal chance to compete with each other. To support equalization theory several studies have been conducted all over the world. Norris in her cross-national analysis concluded that in European Nations countries the smaller parties were more visible due to internet in contrast to the visibility in traditional media.

Social Media or Web 2.0 blurs the difference between the producer and consumer. Tapscott & Williams 2008 gave four principles for user generated theory.
- ✓ Openness
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Sharing
- ✓ Global thinking

Boyd and Ellison, 2007 defined social media as web based service where users can create a public or semi-public profile, create a list of users they are connected to, and access their own and other users' list of contacts. It can be further divided as following

Social Networking Sites such as Facebook and Twitter, Aggregation Services, Data Mash up, Tracking filtering services, Collaboration tools, Web-based software tools and Crowd sourcing tools (Anderson, 2007).

Social media has not only changed the way in which people connect with each other but also their day to day activities. Over the past few years internet and especially social media has become an important tool in political campaigning. Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Linked in have brought back individual political leader rather than the political party, thus facilitating personalization of political communication. Social media has essentially changed the political campaign as it removes the filter of traditional media. The social media helps campaign to reach much more people than earlier communication strategy which contributed to the fundamental change in human culture.

A number of studies have shown that social media has become one of the major parts of political communication; it has enabled greater interaction between the political party/candidate and voter.

In US presidential type i.e. candidate centered elections, the main focus is on candidate rather than political party, the candidate individually strive for being elected in congress, state legislative or for presidency. In this case social media is

apt for candidates to directly connect with citizens (Enli & Skogerbo 2015)

In party centric election like in India, the party takes central stage. The party is in charge of communication process. The communication strategies are guided by party ideology. However in case of party centric campaigning also the communication is becoming personalized.

Social media (Facebook) are basically used to get information regarding politics; it does not change perception of the users (Andersen and Medaglia, 2009). In fact it has become like embedded form of communication. In the study conducted by Effing et el, 2011 it was found that there is very little effect of social media used and the vote received. Hong and Nadler, 2012 was of view that there is very little co relation between the attention politician get by using social media. In short we can say that there is positive, negative and neutral effect of using social media/internet by the politicians (Hurwitz, 2003).

On one hand researcher is of view that technology has long and effective role to play when one talks about social change, to support their points they give example of printing press, while on other hand some researchers feel that technology doesn't play any role in changing social equation. Rather how and where technology is used is counted. While other sect of researchers feels that technology alone don't have any role rather when there is relationship between the nation's political structure and technological capabilities (Coleman, 1999). Coleman and Spiller, 2009 pointed that effect of technology can be studied only as in context.

III. METHODOLOGY

The websites of the two major state party of Bihar- Janata Dal United and the Bharatiya Janata Party was analyzed. The websites were analyzed for the kind of content they carried as well as their navigation and user-friendliness. The Facebook accounts of these two parties was analyzed for the month of September, October and November 2015 to see what were the kind of content that the leaders were posting and the kind of response (Like, Share and Comment) they received from people. In order to assess the popularity of the Facebook pages the maximum number of likes, maximum comments and maximum shares were taken into account. In addition the minimum likes, minimum comments and minimum shares were also taken into account. The various posts were categorized and put under broad themes and the broad themes of the posts were compared.

IV. ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATIONS

The presence of the political parties on the internet is seen in terms of their party's websites as well as their Facebook page. The Bharatiya Janata Party: The BJP web page used PHP to develop website. The primary menu consists of the following heads: Home, Leadership, Representatives, Organization, Gallery and contact. The primary menu was in the form of dropdown.

Below primary menu there was a picture slider, which contains messages and photograph of prominent BJP leaders of state and central level. As we scroll down slider we found two heads as state leaders and gallery. State leader contained photographs and details of Sushil Kumar Modi, MangalPandey, and Nand Kishore Yadav. The gallery section contained the photographs of different events held in state. Further down we saw a section of press releases. The right side of website contains video; join BJP, sign up for newsletter and upcoming events. The website had five video which are of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President Mr. Amit Shah.

The mast head of website contained link to official twitter and facebook account of BJP and an option to like Bihar BJP's facebook page. At the bottom of the page, link to BJP central website, Narendra Modi's website, BJP President Website, State President website and Contact were available. The prominent color used in website was saffron.

V. JANTA DAL UNITED

The JDU official website was not functional, in place of it; the party used www.nitishforbihar.com as its website. The website used latest technology to develop its website. The website was in single page format, which is the latest trend in web world.

The primary menu consisted following head: Home, Leadership, Campaign, Post, Resources and contact. When we clicked on primary menu secondary menu option dropped down from primary menu.

The mast head contained link to social media such as instagram, Whatsapp, iTunes and android apps and a search option. Just below it we found Facebook, twitter, YouTube, Goolge plus and linked in links.

Below primary menu there was a picture slider with Nitish Kumar as prominent and only person visible. As we scrolled down we saw options such as नीतीशकुमारकानेतृत्व,बिहार - हमाराविज़न, अपनीबात - आपकेपास.

When we further moved down we saw options in form of slider which had further option such as: Holistic Approach to Healthcare: Bihar 2015, Roads, Bridges, and Easy Connectivity: Bihar 2015, Safety and Security for All: Bihar 2015, e-Governance: Bihar 2015 and Strides in Primary Education: Bihar 2015.

The slider was continued by letter by Nitish Kumar which talked about current status, future plans. Just below this there was a link to YouTube channel, twitter and Facebook page.

The last section of website gave information about numbers of voters, numbers of households, volunteers and number of rallies held. It also gave option to register oneself for getting information and being in touch with party apart from option such as facebook, twitter, google plus, you tube and linked in. The prominent colour used in this website was white and green, which is also the official colour of JDU.

VI. FACEBOOK ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL LEADERS

Every post/tweet was categorized into a category as was found suitable. The coding scheme was developed by the researcher by using clustering approach, creating a new category when needed. The posts were categorized in the following categories:

Greetings: This code describes posts/tweets which send festive greetings, thanks people/ party/ organization for support on particular issues, birth and death anniversary of prominent personalities.

Campaign: A posts/tweet to inform campaigning activity

Criticism: A posts/message generally aired towards opposition to highlight the failure

Appreciation: This code describe posts/tweets which highlighted ones achievement

Cross Media: This code describe posts/tweets which gave links to interview/articles/video on other social media/ media vehicles

Direct Interaction: A posts/tweet directed at specific individual

Information: A posts/ tweet to inform about the upcoming rally, explain one point of view on specific matter.

The election was held in five phase in Bihar from October 12, 16 and 28, to November 1 and 5 2015. The announcement of election was made on 9th September 2015.

All the Facebook posts were categorized into various categories. After categorization the number of likes, comments and shares for each was noted down.

NITISH KUMAR

During the campaign period i.e. 5th September 2015 to 5th November 2015 Nitish Kumar had posted a total of 144 Facebook posts.
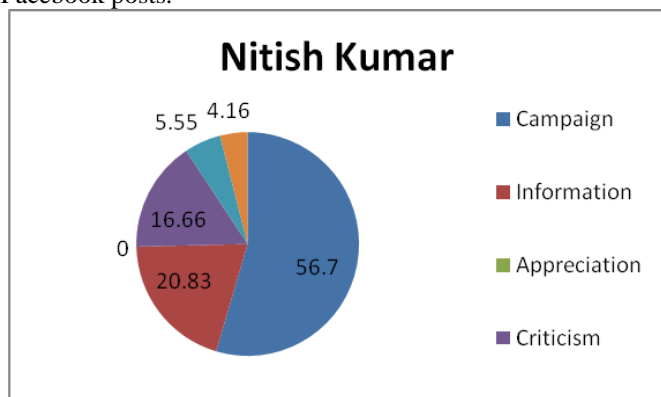

Figure 1

From the above Figure it can be conclude that, out of the total 144 posts by Nitish Kumar 76 posts were related to the campaign, 30 posts fell into information categories, 24 post criticized the opponents, while 8 and 6 post were related to cross media promotion and greeting respectively. No posts were found in the category of Appreciation specifically.

SUSHIL KUMAR MODI

During the campaign period Sushil Kumar Modi posted a total of 148 Facebook Posts
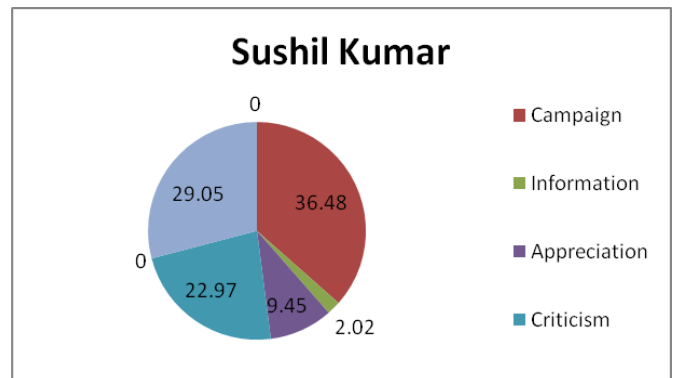

Figure 2

From the above figure it is seen that out of the total 148 posts by Sushil Kumar 36.48% (54) posts were related to the campaign, 2.02% (3) posts fell into information categories, 22.97% (34) posts criticized the opponents whereas 9.45% (14) posts were related to self-appreciating, while29.05% (43) post were related to greeting. There were no posts under the category of cross media promotions

Likes	September	October	November
BJP Maximum	19000	25000	8800
JDU Maximum	97000	9900	22000
BJP Minimum	4100	397	480
JDU Minimum	2000	1000	5400

Table 1

From Table 1, we can see that Likes on Nitish Kumar's post is much greater than likes on Sushil Kumar Modi's post. It is evident that number of follower of Nitish Kumar is more than Sushil Kumar Modi, so Kumar had an edge over Sushil Modi in terms of likes. When we talks about the minimum number of likes on a post, here also JDU Nitish Kumar is ahead of Sushil Modi.

Share	September	October	November
BJP Maximum	2059	7849	440
JDU Maximum	434	3041	1486
BJP Minimum	104	19	72
JDU Minimum	61	63	157

Table 2

From Table 2, we can conclude that Sushil Modi's post has more share than Nitish Kumar's post. The same can't be said for minimum share. Here Sushil Modi is lagging behind Nitish Kumar.

Comment	September	October	November
BJP Maximum	331	1332	487
JDU Maximum	1033	2712	565
BJP Minimum	40	25	30
JDU Minimum	169	140	327

Table 3

From Table 3, we can see that Nitish Kumar's post get more comment when compared to Sushil Modi's post. We can thus conclude that Nitish Kumar's post are more interactive and engage people more efficiently and effectively.

VII. CONCLUSION

The internet as a mass medium had been diversifying with various applications. Facebook was started to link up with acquaintances and friends have now grown into an application which can be used for a variety of purposes. One of the uses of new media has been political communication.

Political parties go online to provide and manage information about themselves, their goals, manifestos, policy proposals and so on. They use the internet for campaigning: to recruit new members and potential voters. The use of social media and internet by political parties has happened all over world but the presidential elections of Barack Obama and Narendra Modi in 2014 gave a big boost to the use of social media by political parties.

The BJP website in Bihar is of much inferior quality when compared to the website of Janata Dal. One thing which one need to keep in mind here is that the Janata dal United official website is nonfunctional; it depends fully on the website specially developed for Nitish Kumar.

Nitish Kumar's website uses latest technology to develop its website and uses both in English and Hindi in its website. This may be to show that JDU still have its root in culture but also shows that they are progressive. The website was updated regularly.

Both Nitish Kumar and Sushil Kumar Modi have large number of follower on Facebook. Nitish Kumar however had edge over Sushil Kumar Modi in number of followers. The number of post by Sushil Kumar Modi is slightly higher than Nitish Kumar, but when it comes to number of likes and comment Nitish Kumar leads. It may be due to reason that Nitish Kumar has more number of followers and the posts of Nitish Kumar are more interactive. Sushil Kumar Modi's post gets more shares on average when compared with Nitish Kumar. Here Sushil Kumar has an upper hand. By sharing a post it means that the follower is not only in in track with the post but also want other people to know that they are in sync with the message and in one or the other way works as opinion influencer for other follower.

On Facebook, Campaign and information post consisted of 38% of the total post posted during the campaign period by Sushil Kumar Modi, whereas Nitish Kumar posted 77% post related to campaign and information. The post of Sushil Kumar talked about the vision of Bihar and gave a glimpse about the on ground campaigns and the support Sushil Kumar was getting from the citizen of Bihar whereas Nitish Kumar differed from Sushil Kumar Modi by sharing the information of upcoming rallies apart from sharing the on ground campaigning.

16.66% of Nitish Kumar post criticized the opposition especially Narendra Modi, where as in case of Sushil Kumar Modi the criticism post was 22.97%. Nitish Kumar's post focused on Narendra Modi. Nitish Kumar did not confine himself with the problem of Bihar rather he was interested in the pan India issue. The reason for this may be since Nitish Kumar was attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he was trying to put across his point that in the regime of Narendra Modi India is not feeling safe, so how will he make Bihar a better place? Nitish Kumar also pointed that Narendra Modi is more in rhetoric than action. Whereas Sushil Kumar was focusing on Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav and was pin pointing about the bad law and order, education , health and other problems in the State.

The other major difference between the post of Nitish Kumar and Sushil Kumar Modi was Nitish Kumar used Facebook to promote his actives on other media vehicles and social media whereas on other hand Sushil Kumar Modi posted 9.4% of post in appreciating the work of BJP and especially Narendra Modi, whereas Nitish Kumar refrained himself from appreciation post.

In light of recent political development in India it can be concluded that the internet and especially social media plays a big role in promoting ideology and projecting a candidate. The 2014 general elections and 2015 election had suggested that internet and especially social media is here to stay. And it has supplemented the convectional mode of campaigning and acts as a reinforcement effect on voters.

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