



A Systematic Literature Review On The Influence Of Social Media In Political Communication

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the effect of social media as political communication channel to make party leader more prominent than party itself. To understand the same, we have reviewed literature of different nations across the world from 2000 to 2022, with PRISMA four-phase data flow framework. We have defined specific criteria and search terms to identify the relevant studies which has discussed about influencing factors of social media in political landscape. Once identified, we found out key takeaways from all those studies, in terms of the influence of social media to make party leader more powerful than party itself. We found that in the last 15 years, the influence of social media (especially in large and economically well-off nations) as primary communication channel has grown significantly, and party leaders have gained competitive advantage than party itself, by reaching directly to the followers through social media.

Keywords: Social Media, voter behavior, literature review, election, party leader, political communication

1. Introduction

Political communication has been a popular subject of study in developed Western nations since 1950s (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and Mcphee, 1954; Oliver and Blake, 1946). According to Henneberg (1996, p. 777), political communication wants to “establish, maintain and enhance long-term voter relationships at a profit for society and political parties, so that the objectives of the individual political actors and organizations involved are met”. Political communication is combination of politics, marketing, and campaign messaging; and examines political parties and voter behaviour (Scammell, 1999: 718). At a macroscopic level, political communication can be inspected vis-à-vis two major areas – political party/candidate and their interaction with voters. Voter behaviour has been studied through the lens of consumer behaviour (Newman and Sheth, 1984). In a similar way, political parties along with their candidates and party policies combined, have been studied as a political brand (Reeves, de Chernatony, and Carrigan 2006). There are different marketing or communication medium that can affect a voter’s preference while selecting a political party. Effect of these mediums vary significantly in terms of different socio-economic strata, regions, cultures, economies, age, gender; and no specific marketing or campaign channel contribute towards determining the election results (O’Shaughnessy and Henneberg, 2009). So, political parties and candidates have started to shift their strategy from engaging in vociferous campaigns before the election to creating a regular and continuous relationship with the voters (Grossman, 2006). Over the years, past studies argue the different concept, factors and communication strategies to understand voter behaviour such as – A) Issues and Policies, Social Imagery, Emotional Perceptions, Candidate Image, Current Events, Personal Events and Epistemic issues (Newman and Sheth, 1985). B) Use of different traditional marketing tools and techniques by political parties and candidates (Kotler and Kotler, 1999; Niffenegger, 1988; Sharma, 1976). C) Role of a candidate’s different traits – intelligence, leadership, honesty, care and experience to win any election (Fridkin and Kenney, 2011). D) Importance of proper messaging during campaign communication (Kahn and Kenney 1999; Westlye 1991). E) Importance of targeted marketing to increase the voter turnout in favour of the candidate or the party (Clinton and Lapinski, 2004) etc.

Till early 2000s, most of these political communication studies were limited to developed Western economies; with USA and UK elections taking the centre stage. Though the above studies mostly cater to the

concept of political communication for developed Western nations, there are limited studies which discussed the about political communication strategies in developing countries, especially in South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and different frameworks to inspect, understand and predict voters' preferences. In recent years, social media has taken an important place in the field of political communication (Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Leclercq et. al., 2016). One of the first examples of social media adoption in political communication can be seen in Barak Obama's political promotion in 2008 (Moufahim & Lim, 2009). During the presidential elections in USA (2008), Obama was the first to introduce Web 2.0 and social media to attract the young voters of USA (French and Smith, 2010). This consistent and continuous social media strategy had helped Obama to become one of the most powerful politicians of his time (Fraser and Dutta, 2009). This kind of brand building exercise demands both credibility of the candidate and control over the campaign messaging (Milewicz and Milewicz, 2014). By envisaging voters as consumers in the branding milieu, the involvement of consumers or voters through different social networks like Facebook, Twitter etc can work as very impactful tools to create a greater bond between the candidates and their followers (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2010). In recent times, politicians and their political parties across the world are using social media to reach the masses (Hong and Nadler, 2012). Technology-driven media is at one end of the spectrum and have been heavily used during national elections by politicians in developed nations. These politicians include Obama, Trump (Ahmad and Yazan, 2018), Boris Johnson (Moore, 2019). Social media was also used by the leaders of the developing countries such as Narendra Modi (Kapoor and Dwibedi, 2015; Rodrigues and Niemann, 2019), Imran Khan (Ashraf, 2013) but there are not many studies to evaluate the impact of the same. However, no review study has yet focused and comprehensively synthesized the findings of past studies which tried to measure social media's influence to make party leader more important component of political brand than party itself.. Therefore, the orientation of this review article is to offer summary literature on the influence of social media on political parties and party leaders. This article includes papers published from 2002–2022 relating to this topic. Specific search terms and study selection are illustrated in the second part to summarize development and current understanding of how social media is influencing voters's political brand selection. This study also identifies the evolving pattern or trend regarding the importance of using social media (by party leaders) to influence the voters, across parts of the world democracies. Finally, this study would highlight a few areas where more research is needed based on the literature review outcome.

2. Literature search and selection

Political communication, as a research subject, has been studied since 1940s. Over the years, with changing economic, social, and political landscape, different methods of political communication have emerged. Before starting of this millennium, studies on political communication were mainly carried out in developed nations like USA, UK and other European countries. In last two decades, researchers have extended their boundaries to developing nations like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other African countries. However, all political communication related literatures are not within the scope of our study as this study mainly focuses on effect of social media in political communication to make political leader more prominent or important than the party itself.. So, there is a need of selected and systematic review of studies to focus on the relevant data and understand the trends in last 15 years in this regard. Objective is to summarize evidence from past studies (across different geographies) reliably and accurately. PRISMA (**Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses**) framework uses a 27 item checklist and four-phase data flow diagram to carry out this literature review systematically. This structured approach of PRISMA is useful for accurate and authentic reporting of a systematic review. We followed the four-phase data flow framework of PRISMA to systematically select literatures in each stage (identification, screening, and eligibility) and finally ended with 74 relevant studies for this article. Through this approach, we have reviewed all the articles and found out key takeaways in terms of the effect of social media in political communication to make party leader more prominent. To start with, we have searched keywords like social media, party leader, voter behavior, election, political communication, political party etc in following databases – SAGE, Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis, Business Source Complete, Scopus, Emerald and Sciencedirect. We have found total 171 studies from above search and we have found additional 126 studies from the reference list of earlier studies.. In total, we have found 297 studies in identification stage of PRISMA four-phase flow diagram. In next Screening phase, 68 duplicates are removed and the number came down to 229. We have put following exclusion criteria in eligibility stage – A) Not related to our study objective, means exclude those studies which do not focus on social media effect on political communication (n = 76) B) No proper study framework used, means that these studies did not follow any proven framework to analyze (n = 31) C) No proper results demonstrated, means no definitive or relevant conclusions are found from the study (n = 11). Total 118 studies are excluded based on above criteria. On remaining 111 studies, we have put following inclusion criteria and that removed another 27 studies – A) Published in peer-reviewed journals or in good conference of political communication discipline (16 articles published in non peer-reviewed or different discipline journals) B) In primary survey method, response bias is addressed (7 articles does not mention about handling bias in survey questionnaire) C) Robust methodology or analogy is described to derive conclusion (Conclusion is under

developed for 4 articles).Based on above inclusion criteria, finally 74 studies are considered in scope for review. Following is the distribution of top reviewed journals of these 74 studies –

Journal Name	#
Journal of Political Marketing	7
American Political Science Review	5
Commonwealth and Comparative Politics	5
Journal of Marketing Management	5
European Journal of Marketing	4
Journal of Brand Management	4
Political Studies	3
Journal of Indian Business Research	2
Journal of Politics	2
The British Journal of Politics and International Relations	2
Party Politics	2
Journal of Communication	2
Critical Studies in Media Communication	2
Economic and Political Weekly	2

3. Influence of Social Media in US Elections

Political communication is complex phenomenon and it has scope to go beyond the traditional trinity factors of political landscape – party, leader and policy (Pich & Newman, 2019). Most of the developed western nations have 2-3 large-party ecosystems. USA predominantly has 2 major parties – Republican and Democratic- and both have different ideologies (Speel, 2000). After observing US elections from 1986 to 2000, Knuckey (2005) mentioned that traditional and conservative voters are the major supporters of the Republican Party and liberals prefer Democratic party; Post 2000s, social media has emerged as one of the factors that can influence a voter's decision to choose a political brand (Hong and Nadler, 2012), and party leaders started gaining prominence through direct communications with their voters from their individual social handles. In the USA, Obama influenced a significant percentage of new voters with his web 2.0 or social media strategy in the 2008 elections (Bligh and Kohles, 2009; Moufahim & Lim, 2009). 2008 elections have witnessed different aspects of politics, culture, economy and technology (Todd and Gawiser 2009). In this article we will review more of technology or internet based communication medium like social media (DiNucci 1999; O'Reilly and Battelle 2004). By December 2006, 22000 corporate social networks were present in Facebook (Smith, 2006). By 2007, social media has already become a medium of user generated content and 21 million members started using Facebook actively, resulting 1.6 billion page view per day (Ellison et al., 2007). With the increasing features of social media, people started getting more attached to it for absorbing and generating content. Internet is used in 2000 and 2004 elections as wells for different campaigns, but in 2008 US election social media became mainstream for any election campaigns. Social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) has been more strategically used by Obama than the Republican candidate, and that strategy has helped Obama to win (Fraser and Dutta 2009). Chris Hughes, cofounder of social networking site Facebook, strategized Obama's social media campaign (Stelter, 2008) in such a way that Obama has gained competitive advantage over opponent candidates not only in initial elections but also in final presidential election. Even Obama was so confident about the influence of social media on voter's mind, he decided to let go public funding, which was first time for a Democratic candidate. His social media team assumed that they would able to collect necessary funds, only by regular interaction and campaigns with their voters through social media (Hasen 2008; Klein et al., 2008). In 2012 election as well, both the party leaders (Barack Obama and Mitt Romney) used their social media game to run campaigns. According to Pearson and O'Connell (2012), in 2012 election, use of social media has become necessity. Between 2008 and 2012 US elections, Twitter users have grown from 3 million to 500 million (SemioCast, 2012) and number of Facebook users crossed 1 billion (Facebook, 2013). 69% of voters mentioned in exit poll that they have been influenced by party leader's social media campaigns and this is a sharp increase from 37% in 2008 election exit poll (Rainie, 2012). Obama, as a party leader, has created his own brand in different social media like Facebook - (www.facebook.com/BarackObama) and Twitter (<http://askobama.twitter.com/>) and that provided him competitive advantage over Romney, who was not as active as Obama to run his campaigns in social media (Serazio, 2014). Obama's 2012 campaign website had 79 third party tracking programs (which are used to show relevant ads to the social media users), while the Romney's social media campaign had 40 tracking programs to show relevant ads to his social media supporters (Singer & Duhigg, 2012). Following a comparison of Barack Obama's and Mitt Romney's Facebook output in the run-up to the 2012 election, Bronstein (2013) concludes that it is easier for party leader (than party itself) to maintain the support of their voters through social media interaction. While Democratic party has centralized its power under party leader to share campaign generated social posts and that helped increase of supporter base, Republican party was uncertain in their social media messaging strategy to back Romney as core of their political brand identity

(Mitchell & Rosentiel, 2012). Similarly, Donald Trump's persona as party leader has overshadowed the impact of the Republican party on many voters ((Ahmad and Yazan, 2018) through his continuous campaigns in social media in 2016 US election. On the election day, Trump (party leader of republican party) has overtaken Clinton (party leader of democratic) in terms of number of tweets. Trump has sent 30,000 tweets while Clinton has only sent 10,000 tweets (Baumgartner and Towner, 2017). 68% of American adults started consuming news from social media (Matsa and Shearer, 2018) and this population is more loyal to party leader like Trump irrespective of party ideologies. Trump has gone a step forward to establish his party leader brand by tweeting extremely uncivil and impulsive messages about islamophobia, xenophobia, racism and sexism (Ott, 2017) and that attracted huge number of youth as his supporter base. Trump himself acknowledged the importance of social media for rising popularity of his individual party leadership brand (Chen, 2019). According to Rahyadi & Aras (2020), Trump has used social media for targeted communication to win 2016 presidential election. For 2020 election, Democratic party and their presidential candidate Joe Biden gradually understood the importance of establishing party leadership brand through social media communication. According to Li (2020), initially Biden's social media communications did not seem engaging, but gradually it showed an alarming upward trend. As of 2021, USA has largest twitter users (70 million) of the world and Biden has used this medium significantly to reach out to the voters directly (Brian Dean, 2021).

4. Influence of Social Media in UK based Elections

In another developed western country UK, there are multiple parties, but mostly it is a two-party system. UK has two major parties – Labour party and Conservative party and both the parties have loyal and large follower base since many years (Clarke et. al.,1993). Apart from these parties, few other parties like Liberal Democrats party also has some loyal follower bases (Lebo and Young, 2009) but those numbers are few. Before the advent of social media, party leadership did not have channels to establish primary communications with voters but it was considered one of the factors of party support (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Bean & Mughan, 1989). Since 1990s, personal communication through electronic media gained prominence and Tony Blair started establishing party leadership brand by communicating directly with his voters through mass media (Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley,1998; Cho and Endersby, 2003) at the start of his career and eventually shifted to social media communications to influence voters (Scammell, 2007). Scammell (2007) mentioned about the series of simultaneous activities by the Labour party (party brand) and Tony Blair (leadership brand) to rebrand the overall political brand, but there is not much mention about social media to influence voters. UK's next prime minister Gordon Brown and Labour party also did not pay much importance to social media communication (Nock, 2011) and mostly focussed on the basic economic and health policies to influence voters. In next election, social media and digital campaign around Brexit becomes prominent and David Cameron has used both social media and television media extensively to increase the effectiveness of direct communication with his voters (Craig, 2016). However, multiple television programmes where Cameron came face to face with public to communicate directly, have influenced voters significantly along with digital and social campaigns around Brexit (Lunt, 2019). After Cameron, Conservative party started using social media platforms significantly to promote Theresa May's personality as PM candidate (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020), but May herself was not able to connect or communicate with her voters through social media and this has been one of the causes of her downfall (PRWeek, 2022). May was against of social media and she considered social media as the platform of extremists (Bienkov, 2018). From 2019 election, scenario has changed as both Boris Johnson and conservative party have used digital and social media extensively and ran multiple campaigns in facebook and twitter to build and motivate their follower base (Moore, 2019). However, during this time, labour party has also increased their presence in social media campaign significantly to influence their voters (Booth & Hern, 2017) but their leader lost the game against Boris Johnson. Before 2019 election, more than half a million people "like" Boris Johnson's facebook page and that is significantly more than all of the other candidates combined (D'Urso, 2019). 2019 UK election can be termed as the only election in UK where party leader (Boris Johnson) has overshadowed party brand through his social media campaigns (Senior et. al., 2021). Though Rishi Sunak (current prime minister) has not come through general election, he has been using social media extensively (even during his finance minister tenureship) to influence voters (Conte, 2021).

5. Influence of Social Media in Few Other Developed Nation's Elections

In the Romanian presidential election of 2009, social media has emerged as one of the leading communication channel of party leaders to influence voters directly as 75% of the Romanians consider that televisions are willing to broadcast anything for increased rating and also 65% of the TV viewers consider that TV manipulates content (Momoc, 2013). Social media users have grown by more than a million over two years, between 2009 and 2011 and politicians or party leaders started using this tool heavily to communicate with their followers by asking them either to vote or to protest against opponent (Momoc, 2013). In 2012, during impeachment of president Traian Basescu, social media has shown its extreme power (Tasente & Nicoleta, 2012). Political leader's direct use of social media as channel of political communication,

contributed decisively to make Klaus Iohannis as president of 2014 general election (Patrut, 2015). For the 2011 Ireland elections, approximately 30000 tweets were analyzed to understand the voter sentiment and build predictive models (Birmingham et.al.,2012) to understand voters' preference and the majority leaned towards party leadership brand than party brand. But not only political leaders, political parties have also started using social networking sites to communicate with young voters (Hogan & Lynch, 2011). Suiter (2015) mentioned that most of the party candidates used facebook and twitter to mobilize and engage with voters and that has significant effect on the election outcome. For the 2013 Italy elections, a similar analysis was done from the tweets of Italian voters (Coletto et.al., 2015). Italy, a multi-party democracy, has always been influenced by leadership brand more and the study findings were no exception. Over the years, use of social media as political communication has increased significantly and in 2022 general election of Italy, daily number of social media posts (in previous 4 months of election) by political leaders have seen a significant increasing trend in comparison to previous elections (Pieri & Liu, 2023). Sang and Bos (2012) tried to predict the 2011 dutch elections from Twitter, but no dominant factor, between party leadership and party brand, has come out as the study's outcome. But unlike other countries, in Netherlands, political parties have significant influence on voters through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter (Spierings & Jacobs, 2018). Steible (2022) mentioned that in France, Emmanuel Macron had created his own leadership brand through continuous and direct interaction with his followers through social media. He has put specific agenda driven posts in social media to make France the driving force of European integration and associated that agenda with his own political leadership brand. According to Grimmer and Grube (2017), in Australia major parties have started losing their followers and new populist parties are emerging due to their consistent social media presence and campaign. In Japan, the single-party system was abolished in 1994 and new parties (with new party ideologies and policies) took centre stage. However, from 2014, Shinzo Abe (Party leader brand) started using social media to communicate directly with voters and hence started the trend to make party leaders more significant (Schafer et al., 2017). In Canada, social media has played a significant role in creating the positive image of their prime minister Justing Trudeau, but that did not affect significantly in election outcome as voters still emphasize more on party policies than individual leader characteristics (McGregor et. Al., 2021). In Singapore, both parties and party leaders communicate through social media but those are mostly information driven and not propaganda driven (Tan, 2020).

6. Influence of Social Media in India based Elections

In the Indian context, though nationally 2 major parties - Bharatiya Janata Party/BJP and Indian National Congress/INC have been dominated the electoral process for the last 30 years (Cole et al., 2012), there is a significant number of regional parties in India, and some of them with their mammoth influence in their regions, dominate the fate of Indian Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian parliament) election. In the Indian context, as current generation uses social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) heavily, political candidates also prefer to use these platforms (Jain et al., 2017) to increase their visibility. The 2004 Lok Sabha elections in India saw, for the first time, the major use of new media by both national parties (Tekwani and Shetty, 2007) - Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Indian National Congress (INC). In 2009, major candidates from both the parties showed further inclination towards the idea of using the Internet as a platform for political campaigning (Pathak et.al., 2015). 2014 has been a landmark year when Narendra Modi came to power after a decade-old run by the Indian National Congress (Prabhu, 2014). Almost all national and regional political parties used different technological tools to target voters by sending curated content through mobiles and social media (Pathak et al. 2015). India has one of the biggest elections in the world, that includes numerous candidates and political parties seeking votes from approximately a billion citizens. Interestingly, 15 million voters in the age bracket of 18-19 years had voted for the first time in 2019 Lok Sabha election and this age group is assumed to be more technologically equipped than other age groups. The above statistics prove that applying different tools and techniques across all the 542 parliamentary constituencies, by any political party, is a complex phenomenon and hence social media was used extensively (Hall, 2019) by all the parties to disseminate uniform campaign messaging. During the same period, Internet and social media have penetrated the Indian population significantly. In 2015, only 19.13% of total population used social media channels. That number increased significantly to 46.44% in 2019 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/240960/share-of-indian-population-using-social-networks/>). Multiple studies (Hall, 2019; Jain et al. 2017; Kapoor and Dwibedi, 2015) pointed out that political parties used social media to influence a voter's decision regarding their preferred political brand. However, according to Sen (2016), the tremendous rise of BJP as preferred national party post 2014, can be attributed to either Narendra modi's own social media campaign or BJP party's social media campaign around Narendra modi with slogan like "Ab ki bar Modi Sarkar". Social media based approach helped Modi to escalate from regional branding (Gujrat Chief minister) to national level branding as prime minister (Jungherr, 2016). Modi's live conversations through social media networks also influence the young and tech savvy voters significantly (Ghatak & Roy, 2014). Even in 2019 loksabha election, this trend continued and Narendra modi's social media campaigns have significant effect on election outcome (Jain and Ganesh, 2019). Chibber and Verma (2019) mentioned this as an ideological shift of Indian voters, who primarily supported party identity and policy but shifted to the loyal voter base of a party leader, based on his digital and social media campaigns.

7. Influence of Social Media in Few Other Developing Nation's Elections

Among other developing nations, Ashraf (2013) mentioned about Imran Khan's increasing popularity through his social media interactions. His own brand (party leadership brand) is almost synonymous with the political brand, with minimal effect of party brand. According to Behera (2018), Imran Khan has used his popularity in digital and social media to influence voters significantly. In Bangladesh election, both party ideology and party leadership have more or less similar impact (Chowdhury and Naheed, 2019) on voters' minds and social media is yet to have any significant effect on overall election outcome. Among African countries, Zimbabwe voters get more impacted by party ideology and policies (Dendere, 2013) on ground than individual leader's personality and but effect of social media on these two parties' followers is significant (Mwonzora and Xaba, 2020). For Ghana, voters are primarily divided by the policies of two dominant parties – New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress (Adams and Agomor, 2015) and social media has increased the participation of general population in political communication (Dzisah, 2018) but no difference in effect is observed between party leader's and political parties' use in social media. In Zambia, ethnicity and party policies around ethnicity significantly influence voters (Erdmann, 2007), but in recent times social media has become the main channel of political communication (Centre for Media, Data and Society, 2021). South African voters have always given higher importance to party leadership and that was prevalent in 2019 elections (Nyenhuis, 2020). Party leaders have used social media to reach a larger audience, however its effect on overall election outcome is yet to be analyzed (Reddy & Naidoo, 2022). In 2015 and 2019 elections of Nigeria, party brand has dominated as voters were still influenced by two major political parties (Tunmibi and Olatokun, 2020). Though social media had influence in those elections, but mostly party brand is more prominent in those political campaigns (Orji, 2019). After political change in Indonesia in 1998, the impact of party ideology started fading and the politeness of the party leader or candidate became a prominent factor in winning the election (Fuad, 2014). Different social media sites, especially Twitter, in Indonesia since the 2014 and 2019 elections have been used as a communication channel used by political parties to change conventional campaign strategies into virtual campaigns that are more informative, interactive, and participatory (Widayat et. al., 2022).

8. Conclusion

All the above studies discussed the effect of social media in political communication and whether it is making party leader more powerful or not. . Party and leadership are interrelated aspects of political branding (Needham, 2006), and it is difficult to quantify the impact of each of these elements. In this study, we reviewed literature of different nations and different timeframes and tried to find out impact of social media in respect to party leader so that political marketers can design strategies accordingly. Two of the world's most developed nations, USA and UK have two-party systems for the last few decades. In USA, Republican and Democratic parties used to have very loyal followers, and their ideologies, economic policies, healthcare policies and employment policies are pole apart. Unlike Republicans, Democrats have always been liberal and open minded. Naturally, upto 1990s party brand used to be a dominant factor in US elections. In the new millennium, with the advent of social media, party leaders started interacting directly with the voters, shifting loyal party brand voters to leadership brand voters. Based on the above-reviewed studies, Biden, Trump and Obama had more impact on voters than party ideologies or policies, with the help of direct social media communication. Similar to the US, the UK also has two major parties – The Labour and the Conservative party- and both have their loyal follower base. However, starting in 1990s "presidentialization" of UK politics started, aparty leaders or candidates started gaining importance. Based on multiple kinds of literature post-2000, it is evident that both party leadership and party brand significantly influence the voters but effect of social was not as prominent as it is in US. Though Boris Johnson has benefitted extensively from social media campaigns and Rishi Sunak also has very impressive social media supporter base, Gordon Brown, David Cameron or Theresa May have not used social media extensively to win earlier elections. Among other developed nations, the pattern is clear for Japan, Italy, France, Romania, Ireland etc, as in all these nations, party leadership brand becomes prominent with the help of social media communication , though for Italy and Ireland, parties also use social media equally to influence voters. We have done an extensive literature review of one of the largest democracies – India. Based literature of post 2000s, we can see a significant trend change in the influencing factors as it has been shifting from a party brand to a leadership brand with the advent of social media. Though parties have used social media in 2004 and 2009 elections, Narendra Modi has taken social media campaign to a mammoth level in 2014 and 2019 elections to influence young and tech savvy voters. Even BJP party's social media campaign is also focussed around party leader Narendra Modi than party's ideology and policy. For developing, nations we can see a mixed pattern. Pakistan is majorly influenced by Imran Khan's social media communication to a great extent and that caused him a landslide victory in 2018 general election. But, though in Bangladesh social and digital media started gaining prominence in political landscape, it does not have significant effect to promote party leaders over party brand. In African countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nizeria and Zambia, social media has played an important role in election outcome but contrary to USA and India, mostly party brand is reaping benefit more from social media campaigns than party leaders. The purpose of our study was to do an extensive

literature review about the effect of social media in political communication and how that is impacting the power shift among party brand and party leadership brand.. Based on our review, in the last 15 years, the influence of party leaders (especially in large and economically well off nations) has grown significantly on the voters with their direct communication through social media.

9. Future Research Area

Most of the studies, which discussed the impact of social media in political communication, are qualitative and there is a clear gap as no empirical study was conducted, which may help to understand voter behaviour about different factors associated with political parties and party leaders. Also, most of the studies discussed the influence of social media in political communication on a broad level and very few studies tried to find out the influence of sub-factors like followers, language, frequency of post or tweet, presence in any social media platform etc. So there is a clear research gap to find the influence in more granular levels.

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