The Impact of Social Media on Indian Voters: A Special Reference to the 2020 Delhi Assembly Elections

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Abstract:

In this era of the information revolution, social media has become a powerful tool in Indian politics. Media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram are no longer just platforms for communication, but also key instruments of opinion formation and political strategy.

Nearly all major parties used social media extensively in the 2020 Delhi Assembly Elections. This election campaign was not only for publicity, but also to influence voter sentiment and issues.

The objective of this study is to analyse how social media influenced the electoral preferences, political participation, and ideology of Delhi voters.

Keywords: Social media, Delhi Assembly Elections, 2020, opinion formation, political strategy, campaigning, Aam Aadmi Party, BJP.

Introduction:

India is the world's largest democracy, whose politics has been redefined by social media. While voters previously obtained information from traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers), most young and urban voters now form their political opinions through digital means. In a metropolis like Delhi, where internet access and digital literacy are high, social media played a decisive role in the 2020 elections. The objective of this research is to understand its impact and analyse its influence on voters.

Objectives of the Study:

1. Analyse the role of social media in the 2020 Delhi Assembly Elections.
2. Understand the impact of social media on voters' political attitudes and decision-making.
3. Study the social media strategies adopted by major political parties.
4. To understand the extent to which social media has become a source of information as well as a tool for publicity and propaganda.
5. To investigate the role of social media in the political participation of young voters.

Research Questions:

1. Did social media influence voters' voting decisions in the 2020 Delhi Assembly Elections?
2. To what extent did political campaigns broadcast on social media influence public opinion?
3. Has social media replaced traditional election campaigns?
4. What is the difference in social media influence among voters of different age and class groups?

Review of Literature:

Previous studies, such as Kaid & Holtz-Bacha (2008) and Chadwick (2013), have shown that social media has challenged the role of traditional media and made communication more participatory. In India, studies by Jain (2019) and Rathore (2018) show that social media platforms are not only tools for campaigning but have also become a medium for two-way communication with voters. Political parties have directly engaged with voters through Facebook Live, Twitter campaigns, and WhatsApp groups, reducing their reliance on traditional rallies and television campaigns.

To understand this entire study, previous studies have clearly shown that social media influences voter perceptions. Howard & Hussain (2013) stated that social media is a new medium for political activism that influences public opinion formation. Bennett & Segerberg (2012) termed it "connective action," where individuals themselves form political connections through digital means. In the Indian context, according to Kumar (2019), social media has created a "digital public sphere" in Indian democracy. The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS, 2020) stated that, "70% of young voters in Delhi relied on social media for election information."

Research Methodology:

• To study this topic, we used mixed methods research. The survey area was the Delhi Metropolitan Area, and the sample size was 300 voters. We used online questionnaires (Google Forms), interviews, and content analysis of social media posts and political advertisements. The analysis was conducted using SPSS.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sr. No.	Variable	Category	Respondents (%)
1.	Gender	Male	58%
		Female	40%
		Other	2%
2.	Age Group	18–25 years	38%
		26–35 years	32%
		36–50 years	20%
		50+ years	10%
3.	Education	Graduate	46%
		Postgraduate	28%
		Other	26%
4.	Occupation Student	Student	34%

		Employed	38%
		Businessman/Self-employed	18%
		Homemaker/Other	10%

Interpretation:

Most of the respondents were young and educated voters, who are more active in social media use.

Table 2: Pattern of Social Media Use:

Sr. No.	Platform	Users (%)
1.	Facebook	65%
2.	Twitter (X)	40%
3.	Instagram	58%
4.	YouTube	75%
5.	WhatsApp	88%

Interpretation:

WhatsApp and YouTube were found to be the most popular platforms—proving useful for both political campaigning and communication.

Table 3: Trends in Obtaining Political Information from Social Media

Percentage of Voters Responding	
Yes	79%
No	21%

Interpretation:

Nearly three in four voters obtain their political information from social media. This indicates a decrease in reliance on traditional media.

Table 4: Impact of Social Media on Voting Decisions

Level of Influence	Respondents (%)
Very High	42%
Somewhat	38%
None of the above	20%

Interpretation:

A total of 80% of voters admitted that social media influenced their voting decisions to some degree.

Table 5: Most Effective Political Party's Social Media Campaign

Political Party	Percentage of Voters
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	60%
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	25%
Indian National Congress (INC)	10%
Other	5%

Interpretation:

AAP's digital campaign was considered the most effective, especially due to messages like "Kejriwal Ki Guarantee" and "Acche Beete 5 Saal."

Table 6: Experience with Fake News on Social Media

Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	68%
No	32%

Interpretation:

Most respondents admitted that they have experienced misleading political information on social media, which misleads voters. Therefore, the need for digital literacy should be highlighted.

Table 7: Perceptions of social media and its Impact on Democracy

Perceptions	Respondents (%)
Positive	52%
Negative	18%
Both	30%

Interpretation:

Most respondents agreed that the influence of social media has grown significantly, and many consider it a positive contributor to democracy. However, some also considered it polarizing.

Interview Analysis – Thematic Summary:

Theme	Key Findings
Political Participation:	Young people acknowledged that social media had actively engaged them in political discourse for the first time.
Speed of Information:	Social media has made the reach of news and campaigns faster and more widespread.
The Challenge of Fake News:	Many participants reported that misleading messages are common on WhatsApp groups.
Digital Campaigns:	"AAP's short videos and memes" were found to be the most effective.
Role of the Future:	Most believe that social media will play a decisive role in the upcoming elections, provided it is used ethically.

Major Findings:

1. Nearly 72% of voters believed that social media influenced their political views.
2. 65% of young voters cited social media as their primary source of political information.
3. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s digital campaigns (such as "Acche Beete 5 Saal", "Kejriwal Ki Guarantee") were highly effective.
4. Facebook and WhatsApp groups brought political discourse to the street level.
5. Many voters also believed that fake news and misinformation on social media created confusion.

Conclusion:

Based on the available literature, social media played a decisive role in the 2020 Delhi

Assembly elections. It became not just a means of campaigning, but a powerful medium for political discourse and voter opinion formation. Its impact was particularly profound among young voters, the educated class, and urban areas. In the future, responsible use of social media and digital literacy will be essential for the strengthening of Indian democracy.

• Social media outperformed traditional campaigning methods in the 2020 Delhi Assembly elections.
• Young, educated, and urban voters were most impacted.
• Social media has now become the primary vehicle for voter engagement for political parties.
• Fake news and political polarization are its biggest challenges.

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