

Use Of Twitter as A Tool for Political Parties' Election Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Twitter is an excellent social medium for following election events and participating in public debate. Twitter allows individuals to express themselves on crucial national problems in various ways. All political parties used Twitter to interact with voters during the general election campaign in 2019. In such a case, it is critical to understand the impact of the election campaign on Twitter on shaping young people's votes. Qualitative content analysis has been conducted to evaluate the quality of national political parties' tweets during the 2019 general election. For this, tweets from the official Twitter handles of the BJP and the INC during the 2019 general elections were selected using a checklist. A serious attempt was made to understand all units of analysis in the tweets. The present study contributes to understanding the quality of the NPPs' messages. This study also evaluated Twitter's influence on the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

KEYWORDS: Twitter, Election Campaigning, General Election, OTH, INC, BJP

INTRODUCTION

Twitter is a social media tool for making public remarks, networking, quick transmission of information, and promotion. Its ability to transmit in real-time has proven to be an excellent platform for political propaganda. The use of Twitter during political campaigns worldwide has been the focus of numerous studies, demonstrating the extensive use of this platform in political campaigning. Twitter has rapidly emerged as a crucial online platform for political communication because it effectively bridges the gap between the ordinary person and the well-liked, powerful, and influential. In a networked context, it has been proposed that its salient characteristics make it a valuable area for fostering a closer bond between politicians and constituents (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Graham et al., 2013). Twitter is indeed used as a platform for political deliberation. The mere number of tweets reflects voter preferences and comes close to traditional election polls. At the same time, the sentiment on Twitter messages closely corresponds to political programs, candidate profiles, and evidence from the media coverage of the campaign trail (Andranik et al., 2010). Campaigners and politicians have quickly recognised the growing popularity of Twitter and its potential for campaigning and communicating with voters. Moreover, as Twitter is one of the most popular social network platforms among candidates and the general population, it is possible to assess how parties and candidates compare to the general population in terms of their political activity online (Constanza et al., 2019).

BJP, a major party, was most effective in wide-scale digital campaigning during the 2014 general election (Saifuddin Ahmed, 2017). After the 2014 general election, the youngsters highly appreciated the use of New Media by the NPPs. The 2019 general election was not a repetition of 2014 but more than that. Every

single national or regional party in India adopted Twitter for election campaigning because of the reach and speed of spreading messages. Twitter was also the biggest weapon of election campaigns for national political parties in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Twitter has been popular among young people as well. The number of young users has also grown over the period. Tweets were continuously made from the Official Twitter Handles(OTH) of all national political parties (NPPs) to woo the voters. IT cell and New Media cell of national political parties were actively working on it. The team of New Media experts was engaged in profiling and collecting data on voters present on Twitter. Through this, many algorithms were set. Twitter messages were made viral according to the psychology of the voters. The current research examines the content of tweets made by NPPs in the run-up to the 2019 general elections. The present study aims to determine the probability of using Twitter by national political parties to influence the youth in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Twitter recorded 396 million conversations for the Lok Sabha election between January 1 and May 23, and the volume of conversations grew 600% compared to the general elections in 2014. Prime Minister Narendra Modi emerged as the most mentioned political personality throughout the elections, while @BJPIndia was the most mentioned political party on Twitter” (Chaturvedi,2019). When compared to other social networks, the Twittersverse shows several subtle variations. Images were equally probable to provoke an assault, although they were somewhat more partisan and less emotionally expressive. Furthermore, portrayals of candidates on Twitter used less male stereotyping than those on other social networking platforms. As a result, photos on Twitter were more likely to make calm, reasonable attacks on candidates possible for consumption by news media members. The 2016 election may have been the "Twitter" election. It aided lesser-known contenders in gaining traction. It helped in vaulting one (Sander) from relative obscurity to almost winning his newly adopted party's nomination, and it aided in taking another (Trump) to the presidency (Christopher et al., 2018). Regarding theory, technique, and data types analysed, studies on Twitter and political communication during elections are somewhat different. Researchers must be inspired by bridging theoretical borders and using theories and discoveries from several scientific areas. (Vergeer,2015). (Ussama Yaquba, S.A.,2017) discovered that users produced small genuine content and that Twitter was mainly utilised for retweeting thoughts already out there, with minimal interaction between users. The discovery that emotion and themes discussed on Twitter may serve as an appropriate proxy for public opinion and crucial election-related events was also noteworthy. Furthermore, we discovered that Donald Trump's campaign messaging was more upbeat than Hillary Clinton's, and it received more excellent feedback from Twitter users when it was mentioned.

METHODOLOGY

The main emphasis of this study was the content of tweets made by NPPs during the 2019 GE. Data was gathered using a qualitative technique. The BJP and the INC were chosen as a sample through purposive sampling. Based on a few predetermined criteria, a checklist was established. For validation, this was transmitted to several specialists. The checklist has been modified in response to the comments. Content analysis of the official Twitter handle (OTH) of the BJP and the INC has been conducted. Data was gathered from 3 tweets daily on each of the OTH of the BJP and the INC between 10th March (the start date of MCC) and 19th May 2019 (the last day of voting).

DATA ANALYSIS

Item 1. A. BJP-Target age group of the tweets

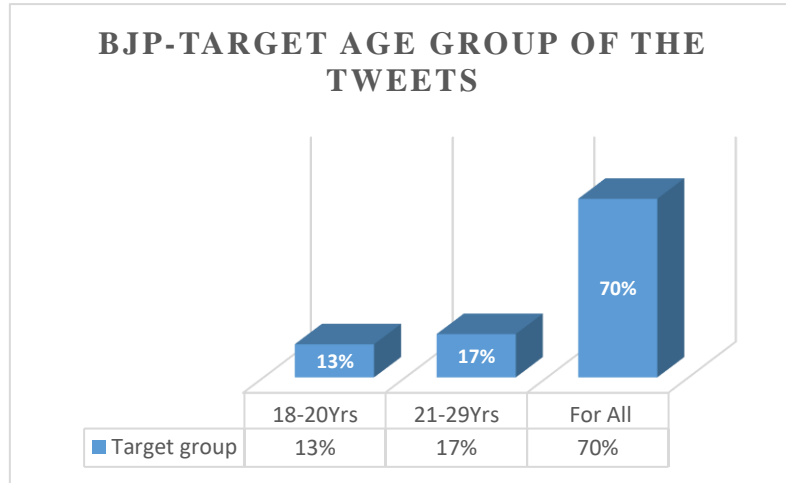


Figure 1. BJP-Target age group of the tweets

The first parameter of the content analysis was to find out the target groups of NPPs’ tweets during the 2019 GE. Figure 1 shows that 13% of tweets from the BJP’s OTH were targeted at 18 to 20 years, 17% were targeted for the age group of 21 to 29 years, and 70% were targeted at all users.

Item 1. B. INC-Target age group of the tweets

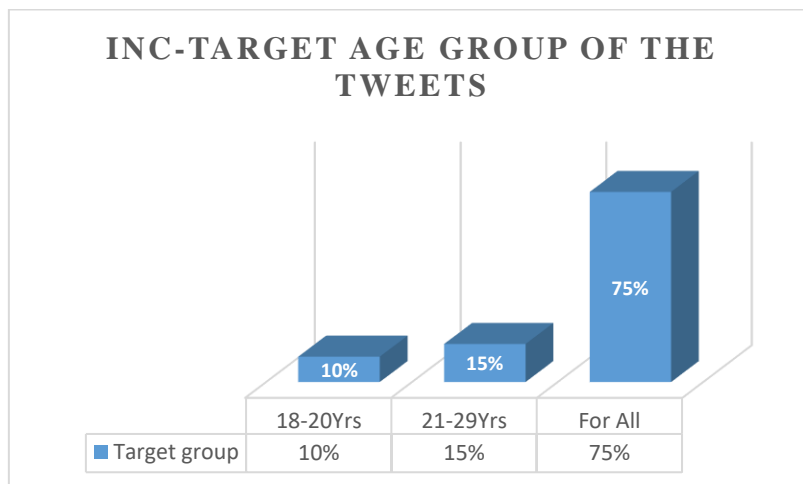


Figure 2. INC- Target age group of the tweets

According to Figure 2, the study came out with the fact that 10% of tweets from the OTH of the INC were targeted at the age group of 18 to 20 years, while 15% of tweets were targeted at the age group of 21 to 29 years, on the other hand, 75% tweets were targeted to all users.

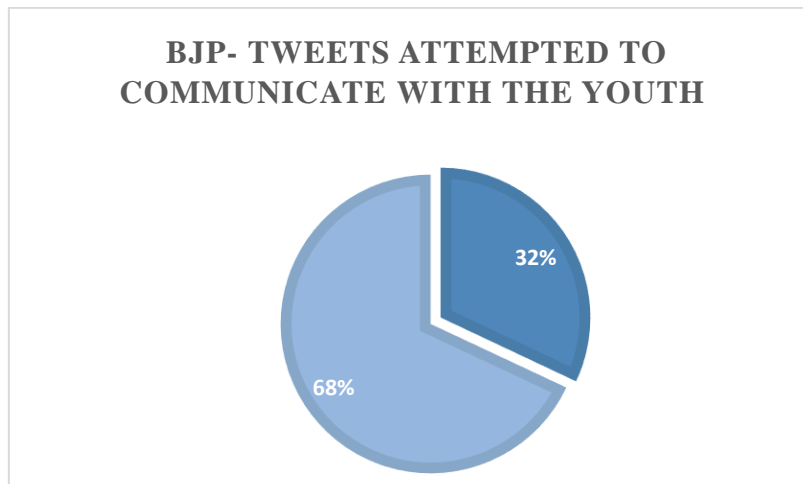
Item 2. A. BJP- Tweets attempted to communicate with the youth

Figure 3. BJP- Tweets attempted to communicate with the youth

Figure 3 projects that only 32% of the BJP's tweets were targeted to communicate with the youth. The rest 68% of tweets had no direct communication with the youth.

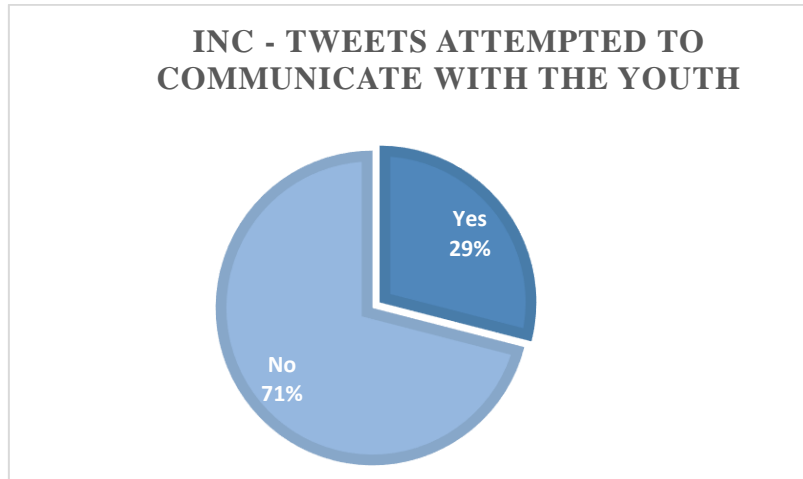
Item 2. B. INC - Tweets attempted to communicate with the youth

Figure 4. INC - Tweets attempted to communicate with the youth

Figure 4 reveals that only 29% of the INC's tweets were targeted to communicate with the youth, and 71% had no direct communication.

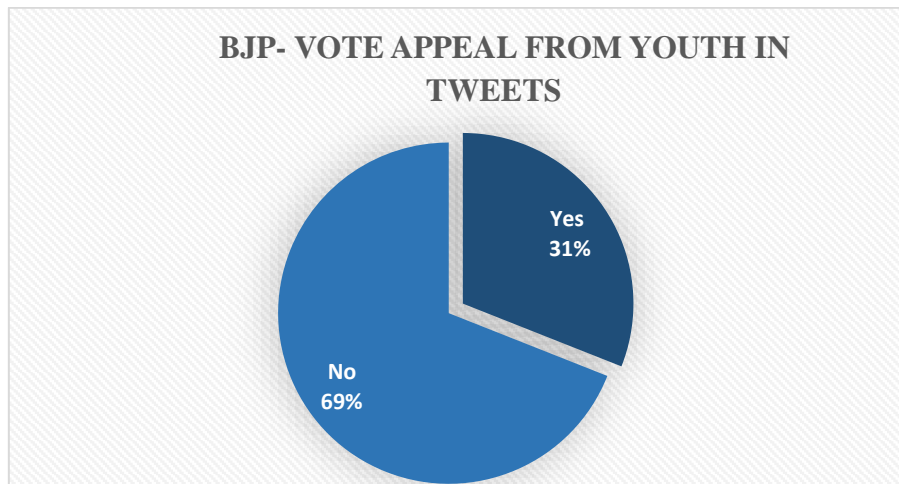
Item 3. A. BJP- Vote appeal from youth in tweets

Figure 5 BJP- Vote appeal from youth in tweets

Figure 5 reflects the status of BJP's vote-appealing tweets to the young voters. This research found that as far as the BJP's tweets were concerned, 31% of tweets tried directly appealing to the youth to vote in the party's favor. While 69% of tweets were for all.

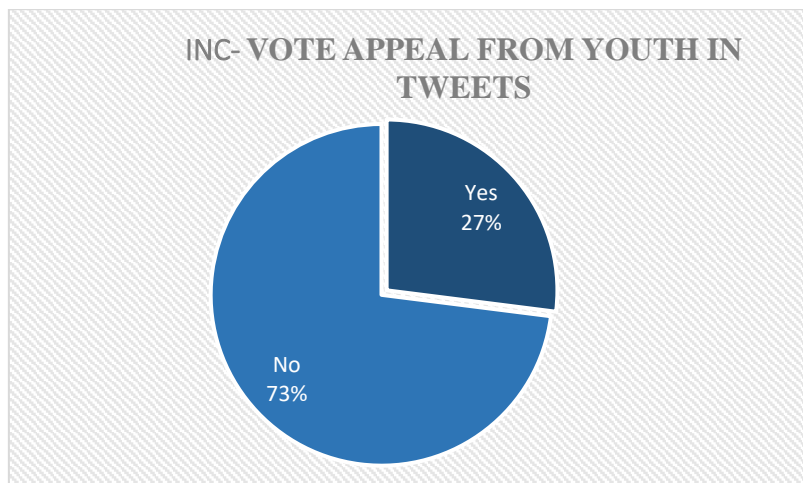
Item 3.B. INC- Vote appeal from youth in tweets

Figure 6. INC- Vote appeal from youth in tweets

Regarding the INC's tweets, figure 6 says that 27% of tweets tried to directly appeal to the youth to vote in their favor. In contrast, 73% of tweets were related to all.

Item 4.A. BJP-Youth issues raised in tweets

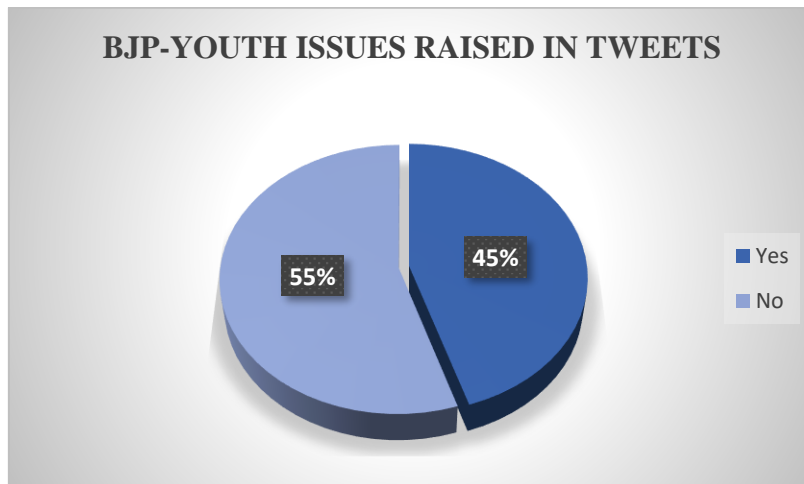


Figure 7. BJP-Youth issues raised in tweets

Figure 7 shows that 45% of tweets from the BJP’s OTH were related to youth issues, and 55% were related to all voters.

Item 4.B. INC-Youth issue raised in tweets

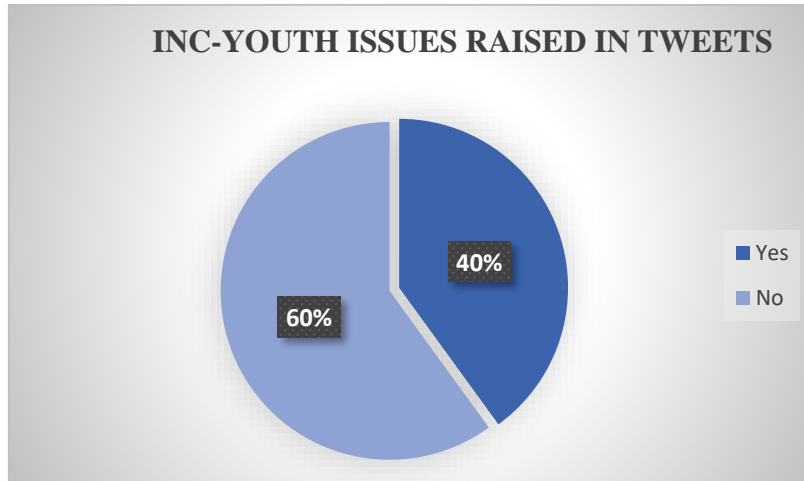


Figure 8. INC-Youth issue raised in tweets

According to the outcomes of the content analysis, figure 8 projects that only 40% of the total tweets of the INC’s OTH were related to youth issues and 60% of tweets were related to all voters.

CONCLUSION

Research describes that both NPPs were mainly focused on all voters. However, first-time voters were also their target. Around 30% of tweets of the BJP's OTH were dedicated to youth, whereas only 25% of the tweets of the INC's OTH were focused on youth. It shows that both NPPs also pushed their efforts to influence young voters. First-time voters are supposed to be eager to vote, but family and friends can influence political understanding and decision-making. At the same time, both parties also directly

appealed to the youth to vote in favor of their party. The BJP tweeted, "All the first-time voters, have you pledged your vote for Modi? "Young people who are voting for the first time are going to vote for Kamal", while the INC appealed through Twitter to save their children from frying Pakoras and votes for Congress for the safety of women. Vote for Congress, vote for you". It can be inferred that all the national political parties tried to attract the youth and seek votes from them, but regarding statistics, the BJP was ahead of all parties. Youth-related issues should be raised significantly for the upcoming general elections. So that the youth can agree with the party's ideology, include more youth-related issues in tweets. Young voters using Twitter should be extensively studied, and data should be prepared.

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