Use Of Facebook to Influence Youth Votes in The General Election

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ABSTRACT

Political parties have embraced New Media as an election campaign tactic. The growing popularity of Facebook among young users is the primary cause. The parties employed the New Media election campaign approach to share their political messages to influence the youth. The youth, particularly first-time voters, are thought to be the key to winning elections. This research examines the campaign substance of Facebook posts made to youngsters by national political parties during the 2019 general elections. Various units of analysis, such as the issues raised in the posts, format, and dialogue with the youth, have been studied with the help of a checklist, for this qualitative method has been used. The posts made by the official Facebook accounts of the BJP and the INC in the run-up to the 2019 general elections were studied. Through this, a serious attempt has been made to analyses the quality of political messages shared with the youth. This study also evaluates political parties' election campaigning tendencies on Facebook in the coming general elections.

KEYWORDS: Facebook, General Election, Election Campaigning, BJP, INC

INTRODUCTION

India has nearly 315 million Facebook users, which shows that Facebook has widely spread in India. It is used in advertising, promotion, distribution of information, entertainment, and communication. SNS technology has undergone a revolution as a result. Users discover how to text, share photographs or videos with their buddies. Any post has the opportunity to be shared, commented on, or liked, which makes feedback or dialogue more engaging. Because of the availability of low-cost data plans and smartphones in India, most individuals now have access to the internet. As a result, political parties have attempted to profit from Facebook's rising popularity among young people. The 2014 general elections were significant in campaigning, with the campaign moving away from conventional approaches and becoming high-tech and heated. "During India's 2014 parliamentary general election, all political parties and candidates used social media extensively to mobilize voters" (N. N, 2014). Election campaigning on social media, particularly Facebook, has emerged as a new option for political parties. Much money was invested into New Media for the 2019 general elections, and Facebook became an election battlefield. "The BJP's populist and digital strategy was a major feature in the 2019 election, which was largely a social media app-based election; the Communist Party of India also launched the CPIM Digital Campaign, in which they invited youth volunteers to be a part of their digital platforms." West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress launched new measures to highlight the State Government's accomplishments and demonstrate how federalism is supposedly being destroyed, and the Centre has disadvantaged states. The INC social

media unit has followed the BJP's social media approach of focusing on star campaigner Rahul Gandhi, presenting his commoner character, and portraying the BJP as a pro-corporate and anti-people administration (Sinha, P.,2021). "Politicians use social media as an effective tool of publicity. They are targeting the voters to attract their party candidates. The volunteers of the BJP indulge in conversation with common people and understand their form of mind and attitude, which helped them achieve big success using Electronic Media (Dogra, K.,2021)." This study focused on the content of national political parties' Facebook posts during the 2019 general election. The study examines the issues triggered by national political parties to influence young voters. It also analyzed the trends of future election campaigns of national political parties on Facebook.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

(Stetka, V., & Vochocova, L., 2014) Stated in their study that the 2013 Czech Republic parliamentary elections demonstrated the value of social media as a new tool for political campaigns. They went on to say that all significant political parties utilized Facebook as a platform for communication but that new and "alternative" parties mostly used it to mobilize against the government. As seen by comments and likes, Facebook users responded to political profiles. (Sebastian Stier, A. B.,2018) describe social media as ubiquitous communication channels for candidates during election campaigns. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable candidates to directly reach voters, mobilize supporters, and influence the public agenda. While (Magin, M. P., 2017) researched the effects of Web 2.0 on political campaigns. The study suggests that one advertising strategy cannot be implemented in another nation. Therefore, research on political campaigning should concentrate on the framework circumstances in certain nations at that time rather than the US model of campaigning. Alternatively, (Borah, P.,2016) tried to learn how Facebook was used during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections in the United States. More "likes" and "shares" were given to funny posts on Obama's page. According to the study, users frequently detest lousy advertising. These new forms of media assume a central role in attracting voters, especially the new generation of young adults. Social media helps political parties and candidates more effectively reach a large number of voters in a short amount of time. Unlike traditional media, social media allows politicians to engage with their potential voters actively. Social media allows political parties and candidates to share their beliefs, goals and accomplishments directly with voters, making them feel more directly involved with the campaign. Social media allows candidates to give their supporters a behind-the-scenes view of their campaign and more easily track engagement. These new forms of media also facilitate the collection of news most relevant to crucial target groups (N, N.,2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study focused on the content of national political parties' Facebook posts during the 2019 general election. A qualitative method of data collection has been used. India's oldest national political party, i.e. Indian National Congress, and India's ruling national political party, i.e. Bhartiya Janta Party, were selected as a sample using purposive sampling. A checklist was created based on some set parameters. This was sent to various experts for validation. The checklist was modified according to the feedback. Content analysis of the BJP and the INC's official Facebook accounts (OFA) has been done. Data was collected from the period between 10th March (Starting date of MCC) and 19th May 2019(the last day of polling); Per day 3, Facebook posts on each of the official Facebook accounts of the BJP and the INC were taken as sample size.

DATA ANALYSIS

BJP- Format of the FB posts

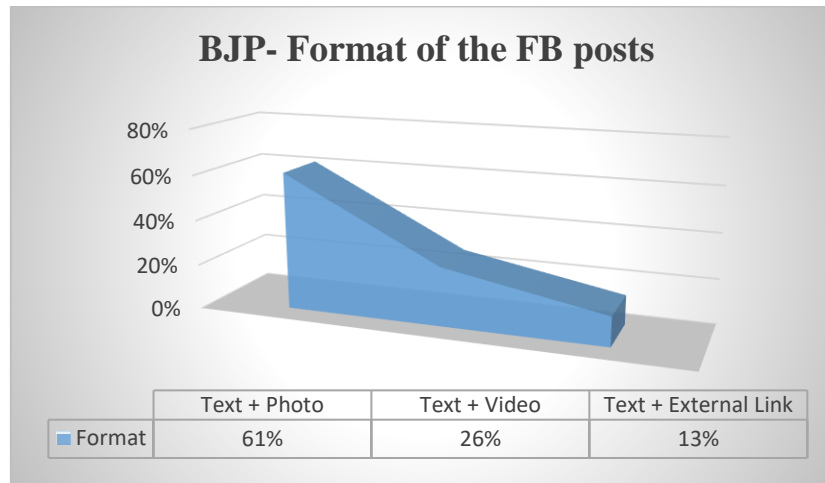|	Text + Photo	Text + Video	Text + External Link
▪ Format	61%	26%	13%

Figure1. BJP- Format of the FB posts

Figure 1 depicts the format of the BJP's Facebook posts during the 2019 general election. 26% of postings were identified in text+ video format, while 13% were found in text + external link type.
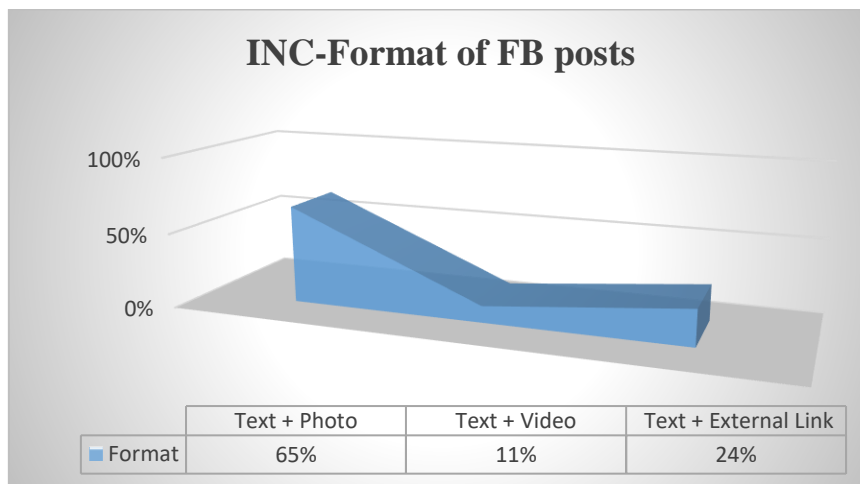
INC-Format of FB posts

	Text + Photo	Text + Video	Text + External Link
▪ Format	65%	11%	24%

Figure 2. INC-Format of FB posts

Regarding the INC, figure 2 shows that 65% of FB postings from the INC's OFA were in text+ photo format, 11% in text+ video format, and 24% in text+ external link format.

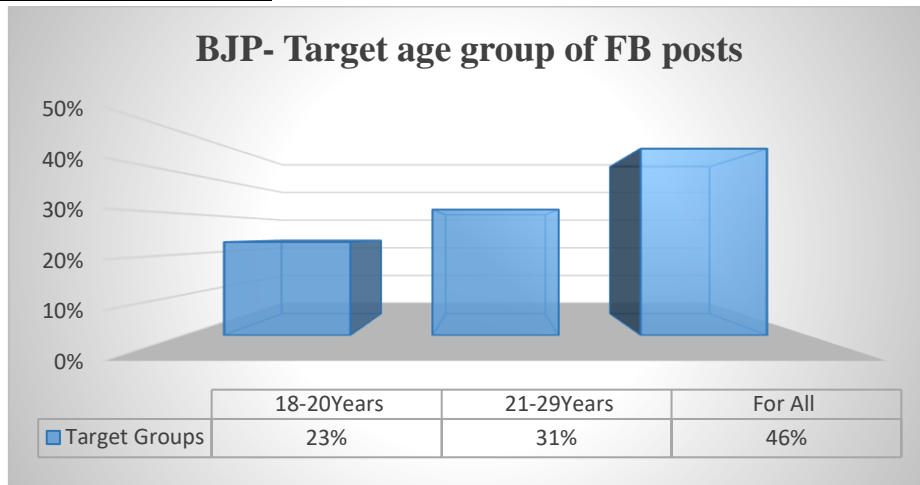**BJP- Target age group of FB posts**

Figure 3. BJP- Target age group of FB posts

The research findings displayed in Figure 3 reveal that 23% of the BJP's OFA posts were directed at voters between the ages of 18 and 20, 31% of the posts were directed at voters between the ages of 21 and 29, and 46% of the posts were directed at all users.

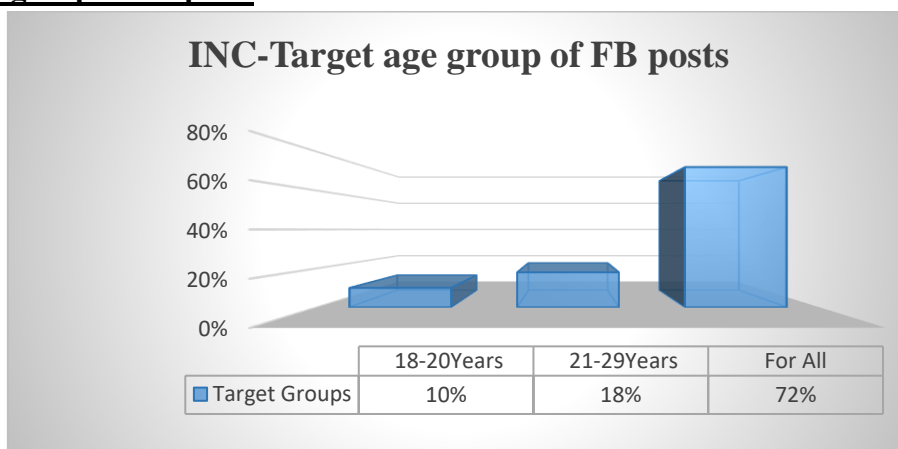**INC-Target age group of FB posts**

Figure 4. INC-Target age group of FB posts

Figure 4 presents the research findings, which indicate that 10% of the INC's OFA posts were directed at voters between the ages of 18 and 20, 18% of the posts were directed at voters between the ages of 21 and 29, and 72% of the posts were directed at all voters.

BJP- Publicity in the FB posts

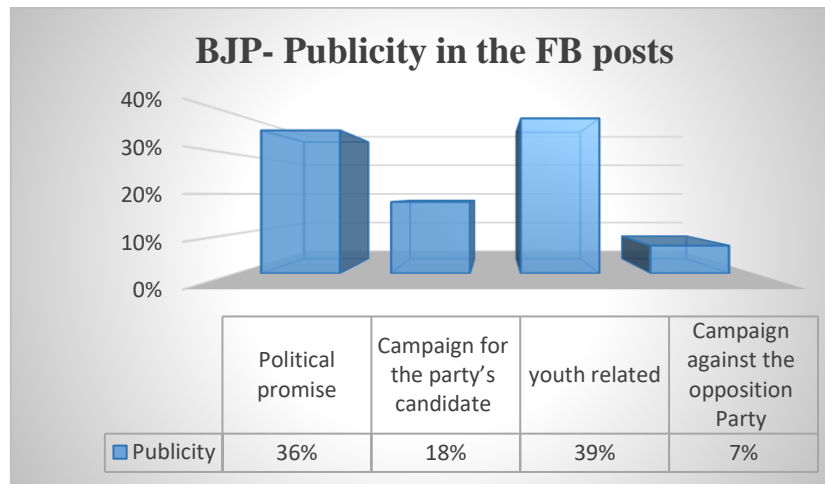|	Political promise	Campaign for the party's candidate	youth related	Campaign against the opposition Party
Publicity	36%	18%	39%	7%

Figure 5. BJP- Publicity in the FB posts

Figure 5. reflects publicity in the BJP's FB posts in the 2019 general election; after the systemic data analysis, it was observed that 36% of posts of the BJP's OFA were from political promises. 18% were related to the campaign for the party's candidate. While 39% of posts were youth related. 7% of posts were related to the campaign against the opposition party.

INC-Publicity in FB posts

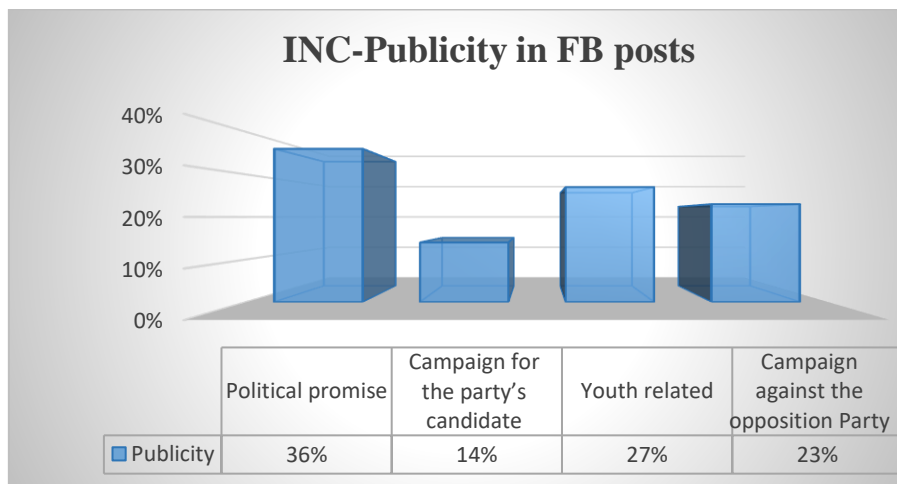|	Political promise	Campaign for the party's candidate	Youth related	Campaign against the opposition Party
Publicity	36%	14%	27%	23%

Figure 6. INC-Publicity in FB posts

Regarding the INC, Figure 6 shows that only 36% of posts from their OFA were based on political promises. 14% of posts were related to the campaign for the party's candidate, 27% were youth-related, and 23% were related to the campaign against the opposition party.

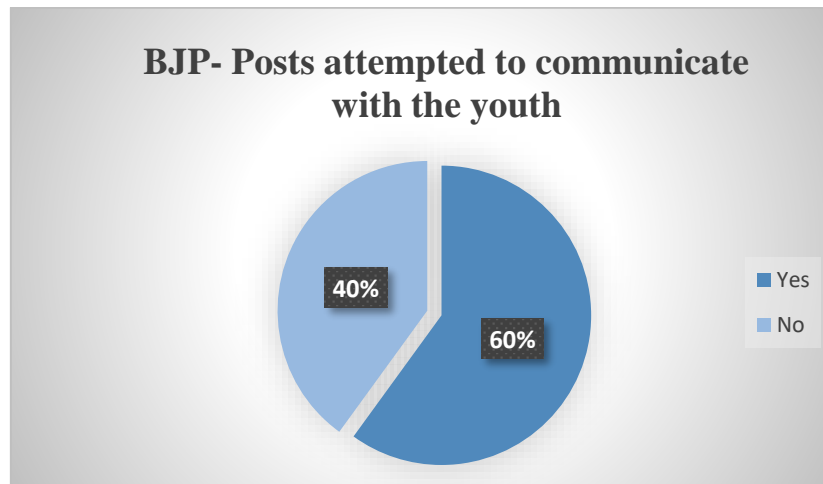**BJP- Posts attempted to communicate with the youth**

Figure 7. BJP- Posts attempted to communicate with the youth

According to the findings, just 60% of the BJP's OFA posts were intended to reach young people. The rest 40% of the posts had no direct communication with the youth.

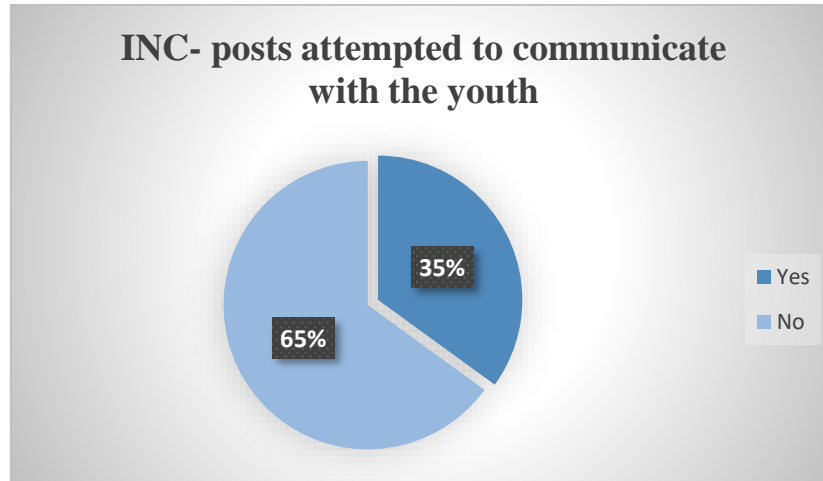**INC- posts attempted to communicate with the youth**

Figure 8. INC- posts attempted to communicate with the youth

Regarding the INC's election campaign-related FB posts, figure 8 shows that only 35% of the INC's OFA posts were targeted to communicate with the youth. The rest, 65%, of the posts had no direct communication with the youth.
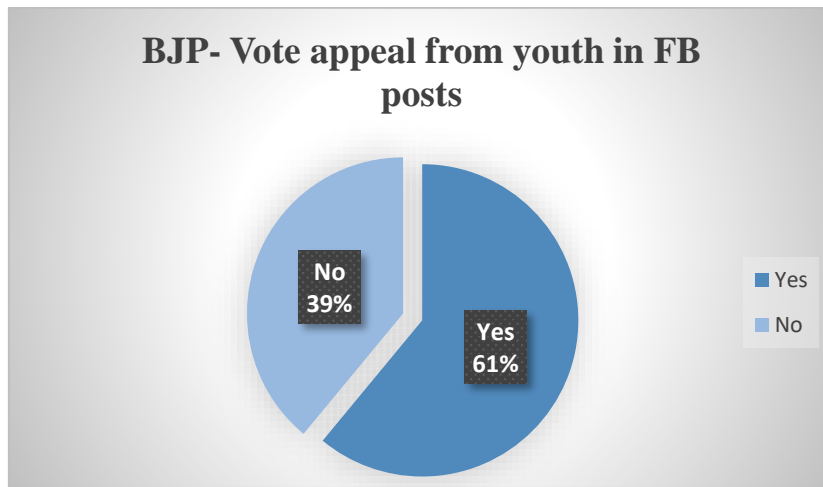
BJP- Vote appeal from youth in FB posts

Figure 9. BJP- Vote appeal from youth in FB posts

Figure 9. shows that 61% of posts of the BJP's OFA; directly appealed to the youth to vote in the party's favour. At the same time, 39% of posts related to vote appealed from all.

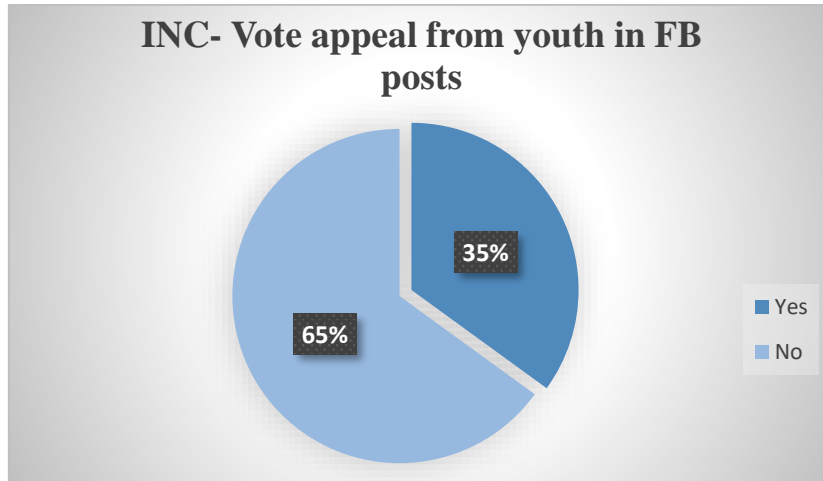## INC- Vote appeal from youth in FB posts

Figure 10. INC- Vote appeal from youth in FB posts

On the other hand, figure 10 INC's OFA was concerned that 35% of posts directly appealed to the youth to vote in the party's favor. At the same time, 65% of posts were related to vote appeals from all.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the national political parties propagated the election campaign in New Media to influence young voters in their support. The study explores that BJP's posts mainly targeted all voters but also focused on 18- 29 year voters, especially first-time voters. It can be inferred that the BJP successfully communicated to the youth. There were mainly four types of posts in the 2019 general election, i.e. political promise, campaign for the party's candidate, youth-related, and campaign against the opposition

party. NPP conducted their election campaign on Facebook on these four critical points. At the same pace, youth issues were also being given priority by NPP through their Facebook posts. Employment and education were the most significant issues of the political parties because these were directly connected to the young voters. The youth was the focal point of all the parties. The biggest reason for the BJP's victory could be that it maintained a constant dialogue to woo young voters in its favor. BJP worked to catch the pulse of the youth. The study inferred that campaigns on Facebook would also be necessary for political parties in the coming general elections. In the upcoming general elections, influencing the youth through Facebook posts will be an essential part of the New Media campaign strategy of the political parties. This study predicts that political parties would use Facebook for their campaign according to the age and interest of voters. This study also suggests that NPP should increase their followers and the intensity of the posts.

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