

Use of Twitter (X) in Election Campaign: Insights from 2024 Indian General Election

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Abstract

Social media has transformed the landscape of political campaigns. Unlike traditional media, social media enables politicians to interact directly with potential voters. The 2024 Indian General Election witnessed a wide use of social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter), to influence the voters. All the political parties and candidates used this platform to reach the voters more directly and easily. This study thus uses qualitative content analysis to investigate the election campaign strategies adopted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) through their official X accounts. The findings indicate that both parties effectively utilized X to strengthen campaign narratives, and connect with voters. The findings of the study emphasize on the increasing role of new media in India's electoral politics and its growing impact on future election campaigning.

Keywords: X, BJP, INC, General Election, Election Campaign

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, television has been a significant force in influencing public opinion in India, particularly during election periods (Jaffrelot & Verniers, 2020; Verma & Sardesai, 2014). But with the digital advancement and use of new technologies, traditional media somehow replaced by new media platforms. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram etc. have gained importance during election campaign. Among these platforms, Twitter has emerged as the most widely used medium for political parties and candidates during election campaigns (Ahmed et al., 2016).

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in India were conducted in seven phases between 19 April and 1 June 2024 to elect 543 representatives to the Lok Sabha. With nearly 960 million eligible voters out of a population of approximately 1.4 billion, the elections witnessed extensive political campaigning across digital platforms (Mogul et al., 2024). Major political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC), actively utilized social media to expand their reach and engage with the electorate. The BJP enhanced its campaign strategy through digital outreach and collaborations with social media

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influencers. Prior to the elections, several senior BJP leaders, including S. Jaishankar, Nitin Gadkari, and Piyush Goyal, participated in interviews with popular YouTubers such as Ranveer Allahabadi and Raj Shamani. Political leaders from different parties adopted diverse social media strategies to influence public opinion and mobilize voter support. Similarly, the INC effectively used platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram to promote its policies and strengthen its connection with voters.

The 2014 Lok Sabha election has often been described as India's first "Twitter election," as Narendra Modi effectively utilised the platform to communicate directly with citizens. Similarly, the 2019 General Election witnessed the extensive use of digital platforms, particularly WhatsApp, for targeted political messaging and voter outreach. Building upon these developments, the 2024 General Election marked a significant evolution in the use of X, which had emerged as one of India's most influential social media platforms for political communication. In 2024 Lok Sabha election also, both parties made extensive use of their official X accounts, along with the personal accounts of prominent leaders, to communicate with voters. Their digital strategies focused on framing political issues, promoting campaign slogans, highlighting achievements and promises, responding to opponents, and mobilising party workers and supporters.

Thus, the present study aims to examine the communication strategies adopted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) on X during the 2024 General Election campaign. Through a content analysis of posts shared by the official party accounts, the study identifies the dominant themes, campaign narratives, and communication techniques employed by both parties. In doing so, it seeks to understand how X functioned as a strategic platform for political campaigning in shaping electoral politics in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pulugurta Chandra Sekhar, in the book *Beyond the Ballot Box: Social Media's Role in Indian Politics*, analyses the growing influence of social media on political communication, public participation, and democratic processes in India. The book discusses the role of digital platforms in election campaigns, grassroots mobilisation, and civic engagement while also addressing challenges such as misinformation, digital manipulation, ethical concerns, and the digital divide. It further explores emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and blockchain, and their potential implications for future political communication. The book provides a comprehensive overview of digital politics in India; however, it adopts a broad perspective and does not offer an empirical analysis of the social media strategies employed by individual political parties during specific elections.

Pratysh Paras Sharma and Tanaya Hazarika, in their article *Social Media and Election Campaigns: An Analysis of the Usage of Twitter during the 2021 Assam Assembly Elections*, examine the role of Twitter in the electoral campaigns of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The study analyses how both parties used Twitter to disseminate campaign messages, create political communities, and engage voters through issue-specific hashtags. The findings indicate that the BJP adopted a more professional and organised digital campaign strategy by effectively utilising analytical tools and data-driven

communication, whereas the INC displayed a comparatively less developed social media strategy due to its relatively recent adoption of digital campaigning. The study demonstrates the growing significance of Twitter in electoral politics but is confined to the Assam Assembly Election of 2021. It does not explore campaign strategies during national elections or examine the broader framing of political narratives on social media, leaving scope for further research.

Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014), in their study "Influence of Social Media on Voting Behaviour," examine the relationship between social media engagement and voter behaviour in the Indian political context. The authors argue that individuals who actively use social media are influenced by the political content they encounter, particularly information related to political leaders and parties, which shapes their voting preferences. The study further suggests that social media contributes to increasing political awareness and encourages citizens to participate in the electoral process. However, the authors emphasize that social media alone cannot significantly influence voter turnout; rather, its effectiveness increases when combined with traditional forms of communication such as television, newspapers, and other news media. While the study establishes the importance of social media in influencing voting behaviour, it primarily focuses on its overall impact and does not analyse the communication strategies or content disseminated by political parties on specific social media platforms. This limitation creates scope for further research on how political parties strategically utilise platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) to influence public opinion and electoral behaviour during the 2024 Indian General Election.

In *Social Media and Everyday Politics*, Tim Highfield (2017) examines how political discussions are integrated into everyday interactions on social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, blogs, Tumblr, and Instagram. He argues that social media blurs the boundaries between the personal and the political, allowing political expression to emerge through ordinary online activities. Drawing on international examples, including the Arab Spring, Occupy, #JeSuisCharlie, #BlackLivesMatter, Everyday Sexism, and #IllRideWithYou, Highfield demonstrates how digital platforms facilitate diverse forms of political participation and public engagement. The book challenges the view that social media is either solely a political tool or merely a space for personal communication, instead presenting it as a medium where both dimensions coexist and interact. Highfield concludes that this convergence has significantly transformed communication practices and provides an important foundation for understanding the role of social media in contemporary political, social, and cultural life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine how the BJP and the INC used their official X accounts during the 2024 election campaign,
2. To compare the campaign strategies of the two parties on the platform,
3. To draw broader conclusions about the growing role of X and social media in India's electoral politics

METHODOLOGY

The study employs content analysis of the official social media accounts of India's two major political parties, namely the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The period selected for analysis extends from 16 March 2024, when the schedule for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections was officially announced, to 19 April 2024, the commencement of the first phase of voting. In addition to primary data obtained through content analysis, secondary sources such as books, journals, magazines, and research articles published in various academic journals have been utilized for the preparation of this paper.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted. A total of 150 twitter posts were analyzed, of which 90 posts were from the BJP and 60 posts were from the Congress party. The election-related content was classified into the following categories:

- Election campaign-related posts, including the use of trending and viral hashtags;
- Attack or Counter attack posts(criticism of opposition leaders,clarification on allegations etc)
- Posts providing regular updates on developmental projects, government initiatives, and public welfare activities;

BJP'S Twitter (X) campaigning in 2024 election

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), established in 1980, has the distinction of being the biggest political party in the world. Currently, it is the leading party in the NDA, which governs India. After notable success in the 2014 and 2019 general elections, because of its active social media use, the party employed strong social media strategies again for the 2024 election. The party recognized the need to keep up with the changing digital landscape, where influencers have a big influence, and emphasized the importance of careful planning and effective execution. To address the growing role of social media, the BJP launched the "Shankhnaad" campaign to improve its state-level social media setup for the 2024 elections. Additionally, it held workshops at both the state and district levels. The BJP emerged as a frontrunner in terms of social media presence and effective campaigning. The party made its debut on X, formerly known as Twitter, in October 2010 and has amassed an impressive following of 22 million subscribers.

The BJP's 2024 election campaign on X (Twitter) was very big, powerful, and focused entirely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The party used popular slogans like "Modi Ka Parivar" (Modi's Family) and "Modi Ki Guarantee" to connect with voters emotionally. The party adopted a hub-and-spoke communication strategy, in which the central @BJP4India account disseminated key campaign messages that were further amplified by state-level party accounts, senior leaders, and digital volunteers. In addition, the party strategically employed high-visibility features, such as 'First View' advertisements, to expand its audience reach and maintain a strong presence across digital media platforms. The party invested significantly in digital advertising to enhance the visibility of its campaign messages and maintain a strong presence across social media platforms during the campaign.

INC'S Twitter (X) campaigning in 2024 election

The Indian National Congress (INC) completely changed its style on X (Twitter) for the 2024 election. The party frequently shared video clips and direct interaction footage of leader Rahul Gandhi engaging with workers, artisans, and citizens to emphasize grassroots connection. Their main messages focused on their election plan called "Nyay Patra," which promised jobs and financial help for women, youth, and farmers. To fight the BJP's large online presence, the Congress team used sharp humor, sarcasm, and popular internet memes to mock the ruling party and share their own ideas quickly. At the same time, the Congress party relied on regular internet users and volunteers to share their posts instead of spending huge amounts of money on ads. They focused on real-life problems like high prices and a lack of jobs to start big debates online and put the government on the defensive. They also worked closely with their alliance partners to make sure all opposition parties were sharing the same message. By adopting a faster and more engaging communication style, the Congress party significantly increased user engagement, receiving millions of likes and reposts, which contributed to a more competitive digital campaign environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

India has the second-largest internet user population in the world, after China, with more than 692 million internet users. Of these, approximately 400 million actively use social media platforms, making digital media an essential channel for political communication. Consequently, platforms such as X have emerged as important tools for political parties and candidates to connect with voters, disseminate campaign messages, and shape public opinion. During the 44-day campaign period leading up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) made extensive use of X to share memes, campaign posts, videos, songs, and other digital content. These platforms enabled both parties to promote their agendas while simultaneously responding to and countering each other's narratives in the online political space.

Comparision of followers of BJP and Congress on X-

<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Followers on X</i>
Bharatiya Janata Party	21.8 million
Indian National Congress	10Million

The data was directly taken from official X handle of BJP and INC, dated April, 2024

Some posts shared by BJP and Congress in their official X accounts during the mentioned time period-



(The figures, screenshots, and campaign posts included in this section are presented solely for academic analysis and do not represent verified facts or the authors' personal views)

Both parties used X (formerly Twitter) to share updates about their day-to-day activities, and these posts can be considered related to development work. During the mentioned time period, both the parties and their leaders mostly posted images of rallies, meetings, public gatherings, and development-related initiatives. Most of what appeared on their official pages centered on comparing their development achievements or showcasing progress made in recent years.

BJP and Indian National Congress (INC) leaders shows two distinct campaign approaches in X during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Congress leaders mainly used their posts to highlight issues such as unemployment, inflation, and economic concerns, while also promoting their election manifesto through hashtags such as #BharatBharosa, #PehliNaukriPakki, and #KisanMSPGuarantee to communicate policy commitments to voters. The BJP strengthened its digital campaign by making extensive use of online advertising on platforms such as Google and Meta, which increased the visibility of its campaign messages. The posts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi frequently included references to cultural traditions, national events, and interactions with spiritual leaders, presenting themes of heritage and national identity. In contrast, Rahul Gandhi's posts focused more on public policy issues, including employment, rising prices, and social welfare, while highlighting the concerns of different sections of society. Modi's online presence came across as polished, symbolic, and carefully produced, while Gandhi went for an informal, approachable style built around direct contact with everyday people. Despite these differences, both leaders used X effectively to communicate with diverse voter groups, promote their campaign messages, and engage in discussions on issues relevant to the 2024 general election.

Kumar et al. (2024), through the CSDS Lokniti study, analysed 798 tweets posted by BJP and Congress spokespersons up to early April 2024. The findings showed that BJP gave almost

equal attention to local (53%) and national (48%) issues, while Congress mainly focused on national issues (86%). The BJP also used consistent campaign hashtags, such as #ModiHaiToMumkinHai, whereas Congress used hashtags less frequently and without a clear pattern. In addition, the BJP invested heavily in digital advertising, publishing 1,111 advertisements compared to only 10 by Congress, with most of its advertisements targeted at Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. As a result, the BJP emerged as the leading digital advertiser by February 2024.

The BJP and the Indian National Congress (INC) adopted distinct yet highly strategic approaches to their campaign communication on X during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The BJP introduced the nationwide #ModiKaParivar ("Modi's Family") campaign, encouraging party leaders and supporters to change their display names on X as a symbolic expression of support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After releasing its election manifesto on 14 April 2024, the party further strengthened its digital campaign by actively promoting the hashtag #ModiKiGuarantee, emphasizing its governance record and electoral promises. In contrast, the INC structured its online campaign around the hashtag #NyayPatra, using it extensively to communicate the key commitments outlined in its manifesto. The party also promoted its principal campaign slogan, #HaathBadlegaHalaat, through regular graphic posts that highlighted promises related to financial assistance, employment opportunities, and social welfare. These contrasting hashtag campaigns illustrate how both parties used X strategically to reinforce their political narratives, increase voter engagement, and enhance the visibility of their campaign messages.

During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP and the INC employed distinct communication strategies on X (formerly Twitter). The BJP's campaign emphasized centralized leadership, a strong party brand, and messages of development and governance through a well-coordinated and professionally managed digital communication strategy. On the other hand, the INC concentrated on grassroots engagement, economic justice, and public welfare, using interactive and citizen-focused content to present an alternative political narrative. While the BJP relied on leadership-oriented messaging to reinforce its political dominance, the INC adopted a participatory approach that highlighted public concerns and everyday experiences. These contrasting strategies demonstrate the growing significance of social media as a platform for political communication, allowing parties to influence public opinion, mobilize supporters, and engage voters through diverse digital campaign techniques.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) utilised their official X accounts during the 2024 Indian General Election. The findings indicate that both parties actively used the platform to communicate with voters, promote campaign activities, publicise slogans and manifestos, and disseminate election-related information. However, their communication strategies differed considerably. The BJP adopted a leader-centric campaign focused on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highlighting government achievements, welfare initiatives, and campaign slogans while maintaining a more active and consistent digital presence. In contrast, the INC employed a more issue-based and coalition-oriented approach, placing greater emphasis on opposition unity, policy

concerns, and criticism of the ruling party. However, both parties made extensive use of social media to establish direct communication with voters throughout the election campaign. They regularly shared memes, videos, photographs, campaign updates, speeches, and other multimedia content to promote their messages, increase public engagement, and strengthen their digital outreach.

The analysis also indicates that X is now not only a social networking platform but also become a strategic tool for political communication, enabling parties to shape campaign narratives, set the public agenda, mobilize voters, and engage with citizens instantly. The findings suggest that social media has become an integral part of modern electoral politics, complementing traditional campaign methods and expanding the reach of political communication. As digital platforms continue to transform the political scenario of the country, all the political parties are increasingly using social media into their election strategies to influence public opinion, strengthen voter outreach, and enhance political participation in democratic processes.

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