Social Media and Political Campaigning in India

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This is a special occasion for me to be able to submit my thesis for the degree of MPhil. This has been a result of a lot of hard work over the last few years. Nevertheless, I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to the people who helped me through this journey.

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Abstract

The concept of personalisation in politics has been well researched, where the candidate as an individual becomes more important to the electorate than the political party or affiliated policies. Personalisation as a concept has always existed in politics but, what is new is the mediation of newer communication technology. Henceforth, the candidate connects directly to the electorate through the new communication and networking technologies.

The electorate was unsatisfied in the past with unidirectional communication through traditional media (TV, newspaper) that did not allow them to ask questions or to share their own opinion. The online social media allowed this interaction, and therefore the political candidates used this available popular space for self-promotion. This research looks at the ways in which online social media has affected the phenomenon of personalisation by studying the 2014 general elections in India. The data was collected through, semi- structured personal interviews with political leaders and their social media strategy team, while also studying their Twitter account feed over a period before the elections in 2014.

The results show that for the first time in the history of Indian general election, political leaders used social media channels such as Twitter successfully towards 'personalisation' in the political campaign. Although, the proportion of active social media users among the voting population was relatively small, this group of voters had significant influence over the opinions of those who were not online, just by the power of information and connectivity. The results of this study will increase the understanding of the effect of social media in political campaigning, and also help new studies in understanding social media as a space, and the strategies that can be used especially by individuals and organisations to reach their target audience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Aim: The purpose of this research was to study the impact of social media on the personalization of campaign strategies in India.

Justification: It is important to explore this area as personalization in a social media age is a relatively new phenomenon. Recent reports in media and politics suggest that social media, especially Twitter has become an important element in political campaign strategy across the world. This new communication platform has been used extensively and successfully, by prominent political leaders across the world, in the process of political campaigning. Presidential systems, where elections are traditionally sought between political leaders and the public, were the early adopters of social media as part of their campaign strategy. The highly personalised election campaigns of President Obama in 2008 and more recently President Trump and their use of social media in the process, has been of great research interest among academicians and practitioners alike. These developments highlight a bigger trend in the role of social media in influencing Politics.

Although, the political leaders in India were fairly late to adopt social media, this trend has reflected on the country's political campaign strategy as well. The general elections of 2014 were the first in India to assimilate social media in mainstream political campaigning. Personalisation was clearly evident in their campaign on various social media platforms. Past research suggest that political campaigning has traditionally been a highly personalised endeavour in an otherwise democratic politics of India. Since the beginning of democratic governance in India in the late 1940s, leaders of charisma, such as Jawahar lal Nehru and Indira Gandhi have dominated Indian politics. Election campaigns have traditionally been revolved leader-centric. Factors like party leader's personal appeal, lineage, dynasty politics

and highly individualised slogans have typically dominated the campaign strategy in India. The purpose of this study was to explore how social media fits into the campaigning logic in a highly personalised parliamentary system in India. The study explores the factors that influence/encourage the usage of social media by political leaders as a campaign strategy and whether social media facilitates promotion of individual leaders over parties and associations.

The 2014 general elections present an excellent context to study a relatively new phenomenon, as this was the first time social media was so extensively integrated into the campaign strategy (Chopra, 2014). Also, Indian demography comprises a majority younger population, where over sixty percent of the population is under age 35 (Census data, 2011), where the widespread availability of low cost smartphones, mobile devices and internet technology have resulted in rapid increase in the number of social media account holders in the country. These changes indicate that the developments in communication technologies and the widespread use of social media have led to a change in the way political parties and politicians communicate with their electorate (Narasimhamurthy, 2014). However, being a comparatively new phenomenon in Indian politics, there has been only limited research focussing on social media's assimilation in the political campaigns, which are traditionally highly candidate/leader centric. This research extends the relatively new line of academic research and understanding that explores the strategic changes social media has brought in politics. Specifically, the contribution to knowledge is in the research domain of the social media and its influence in personalised political campaign strategy. Similar to the rest of the world, with the rapid growth and availability of low cost internet and mobile technology, usage of social media channels such as "Twitter" has massively increased in India.

Research questions: The overarching issues that this research wanted to investigate was the influence of the fast becoming popular and influential social media platform on the democratic processes in India. Specifically, the research question explored the influence of social media, Twitter specifically, on the personalised political campaign strategy in India.

The idea is to understand how and why social media is used by politicians, its reach in the population, what objectives are achieved via social media and how does it allow and facilitate personalisation.

Operationalising the research: In order to address these questions, this study approaches the phenomenon from an empirical qualitative research point of view. To achieve the goals of this study, triangulation research method was chosen. The initial data collection was done through qualitative research methods which included one to one open ended interviews and focus group interviews using semi-structured questionnaire. Focus group interviews were used as an additional source of information to understand the dynamics of the way social media was used in the political campaigning. This helped to bring out contingencies in the use of social media, which was further explored in the interviews with politicians. For confirming the results of qualitative research and to validate the data, quantitative data was gathered from Twitter timelines of the political leaders and their respective parties, by checking frequency of tweets that matched the qualitative outcomes.

Structure: This research has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter briefly introduces the context, significance and the approach taken in this study. Further, it presents a roadmap for the research outlining the thesis structure and contents.

The second chapter discusses the concept of personalisation in politics. It highlights the current state of understanding in research, while explaining the different aspects of personalisation observed in political campaigning. It also outlines the technological changes in media from newspaper, television to present day mediums, such as the social media. Further, it discusses the growth and influence of the social media as an intermediary platform in political campaigning. The next chapter examines these issues in the light of Indian political campaign trends in an attempt to understand the levels of personalisation both traditionally and currently.

The fourth chapter lists out the methodology adopted for this research. While reviewing different methodological approaches, data collection processes, sample type and size, it tries to rationalise the methods used in this research.

The fifth chapter presents an analysis of the research data, while drawing comparisons and similarities with the existing literature. The themes drawn out from different data sources are accessed and discussed to evaluate whether and to what level social media has any significance in political campaign strategy in India.

Finally, the concluding chapter reflects on the findings and presents a summary of the research. The possible theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for further research are also made in this chapter.

Chapter 2: The Personalisation of Politics

Personalisation in politics has been growing in democratic politics across the globe in the last few decades. Individual politicians have been growing in prominence as compared to the party they are affiliated with (Balmas et al., 2014). Heightened media focus on political candidates and leaders is seen as a key indicator of this political personalisation (Grbeša, 2010; Coen, 2015; Bjerling, 2012; Van Aelst et al., 2012; Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014; Karvonen, 2007).

This study focuses on a number of key questions related to the role of social media in the process of personalisation. These include: how political parties and their political leaders react to, or mitigate, the different challenges and opportunities that are created by social media; how, in that process, the focus in political campaigns has shifted towards political leaders, overshadowing their respective parties and party ideology; why leaders are promoted on social media during election campaigning? And, how the public responds to personalized promotion.

The first chapter, therefore, sets out the background to the concept of personalisation in politics and its relationship with the growth of both traditional and social media impacted. In doing so it identifies some of the gaps in existing research and why there is a need for further research.

2.1 The concept of personalisation

The word personalization has different uses according to its context.

In terms of marketing, personalisation refers to targeted marketing where products are marketed through customized promotion to the targeted demography and that marketing is personalized on the basis of the information available i.e. the likes and dislikes of the target customer group (Vesanen, 2007). In politics, personalisation

means personifying i.e. symbolising or representing a quality or idea or, in this case, a political party, in the form of a person. In other words, the leader is projected as the face of the party (Grbesa, 2008), with whom the public can relate at a personal level, which is much like humanising of the abstract (Garzia, 2011). Similar to marketing, personalisation in politics is about attracting the voter (consumer) by presenting a political candidate (product), which suits their taste, with the aim of increasing number of votes (sales) (Schulz et al., 2005). In politics, voters tend to favour politicians who match their own personality characteristics (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004), which means, the voters want to be able to associate themselves with their leaders. According to Bennett (2012) people are increasingly classify their personal politics through personal lifestyle values. Whether buying an environment friendly car, fair trade coffee or choosing a candidate in elections, it is important for an individual to find a match for his own set of values (Bennett 2012). This is synonymous with the basic idea, set out in late 1930s, that voting was similar to consumer decisions and was direct reflection of voter's life conditions (Lazersfeld et al., 1968). The voter's need for association with their leaders is reflected in voting behaviour, which gives personalisation an important strategic space in election campaigning (Garzia, 2011). With personalisation being an important campaign strategy, several approaches and mediums are taken for its application in political campaigning. The different forms in which personalisation is often practised in politics is discussed below.

2.2   Privatisation, celebritisation and individualisation

According to Rahat and Shaefer, political personalisation has become a central theme in political science literature in general and in the research of

political behaviour and political communication in particular (Rahat & Shaefer, 2007). In politics, as Coen (2015) puts it, in 'the age of celebrity politics', personalisation is closely related to privatization, individualisation and celebritization. Here, privatisation stands for an elevated focus on politician's private lives rather than seeing him as an office holder i.e. more focus is put on the politicians as individuals rather than politicians as party members (Coen, 2015; Luengo, 2016). Whereas, individualisation occurs when individual politicians get much more coverage than the political party (Luengo, 2016). Furthermore, with the growing media coverage of politicians, both in terms of privatisation and individualisation, the public or voters eventually begin to see these politicians as 'heroes and villains' which can be termed as celebritization (Coen, 2015). Holtz-Bacha (2004) explains that by referring to matters of their private life, politicians can distract the attention of both media and voters from the difficult to handle issues to softer and more entertaining issues. In a 2002 survey conducted in Germany, it was found that a majority of voters believed that the private lives of politicians is a reflection of how they may perform professionally (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). Also, by shifting focus to private lives, politicians gain a status similar to celebrities making them appear desirable and more human. In short, emotionalizing their campaign (ibid).

According to Bjerling, (2012), personalisation is essentially a multidimensional concept and personification (increased individualization), and privatization (focus on character, personal traits and private matters of the candidate) are different dimensions of personalisation and that each dimension can have their own specific features. He further explains personification as glorifying one person beyond his actual capabilities and that personification 'essentially denotes a trend of individualization' that can be estimated by how frequently the media refers to a party

leader or 'increased party leader concentration'. Personification is when a candidate is identified as not just the face, or the most prominent representative, of his party but as the most significant aspect of the party (Bjerling, 2012). Thus, instead of the candidate being identified with his party, the party gets identified through one candidate. For example, in light of the recent political developments in the United States, one can claim that Trump is the new face Republican, which means the very meaning of Republican Party is reflected and understood through one candidate's persona (New York University, 2016).

Langer (2006) has described the two main dimensions of personalisation in a similar manner using different terms to describe the similar phenomena of individualisation and privatization. She explains personalisation as a concept that consists of two associated but distinct processes namely: 'presidentialization' in which individual politicians become more prominent than the party, policies and other party members; and personality politics similar to that of privatization where the character and personality of leaders become centrally important (Langer, 2006).

Personalisation that is facilitated by media can be understood in two sub categories (Van Aelst et al., 2012). The type of personalisation in which there is increased media focus on political leaders or politicians and their personal characteristics in comparison to the political parties, but the attention is still centred around policy matters is termed as individualization. Whereas, the kind of personalisation in which the focus of media shifts from the politician as the occupier of a public role to politician as a private individual and more attention is given to his private life and personal matters is termed as privatization (Van Aelst et al., 2012).

Karvonen explains the basic theory of personalisation as a notion, in which individual political actors become more prominent at the expense of political parties and collective identities (Karvonen, 2007). Individual politicians or cabinet members become more visible than the party in media and more attention is given to their personal lives rather than their political traits (Van Aelst et al., 2012).

To summarise, personalisation in politics has been classified into two broad categories by most scholars i.e. privatisation and individualisation (see Figure 2.1 below). Although, both put the spotlight on the candidate or leader, there are some basic differences which are unique to each. Figure 2.1 broadly distinguishes between the two phenomenon on the basis of the above debate.

Personalization types

- **Privatization:**
  - a shift in media focus from the politician as occupier of a public role to the politician as a private individual
  - media spotlight on not only leaders' *political* qualities but their *private* qualities as well
  - Candidates willingly expose some of their privacy – private selves, private lives – to advance their political goals
  - a shift in focus from the politician's public life in office to their private life

- **Individualization:**
  - increased media focus on individual political leaders and/or politicians in general at the expense of parties and institutions as collective actors
  - can be estimated by how frequently the media refers to a party leader
  - a shift in focus from political to personal characteristics

Figure 2.1Types of Personalisation

Whilst the concept of individualisation seems fairly straightforward, (leaders overshadowing the party), privatisation, on the other hand, can materialise in several ways. Privatisation can be further elaborated into humanisation, emotionalisation and

celebritisation (Holtz-Bacha, 2004 as seen in Grbeša, 2010). Figure 2.2 below

highlights the characteristics of each:

Privatisation types

Humanisation	Emotionalisation	Celebritisation
• 'Humanisation' is a classic image strategy (Grbesa, 2010) • Politicians try to appear more personable, more like the lay person, closer and familiar to ordinary people. • Visibility of politician's family members to construct human image (Grbesa, 2010). • Seeming closer to ordinary people helps legitimize political position (Holtz-Bacha, 2004).	• 'Emotionalisation' is aimed to generate sympathy and create a bond with voters (Grbesa, 2010) • Emotionalisation of political discourse, can mean that the public sphere begins to eschew political discourse (Lilleker, 2006) • That politician is a rounded, human being, who shares all the emotions with their audience, whether they are real or not, trustworthy or not. (Lilleker, 2006) • Political communication is all about emotional stimulation, or rather that for political communication to fail to stimulate emotions is for that communication to ultimately fail in its goals (Isbell et al., 2013 as seen in Lilleker, 2014).	• 'Celebritisation' depends on both the mass media's need to find new stories to cover and new stars to build, and the politicians' need for new forms of visibility to reach voters. • Celebrity status does not rely on – and it is not necessarily subsequent to – the achievements of a public figure's career (Mazzoni & Ciaglia 2014) • For a politician to be celebritised, it is necessary for him to diversify his communicative platform, becoming accustomed to going public and speaking in different contexts, through different media outlets and to different publics (Mazzoni & Ciaglia 2014). • Politicians want to acquire celebrity status normally reserved for the show business stars, as may make them more attractive to broader audiences.

Figure 2.2: Types of Privatisation

What we gather from the above discussion is that personalisation is a concept that is

manifested in politics in different ways. It can be in the form of individualization,

privatization, emotionalisation, humanisation, celebritisation or any other form that

focuses on a political candidate's private life or professional life over his party,

policies and other party members. Whilst personalisation in politics has several

dimensions through which it functions at different levels according to the degree of

focus on candidates (Kruikemeier, 2014; Van Aelst, Sheafer, Stanyer, 2011; Coen,

2015).

While it may seem confusing to understand personalisation as a whole using several

terminologies, the basic idea of personalisation in politics is 'a general shift in which

collective actors lose in importance compared to individual actors' (Langer as cited

in Bjerling, 2012). This brings us to the question whether personalisation is a new phenomenon and the extent to which it has increased in recent times due to external factors?

2.3   Personalisation in Politics: New or Old?

Wattenberg (1991) describes personalisation as a new phenomenon in politics. Rahat and Shaefer, (2007) while agreeing with Wattenberg's concept, explain that the process of political personalisation directly challenges the basic logic of long existing 'parliamentary system' (where the party is of prime importance and not the candidates). It has been also noted that the leader-centric politics or personalized politics is an established characteristic of presidential style politics while, the parliamentary style governments traditionally demonstrate more focus on the party institutions (Courtney, 1984). It can be deduced that the impact of personalisation has not necessarily been uniform but is dependent to a degree on systemic political features also. Coen (2015) meanwhile whilst giving examples of long standing personalisation in politics, still describes it as a contemporary element of democratic politics. The personalisation strategy has always been an important "media agenda" especially in election campaigns but, there are clear indicators that personalisation and specifically privatization i.e. focus on the private lives of politicians has been expanding significantly over the last two decades (Holtz-bacha, 2004). Thus most agree that whilst personalisation has been in existence since the beginning of politics there has been a clear increase in personalized politics with media acting as one of its key drivers (Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014). Karvonen (2007), for instance, argues political personalisation is anything but new but, he also points out that with the advent of television, the qualities of leaders, became the most

important factor for parties. Hence, charismatic leaders (Bennett, 2012) with huge fan followings may have always existed but what is new is the eclipsing nature that personalisation has adopted over political institutions with the support of new communication and networking technologies. Arguably, as a result, of mediatisation, party ideology has become less important in forming the voter base and for political marketing.

Similarly, Caprara & Zimbardo (2004) point that individualized political choices of voters and the concern of candidates to please the voters by conveying favourable personal image are the two basic reasons for the rise of personalisation in politics. They further list the factors contributing to the process of personalisation, these include: voter's rising educational levels; access to information; the reduced number of diverse political parties; the similarity in political agenda of mainstream parties; the complexity of issues that parties have to deal with in current global era and media advancements like internet and social media. Maarek (2014) explains that personalisation is trending as a political marketing strategy in campaigns because it can effectively target and attract the apolitical voters, undecided voters and new young voters who have very little knowledge and interest in politics. The personalized image of a candidate acts as a motivating factor here and it is easier to convey personal values and "raise sympathy from the voters" than talking about political content and programs (Maarek, 2014, p.18). This trend is described in political marketing as professionalization of political communication that is focused on winning elections by targeting the swing voters and that personalisation is the requirement of professionalization process (Maarek, 2014). Political professionalization is the consequence of social modernisation process which impacts both politics and media relationship (Holtz-Bacha, 2007). This modernisation

process through advancements in internet communication is useful in assimilating the younger and politically disengaged population (Gibson, Lusoli, Ward, 2008). On a different note, speaking of professionalization in politics, Lilleker & Koc-Michalska (2013) propose it to be a strategic approach for appealing the voters through their personality in lieu of their political profile.

Karvonen (2007) also advocates individualization and media to be the contributing factors in personalisation process because people perceive themselves as well as party representatives as individuals first and foremost. He also focuses on media and particularly television to be an important factor in rising personalisation as the "logic of media favours persons over abstract issues and interests". Hence, with advancements in media technologies, personalisation has increased since, people decide their political preference via what the media feeds them, whose major focus is personalities rather that institutions. Similarly, Langer (2010) points out that along with leader's personalities, the media highlights "human stories and personal narratives" related to the leaders because such reportage tends to be more intriguing (p. 61). Due to its capability of being selective about issues that are or are not broadcast, the media influences the criteria on which people judge politicians. Consequently, the issues and the politicians who are given more importance by the media gain more attention by the people (Takens et al. 2015). The social, economic and technological change, overtime, has created a gap between party ideologies and citizen's loyalty which is filled by shifting the focus from party to individual politicians. This is again similar to Bennett's (2012) argument of social fragmentation and technological advancement. From a psychological point of view, as Fog (1999) explains, the reason for media focus on personalities rather than issues is that the audience preference is based on personal identification, and news stories and

political conflicts become much more 'touching and interesting' when it is portrayed as battle between personalities rather than ideologies (Chibnall and Sennett as cited in Fog, 1999). Moreover, party leaders become more important and personalisation becomes even more prominent in the run up to elections when debates, clashes and confrontations among candidates are more frequent. Therefore, the level of media personalisation of politics depends on the events in politics (Takens et al. 2015).

In light of the above, one can reason that personalisation itself is not a new phenomenon. As Coen, (2015) explains, personalised politics was existent even 20 years ago but in contemporary times, media such as, television and internet has "facilitated" the furthering of the personalisation process. What is new, is the mediation of new technologies like social media in election campaigning, which has changed the political campaign strategy into a more personalised one.

2.4   Social media and personalisation in politics

Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and the like. are "highly interactive, mobile and web-based platforms" where individuals "share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content" such as audio, video, images and texts (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kietzmann et al. 2011). Through social media platforms, one individual can directly and personally interact/communicate with "thousands of other people" (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) at any given time. The very nature of social media communication is very personal and an individual's identity is at the core of it (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Social media provides a convenient personal platform for informal communication in politics (Lilleker, Koc-Michalska, 2013; Gibson, Lusoli, Ward, 2008). Since the Obama campaign in 2008, social media has grabbed centre stage in political communication (Chopra, 2014; Vergeer & Hermans,

2013; Van Aelst & Stromback, 2013; Biswas, Ingle, Roy, 2014) as it acted as a benchmark in election campaigning by using social media as a tool to engage biggest number of people possible in the political process (Bode, 2016; Tumasjan et al. 2011). Personalisation in politics goes beyond simply conveying political messages. As Vergeer et al. explains, politicians, through the social networking sites, send out messages that give people insight into their personal and private lives, in the hope of creating a stronger personal bond with people that is beyond the professional one, bringing people psychologically closer to them (Vergeer et al. 2011). Because of its ease of accessibility on various devices, simple and efficient way to connect, it is seen as an efficient tool for political marketing (Olmo & Diaz, 2016). Due to the constant flow of information from various sources on social media, it has the ability to project political information even to a relatively apolitical audience (Biswas, Ingle, Roy, 2014). Such as, a person using Facebook or Twitter will be exposed to political information through posts and retweets of his friends or following on social media, even though he himself does not follow any political group (Maarek, 2014).

Similarly, Boulianne, (2015) argues that social media has the potential to increase political participation among its users as it allows "incidental", or accidental, news exposure without actively seeking it and that it has the potential to improve politics related knowledge among citizens. Dimitrova and Bystrom, (2013) in their study of the caucus elections in the US explain that media, both traditional and online impacts the way the voters learn and participate in politics. They further argue that receiving political information via online sources and exposure to political activity on social media sites like Facebook has "positive impact" on people and it increases their

likelihood of voting. It is a combination of political knowledge and image of a candidate that persuades people to vote (Dimitrova & Bystrom 2013).

While the world of communication technologies like social networks is vast and endless, they also have the ability to create a "small world". This enables people to communicate and engage with large numbers of other distant people and also gives the ability to coproduce content and share with them, and because of it's all embracing power, "social and political networks were…replacing hierarchical social and political institutions" (Bennett, 2012). The new communication technologies allow citizens to share political information and commentary with other citizens breaking the monopoly of "professional communicators" i.e. news organizations and journalists (Moy, Xenos and Hussain 2013 in Bode 2016).

Where the introduction of television allowed the likes of Nixon and Kennedy to draw their audience's focus to body language and personal demeanour along with spoken words (Maddalena, 2016), social media has opened up several more avenues and options for politicians to enhance their communication with their electorate which is evident from the new campaigning methods practiced in contemporary politics, for example, during the Obama campaign (Bode, 2016). Additionally, as Bennett (2012) indicates social fragmentation or decline in the loyalty to formal group identifications such as social class, religion and ideologies and the developments in communication technologies together have given rise to individuation and independence to voters to choose according to personal preferences and values.

As Zaller (1992) puts it, voters judge candidates on the basis of "newly acquired and readily accessible information from the mass media", it can be argued that the personalized nature of social networking platforms has made personalisation more

intense in contemporary politics. This change can also be attributed to the fact that political parties prioritize candidates because apart from the party program, the number of preferential votes a candidate receives is decisive and one of the important factors for winning elections (Vergeer & Hermans, 2013) and social media which is essentially programmed to promote the personal, facilitates this motive. According to Enli and Skogerbo (2013: p.763), "marketing on social media is more personal than mainstream media" and the basic motive for candidates behind using social media has been for promoting themselves and increasing the visibility of their candidacies.

The present-day platforms like Twitter give politicians "personalized profiles similar to those of other famous people which has helped politicians turn into celebrities rather than public servants" (Coen, 2016). It can be assumed that due to the person-centric nature of social media platforms, personalisation has become more obvious today. The postmodern campaign styles (Norris, 200) allow more personalisation of politics as compared to older campaign styles since it incorporates the use of personally managed web platforms such as social networking sites which intensifies candidate or personality centred politics (Vergeer et al., 2011).

Kruikemeier (2014), stresses that the personalisation of politics on social media is not simply the shift of focus from parties to candidates, which is the case with traditional media. Instead, social media and specifically Twitter, "is personalized per definition" since its very layout is person centric as the user of a Twitter account is usually the candidate himself and the content on this platform revolves around the candidate's individual, emotional and private life (Kruikemeier, 2014). In his study, Kruikemeier et al. (2013) find that politicians use Twitter to connect with voters

on emotional level as in more than one third of tweets, politicians are found to be talking about their emotions and about 17 percent of the tweets are about their personal life (Kruikemeier et al., 2013 as cited in Vergeer, 2015).

Arguably, therefore, politicians use Twitter for two main purposes: spreading information about their political activities and also to give away information from their personal day to day life that broadcasts their softer personal side for self-promotion (Golbeck et al., 2010; Santen and Zoonen, 2010). When there is more media focus, such as on Twitter, given to a candidate's private life rather than his party, it can be explained as privatization in politics and when there is more focus on the candidate's emotions and feelings in the media it is emotionalisation (Kruikemeier, 2014).

Further, in comparison to a politician's website, a politician's Twitter account has more impact on a voter because it is more interactive i.e. voters can communicate directly with the politician (Kruikemeier, 2014). Similarly, McAllister (2007) argues that an actual person is much more appealing than a political document or in this case a political website. Moreover, Lee (2013), argues that Twitter directs a voter's attention to individual politicians while minimizing their doubts or disbelief as a voter feels more close to a politician on a human level due to both its interactive and personal nature.

We gather that social media and personalisation go well together because social media enhances the accessibility, impact, reach and most importantly, the focus on a personality and their image. This brings us to the question that if personalisation in politics and social media revolve mainly around personalities and their image, how and why social media is incorporated into political campaign strategy?

2.5   Political leaders and Social Media strategy

The mediatisation of politics leads to an increase in the demand among citizens for politicians to share content related to their public as well as personal lives i.e. the more social media activity a politician shows, the more there is interest among public to know more about that politician (Enli & Skogerbo, 2013). Sharing personal information on social media brought politicians more popularity compared to traditional media, made it easier to reach the young electorate (Gibson, Lusoli, Ward, 2008) and made them seem attractive to journalists (Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2013). In their study of Norwegian politics, Enli & Skogerbo (2013) categorize three basic motives of politicians for using social media in election campaigns: marketing, mobilization and the opportunities for dialogue with voters. Further explaining [they] state that marketing in social media is more personal than mainstream media. The basic motivation here, for using social media is to constantly stay on the minds of the electorate. Along with marketing, politicians use social media for mobilization and to invite the electorate to political events while adding a personal touch (ibid). It is seen as a tool that enhanced the effects of other campaign strategies and coordinate large scale collective actions. Thirdly, politicians considered the use of social media as an easier and effective mode to directly communicate with the voters, engage in dialogues with them, discuss issues and get feedback.

Apart from creating a more personal and direct contact with voters, social media can also prove helpful in creating an effective 'indirect' contact with voters (Norris & Curtice, 2008; Aldrich et al. 2016). The strategy here works on the similar lines as the "two step flow of information" (Norris & Curtice, 2008), where politician or party can target their campaign on influencing the views of activists or socially important

people (influencers) having large following on social media and whose opinion influences their followers. As Aldrich et al. (2016) points out that indirect and mediated contact with voters has great effect on mobilising voters. It is especially effective on younger voters who is more active online and less engaged with political happenings (Aldrich et al., 2016; Gibson, Lusoli, Ward, 2008).

2.6   The power of image

People develop emotional attachment with charismatic leaders and as Edelman (1971), points out, when a leader can connect with his electorate at emotional level, the political perception grows and strengthens among the masses in the leader's favour and they vote for them irrespective of their party (Edelman, 1971). Deriving examples from contemporary democratic electoral campaigns, Kemp et al. (2016) observe that a politician's ability to use social media is essential to gaining voter support as it is an important tool for them to both communicate and manage their public image. One of the factors responsible for personalisation in politics is that the leader is seen as the symbol of a party and the leader's actions, presentation and reputation reflects on the party's image. As Davies & Mian (2008) explain that the image of a leader and the way (s) he is presented to the public affects the reputation of the organization they are associated with. Focussing on voting behaviour, they point out that the elections are entirely "about image not reality" because people vote according to their perception of a leader. Hence, the way a leader is presented to the electorate is of great importance (ibid). Along with the increase in personalisation, with the developments in new media technologies its visibility has also become more common and hence it can be said that

personalisation is discussed more in contemporary politics. In a study on 1988 American presidential elections, Gopoian (1993) mentions the image of a leader can impact voter's decision in such a way that the voters tend to overlook the important policy matters and that their voting choice can be stimulated by a leader's image. Quoting Edelman (1971), Gopoian (1993), further points out that political perception grows and strengthens among the masses and it is capable of "evoking intense hopes and fears and threats and reassurances" i.e. it can generate intense emotions for or against a leader (Edelman, 1971, cited in Gopoian, 1993). Maarek (2014) gives the example of 2012 campaign slogan 'a normal president' by President Francois Hollande where he posed as a common French citizen or their 'mirror image' which was contrary to the flamboyant image of his opponent. By building a trustworthy image that voters can relate to, or consider one of their own, a candidate can easily and positively reach out to voters, especially to those who are undecided about who to vote for (ibid).

According to Davies & Mian (2010), media attention is very important for political leaders for popularity and forming a positive reputation because they are elected solely on the basis of these traits. Voter's exposure to personalized coverage of leaders increases their likelihood of voting for the leader by strengthening their evaluation of the leader (Taken et al. 2015). As Grazia (2011) explain, the voters' criteria of evaluating candidates have been effected by the changing ways in which media presents them. The media plays a crucial role in voter's decision making and "people have come to evaluate politicians" on the basis of personality traits rather than their ideology or issues (Sullivan et al. as cited in Grazia, 2011). It is the personality and personal traits of political leaders that grips a voter's attention and on social media these factors get further enhanced (McAllister, 2016).

Hence, it can be said that a political leaders' image and their perception among their constituents is increasingly a major deciding factor for the victory or loss of his party. Hendricks & Schill (2016) describe personalisation as a mode of political discourse where the personality, personal details and "personal narratives" about the candidates gain importance over "policy discussions" and social media provides them the platform to strategically and consciously present their public and private role and also to get "up, close and personal" with their voters. Social media meets the requirements of political personalisation by enabling politicians to construct a political identity that is both private and public. Although, some academics (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Bennett, 2012; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013) see politician's social media activity as a populist strategy and a distraction from policy debates, personalisation of politics on social media such as selfie images of politicians has a positive impact on otherwise politically disengaged citizens as the politician's image portrayed on social media seems "more human, relaxed with a sense of humour and capable of having a beyond politics life" (Loader et al., 2015). To put it simply, social media communication provides a way of humanizing the relationship between the representative and the represented.

Candidates using social media leave a positive image about their leadership quality and they are perceived as intelligent and efficient by their followers on digital platforms like Facebook (Dimitrova & Brystrom, 2013). According to Enli & Skogerbo (2013) social media usage automatically leads to increased personalisation because social media focuses on individual politicians rather than the political party and it "complements" the personalisation process rather than causing it. For example, by providing individual politicians the ability to individualize the party message, social media aids personalisation. [They] further explain that

traditional campaign styles like "knocking on doors and town hall meetings" were essentially forms of personalisation. Individual politicians have always tried to coin interpersonal interaction with voters but with the advent of social media, the possibility of direct personal communication between voters and politicians has increased and their reach has become a lot broader. Politicians using digital platforms are a new phenomenon but it is a part of personalisation process and not the other way round as "personalisation has a long and rich history with politicians honing their styles to suit the medium of the day" (Loader et al. 2015).

2.7   Power to Voters

The contemporary young citizen is more likely to engage and participate in politics and elections through social networks like Twitter and Facebook rather than through traditional one-way communication systems like newspapers and television which did not give the citizens much chance to engage in politics apart from "occasional vote" (Loader et al., 2015). Campaigning through only traditional media or simply having a party website adds little value as incorporating social media helps engage major segments of the electorate and the youth especially in the emerging democracies (Thomas, 2016). Social media has the ability to strengthen democracy as it gives people the opportunity to put forward their concerns and problems. It also gives citizens the freedom to choose from range of communication mediums like video, blog, text, image or voice in a range of styles which is a reflection of a more "socially diverse political community" (Loader et al. 2015).

Although, social media enables the leaders to easily 'get their message out' or 'market their ideas' it also makes the politicians more accountable and enables the citizens to raise issues concerning them and 'critically assess' the politician's by the

readily available information (Loader et al., 2015). Maarek, (2014) explains that, on one hand, where social media enhances the political communication; it also brings politicians to the edge by heightened possibility of scrutiny. Social media is a platform where the mishaps or mistakes of spread like jungle fire because everyone using a simple smartphone has the power in their hands to relay any and every move of a politician. With numerous hands to broadcast, social media multiplies the number of eyes that view a particular candidate's mishap. Also, voters have become less dependent on journalists and news agencies as information source, which may or may not be biased (Downey & Fenton, 2011).

According to Loader et al. (2015), the younger voter group, which is comparatively more active on social networks, expects their leaders to be experts in their fields and the politician's activity on social networks is seen as a demonstration of their professionalism, efficiency or inefficiency. Another important factor responsible for increasing voter's political engagement on social media is its flexibility and low cost of participation (Kruikemeier, 2014). Political leaders and their followers also use the social media with the intention of facilitating negative impression of an opposition leader (Maarek, 2014) and engaging in politics against their opposition party (Kruikemeier, 2014).

2.8   More Control to Politicians and Safety from Journalistic Criticism

Journalistic criticism or negative media coverage is on par with media's role of a watchdog and it also gives appeal (Ridout & Walter, 2014) and excitement to a story. As messages by the media directly influence the attitudes and opinions of citizens

(Ridout & Walter, 2014) politicians strive to control, counter attack or question negative media coverage. With this respect, social networking sites have enabled politicians to directly engage with the public, diminishing the intervention of journalists as they can now "easily publish their opinions" on platforms like Twitter and stay connected to the people (Vergeer et al. 2011). Therefore, social media platforms give politicians the power to represent themselves in a more personalized and individualized manner and control the messages representing them while cocooning them from journalistic interference and news coverage (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012). Consequently, the possibility to communicate directly through digital communication tools with the audience gives politicians the opportunity to bypass the editing and interpretation by newspaper journalists (Bode, 2016).

Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted the current state of understanding in research, supporting the existence and continuation of personalisation in politics until present day. It also outlines the changes in technology in media from newspaper, television to present day mediums, such as the social media. Further, the growth and influence of the social media, its intermediation as a platform and its use by political leaders, their motivation and strategy was discussed. Finally, the interactive and personalised nature of the medium among others were identified as the factors that facilitate individual political leaders to directly connect to their voters. The next chapter examines these issues in the context of Indian political campaign to try and scope and contextualise this research.

Chapter 3: Leadership and Personalised Politics in the Indian Context

This chapter introduces the current understanding about personalisation in the context of Indian politics. It presents a brief history of the existence of personalised politics in independent India by discussing the larger political parties, most importantly the Nehru-Gandhi family and the Indian National Congress party (INC) which ruled the country almost single- handed for most of the last 70 years. Through this discussion, the presence of personalisation in Indian politics in its two forms individualisation and privatisation emerges. Further, it also briefly elaborates on the dynasty politics, in the light of personalisation, prevalent all over India at regional levels, where generations of regional political families in different parts of India have ruled at state level governments.

Having established the existence of personalisation in Indian politics, the chapter moves on to discuss the importance of the role that social media has played in potentially further personalising election campaigning in recent Indian politics. The chapter highlights how the increase in internet penetration and affordable mobile technology and handset prices, wider and quicker adoptability by the younger generation in India and much younger demography of Indian population led to high popularity of social media in India.

Finally, the chapter also suggests that since personalisation in Indian politics has been a common phenomenon in Indian politics, the new communication medium social media that is interactive and democratic open medium has allowed some politicians who adopted it early to amplify the personalisation process. The

"personal connect" with their voters made possible on social media has made the voters come closer to their favourite politicians. Simply put, it sheds light on the questions, how and why the social media has helped the political leaders in amplifying personalisation in Indian politics.

3.1   Role and Influence of political leaders in Indian Politics

In a debate on personalization, conducted by Insights Active Learning, one of the participants argues, that it looks like the:

> personality of the leader has become more important now than the party or alliance to which he/she belongs. This is the reason why leaders have won with great margin in recent elections; For example, PM Narendra Modi at national level, Chief Minister Arwind Kejriwal, Nitish Kumar etc. at state level" (Insights, 2015).

In theory, personalisation and parliamentary governance should not go well together as Mikael Sala, French political strategist pointed out, parliamentary elections are fought between the party and the people while presidential elections involve a political personality and the people (BBC Newsnight, 2017). In case of India, it is a parliamentary democracy but, both currently and historically, there have been a series of leaders whose election campaign strategies often focussed around their personalities, enjoying cult followings and acquiring an authoritarian style while in governance (Banerjee, 1984).

To understand personalisation in current Indian politics, it is important to first understand what role and influence the political leaders have had in the politics of India over the years since the beginning of democratic India.

3.2   Politics and democracy in India

Mill (1861) and Harrison (1960) argued that democracy is not possible in multi ethnic and multilinguistic societies and yet, the world's largest democracy India which happens to be heterogeneous both ethnically and linguistically, celebrated its seventy years as an independent and democratic nation on 15th August 2016. In these seventy years, India has had sixteen Lok Sabha elections (general elections), choosing fifteen different prime ministers, every time with fresh promises and new goals by its leaders to develop and move the nation forward.

The Indian political system is based on the Westminster model of parliament (Manor, 1994; Brass 1990) with the essential features of democratic majority rule (Mehra & Kueck, 2003). Criticizing the adoption of Westminster model Nehru (1986) identifies Indian constitution, an "amended version of the 1935 Government of India Act" and a result of the conditioned minds of the then leaders who believed that "whatever was British was best" (Nehru 1986, cited in Lijphart, 1996). However, more recent researchers have questioned whether Indian political system is essentially based on the Westminster model (Mehra & Kueck 2003; Lijphart 1996). Lijphart (1996), interprets it as more of a "consociational or power sharing system of politics" (a political system formed by the cooperation of different, especially antagonistic, social groups on the basis of shared power), which advocates the possibility of democracy's survival in heterogeneous societies like India. While Mehra & Kueck (2003) define Indian democracy as a "confusing contradiction" which does not fully match either the Westminster majoritarian democracy model or Lijphart's Consociational system/power sharing theory. Instead, they argue that what seems like the consensual nature of politics in India does not represent the political

institutions, rather it is the "political behaviour of individual political leaders who through negotiations and reconciliations achieve broad consensus and also; it is their capacity to adapt to continually changing situations" that has kept democracy in India functioning since independence (Mehra & Kueck, 2003). Similarly, Pedersen & Knudsen (2005) stress on factors like "trust and willingness" among the ministers towards the leader and a leader's ability to create "team spirit and avoidance of conflict" as essential to the functioning of consensual democracy. The leadership traits mentioned above as essential to consensual democracy were clearly evident in the leadership style of the Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, in the first two decades of democratic India and, therefore, the leadership and key political individuals had great importance during that time (Chatterji, 1988; Kothari, 1964; Lijphart 1996).

The first Prime Minister of India Jawahar lal Nehru of the Congress Party served for almost two decades from 1947 to 1964. During these years, he established a strong hold for the Congress Party and his leadership through developmental populism, which was a much-craved idea of the time as India was left economically and socially very weak after independence (Chatterjee, 1998; Kothari, 1964). Slogans that promised a brighter future that included dams, science, nuclear power, steel mills, equality, entitlement etc. (Dilip menon, 2016, discoversociety.org) created a huge voter base of hopefuls who could not find any better alternative than to have faith in those promises (Chatterjee, 1998; Kothari, 1964). Through adopting the policy of bringing together all classes of the society and 'displaying concern' for them that Congress under Nehru's leadership could establish itself as the sole dominant party of newly independent and democratic India (Chatterjee, 1998). Another important factor in providing Congress with a strong hold over politics in India was

the trust base it had already formed through the crucial role it played in the movement for independence (Kothari, 1964; Mazumdar, 1998; Rongala, 2005).

Nehru also gave special emphasis to a policy of consensus and accommodation of all voices which is seen both as a requirement of the time as well as deliberately pushed agenda. For example, Gudavarthy (2015) explains it as having clear impressions of Gandhian principle of unanimity and that, Nehru did not consider the majoritarian system of democracy effective enough for the country in its developmental phase. A contradictory line of argument, however, describes Nehru's tactics as authoritarian form of leadership, which was deployed through the idea of kinship rather than moral authority (Dilip menon, 2016).

The Nehruvian consensus strategy of taking all voices in consideration and moving forward together while keeping the final authority concentrated on himself, was ultimately targeted towards centralization. Whereas, Indira Gandhi (ex PM- Congress 1966-77 and 1980-84), his successor applied a more direct and authoritative approach in her governance (Gudavarthy, 2015; Malik, 1987). Both Nehru and Indira Gandhi had charismatic personalities. Where Nehru was fondly referred as "Chacha Nehru" (uncle Nehru), his daughter and successor Indira Gandhi was lovingly referred to as Mother India or the Iron Lady of India by her electorate (Gupte, 2012; Khilnani, 1989). But, her "relentless drive for power" and "determination to dominate Indian political life" was much more pronounced compared to her father (Hart, 1976 as cited in Malik 1987). Nehru's modest and consensual Congress Party was recreated by Indira Gandhi into one that functioned on populist and personalistic ideologies (Kohli, 2001). From appointing loyal ministers to dismissing the ones who challenged her, from the poverty alleviation promises to adoption of populist policies

and even the imposition of "National Emergency" to shut down the opposition, Indira Gandhi's strategy remained fiercely focused towards the concentration of power around herself (Kohli, 2001).

While Nehru adopted the "classical political method of accommodating the regional elite" and yet kept the power concentrated to himself, Indira Gandhi's authoritarian policy could not last beyond her and eventually led to the decline in Congress's supremacy (Gudavarthy, 2015; Chaterjee, 2009; Kohli, 2001). The authoritarian nature of Indira's rule and especially the "failure of Emergency" (Gudavarthy, 2015), also created opponents who challenged her personalised policies, eventually leading to a significant rise in a variety of regional political parties across India (Kohli,2001).

Both Nehru and Indira were charismatic leaders and used the power of their personality in influencing the party and its processes (Lijphart, 1996). Together, the trustworthy, positive and populist image of the Congress Party due to its role in Indian independence movement and the prominence of charismatic leaders, provided the base for their dominance after Independence. Even after the failure of National Emergency and emergence of a variety of leaders and parties in Congress's opposition, the Nehru-Gandhi family was still widely accepted as the most legitimate and trusted name for the Prime Minister's position (Chandra, 2016). Indira Gandhi was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi who many consider was the last "national leader" from the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Indeed, Rajiv Gandhi's appointment as the Prime Minister too is attributed to his "personality and sympathy over his mother's assassination" (Brass, 1986 as cited in Meyer, 1989).

Yet even after his assassination in 1991, the surviving members of the family are currently the most powerful in Indian politics and under their patronage the Congress Party has held on to power (Gupte, 2009).

The elections in India have mostly been fought between a handful of charismatic leaders or those belonging to certain dynasties. The leader-centric characteristic of politics in India is similar to the political systems in countries having presidential style of governance. Neher, (1994) describes this phenomenon as unique to Asian countries calling it "Asian style democracy, where the politics and governance, fall somewhere between semi-democracy and semi-authoritarianism" (p. 949). He reasons that such phenomenon is the result of the problems faced by newly formed nations, where issues like "economic development, nation building, national security" require a strong leadership (Neher, 1994 p. 949). As Sharma (2002, p. 77) explains, despite its weaknesses like "low income economy, widespread poverty, illiteracy and immense religious and ethnic diversity", the democracy in India has a "self-correcting nature", a quality that could hold the country together despite all odds and that has been constantly shaping and bringing political and socioeconomic changes since independence.

Moving on, to understand the leader-centric politics in India, it would be worthwhile to delve deeper into Congress party's grasp on Indian politics over the years as this party had been in governance for majority of the years since independence.

3.3   Congress's sole stronghold over Indian Politics

Defining the Indian political system as "the congress system" Kothari (1964) explains that it was the Congress Party that introduced an organized and functional democratic government in India and more importantly, for a very long period "Congress was the only party to be trusted" for the job of governance in India. The Congress Party and its prominent leaders were originally the result of the "movement for independence and reform" in India. Due to this historical legacy, before even coming to power, Congress and its leaders had already gained "legitimacy" to govern and had accumulated a huge trust base in the society (Kothari, 1964).

The 'party system' in Indian politics is 'one of the most successful party systems in operation' and contrary to most western democracies where party system suggests 'a relationship between the government and party organization' and where the party organization plays a crucial 'subsidiary role', the Indian party system works on consensus within the party and outside (Kohli, 1988; Kothari, 1964).

Prooijen & Lange (2014) explain that political leadership is important for representing a society as well as for decision-making purposes and smooth civic-economic operation of a society. Further, a society depends on its leaders for its well-being and since, so much power remains with the leaders, the media and the citizens closely monitor and evaluate the leaders in terms of their character, behaviour, trustworthiness and levels of corruption (Prooijen & Lange, 2014).

Political leadership in India is comparatively more significant than political institutions because in a political system swaying between majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy, the power rests with the leaders and not the institutions

(Mehra & Kueck, 2003). The importance of individual leader's in Indian political system is evident from the way the political governance changes considerably under the same "institutional arrangements" but different political leaders. For example, centralizing authoritarian governance under Indira Gandhi was a stark contrast to the previous Nehruvian policy (Mehra & Kueck, 2003). It can be supposed that leader charisma has more worth in Indian politics.

A leader can create a huge following, inspire them and even become the role model of the masses through their personal charisma (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This phenomenon goes further in case of India, where it is common to idolise and worship the leaders (The logical Indian, 2015). Narrating the charismatic personality, extraordinary success and popularity of Indira Gandhi, Malik and Vajpeyi (1988) argue that politics and culture are interdependent and the actions and personalities of political leaders are shaped and influenced by the environment that surrounds them. In case of India, it can be argued that the political leaders who are able to mould their personalities according to the nature of their current society are trusted, admired and even idolized by their followers. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Indira and even the contemporary ones like Narendra Modi are worshipped like godly figures. For instance, the creation of temples (see Figure 3.1) made in their names is a common phenomenon across India (The Guardian, 2007; Huffpost, 2015).

Figure 3.1: PM Modi statue in India (Source: telegraph.co.uk, 12/02/2015)

India has had sixteen general elections since independence and out of that the Congress Party (INC), led mostly by the Nehru-Gandhi family lost only six times. They formed government ten times out of sixteen, either in direct majority or in coalition led by the Congress (Meyer & Malcolm, 1993). The leadership of the country under Congress Party has been passed on in a dynastic manner among the Nehru-Gandhi family members i.e. from father (Nehru) to daughter (Indira Gandhi) to son (Rajiv Gandhi) to now Prime minister in-waiting grandson (Rahul Gandhi) & granddaughter (Priyanka Gandhi), rather than in a democratic manner (Chhibber, 2011). The first Prime Minister of India Jawaher Lal Nehru is often described as the great statesman of his time for his personal charisma and dynamic personality is confirmed by scholars, supporters and opponents alike as somebody who could use his personality in his favour even in situations meant to sabotage his position (Haqqi,

1986; Ghose, 1993; Bendix, 1967). He is also referred as "the last Englishman to rule India" (Kumarasingham, 2009) due to his personality having close resemblance to the colonial English rulers and the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty is often criticised for continuing to reap benefits of India's feudal-colonial mind-set (Roe, 2010; huffpost, 2014). Here leaders were considered to be God-like or a class apart and acted more like rulers rather than democratic leaders (Huffpost, 2014). The heritage of belonging to the Nehru-Gandhi family legacy is still being regularly coined during campaigns by the current successors of the Congress Party when they introduce themselves as grandson or daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi or great grandson of Nehru in their campaign speeches (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2012). Interestingly, the surname "Gandhi", adopted by the successors of Jawahar Lal Nehru i.e. Indira Gandhi onwards has no biological relation with Mahatma Gandhi. Clearly, it is the legacy of the personality or name and fame of leaders like Nehru, Gandhi and Indira that still reap benefits for many of their successors. Likewise, it is the personality politics of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that the opposing BJP, aimed to break in recent elections by putting forward their candidate Narendra Modi with a contrasting background, view and character (Pocha, 2014). However, just like the Congress Party, the BJP's election campaign style also centred on its leader, the only difference being, the leadership wasn't dependent on family legacy.

3.4   Leaders of influence

During the last general elections in India in 2014, the campaign strategy of the winning party (Bhartiya Janta Party or BJP) revolved mainly around increasing the popularity of the prime ministerial candidate among the wider electorate (Narayan,

2014). The BJP candidate's personality, charisma, details about his non-political family and childhood and his easy accessibility for the electorate on social media was marketed intensively throughout the campaign period via tweets, Facebook posts, YouTube videos, google hangouts (Kazmin, 2014). They even used 3D holograms to make the BJP prime ministerial candidate appear to be present at various political rallies in remote locations all over India (Sen, 2016). The BJP, won by an absolute majority for the first time in the 2014 general election. Some commentators attributed major credit to the role social media in helping create this historic victory. In particular, in cementing a huge fan following and a popular personality base for Modi (Biswas, Ingle & Roy, 2014). Yet whether this personalization strategy was accelerated by social media or alternatively whether there were other unique cultural factors at play is debated in later chapters.

3.5   Regional and dynasty politics in India

In the case of India, an emotional bond of people with any particular leader does not seem to depend solely on the basis of the leader's personality, lifestyle or charisma but factors like the leader's religion, region, caste, and gender also play a crucial role. India is a heterogeneous country where politics of preference is traditionally based on religion, caste and region (Barnett, 2015; Kochanek, 1974; Dasgupta, 1970). In such a system, therefore, one particular party or leader is unlikely to satisfy the demands and expectations of a diverse population. Indian political parties take advantage of this kind of behaviour. For example, in a Muslim majority constituency, any political party would normally put forward a Muslim candidate.

Political parties in India have a tendency to centralize their power into their leaders who then act as the ultimate authority. Most political parties in India have been centred around one leader who enjoy extreme popularity in regional or national politics. The reason for it can be attributed to dynastic nature of most of the parties in the centre as well as the numerous regional parties where the leadership position remains reserved for members of particular families. Their popularity has been so extreme that even the charges of corruption proved in the court of law and serving jail terms, have not been able to reduce it (Michelutti, 2007).

Another factor responsible for the leader supremo tradition in Indian political parties is the prevalence of "Mai-baap Sarkar" or "nanny state" where the "state is involved in everyday economic activities of its citizens". The government functions as the "primary investor, creator and provider" for the country, which has over time led to a "psychology of dependence ingrained" among its citizens (Chhibber, Shah & Verma, 2015). The leader's individual charisma, stardom, their personal traits and carefully manoeuvred specific populist schemes such as low cost food and free distribution of home appliances have been associated to their individual popularity (Jeyaranjan & Vijayabaskar, 2011). To put this simply, being in government in India is synonymous to holding control over the state and its institutions. Moreover, where so much power lies in the hands of the government, that power automatically gets concentrated in its leader who then assumes control over the party members "using the levers of this mai-baap state", diminishing any challenges to their authority (Chhibber, Shah & Verma, 2015). This phenomenon has also led to increased party fragmentation and formation of numerous regional parties because the concentration of power into a sole leader leads to insecurity among the 'ambitious party members' in terms of their

individual career paths who then step forward and create their own separate parties (Chhibber, Shah & Verma, 2015).

As a result, such systemic factors, personalisation is deeply rooted in Indian politics. As Kanungo & Farooqui (2008) argue that from the very beginning of democracy in India, leader's like Jawahar lal Nehru in the 1950s, Indira Gandhi in the 1960s and 70s, Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s, Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the 1990s and recently, Narendra Modi have been playing the personality and personal charisma card and that their success can be partly attributed to it. They further argue that the role of leader charisma is not limited to just national level-politics, in fact it is equally evident in the politics at regional level (Kanungo & Farooqui, 2008). For example, the south Indian state Tamil Nadu has had five chief ministers who were popular cinema actors before stepping into politics and turned their cinema fan following into election votes in their favour (Prakash, 2012). Film stars and celebrities have been using their pre-existing public awareness, support and popularity as a platform to enter politics (Mukherjee, 2004). The last chief minister of Tamil Nadu Jayalalitha Jayaram is a former movie superstar and equally popular as a politician, while the opposition is supported by yet another superstar Rajinikanth, whose "political clout" has huge impact over election results (Rajanayagam, 2015).

Similarly, in Bihar (state in north India), Lalu Prashad Yadav, who ruled the state for most of 1990s and still has a strong hold over the state's election politics is seen as a larger than life figure whose "populist charisma" is so huge that the state of Bihar is seen as synonymous with his name (Witsoe, 2011). Similar dynastic trends can be seen in the politics of Uttar Pradesh also where yet another political family has been in power for most of 1990s and 2000s.

In Maharashtra (South western India), Bal Thakrey, through his charismatic appeal, could establish dictatorial authority over his party and the state (Gupta, 1980). Indeed, the importance and power of regional leaders in Indian politics can also be attributed to the fact that people in this heterogeneous country find their regional leaders more relatable because of common language, clothing and religion (Brass, 2005; Kohli & Singh, 2013).

At national level, the Prime Minister's post has been acquired by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for most of the period since 1947. At regional level, numerous new parties were formed during and after the JP movement in 1974- 75 (Park, 1975). Although, the JP movement was targeted against the Congress and its dynastic supremacy over politics in India, the new leaders and parties born out of the movement went about practicing the same dynastic politics which they once rose against (Banerjee, 2007). In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the families of two Yadav leaders who became leaders during the JP movement of 1975 have been leading their respective states since. In Maharashtra, similar trend is seen with the Thackreys. Bal Thackrey, became a prominent leader in the 1960s. He founded the party Shiva-Sena in 1966 and was known for keeping the power centralised to himself by solely taking all major party decisions. His family members have had their hegemony over the state since (Phadnis & Gadgil, 2012). In South India, along with dynastic succession of leadership, there have been very clear examples of celebrity leaders as well, in which film stars have successfully held leadership positions on behalf of their popular image (Hardgrave, 1973). All these examples confirm the importance of individual leaders whose name itself is enough for their successors to remain in power. It can be concluded from the above discussion that personalisation in the form of charismatic leaders or popular celebrities is deeply ingrained in Indian politics,

society and culture. It is also clearly evident that dynastic succession of political leadership is quite common both in regional as well as national politics.

The popularity and influence of these political leaders also overshadow the importance of the party or institution they belong to and in all the above mentioned cases the leader's name acquires such immense importance that the meaning of their respective parties without their particular leader or his name (read biological successor) seems unthinkable for the party members or the electorate (Bueno de Mesquita, 1975). The dynastic trends in Indian politics reflect that individual leaders remain the focus of politics either due to their personal charisma, personality, past popularity (such as, film stars) or because of dynastic legacy. This phenomenon proves the existence of personalisation in Indian politics in the form of individualisation i.e. more focus is put on politicians as individuals rather than politicians as party members and also when the leaders outshine their parties and its ideology.

The similar tendency of individualisation has been seen in the campaign methods adopted by political parties and the leaders during election period also. The entire campaigning revolves around Individual leaders whose image, personality and charisma are carefully manoeuvred to make them look like larger than life or god like figures who look and sound like promising protectors and rescuers to the electorate (Price & Rudd, 2010).

3.6   Personalised Campaigning in Indian Politics

Election campaigning in India has been leader-centric during most elections and is a common strategy for almost all political parties. Individual candidates are promoted as the face and icon of their parties making the elections look more like a battle between top leaders rather than parties Chhibber & Ostermann, 2014).

Election campaigning methods in India have barely changed since the first general elections of 1951-52. Politicians still rely mostly on traditional campaign methods like political rallies, printed posters and pamphlets, TV & radio advertisements and door to door campaigning. These standard methods had derived positive outcomes in past elections. Hence, as Sequeira (2016) describes, politicians and campaign strategists did not see much value in experimenting with any new campaign methods for a very long time. As the BBC reported during the last 2014 general elections, "traditional methods like mass poster campaigns with leader's photo are still critical" to reach out to the huge number of Indians who cannot read (BBC News, 2014).

Pamphlets, posters and newspaper advertisements mainly consist of pleasing images of the party candidate and slogans or one liners that validate the candidate. Similar efforts to highlight the party candidate could be seen in television and radio advertisements, where candidates appealed for votes by stressing their good character and personal "heroic abilities" to carry out the job (Chopra, 1998).

Since the first democratic elections, campaigns in India have been carefully managed and ideas like development and poverty eradication were strategically propagated year after year. Although, the first few Prime Ministers seemed to have

extraordinarily charismatic personality, both Nehru and Indira had deployed campaign managers for their image makeovers (Kanungo & Farooqui, 2008).

Although the most recent head of the Congress party (Sonia Gandhi) is an Italian born married in the Gandhi family, the Congress party won two elections under her leadership on the basis of the "Gandhi surname" (Elections.in, 2016). Now, the younger Gandhi (Rahul Gandhi), who reluctantly accepted the position of vice president of Congress party and is the prime minister in waiting due to party member's demand is widely perceived as not much of a leader (Dorschner, 2014; Torri 2015, The Indian express, 2016). Unlike other political leader's, Rahul Gandhi is said to have an invisible political presence as he rarely gives any media interviews and hardly ever raises a word in the parliamentary proceedings (Mehta, 2012; Traub, 2013). Nevertheless, he is never faced with any challenge from the much experienced, capable and taller leaders within the congress party (Traub, 2013).

In context of the election campaigns, the undisputed congress mascot and the face on the advertising platforms has always been a Nehru-Gandhi family member (Business standard, 2009) and therefore, Rahul Gandhi remained the hesitant and unannounced but, a definite prime ministerial candidate in the last general election of 2014 (Huffington post, 2014).

Similarly, in case of the right wing nationalist party BJP, Narendra Modi was declared the prime ministerial candidate for 2014 general elections and was promoted as the face of BJP in every posting and media content produced for the campaign (Narayan, 2014). Although, unlike the Congress party, which has an umbilical cord attached to the Nehru-Gandhi family, the BJP is affiliated to its ideological non-political right wing nationalist organisation, the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsewak

Sangh), and the prime ministerial candidate and national head of the BJP is chosen by massive deliberation exercise between the RSS and the BJP (Jeffrelot, 2015; Narayan, 2014). Nevertheless, in the last two elections that the BJP won and formed the government, they had a dynamic prime ministerial candidate who had a central presence in the election campaigns (Nayar, 2005; Wyatt, 2001; Wilkinson, 2005). For example, the first BJP prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who came to power in 1999 had used slogans like "Abki Baari Atal Bihari", which translates as, "It should be Atal Bihari (name of the candidate) government this time" (Sardesai, 2015). Again, in the 2014 election the main slogan used was "Abki Baar Modi Sarkar", which translates as, "It should be Modi (name of the candidate) government this time".

In third case, more apparent than others, the newly formed Aam Admi Party (AAP), which came into power in the Delhi state elections within two years of its formation by winning 67 out of 70 seats. The campaign for this election was concentrated mainly on promoting their leader Arvind Kejriwal. Although there were other senior leaders who were part of the Aam Admi Party from the time of its inception, when it was still a non-political anti-corruption movement, they were unceremoniously removed later from the party. This did not have any effect on the outcome of the election results, as the AAP went ahead with the official election slogan "Paanch Saal Kejriwal", which translates as, "Kejriwal (name of the candidate) for five years" (Sardesai, 2015). This indicates that the electorate associated the party in all the three cases, to an individual and not the individual to the party. In each of the three cases, the personal characteristics, charisma, the values that they stood for and their public perception is what was the determining factor in winning the elections. So, in case of Kejriwal, people associated with him as someone who is honest and

completely against corruption which people believed to have become an epidemic of sorts at the time of elections (Kumar, 2014).

Kejriwal was a bureaucrat before joining political activism. He has won the Magsaysay award (highly acclaimed award in South east Asia for social work), lived a modest life and drove a very small car (he repeatedly mentioned about his modest living standards in most of his public appearances) (Webb, 2013). Eventually, he anchored one of the biggest anti-corruption movement (India Against Corruption Movement) with wide support in democratic India. People associated his brand new party with values like "simple living, high thinking", which the party propagated as personal values of Kejriwal as an individual (The Indian express, 2015). Out of the five non-political leaders, headed by an elderly Gandhian (Anna Hazare- social activist, who followed Ghandhian ideology), who organised the anti-corruption movement, just one leader Arvind Kejriwal remained with the political outfit that they originally created (Tripathi & Chandani, 2014; Kim & Buser de, 2016). The movement in fact, fragmented quite soon without even achieving its major goals. Clearly, the electorate did not associate the newly formed party to the anti-corruption movement but more to the individual when choosing him as the state Chief Minister. Most of the sixty-seven candidates of the Aam Admi Party who won the Delhi state elections had never fought a general election or been in active politics before (Roy, 2016). The party could win the votes in the name of Arwind Kejriwal (Wyatt, 2015). Such was his popularity that he defeated the sitting three times chief minister of the state, from the congress party, by a huge margin. Also, Kejriwal was just a common man that people did not know anything about only two years ago. But within a short span of time, starting with the IAC (India Against Corruption) movement, he could establish himself as a popular political leader.

From the above argument, we gather that popular leaders, dynastic politics, election campaigns focussed around a leader etc. (all indicate personalised politics) have been a common phenomenon in Indian politics both traditionally and until recently. But, in the recent past, around when the IAC movement started with massive use of the social media, social media has gained tremendous popularity for political communication among the public as well as the politicians. Compared to the rest of the world and especially the developed world, social media use for political communication in India is a relatively new phenomenon (Rahul, 2016; Singh, 2016). The next section discusses how political communication on social media has been able to facilitate personalised politics in India.

3.7   Personalisation and the Growth of Social media in India

The victory of Barack Obama in the 2008 US Presidential elections, which is partly attributed to the innovative use of social media in campaigning, introduced a new platform and method for broadcasting news and views alternative to mainstream media (Bode, 2016; Vergeer & Hermans, 2013; Van Aelst & Stromback, 2013). Following its impact in the US, social media was used extensively for the first time in India as a mass mobilising instrument by the IAC (India against corruption) movement in 2011 (Biswas, Ingle & Roy, 2014). During the India against corruption (IAC) movement, social media was used as an alternative communication platform independent of the mainstream media, which had low credibility due to their associations with mainstream political parties and corporate interests (Harindranath & Khorana, 2014).

The movement was started by a group of people who came together from the civil society, some of whom had experience in working in government positions (civil services) or running Non-profit organisations and social work. They showcased themselves as "outside of the political system" and branded themselves as "anti-establishment", sometimes also calling themselves to be "the anarchist" (Diwakar, 2016). They maintained that the system that runs the country, including bureaucracy and the legislative council (politicians) have become so corrupt that a revolution of sorts is needed. The movement's demand was to pass an anti-corruption law that would function as a mechanism against corruption. Social media appeared to be the optimal platform for the IAC to spread the awareness of the widespread corruption cases and also the details and importance of the demands they were raising (Munda, 2013). Social media itself is often viewed as anti-mainstream media and thus, to appear anti-establishment it seemed to be the right messenger for the cause (Udupa, 2014). A common belief among people was also that mainstream media were closer to the establishment i.e. the government, powerful politicians and the big corporates. Therefore, the younger generation favoured the medium as well as the message it broadcast (Burns et al. 2015).

The IAC movement eventually resulted in formation of the Aam Admi Party (AAP) and establishing Arvind Kejriwal as the party leader. Inspired by their huge social media success in mobilising the masses for IAC movement, the AAP used the same strategy to reach out to the electorate in the subsequent election campaigns, in which Kejriwal was promoted as an "honest" leader (Sharma, 2014). Again, this strategy proved to be the game changer in AAP's favour in the 2013 Delhi state elections, which shook the well-established old political parties.

Arvind Kejriwal's party, the Aam Admi Party has been widely called the product of the social media (Wahie, Sinha & Sinha, 2016; Dafade, 2014). Their campaigning was able to use social media as a tool to galvanise the voters. AAP used social media to successfully create the discourse around corruption as the main election issue. While also prophesising that the main stream media was hands in gloves with the bigger corrupt political parties, such as the Congress and the BJP (Jain, 2017). This made AAP the people's favourite on the social media and among the younger voting population. Especially, the first time voters as they were attracted and hopeful with a fresh party actively present on the media platform of their choice i.e. the social media (Leichty, D'Silva & Johns, 2016).

Since the IAC movement in 2011-12 and the AAP/Kejriwal success in 2013, the presence of mainstream political leaders on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is considered essential and has become a norm. The politicians understand the importance of being present online (Kruikemeier, 2014) and there is also an expectation among the electorate from their leaders to be accessible on the social networking sites (Gainous & Wagner, 2013; Chopra, 2014). This is due to several reasons, such as change in the lifestyle of an average voter, where social media has become an integral part of their life and just like rest of their world around them, an average voter expects to connect with their political leaders on social networks (Chopra, 2014).

However, this phenomenon is new and after the 2014 general elections it has become almost imperative for all political leaders in India to have an online presence (World Economic Forum, 2015). The most effective use of the social media was probably done by the current prime minister, while he was campaigning in 2013-14

for the general elections. It has been accepted in many research reports that Narendra Modi was able to use social media to great effect and it had a significant impact on the electoral outcome of the 2014 general elections (Katkar, 2014; Chopra, 2014). As 65% of India was under 35 years of age during the general elections (Source: Census 2011), social media became the most effective way of interacting with the younger voters (Livemint, 2013). This was because the younger generation was mostly online and connected on social networks and the news and views could spread very fast via this medium. Additionally, the nature of social media content which was produced by political parties such as BJP was designed for the consumption of younger generation on social media (Pich et al., 2015).

Perhaps, Narendra Modi took a lead from Anna Hazare's IAC (India against corruption) movement which became very popular on platforms like Twitter and Facebook owing to its popularity among the younger generation (Chopra, 2014). Although a non-political movement, as there were no political parties involved, the IAC movement became one of the biggest mass movement in independent India's history and the role that social media played, was of immense significance (Jain et al., 2012). It is also important to note that the Indian government did not allow private news channel broadcasting in the country until late 1990s (BBC News, 2011). This was the method that the government of the day used to broadcast information and content of their choice.

Since early 2000 onwards, the role of media, mostly news channels became that of a vigilante who would go after any social injustice they found. The 24x7 format of news channels also put huge commercial pressure on the channels to create captivating content so that the people would choose to watch news channels instead of

watching soap operas (Rai & Cottle, 2007). However, people still felt that mainstream media may be biased or may have inclination towards a party. Whereas, the social networking platforms have been considered to be a place where people with all kinds of inclination, biases, backgrounds and understanding put forward or share their knowledge and views and the platform so far is considered free from corporations and political institutions (Barclay, 2015).

Although, there is a possibility that wrong information or misinformed views are also shared (DeNardis & Hackl, 2015). However, as social media becomes much more participatory because of increasing internet penetration and mobile technology becoming affordable, the views of all kinds on social media are challenged, debated, reinterpreted, corrected and shared. This makes the democratic process more participatory (Gayo-Avello, 2015). The younger generation feels more empowered as being co-creator of the political dialogue and other processes and feel like the stakeholder in the country's democratic process which the mainstream media such as TV or newspaper did not allow them to do earlier (Rupa P & Karnamaharajan, 2015). No wonder there are voices from around the world mostly from the governments to treat Facebook and Twitter as a media company and to have similar standards and code of conduct.

This brings us to the understanding that social media has clearly been taken seriously by political leaders for campaign purposes in contemporary Indian politics and its growing popularity establishes its effectiveness. In the 2014 general elections, social media was both used and consumed for political communication by politicians and the electorate respectively. It influenced the nature and format of political campaign strategy and probably also the outcome of the 2014 general

elections. The highly interactional, democratic and open nature of the medium made social media much more popular among the younger electorate for whom it became the preferred mode of consuming political news. Many academic and non-academic studies on 2014 elections have since established that the extensive use of social media by the current prime minister, Narendra Modi in the political campaigning, gave him a definite advantage, especially among the younger voters for whom this platform was more accessible. The presence of a leader's image, sound, video, virtual presence of a leader in someone's pocket or in the hands, makes them feel closer to that leader (Tenhunen & Kavelyte, 2015).

3.8   The growth of internet and social media in India

One of the first political leaders in India to adopt and understand the value of the social media for political communication was Shashi Tharoor, who is often referred as the 'Twitter Minister'. The Minister of State for the Ministry of External Affairs and a former UN diplomat, Tharoor brought social media into mainstream Indian politics. He was an exception until before late 2010 to be using social media actively to establish a two-way communication with the electorate (Nair, 2014). Initially, social media was not seen as a suitable communication medium for politicians and many politicians considered it as a short lived and unimportant trend (Nair, 2013). Although Shashi Tharoor received severe backlashes due to controversial Twitter content on many occasions (Soni, 2014), he has been the top followed political leader in India on Twitter and lost this top position only later to Gujarat's tech-savvy Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi. Today, Narendra Modi is one of the most followed politician in the world on Twitter.

Narendra Modi, who has been a big supporter of using the modern technological innovations for governance related work, was at the front in using social media for connecting and interacting with public. Soon in July 2013, Narendra Modi surpassed Tharoor and became most followed Indian politician on Twitter. On July 27th, 2013 he had 19,63,426 followers on twitter (Source- Pewinternet.org). Interestingly, Congress's chief ministerial candidate Rahul Gandhi did not have a Twitter account until April 2015 i.e. long after 2014 general elections.

According to Effing et al. (2011), politicians who showed active engagement on social media received more votes compared to politicians who did not use social media. Similarly, Digrazia et al (2013) suggest that the outcomes of an election and voter's behaviour can be predicted on the basis of data gathered from social media. Whereas, according to Cameron et al. (2014), social media data can predict only the closely contested elections. However, more advanced analysis and filtering of social media data is required before drawing any predictions or conclusion (Kalampokis et al., 2013 as cited in Safiullah, 2016).

3.8.1 Society Online

In June 2012, India had 137 Million internet users, which crossed above 200 million mark by 2014 general elections (CNN, 2014) and it was expected to have over 450 Million internet users by June 2017 (Nair, 2013, Chopra, 2017). This rapid rise in number of internet users has led to an increase in digital influence on people's opinion towards the political entities. The figure below shows this rapid rise over a

60

period of last ten years and also the expected number of internet users up until year 2019.

Internet population (In Million)
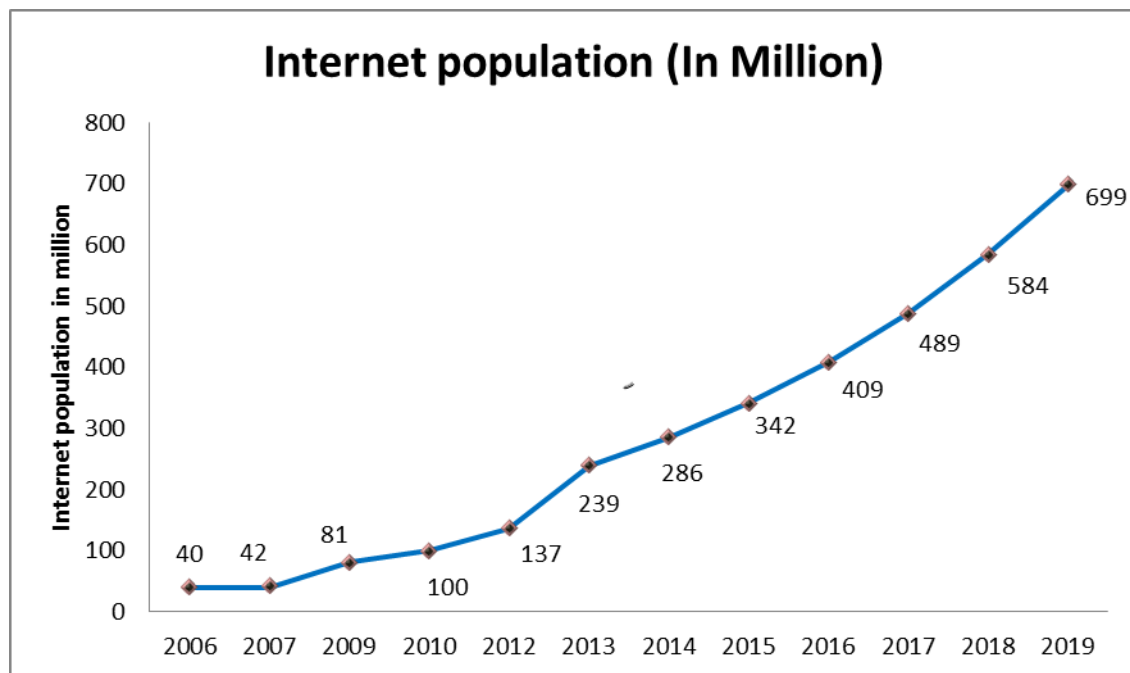
Figure 3.1: Internet population in India (source: Dart consulting)

According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), by 2015, the number of internet subscribers in rural India rose to around 50 million. While in urban India, this number rose to around 150 million users (Dazeinfo, 2015).

The report from IAMAI emphasizes on the fact that 52% of internet users from rural areas access the internet for the prime purpose of entertainment, followed by 39% for social media and 37% for communication. The massive adoption of low-price smartphones is allowing the users to carry their digital world with them (Dezeinfo.com).
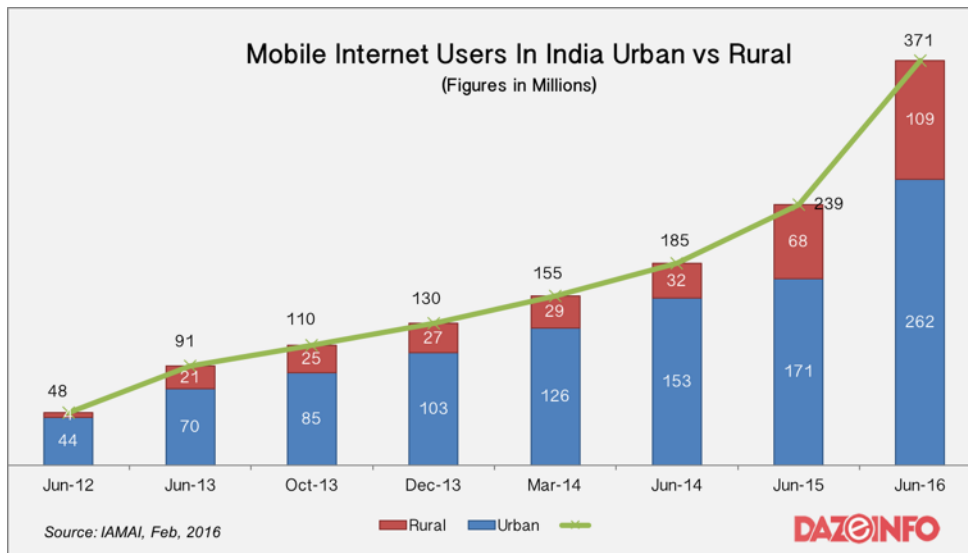
Figure 3.2 Mobile internet users in India

The total number of social media users was estimated to grow (and actually grew) from 55 million in 2011 to over 160 million in 2014, which is a higher growth rate than the regional as well as global growth (eMarketer, 2013). As internet is becoming more and more approachable for Indian masses, social media sites are becoming more popular among the users. Moreover, Indian internet users are more likely to discuss politics than many other countries (Pew research, 2015). A Pew research study in December, 2012 established that nearly 45% of Indian web users connect on social media to discuss politics (H. Rajput, 2014).

Also, according to latest census 65% of Indian population is under the age of 35 and as the graph (below) shows, similar to the phenomena elsewhere in the world, smartphone penetration in the Indian population is higher in the younger population.
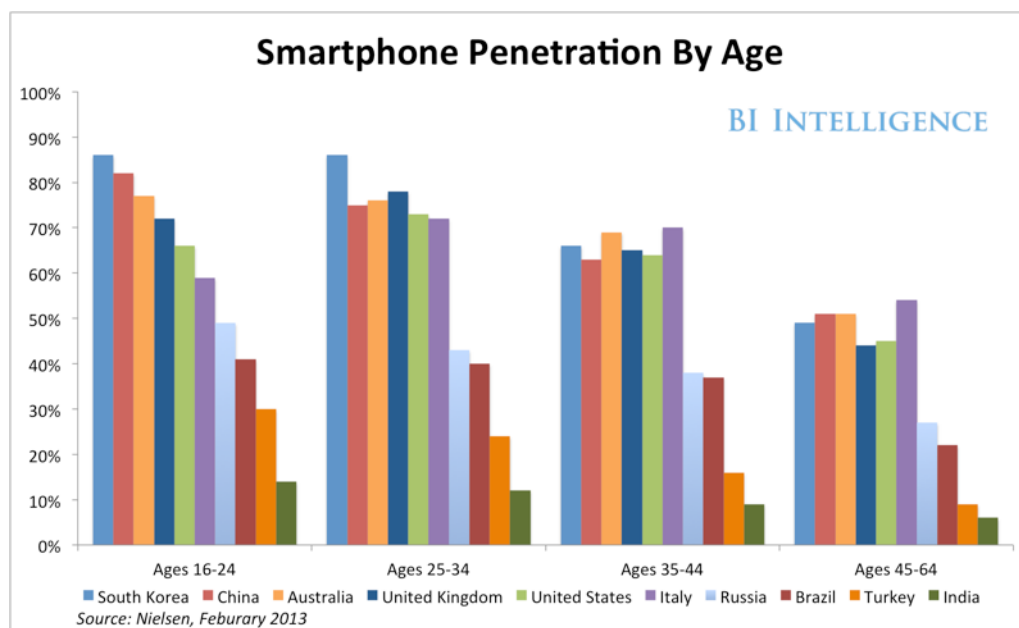
Figure 3.3: Smartphone penetration by age. Source: Business Insider

Although, the overall percentage of smartphone penetration is still quite low as compared to other developed countries in the above graph, this small chunk of younger population is crucial in India.

Moreover, the availability of low-cost internet data is another crucial factor leading to this rapid growth in the number of social media users in India. The table below shows that the rate Indian users pay a lot less for the same amount of internet data when compared to many developed countries. For example, on comparing Unlimited data plans, Canadian Mobile users paid about 3000 rupees whereas, in India, users paid around 1000 rupees for it.

Data Plans	Postpaid Plan ($ monthly/MB)	Postpaid Plan ($/MB)	Unlimited Plan ($ monthly)	Prepaid Plan ($/MB)
Canada [25]	$24.00/500	$0.05	$72.90	N/A
Denmark [26]	$17.00/500	$0.03	N/A	$1.70
Finland [27]	$8.90/300	$0.03	N/A	N/A
Hong Kong [28]	$5.00/50	$0.10	$38.00	N/A
India [29]	$2.10/5120	$0.00	$19.00	$0.00
Japan [30]	$4.70/0.5	$9.40	$52.60	N/A
South Korea [31]	$12.00/500	$0.02	N/A	$0.43
Sweden [32]	$9.50/1024	$0.01	$13.80	N/A
Taiwan [33]	$12.00/500	$0.02	$26.60	$1.64
U.S. [34]	$15.00/200	$0.08	$29.99	$10.24
U.K. [35]	$7.70/5120	$0.00	N/A	$0.50

Figure 3.4: Worldwide data charges comparison (Source: Track.in)

3.9   India general elections 2014

Narendra Modi had his eyes set on the prime minister's position quite early on and he started his campaign well in advance than any other party's prime ministerial candidate (Motiwala, 2014). Before fighting other opposition candidates in the general elections, Modi had to fight hard to be declared as the prime ministerial candidate from his own party, the BJP. As Maiorano (2015) explains, Modi approached and tackled this obstruction by propagating a pro development image and pro Hindutva (Hindu majoritarian) stance. With intense political manoeuvring, he overcame inter party factionalism and other associated issues with the backing of BJP's parent organisation RSS (Rashtriya swayamsewak Sangh-pro Hindutva) (Jeffrelot, 2015; Narayan, 2014). Additionally, with the support of the big corporates in India with whom he found some favour earlier (the state he ruled as chief minister), he crafted an image of being pro economic development. As with any conservative right wing political parties in the world, Modi and his party had also been accused of being too friendly with corporates even at the cost of hurting common people (Torri, 2015; Jani, 2009).

Further, the BJP "patriarch" and the ex-deputy prime minister of India LK Advani wanted to be the Prime ministerial candidate in 2014 general elections (Jani, 2009; Torri 2015). A group within the party also favoured his candidacy. However, Modi overcame that hurdle and with the help of a group of senior BJP leaders was able to become the prime ministerial candidate from his party (Torri, 2015). Nevertheless, because of the communal riots that happened while Modi was the head of the state of Gujarat, many smaller but important political parties distanced themselves from the Prime minister candidate but not from the party. In the era of coalition politics and coalition government, this was crucial disadvantage that the BJP gambled upon by announcing Narendra Modi as the prime minister candidate (Jeffrelot, 2016; Torri, 2015; Price, 2015)

In some sense, this was the beginning of separation of Narendra Modi and his party, the BJP at one level. Modi had developed an association with many traits and characteristics that his party could not boast of. He championed himself as honest, hardworking professional and also a "techno savvy" leader (Ramakrishna, 2015). He became famous to be working sixteen to eighteen hours a day and being very health conscious following an intense daily yoga routine. He had devised the catchy slogan "na khaunga, na khane doonga" (I won't be corrupt nor allow corruption) (Sukhtankar & Vaishnav, 2015). He crafted his image of being business friendly through many instances such as when he extended an immediate offer to the Tatas (for the tata nano car plant) when they were abruptly asked to leave the land by another regional political party due to a political mass movement of the time, against them. The Gujrat state was the most industrial state with one of the highest GDP and per capita income in India, which he boasted in his speeches. He talked about the "Gujrat model" which meant a governance philosophy, which was development centric with

less bureaucracy and red-tapism. He also sloganed the term "the government has no business being in business" and "minimum government, maximum governance" (Ruparelia, 2015).

Through his experience and image as the chief minister of Gujrat for two consecutive terms, Modi created an image of an individual with personal traits such as good administrator and pro-development. This was an image created in addition and exclusive of the "Hindutva" (pro Hindu majoritarian) philosophy of the party (Sardesai, 2014). Therefore, this created an image and a political discourse in the election campaigning of the 2014 general election which had an important dimension of "privatisation" aspect of personalisation (yoga, celibate, tech savvy, good administrator) and individualisation (pro-corporates, pro-economic development, pro-Hindutva).

As it appears that Modi used all forms of communication including mainstream media and especially the social media to curate an image of himself separate from his party (Ahmed, 2016). Although, mainstream media was hostile towards Modi (Rabindranath, 2015) and kept associating the 2002 communal riots as a blot to his personal character and the following refusal of visa by the US government (Mahurkar, 2014), to a great extent Modi was able to project himself as an 'outsider' (much like Donald Trump) who the mainstream did not like and who was also anti-establishment (Price, 2015). For the common voters, establishment meant the ruling and the opposition politicians in the centre (Delhi) who were often criticised for being involved in corruption cases. All this required him to create his own individual image away from his party and other politicians in the parliament in general.

Narendra Modi adopted the social media comparatively early and used it extensively, which provided him great advantage towards creating an individualised and privatised discourse in the election campaigning in 2014 (Sambandan, 2014). Social media was considered to be anti-establishment also because it had gotten almost censored by the government numerous times. Similarly, social media also got an image of anti-mainstream media because it brought out collusion between media and politicians. To that aspect, the IAC movement reinforced these perceptions among the people when their anti-corruption movement used the social media to publicise the corruption expose and also pointed fingers at the mainstream media. The nature of the consumption of social media, which was mostly on smart phones and therefore the profile of the users, which was mostly young, stood out as the main reason among politicians to utilise this platform. This was because 65% of India was under the age of 35 at the time of general election in 2014. Thus, when tech savvy Modi decided to use social media extensively as a medium to communicate with the voters, it resonated well with the target. The detailed analysis of the nature of social media profile of its users and its adoption and usage by the political leaders in the 2014 general election will be done in the next section.

Moving on to the opposition party's strategy, the Congress (ruling party until 2014), projected the youngest Gandhi in the family (44-year-old Rahul Gandhi) as the youth leader, aloof from the corrupt system and governance (Torri, 2015). Subsequently, Rahul Gandhi's image was projected as an individual who is although part of the Gandhi family heritage, but has disassociated himself completely from the then ruling congress government. He portrayed an image of not being interested in holding any constitutional position in the then ruling government (Dutt, 2013). However, the congress party was decimated to the lowest figures in the history of Independent

India in the 2014 elections. This may have many reasons as identified in various academic and non-academic publications. Many of them allude this to Rahul Gandhi's lack of communication skills and or any charisma (Malik & Malik, 2014). To that extent his political campaign rested upon disassociating himself from the government, but maintaining his heir apparent status of the Nehru-Gandhi family. The Congress party unofficially projected Rahul Gandhi as the prime ministerial candidate for general elections because of his obvious qualification of the next generation of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Thus, the Congress party's political campaign, as in the past, tried to sell the Gandhi surname (Dal Bó et al., 2006). This shows a level of individualisation of the political campaign. Although, the Congress party has always claimed to associate the party to certain virtuous values such as, secularism, party first and left of centre politics (Seshia, 1998), the Congress party has almost always been led by a Nehru-Gandhi family member. In fact, the family and the party have been referred as synonymous in the political campaigns.

The Congress party also denounced the use of social media as an urban phenomenon that can have minimal or no positive outcome in elections, which was evident from the fact that its leader, Rahul Gandhi did not have a personal account on Twitter or any other social media account until after the 2014 general elections. Up until the 2014 elections and until the rise of social media trend, most Congress politicians enjoyed exclusive status and were seen as the ruling classes or guardian angels of the country. This phenomenon is often described as the Mai-baap culture (Chhibber, Shah & Verma, 2015). Therefore, the medium such as Twitter and Facebook did not suit their elitist status.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to summarise the current academic literature on personalisation in Indian politics, traditional political campaigning in India and the current changes in political campaign strategy due to the rise of social media uses in India. Further, it has elaborated, how some political leaders quickly and others hesitantly adapted their political campaign strategy on the social media during the Indian general elections 2014. However, it came out that since social media is a relatively recent phenomenon in India, there is only limited research in its role in personalised political campaign strategy. Therefore, it looked prudent to study the 2014 Indian general elections to develop our understanding of the nature of use of social media by Indian political leaders. The next chapter explains the setting of the research in more details and discusses the method used to conduct this research.

Chapter 4:   Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand how social media, such as Twitter, fit into the campaign strategy in highly personalised politics in India and whether social media facilitates promotion of individual leaders over party and associations. The focus of this research is to find out whether social media amplifies personalised politics in India. The idea is to understand how and why social media is used by politicians; the nature of its usage; the reach of social media; the aim and purpose of engagement on social media platforms; what objectives are achieved via social media and also the dynamics of social media as a communication tool.

The study aims to examine the factors that influence the usage of social media by political leaders and its effect on political process in the country. Specifically, this study looks at the social media as a personal tool to facilitate, build and manage a personal discourse and communication channel with electorate and if and how it influences personalisation in politics.

4.1   Rationale for research approach

While deciding which research approach to choose for fulfilling the purpose of a research project and draw conclusive answers to the research questions a range of important issues need to be considered. These include whether: to collect data through single method or mixed method; the data should be collected in a certain timeframe; or should it be spread out over the entire research period (longitudinal study); to use quantitative methods or qualitative methods (Jankowski & Selm, 2008). As Smith (2015) explains choosing a research approach means choosing a

certain "perspective on the world and on our data". A research approach is decided on the basis of what exactly we want to concentrate on out of a broader matter, what do we want to bring to light and what would be the most practical approach (Smith, 2015).

The approach chosen for the purpose of this study was empirical research, in which the data was collected from various sources adopting what Creswell (2003) refers as concurrent triangulation strategy in which multiple methods are used to verify and validate the findings of one method with the other before concluding the final result. Empirical research is set around observation or experience based evidence which are used to produce generalized theories following which, conclusions are drawn from the research (Diefenbach, 2008). The objective of empirical research is to gain a thorough understanding of a matter by engaging and interacting with it rather than only drawing conclusions through reductionist means (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In case of the current study, the topic for research was chosen after observing the trends, activity levels and politician's engagement on social media platforms during the time period close to the 2014 elections, it was clearly evident from the reports (such as, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Internet And Mobile Association of India and in the general news media) and observation of the rapidly soaring traffic on all social media platforms that the number of active social media users in India was rapidly increasing. Understanding this trend, politicians were also rapidly embracing various digital platforms for campaign purposes (Rajput, 2014). The reasons for applying empirical approach was that, it takes into account the context where research effort is active, while it is also most appropriate for small samples that produce qualitative data results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Research in the context of social media and politics in India is currently evolving as it is quite a

new development in Indian society and among Indian politicians (Rajput, 2014; Ahmed, Jaidka & Cho, 2016). Moreover, there hasn't been much academic research focussing on the 'personalisation' of politics in relation with social media in India. Also, empirical approach was most suited and practical (Osborne, 2008) for this study because of small data sample size due to the time constraints for this research project. Although, small sample sizes may raise questions over the validity of any research and possible bias, they can be very effective in indicating "a trend in a changing population" (Osborne, 2008: p.x). However, the main weakness of the empirical approach is that it produces generalized theories and conclusions based only on a small number of observations. Consequently, it may compromise the reliability of research results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). To overcome the disadvantages of a small sample empirical research, the weaknesses of using single method and to confirm research data validity, multiple methods were adopted. These included: qualitative interviews; focus group interviews; quantitative data from Twitter; as well as digital news archives. As explained above, the multiple method approach in research methodology has been termed as concurrent triangulation strategy by Creswell (2003) who has justified it as the most appropriate method for overcoming the above mentioned weaknesses. Further details of individual methods and their application in this research are discussed below.

4.2   Research strategy

The research strategy was divided into two parts. The first comprised finding out the context for the study where politicians are actively using social media and the perspective for using it. Social media use for campaign purposes is a relatively new

phenomenon in India which is positively affected by the rapidly increasing access to low-cost mobile and internet technology (Rahul, 2016; Singh, 2016).

4.3   Why Twitter?

The second phase of the study comprised looking at Twitter data to compare, analyse and draw similarities with the findings and to validate the results. For this purpose, a Twitter data set was produced from selective Twitter accounts which were active during the election period. A total of ten Twitter accounts were studied from three main (national) political parties. These parties were, BJP (winning party), the Congress Party (opposition), Aam Admi Party (opposition). Three accounts (party's account, party leader's account and party spokesperson's account) from each party were chosen for content analysis. Twitter provides a good platform to study for this research because most politicians used Twitter for political communication in the 2014 Indian general elections for either self-promotion, media validation or to supplement their offline strategy (Ahmed et al. 2016). Scholars like Tumasjan et al. (2011) stress the fact that since the Obama campaign in 2008, Twitter has been extensively used as a "platform for political deliberation" and that "Twitter can be considered of political landscape offline". Also, Twitter has the third largest user base in India (PTI, as cited in Ahmed et al., 2016). Further, almost all the politicians active on Twitter, used the platform to share links of/from any other social media account they had such as, video links from YouTube or Facebook posts. By contrast, they did not necessarily share Twitter content on other social media platform (Ahmed et al., 2016). This made Twitter a more homogeneous platform to study compared to other social media platforms.

The party that initiated social media use for campaign purposes was the newly formed Aam Admi Party who came into power in the Delhi state elections in 2013 (Chopra, 2014). The Aam Admi party is referred as an urban party and their electorate in Delhi state constituted an urban population. Similarly, BJP too is considered to be a significantly urban party (Falcao, 2009). Both the parties arguably used social media for campaign purposes and to reach out to the population active on this platform (see chapters 3 and 5).

Why India?

India provides a good context for this research because firstly, Indian democracy is the biggest electoral exercise in the world. Secondly, in the recent parliamentary elections in 2014, social media was extensively used by various political parties, particularly by the winning party, the Bhartiya Janta Party. Before the 2014 elections, use of social media was almost negligible among the politicians whether for campaigning purposes or otherwise. Thirdly, the 2014 elections took place just in time when internet penetration had reached substantial levels in at least urban India. Fourthly, 65% of the population was under age 35 during this time, which means the younger generation of people was the biggest electoral target audience,

4.4   Details of research sample

The interview participants were selected in two categories- the representatives (politicians) and the represented (voters). The first category included key ministers and party members such as, party spokespersons and campaign strategists from the ruling and opposition parties. These participants were again chosen from the three

main national level political parties (The ruling Bhartiya Janta party –BJP and the opposition Congress and Aam Admi parties). Here, the objective was to understand the motivation of the political parties for using social media and to confirm the importance of personality driven campaigning in party election agendas. It was initially difficult to select participants in this category as the political leader's and party member's social media engagement depended on their position in the party, their age, whether they managed their accounts or outsourced it to a social media management team and whether they had a social media account at all. To overcome these issues, individual Twitter accounts of ministers from both ruling and opposition parties were examined to find out their activity level on the digital platform. They were then strategically filtered out on the basis of their Twitter use with political content. The ministers with maximum Twitter engagement for political communication were approached via email, tweets and direct Twitter messages requesting them for interview.

Other participants in this category such as spokespersons and strategists were chosen on the basis of their role in their party's communication strategy.

For example, one of the participants was the communications manager for the ruling party and another in similar position from the opposition party.

Some journalists and academics in Indian politics and media were also included in order gain their specialist insight and views around the changing nature of political campaigning in India. More importantly, these participants were local residents, who held local knowledge and understanding of Indian politics and social media. They were capable of providing information and views around the changes they observed over the years, which the limited available research in the field could not provide.

Fortunately, in all cases, each interviewee had an active interest in using Twitter for their political communication purposes.

The second category of participants included voters from different parts of the population, with whom focus group interviews were conducted to understand whether the parties campaign strategies actually matches with the electorate's expectations. A total of eight focus group interviews were conducted with thirty participants. Whilst the overall quantity of interviewees may seem low it provided a perspective of voter's perceptions about political personalisation and social media. It also aids in verifying and matching the data collected from Twitter and the politicians. Importantly, all the participants in focus groups were in the age group 18 to 35 years which as noted above constitute the key audience in terms of campaigning.

In general terms the focus group interview is a popular data collection technique in qualitative research in which the conversations in a group, facilitated by an interviewer/researcher is treated as the data source (Morgan, 1996). Stage & Manning (2003) argue that through focus group interviews a qualitative research can gain "elicit perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group" of participants familiar with the research theme. As the discussion ensues in such interviews, new ideas, arguments and counter arguments come to surface which can help the research by gaining a broader perspective of the research topic. One of the advantages of focus group interviews is that it "allows the participants to exercise a fair degree of control over their own interactions" (Nichols-Casebolt & Spakes 1995, Montell 1995 as cited in Morgan, 1996: p.x). Due to its conversational format, it arguably also provides a more comfortable forum to participate in the conversation for those who might be reluctant to be interviewed individually (Morgan, 1996).

Including voters in focus groups was beneficial as well as essential to this research as the voters constitute the demand side of the electoral process and presumably impacts any decisions regarding campaign strategy (Benz & Stutzer, 2002). Understanding the voter's point of view was important to find out how they perceive the information obtained from social media communication.

To interview the voter population, cluster sampling method was used. A cluster sample is a simple random sample in which each sampling unit is a collection or cluster of elements (Scheaffer, Mendenhall & Ott, 1979). Groups of three to six students were approached for interviews at three universities in India (Delhi University, Jawharlal Nehru University and a regional medical college).

Cluster sampling is often the only practical method of sampling a large population, and it is the most effective method used in surveys when it is either impractical or very costly to obtain a list of all members of the population. In cluster sampling techniques, we sample clusters or groups, rather than individual members of the population.

Cluster sampling is a preferred method when the statistical population is internally heterogeneous (Ramasubramanian & Singh, 2017). The participants in this category were all students (aged 18-35) which means a homogenous population but, all of those students had diverse social, economic and ideological backgrounds which made them internally heterogeneous. Interviewing participants from this demographic offered the best means of understanding responsiveness to social media campaign messages. The lower age limit for interviewee participation was set to be age 18 because it is the legal minimum voting age in the country.

Interviews and focus groups were held during the months July and August of 2016 in India with the political leaders from the three main national level political parties, their

campaign strategists, social media managers and with people of voting age from urban as well as rural parts of India. These meetings were held mostly at the leader's offices and in university campuses. The interviewees in the first section were contacted via formal emails requesting for their participation. Some leaders who could not respond to email were approached on Twitter and directly in their offices. For the focus group interviews, groups of students were approached directly and randomly at the University campuses. They were told about the research project briefly and permission was taken to voice record the entire conversation.

The interview questions were translated into Hindi for the interviewees not fluent in English language. Moreover, the interviewees were asked to participate in the research after being briefly explained about the aim, nature and scope of the study to make sure they were comfortable in participating. The discussions took place at the offices of the politicians and lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Notes were taken during the interviews, in order to help analyse the gathered data at a later time. During the interviews, respondents were free to express their views even in topics which were not included in the discussed areas. The two tables (4.1. & 4.2) below illustrate the data sources and interview participants in detail:

	Data collection method	Participants	Quantity	Type
Primary Data Sources				

	Semi-structured interviews	Political leader	6	Qualitative
		Academic	4	Qualitative
		Journalist	2	Qualitative
		Social media strategist	4	Qualitative
	Focus Group	University student (young voting population who were included to understand their social media engagement and influence	8 groups, 30 participants	Qualitative
Secondary Data Sources	Twitter timeline analysis	Political Party official account	3	Quantitative
		Political leader official account	3	Quantitative
		Political Party spokesperson	3	Quantitative

	Other sources	Youtube videos, Political party website, online political editorials, news and media websites			Mixed

Figure 4.1: Data Sources

Participant Details

Nos.	Participant code	Participant Profile	Reason to include	Method	No. of participants
1	Participant one	MLA (Opposition Party BPF- Assam)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
2	Participant two	MP (Ruling Party BJP-Assam-1)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
3	Participant three	MLA (Ruling Party BJP- Assam-2)	To understand motivation and	Face-to-face	1

			strategy of SM use by a politician		
4	Participant four	Leader (Opposition Party Congress- Delhi-1)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
5	Participant five	Leader (Opposition Party Congress- Delhi-2)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
6	Participant six	MP (Ruling Party BJP-Delhi)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
7	Participant seven	Social media manager BJP (1)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM team	Face-to-face	1
8	Participant eight	Social media manager BJP (2)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM team	Face-to-face	1
9	Participant nine	Political Journalist-Times Now	To understand from specialist the motivation and strategy of SM use in election campaign	Face-to-face	1

10	Participant ten	Professor- Media Studies	To understand from specialist the motivation and strategy of SM use in election campaign	Face-to-face	1
11	Participant eleven	Professor- Political Studies	To understand from specialist the motivation and strategy of SM use in election campaign	Face-to-face	1
12	Participant twelve	MLA (Opposition Party BPF- Assam)	To understand motivation and strategy of SM use by a politician	Face-to-face	1
13	Participant thirteen	Social media expert (1)	To understand from specialist the motivation and strategy of SM use in election campaign	Face-to-face	1
14	Participant fourteen	Social media expert (2)	To understand from specialist the motivation and strategy of SM use in election campaign	Face-to-face	1

15	Focus Group one	Campus Law College students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	6
16	Focus Group two	IP College for Women students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4
17	Focus Group three	Hindu College Students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4
18	Focus Group four	Faculty of Management Studies Students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4
19	Focus Group five	Assam Medical College students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4

20	Focus Group six	Delhi University PG students	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4
21	Focus Group seven	Delhi University Student Union (1)	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	5
22	Focus Group eight	Delhi University Student Union (2)	To understand from young voters using social media the influence of SM use in election campaign	Focus group	4

Figure 4.2: Participant Details

MLA   Member of legislative Council (state)

MP   Member of parliament (Central)

      Bhartiya Janta Party - One of the two big

BJP   national parties

      Congress Party - One of the two big

Congress   national parties

4.5   Research Method

In order to achieve the goals of this study, triangulation research method was chosen. The initial data collection for the purposes of current research was done through qualitative research methods which included one to one open ended interviews and focus group interviews using semi-structured questionnaire. For confirming the results of qualitative research and to validate the data, quantitative data was gathered through Twitter data by checking frequency of tweets that matched the qualitative outcomes. The style of research in which both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to collect data and to study or analyse the same subject matter is referred as triangulation method (Greene & Caracelli, 1997 as cited in Thurmond 2001).

The triangulation method has been cited as an advantageous strategy in order to validate the data or research as well as to gain an in depth understanding of the research (Carter et.al., 2014). This method benefits from the "rich variety of data" generated via different methodological approaches and mixing the two different "but complimentary" methodological approaches makes the results "more trustworthy" (Belk, 2006). Hussein (2009), asserts that triangulation method can be successfully used for confirming the research results by the process of attaining same result multiple times, using different methodological techniques. He further mentions that using quantitative methods to validate the outcomes of qualitative study has been considered classic validation method by researchers (Hussein, 2009).

Although, qualitative and quantitative methods hold their respective strengths and weaknesses (discussed below), they are both intended to understand a subject matter and by bringing them together the chances of "neutralising the flaws of one

method and strengthening the benefits of the other for better research results"
increases (Hussein, 2009).

A qualitative research method is mostly suitable for collecting data from a relatively smaller sample. Unlike quantitative methods, one cannot measure or calculate the results using qualitative methods, but it allows the researcher the scope to analyse the data by providing descriptive accounts (Collis & Hussey, 2013). In less explored research topics, qualitative methods can help by allowing a better understanding of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 as cited in Hoepfl, 1997). With its potential in descriptive accounts this method can generate interest in the broader perspective of a study by opening more avenues to discover for the researcher.

As Silverman (2016) states, "Qualitative research can capitalise on fieldwork relationships with practitioners to stimulate interest in their findings". Also, the descriptive accounts of the findings in the field and from other research on similar lines benefit researchers with scope for comparison and learning from them (Silverman, 2016). This method also allows a researcher to apply new innovative means and approach in their investigation or data collection (Silverman, 2016).

For any research it is really important that it is conducted in as much natural circumstances as possible for the findings to be closer to reality. As Wimmer & Dominick (1983) and Dillon, Madden & Firtle (1993) state, "Qualitative research methodology lets the researcher view behaviour in natural surroundings without the artificiality that encloses experimental survey research from time to time".

As this research's aim was to understand the campaigning and voting behaviour as well as the intentions behind social media usage, it was important to conduct the research in the participant's natural surroundings where they could be at ease while

answering or discussing questions. Also, it was important for this research to be conducted in the locations associated with the topic to view and understand the respondent's surroundings and behaviour at the place of action. For these reasons the interviews were conducted at the offices of the political leaders were they make decisions and implement them. The interviews with students were conducted inside their university campuses were they most students routinely engage in or come across events of political nature through peer discussions, university elections etc. Qualitative research can also be helpful in improving the researcher's understanding on the matter of investigation as several different points of views on the research phenomenon can emerge during the study.

The qualitative research method also allows scope for on the spot changes and adjustments if required depending on the participant's response. A researcher can ask a question in different ways to get clearer answers. Since qualitative methods are adaptable and flexible, they provide researchers with the choice to implement new tools to draw information (Hoepfl, 1997). This method is beneficial for the current study due to its adaptability as fresh and diverse points of views may occur during the course of study and data collection (Liamputtong, 2013).

4.6   Limitations of the qualitative method

In terms of disadvantages, qualitative research samples are mostly smaller in size due to which the results of the study cannot be generalised for the entire population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). To overcome this limitation, qualitative research is often conducted along with quantitative research where qualitative data can

strengthen the understanding of the research phenomena while quantitative provides bigger generalizable data.

Data reliability can be another issue in qualitative study as the data gathering process requires the researcher to be "closely involved" with the respondents. Such a situation can create biases and may threaten the objectivity of the results produced (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Qualitative research needs to be well planned, otherwise, it may produce worthless results. It is important for a qualitative researcher to be able to focus and not divert from the key concepts of the study because it is easily possible to get carried away when too many new and diverse information emerge during the course of the qualitative study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

4.7   Data collection method and tools

For the purpose of this research, in depth interviews were conducted. In depth interviews are personal and semi-structured interviews that aim to identify participant's emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding a particular research matter. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask questions freely and explore deeper at any point necessary (Hoepfl, 1997). The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees while eliminating non-response rates, but interviewers require the necessary skills to successfully carry out such interviews (Fisher, 2005; Wilson, 2003). As Hoepfl (1997) suggests theoretical sensitivity is one of the essential qualities for qualitative research interviewers which in short means the insight and awareness that an interviewer should have in terms of

his/her understanding of the data and research. Barriball & While (1994) suggest two key qualities for qualitative interviewers, that an interviewer should be able to establish "competent use and understanding" of the interview and the research and should have the "awareness of the errors or bias" that may arise during the interview and should be able to overcome any such difficulties.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially meant to be derived. However, there is always a crucial risk that the interview may deviate from the original aims and objectives of the study (Gill & Johnson, 2002).
As far as data collection tools were concerned, the interviews involved the use of semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as an interview
guide. Key questions in the form of interview guide were prepared to guide the interview towards the satisfaction of research objectives, but additional questions were included during the interviews whenever necessary. An interview guide can thus help ensure that the interviews stay focussed around the main phenomenon of the research (Hoepfl, 1997).

A questionnaire divided into two parts was developed, in order to collect the data from two main groups in the study - the political leaders and the voters (the supply side and demand side of this study). The two sections were: Questions for the political leaders and social media strategists and questions for the general voting age public from rural and urban India. In any electoral process, it is the political parties and leaders who try to understand the electorate's expectations and base their campaign around those expectations. By using social media for campaign

purposes, the political parties and leaders were trying to reach out to the voters providing them with the information about their plans and objectives and other information they might find relevant. The voters, want to participate in the electoral process and expect information and interaction which political leaders aim to provide via social media. If one political leader does not engage in fulfilling these needs, then they risk losing ground to their opponents. Overall, therefore, it was important for this research to understand both sides of the phenomenon and assess whether voter expectations matched party strategies.

The questions were structured as open-ended to allow the flow of discussion and crucial information which the researcher might have missed and could later include in the analysis. Interview questions were semi-structured and open ended. The questions were developed with the purpose of understanding and verifying whether a personality centred campaign has had any positive or negative impact over the voting choices. Another consideration was to understand whether the use of social media and Twitter, in particular, has had any impact in positively driving personality centric campaign as observed in several recent election studies.

The questionnaire used for the semi structured interviews included the following main questions:

Part one- Campaign strategists and political leaders

1. What is the need for personalisation? Why do politicians post about their personal or private life on Twitter? (objectives?).

2. Who is the audience that politicians want to target on social media and why? How much do they know about this audience? Do they monitor who follows them and why? (agenda/strategy?).

3. How has communication strategy with voters changed over last electoral cycle (in view of social media uses) and why? (change).

4. What are the benefits and drawbacks of communicating on social media? (journalistic immunity, more freedom, trolls?).

5. Who in your opinion has used social media successfully during the elections and why? (success comparison).

6. Does the possibility of two-way communication on social media allow leaders to individualise the party message? (individualisation and privatisation).

7. How is political personalisation on social media different from television and newspapers and is social media a bigger and more efficient enabler of personalisation or does it hinder personalisation?

Part Two- Voters

1. How do they evaluate the leaders when they decide which party to vote for in the election?

2. Does social media presence of political leader increase their likability and trustworthiness and how important are personal likability and trustworthiness as criteria to differentiate between politicians? (the factors are assumed to be parts of personalisation).

3. Is social media presence of politicians making their communication entertaining for voters? Should politics be entertaining? (aim- to understand whether SM personalised campaigning helps in reaching out to wider

electorate and making politics more accessible for people who are generally not interested in politics).

4. Are politicians distracting attention from questions of principles and policies through personalisation in campaigning? How?

5. Has ideology been abandoned in politics and is it less about clashes of great ideas and more about personal charisma of leaders?

6. What are their expectations from political leaders on social media? Do they think that politicians should use social media and if so, what should they be doing?

4.8   Twitter data collection method

In the second phase of data collection, Twitter data was collected from the timelines of leaders of three major political parties (the Bhartiya Janta Party(BJP), the Congress Party and the Aam Admi Party or AAP). In total, nine Twitter accounts were selected that included three accounts from each political party. The Twitter accounts included one political leader's account from each party,
one party spokesperson's account from each party and one campaign strategist's account from each party.

The data gathered from Twitter mainly focussed on all tweets from the above accounts during the 2014 election campaign period that is from December 2013 to the Elections in May 2014.

4.9   Data analysis

Two main methods of analysis were employed. Firstly, the nature of the research was exploratory, meaning that it is a new area being explored due to there being little

or no other research or information available concerning this particular area under investigation (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

Major and reoccurring themes in the qualitative interview data were noted and compared and matched with the data obtained from the Twitter timelines. This enabled patterns in the combined data to emerge. The themes thus obtained were then compared with the existing literature to see whether they matched or not.

Content analysis method was used to analyse the data which was gathered from personal interviews. According to Moore & McCabe (2005), this is the type of research whereby data gathered is categorized in themes and sub-themes, so as to be able to be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in data collected being reduced and simplified, while at the same time producing results that may then be measured using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis gives the ability to researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives. However, human error is highly involved in content analysis, since there is the risk for researchers to misinterpret the data gathered, thereby generating false and unreliable conclusions (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008).

4.10 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted with ethical approval from the University of Salford. All the interviews were conducted with informed consent that the data will be used for academic purposes only and their identity would remain confidential and anonymous. Before starting the interview, they were informed that the entire

conversation will be recorded on a voice recorder. It was made sure that they do not reveal any sensitive information, no questions of sensitive nature were asked.

In the case of data from Twitter, no ethical approval was sought after as Twitter is essentially a public platform. According to the research findings of Zimmer & Proferes (2014), out of 380 academic publications on Twitter during the years 2007 to 2012, only four percent (16 papers) had any form of ethical approval for using Twitter data and the rest had treated this data as public data and hence did not have any mention of ethical considerations. Using their research as example, this study also applied a similar approach in Twitter data collection and use considering that none of the Twitter account holders would have any objection over the privacy of their already public tweets.

All the Twitter accounts studied were Twitter verified, eliminating any chances of using fake or troll accounts. Using only verified accounts also negated any chances of using any wrong information tweeted/published in the name of a politician. Moreover, Twitter itself mentions in its terms of service that, "Twitter broadly and instantly disseminates your public information to a wide range of users, customers, and services, including…organizations such as universities…that analyse the information for trends and insights" and "Our default is almost always to make the information you provide through the Services public…" (Twitter, 2016). Therefore, after much consideration, it was presumed in this research that none of the account holders would have any objection over their Twitter data use.

4.11 Research Limitations

Due to this research project being a media & politics research, interviewing

small and large political leaders and experts was core to it. Accessing important

party politicians and staff proved to be extremely difficult as most important party

members and leaders are understandably run a tight schedule. Out of the hundreds

of emails sent out, most emails remained unanswered and many declined the

request. Most of the contacts were either too busy to participate or did not participate

due to their party's stringent internal policy against participating in any such study.

Around a third of the emails sent out returned as rejected or access

denied. Ultimately, a total of 12 interviews were obtained in the first

category of participants.

Getting hold of party spokespersons was comparatively easier as they were mostly

ready for interviews once they received details about the purpose and content of the

study although they could be reached after several postponed appointments.

Interviewing university students in urban areas did not pose any serious issue as

they were quite vocal about their opinions and showed deep interest in both political

affairs and digital media. But, it was difficult to win the confidence of the students

from rural areas as they were initially reluctant to speak on the record. This could be

because of their fear of getting easily identified over their opinions or due to their

own university's policies.

Travelling to rural areas was quite difficult as blocked roadways and train

cancellations are common there. A few times, the meetings had to be cancelled in

last minute as the expected participant could not be reached due to poor

communication services.

In collecting Twitter data, the researcher was faced with a serious issue over the limited number of downloadable tweets and its download format. Twitter currently does not allow downloading over 3200 tweets per account and it is difficult to convert the data into excel files or any other coding friendly format. The limited data could easily be downloaded in pdf format were the frequency of themes could be assessed. For a larger number of tweets and more formatting options, a third party professional software was required which was beyond the funding scope of the project.

Due to the limited timeframe and scope of this MPhil research, the sample size selected for data collection was comparatively smaller. Before making any generalisation, it would be practical to test the findings of this research with a larger sample. The results of Twitter data again can't be seen as a standard at this stage due to its small sample size and needs verification with bigger data sample. However, the smaller sample size does reveal the research phenomena successfully. A more extensive research and large scale study is required to make the findings of this research more plausible. The small sample size in a comparatively large country, poses limitations to the internal validity of the findings as for internal validity, the findings need to be a "true representation of reality" (Denzin, 1970 as cited in Brink, 1993). Efforts were made to keep the sample as random and diverse as possible to avoid any monotony or bias in data but, due to the vastness of the country and its population this study would benefit from a much bigger sample and much more extensive research.

Looking at one election, in one country through a very small sample size, the findings are always going to be contextual and of limited scope. For external validity of the findings so that its scope of applicability increases (Brink, 1993), this research requires to be conducted in a wider region, in different time periods (campaign, non-campaign) and for different elections, looking at several candidates.

Chapter. 5 Social Media, Personalisation & Campaign Logic in Indian Politics: The 2015 Elections

This chapter analyses the qualitative interview data gathered, in light of the main research question and the literature reviewed in previous chapters. The data was collected with the focus on understanding where and how social media fits into political campaign strategy in India, which traditionally has high levels of personalisation. The qualitative interview data discussed below, was collected by conducting personal face to face interviews with political leaders, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly, campaign strategists and prominent scholars in Indian politics and media studies (see ch.4). Also, to understand whether the campaign strategy actually matches with the electorate's expectations, data was gathered through focus groups with young voting population who mostly use social media. Such themes were then noted and compared with the themes and examples observed on the Twitter timelines of the political leaders from the three main political parties during the 2014 Indian General elections.

The discussion in earlier chapters suggest that personalisation in politics is not a new phenomenon. In both India as well as the world politics, we have seen various examples of charismatic leaders who have been remembered more for their dynamic personalities rather than policies. In India, a democratic (parliamentary) system of politics, theoretically, the party should be the highlight of the campaign. But, as established in previous election studies, even in parliamentary systems like India, individual candidates have repeatedly acquired centre stage (Holtz-Bacha, Langer, Merkle, 2014). Indeed, individual political personalities have become part of the

party's core campaign strategy in order to gain popularity among the electorate. Such personalisation in politics is impacted and accelerated by external factors such as media coverage of a political leader, leader's appearances in television debates and more recently, by the presence, activity and visibility of the leader on social media such as Twitter (see chapter 2).

Through the analysis and discussion of the interview and Twitter data in this chapter, we try to understand how, why and where social media fits into the personalised campaigning in Indian elections. To answer these questions, we look at the phenomena from two angles with the help of the interview data. Firstly, we try to understand the nature of social media content creation (by political parties & leaders) and its consumption by the electorate and secondly, and more importantly, the strategy behind using social media for personalised campaigning and its potential.

5.1   The growth and importance of social media in campaigning

Social media is a relatively new phenomenon in India. New and cheaper mobile technology has penetrated the mostly younger demography of India, resulting in their constant and active presence on social media platforms. Social media acts as a faster medium for communication and information sharing and allows a two-way interaction, which suits the comparatively busier lifestyle of the under 35 populations. This younger age group, which is the majority demographic is typically disengaged or disinterested in general politics, news or information from any other sources (Rupa P & Karnamarajan, 2015, Chopra, 2014).

Hence, seeing its growing popularity, political leaders and parties too have adopted social media to communicate with the electorate and spread information about

themselves. During the 2014 General Elections, for the first time, social media's prominence was seen to be rising in political campaigning (Chopra, 2014)

In both the interviews conducted here with party officials and the analysis of Twitter data, it emerged that social media was viewed as having certain advantages over mainstream media for campaigning. Social media was adopted as a new election campaign strategy, which seemed to focus mostly around highlighting the party candidate/leader and bringing them to centre stage.

Although a parliamentary system in theory, leader centric, personalised politics is historically common in Indian political system (see chapter 3). Adoption of social media in political campaigning has intensified personalised politics due to the platform's reach, one to one and two-way interactive nature. Also, the possibility to relay individualised, leader centric messages, creating celebrity image and fan following and giving insight into the personal/private lives of politicians has made social media the campaigning platform of choice for politicians in India.

The findings from qualitative interviews and Twitter data also reinforce the major personalisation aspects of social media, such as, individualisation and privatisation and its role and influence in the political process (see chapter one and two). Political parties in India recognise that the nature of content (news and views) creation and consumption has changed dramatically in the last few years (Chopra 2014; Howard & Hussain 2011; Jaffrelot 2015). Both politicians and political experts agree that since the beginning of this decade, elections have seen significant impacts from social media and its role in political discourse has grown substantially (Chadha & Guha 2016). A similar point of view was observed in the qualitative interviews as well. In an interview (quoted below) with an academic in political studies in India, a clear and rapid change in election campaign style has been

observed in the past few years. Social media is seen as a popular medium and has broadened the reach of politicians, especially among the youth, which was not possible earlier.

> During earlier elections, when social media and communication facilities were not good, the politicians used to adopt other ways to communicate with their voters during elections. By door to door visits, public meeting, small gatherings etc. But for one decade or so, with the social media use and communication facility, even in the remote places in India it has been very successful. Politicians have made use of this particular facility and find it easier to reach the voters and especially young populations which forms majority of percentage in the country like India. (Dr. Yadav, personal interview, August 10, 2016)

Being present and active on social media is now seen as an integral part of current day political communication and campaign strategy. It is an essential part of modern society and acts as a common platform shared by both politicians as well as the electorate. Interviews with politicians in India, reinforces this point:

> In a techno savvy age, people need to be on social media. It is important to air your views via social media. (Ramen Deka, MP, personal interview, 13 August 2016)

> Strategy [for campaigns] has seen tremendous change. It is the need of the hour…, but since 2014 Narendra Modi used it a lot and reaped huge benefits too. (Pijush Hazarika, MLA, personal interview, 13 August, 2016)

As explained in earlier chapters, because of technological improvements, internet penetration in India has increased significantly, the cost of mobile technology has become more affordable and the improved multimedia capability of smart phones

have influenced the production and consumption of new media (Mishra & Monippally 2014). Similarly, lifestyle changes where society as a whole is living in a busier environment, the idea of consuming news and other media content "on the go" has become norm (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014).

> Due to technological upgrades and the internet, it's more important now. Electronic media and social media are fast media and cheap. The benefit is fast information. Earlier in print it was very slow. London news, within seconds I can know here in rural India. (Ramen Deka, MP, personal interview, 13 August, 2016)

> People are on social media these days, news is consumed on Twitter, politicians are on Twitter, because the messages are reaching the audience faster than the newspaper the next day… and because nobody cares whether the news (TV, newspaper) is even there, they haven't got the time to sit and read or watch TV. (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 19 August, 2016).

Both statements above indicate that with the advancements in communication technology in the recent years, there has been significant change in the way news and media is created and consumed in India. This has impacted both the voters and the politicians alike.

5.1.1   Content creation

The electorate, especially younger voters, uses social media for a range of reasons which spans from socialising, connecting with friends to gathering news, information, opinions and taking part in debates. Due to such penetration of social media in the electorate's lives, most interview participants, especially social media team members

of political parties or the political leaders active on social media, agreed that being

active on social media is an integral part of political campaigning.

> The audience or target is the younger voters. Because they are most of
> the time on social media…they like to know interesting things not boring
> politics. On social media, politics is presented in interesting way, like what
> a leader does in his personal time… (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal
> interview, 19 August, 2016).

Providing interesting facts about and from politicians own lives is considered

important as there is an inherent demand among the electorate for such information

from their political leaders.

> There are millions whose primary source of information is Facebook or
> Twitter. So, you have to cater all these different people using the 'kind of
> content' they want to look at, watch or listen or read. So, that is why,
> different medium will have different kind of content (Ankit Lal, AAP
> strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

Despite its growing importance, social media was initially accepted and realised by

only a few smaller and new political parties (e.g. AAP) and a few enthusiastic

political leaders. Political leaders such as Shashi Tharoor from the oldest political

party in India (Indian National Congress) was an early exception. He set up twitter

profile in 2010 to actively establish a two-way communication with the electorate

(Nair, 2014). Nevertheless, following a serious backlash to a controversial tweet,

where he referred to economy class in airlines as "cattle class", (the tweet was later

deleted), social media was thus viewed as a risky proposition by most political parties and/or leaders (Nair, 2014; Biswas, 2014). As one AAP party strategist pointed out, unlike few years ago, these days, the social media activities of public figures are taken seriously as it has the potential to make or break their image. Twitter or social media did not matter until a few years ago but now it has become essential for a politician to be active and popular on these platforms.

> Who would have cared what somebody was doing on Twitter apart from an extreme case of Sashi Tharoor like person who…back in 2009 people would not have cared about deleting a tweet. Now it's part of politics…
> (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

> The smaller regional party (AAP), which came into being in 2012 following a mass movement against corruption, ignited and accelerated by social media, found considerable support among the Indian population (Biswas, Ingle & Roy, 2014; Udupa, 2014). Their experience of using social media for the mass movement, led the party to use the medium extensively to win the 2013 Delhi state elections (Safiullah, Pathak & Singh, 2016).

> Kejriwal used social media very successfully in the Delhi state elections. He publicised his election promises, he popularised it on social media (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 19 August, 2016).

Until this point though, the AAP was largely, an exception, other bigger political parties in India were unsure or even ignorant of the sudden phenomena and could not see any value in creating online presence.

As noted earlier, the leader of the biggest and the oldest party in India (Indian National Congress) did not even have an active social media presence until after the 2014 General Elections. They clearly did not see much advantage in online presence until suffering a significant defeat in these elections. As one current state legislative assembly member admitted, (quoted below), his reluctance to use social media and accepted that he did not find much value in using the social media. According to him, the medium was for a small section of the younger, urban population and not for a senior political leader like himself. Interestingly, he clearly did not want to be seen as too approachable. Like a lot of other older party members, he believed that being easily accessible, diluted one's importance.

> …platforms like Social Media are prone to stagnation or saturation after a certain time. In a country like India, certain level of secrecy or mystery is important to create a cult following…too much Social Media use exposes your strengths and weaknesses. For keeping their attraction and continuity and also for keeping a cult following, mystery is important. (Emanuelle Moshahary, MLA, personal interview, 09 August, 2016)

The important point to consider is the context of this particular interviewee - a senior politician (MLA) in rural part of north-eastern India with traditional ideas regarding new technology. Mobile technology still has limited penetration and impact compared to larger urban areas of India (Raman & Chebrolu 2007; Gupta & Jain, 2014). However, this clearly indicates an under-appreciation of a relatively new communication phenomenon amongst parts of the older political establishment. In the rural areas, social media could, however, be functioning in the manner of a "two step flow" model (see chapter 2). Here, certain members of the community such as activists, local leaders or a well-educated person who are active on social media

have some influence on shaping the opinion of their group or wider community. These influencers then influence opinion of the community they belong to.

> We reach out to people who are influence makers… our target is to make sure that these influencers are influenced by the content that we create (online). (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

Increasingly, the social media phenomenon is being accepted as an important element in contemporary election campaigning by many politicians, which is evident from politicians increasingly subscribing to it and actively using it in their campaigning. The participants from at least two major political parties in India (AAP and BJP) clearly stated that they considered it as an important and decisive factor in the run to the general elections 2014 and subsequent elections. Interviews with the political leaders and their party's and/or individual's Twitter timelines indicate that they certainly believed in social media's effectiveness. Both these parties had exceptionally high social media presence and had successful results to follow in the elections. The high numbers of leader-centric personalised hashtags, putting emphasis on personality characteristics of leaders intending to popularise them and the enormous number of times they were retweeted (see Twitter analysis- Appendix) underlines the growing social media phenomena. In the statement below, an MLA from the BJP explains that to be successful in politics, one has to be popular and on social media where it is faster and easier to create a popular and positive image. Equally, the lead strategist of Aam Aadmi Party saw social media as an "enabler" i.e. it provides individual politicians, the power to broadcast and communicate directly with the people without involving any established traditional media.

> Politics is about what's trending. Popularity on social media is fast forward way to create positive image… (Pijush Hazarika, personal interview, 07 August, 2016)

> …social media is generally an enabler of sort. So, we started using social media back in 2011 (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

Further, the head of the social media management team of AAP, highlighted the objectives and the rationale of being present on several social media platforms. According to him, the various platforms have differing objectives. Their target ranges from broadcasting party events and providing party & leadership information, countering trending narratives and providing video content for sharing and consumption at people's own convenience. Being present on all these platforms in several digital formats increases their reach and penetration among the online population. Also, each social media platform is structured to suit information in certain formats (See Figure- 5.2). For example, Twitter's (original) 140 character is appropriate for one-liners that can be used for creating a narrative through single or multiple tweets (Dayter, 2015). Whereas, for those interested in detailed information, YouTube and blogs are better suited as their formats support longer videos and stories.

> …all these platforms, they have different kind of material different audiences… you have to cater to all these different people using the kind of content they want to look, watch or listen or read (Charanjeet Singh, strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).
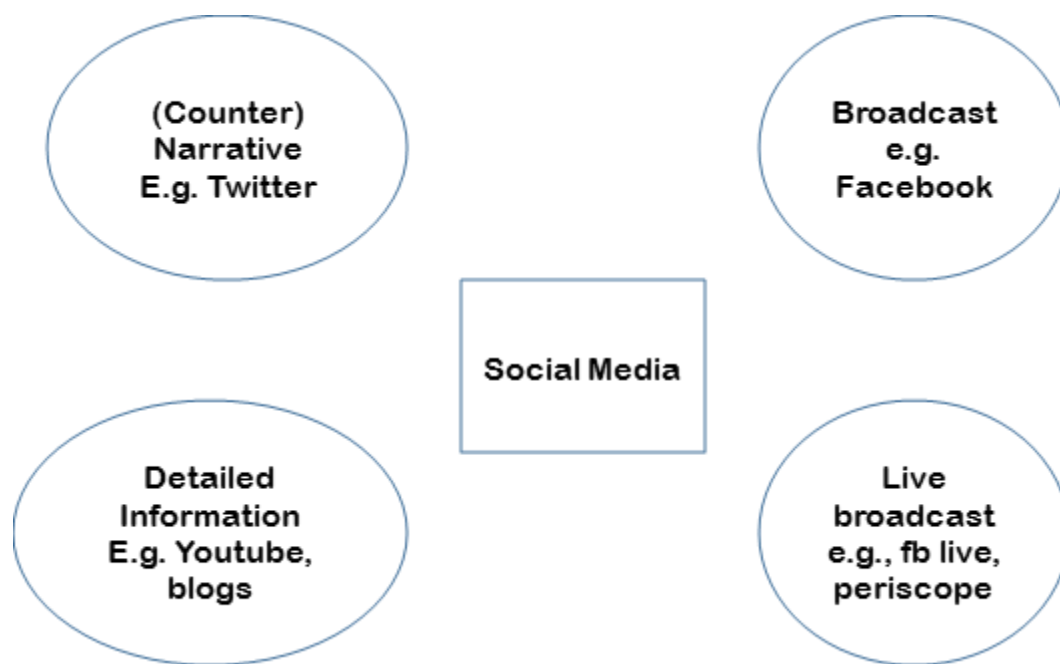
Figure 5.1: Social media platforms as tools in political campaign strategy

Therefore, as part of the online campaign strategy, different content is created for the various social media platforms (See Figure 5.1). Because of the low bandwidth issue with internet in India, mediums such as Facebook and YouTube are less preferable where internet connectivity is limited (O'Neill et.al., 2016). Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube etc. require high data availability for their images and videos to load. As one interviewee pointed out, low-resolution banners on Facebook is, therefore, a better medium to just communicate limited information such as information banners that can be viewed in low bandwidth (weaker internet connection). Similarly, Twitter is the preferred medium for low bandwidth issues. On Twitter, links to more detailed higher resolution content can be provided, which the people can view when convenient. Also, Twitter is the preferred medium for counter-narratives, fact checks, short effective messages and low resolution audio-visual content. Therefore, as one party strategist suggested, same content and similar

messaging has to be created in various formats for various platforms to specifically

suit the requirements of the consumer and his access to limited technology. In short,

the messages and strategy for campaign are shaped by the technological limitation

to a certain degree.

> Facebook has its own limitations because of the bandwidth limitation that
> general people have. So we curate the same content into different forms
> (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

However, in recent years, content creation has also become a much more affordable

and cheaper option for both political parties and individuals because phones with

cameras are making media content creation much more accessible (Joyce, 2010).

Unlike the mainstream media which requires much higher resolution videos and an

expensive setup for broadcast, the social media content creators just need a simple

smart phone that has become much more affordable recently and internet data that

is available at very low rates compared to rest of the world.

India has one of the fastest growing smart phone market according to Cisco which is

driven by sub $90 smartphones mainly owned by semi urban/ rural population.

This is why different formats are required for consumption by rural, urban population.

Twitter, which uses less data to convey the idea also becomes important to

challenge views. On Twitter, links to heavy files, pictures, videos can be shared,

which the consumer can view according to their convenience.

The low cost of internet data plans in India is yet another factor making internet and

mobile technology widely accessible. India has one of the cheapest data plans in

world when we compare per mb cost to a mobile user. For example, unlimited data

plan for Canadian users cost 3000 rupees while Indians pay roughly 1000 rupees for it (see chapter 3).

The dynamics of the market, urban-rural divide, limitations of internet penetration, bandwidth and cost of mobile data are the factors which are driving the use of multiple platforms on social media for creating different types of content which suits the needs of different people. As the above figure 5.1 illustrates that political parties are using each platform for different purposes. This also underlines the point that the reach of social media through various platforms has been substantial in connecting the electorate from different sections of the society.

To summarise, social media has various platforms and each of them cater to different requirements and demands of the consumers i.e. detailed high resolution videos on YouTube or short & strong one-liners with links to detail on Twitter that can reach both very low bandwidth demography and the urban classes which may demand more quality consumption. Thus, it has very broad reach among the electorate. Similarly, the cost of creating content for modest smartphones, such as low resolution audio-visual content and uploading it for sharing has also allowed political parties to use the medium for the purpose of individual or party's campaign objectives. Also, for individual politicians it is now much easier to have a personalised communication channel. For example, the Twitter feed where they can personally feed a two-way communication with their electorate through a much cheaper and efficient medium. Individual political leaders have now been enabled to manage their own personal accounts. This has provided them the option to communicate or broadcast directly and personally and provide details which are much more personalised. For example, AAP leader is advised by his strategy team

on personalised Twitter content but ultimately, he decides what to tweet and tweets himself from his personal account.

> Most of the time Arvind (AAP leader) tweets on his own and we (strategy team) feed him the things that we think might be interesting from his personal life or otherwise and he decides whether to democratize them or not (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

They can highlight their personal characteristics by giving away certain glimpses from their personal life through their social media accounts. For example, recurrent tweets or pictures depicting religious inclination can create an image for a leader being a religious one. Or, when more focus is seen to be given to honesty through tweets or hashtags, the leader's image becomes synonymous to honesty. To an extent, that assists them in personifying the ideas and ideologies they stand for. The interview excerpt below ascertains that political parties very well understand this idea and strategize their campaign around it.

> …every idea needs to be personified. So, what you see in the form of pictures of Arvind or Kumar or Manish (political leaders), for us they are actually personification of the idea. So, they are not the idea themselves. But people need faces they can identify with. If I say that OK honesty is very good. Its good everybody knows. But who do they relate the honesty with? In our specific case we gave them a few people who they could relate the honesty with (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

5.1.2 Content consumption

All the interviewees in this research agreed that the younger generation spent a majority of time on social media compared to other media platforms.

Since, most of the electorate are younger and increasingly in possession of smartphones, they become an immediate target for the political parties for social media content consumption. Therefore, most of the political parties devise strategies to reach this younger demographic through the social media.

> …usually, we want to target the young generation because they are majority and are very conversant, who uses this mobile phone, social media, internet, Twitter, WhatsApp and all the other. They can very easily reach to the population who are in use of this social media (Dr. Yadav, personal interview, August 10, 2016).

The Uttar Pradesh state government in India distributed free laptops and tablets to college students as part of their election campaign in 2012-13. Interestingly, the laptops had the image of the political leader on desktops which could not be removed. Similarly, in order to lure the younger netizens, the opposition party responded by creating a manifesto for free internet data with the laptops and also proposed free smartphones due to the popularity of earlier party's scheme among the lower socio-economic groups. Similarly, the AAP won the Delhi state elections with a huge mandate in 2015 over their promise to create free Wi-Fi zones across Delhi in their campaign manifesto.

> My class students said they voted for Kejriwal because he is going to give us free WI-FI. That was their only concern. Because he publicized it,

popularised it in the social media. This is the general perception among young college going people, this is what matters to them (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 19 August, 2016).

It is obvious that AAP, although being a smaller party, has utilised social media and has been more popular among the younger generation because of the importance it gave to internet access in their campaign. The announcement about creation of free Wi-Fi zones was part of their strategy to target younger population (See figure 5.2).

These examples show the importance of information and communication technologies among the masses and that the political parties and leaders understand its importance. They also demonstrate the importance given to mobile devices and internet usage by the politicians. It demonstrates the growing significance, popularity and relevance of mobile technology in the context of Indian elections.

Chetan Bhagat ✔
@chetan_bhagat

Follow

These were the AAP hoardings for Free Wifi pre-elections. Do you see a terms and conditions apply anywhere?

5 साल केजरीवाल
पूरी दिल्ली में फ्री WiFi देंगे
आम आदमी पार्टी

7:18 AM - 13 Feb 2015

Figure 5.2: AAP hoardings promising free Wi-Fi in Delhi

The popularity and significance of social media has increased to such an extent that even the mainstream media picks up debates, controversies and issues from social media (Chadwick, 2011). As evident from the interview (see below), politicians see social media as integral to their campaign strategy as they can target newsmakers like journalists and editors through this medium who can then spread and accelerate ideas or news that is favourable to them.

> We target newsmakers on social media, the advantage is the speed at which news travels through this medium, takes things to a whole new level…something happening on social media it is very likely that it will

break into the main stream news. (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

Because social media is much more dynamic, it can be much more volatile as well. One focus group participant gave the example of a student at a prestigious university in Delhi had been framed on social media as a traitor for giving anti-national speech. Whether his speech was anti-national or not is unclear but the issue got huge momentum on social media and grabbed headlines across the country.

Social media has the potential of misleading the people and its impact can be seen in rural regions also. For ex- Kanhaiya lal case happened in JNU(Delhi) but even in Jhansi (small town), he is considered a traitor. Although he did not say anything bad, but through social media he got a bad image all over India, even in small towns and villages. Social media does have? a chain reaction. (Pranav Kumar, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

The participation of younger population who consider themselves to be a stake holder in setting up the entire discourse has been made possible by social media. Comments like above show that sometimes the agenda and narrative is framed on social media.

In some cases, where the mainstream media would not give importance to an issue because of their oversight or editorial decisions or other power dynamics, the narrative is set on social media. In short, social media is being used to bypass traditional media and communicate directly.

> There are news channels out there who don't want to broadcast about us
> or trying to portray that our party's decisions are not going down well with
> the people. Reason could be anything, maybe their editor prefers others
> over us or because we are new… (Ankit Lal, strategist, personal interview,
> 21 August, 2016).

There has been an increasing feeling that before the social media phenomena, the younger electorate was left out of the political process, mostly because of lack of information available to them and the lack power through a medium which they could use and influence.

> Leaders definitely should be on social media and their duty should be
> grievance solving, reply to their queries, responsive. It gives hope that
> something is being done. At least on social media we can see that out of
> one billion one common person is being heard. (Praem Hidam, personal
> interview, 17 August, 2016)

5.2   Strategy

The social media strategy of individual political parties and the political leaders were inclined to be part of their respective macro-party strategy influenced in turn by the specific elections, regions, issues and other contexts like a candidate's background. However, drawing on the interviews and Twitter data, several key themes of social media election strategy can be identified. These include personalisation in the form of both individualisation and privatisation. Figure 5.3 below illustrates how the social media is assimilated into the personalised campaign strategy. It shows the dynamics of political campaigning in Indian politics and the strategy that political leaders use in their campaigning with the help of social media. The different aspects of

personalisation such as privatisation, individualisation and humanisation can be seen here functioning as strategy here. As social media provides platform for two-way interaction, it is also utilised for influencing the influential social media users who in turn act as the amplifiers for spreading out their messages.
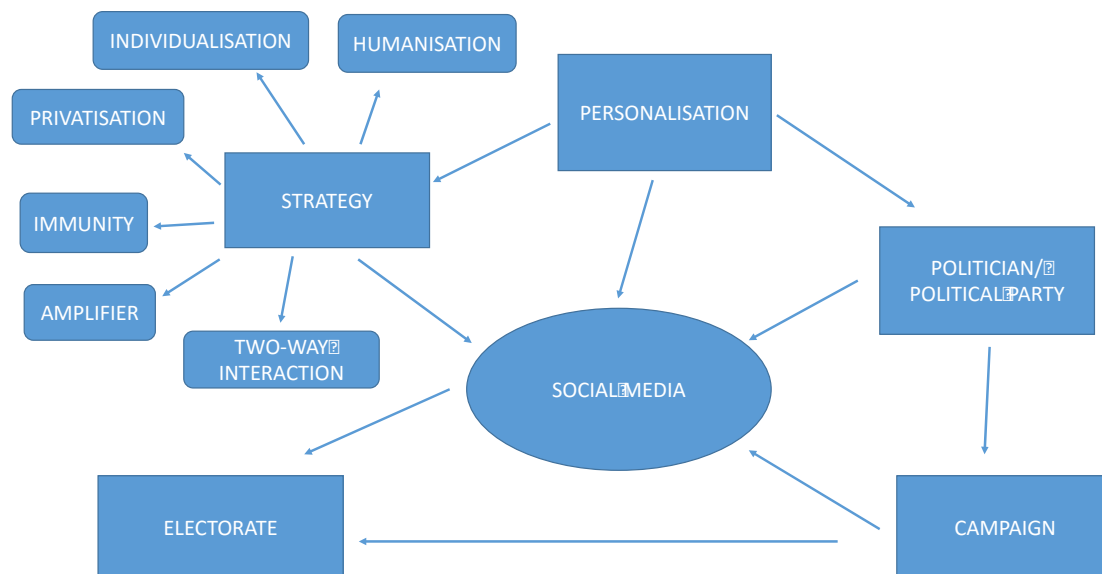

Figure 5.3: Social media strategy for personalised political campaigning

5.2.1   Individualisation

Individualisation has been the most obvious effect of assimilating social media in main stream campaigning in India. Although this phenomenon was quite prevalent in past elections too, it hadn't been so apparent and at such massive scale.

Personal credential vs Party ideology

Individual party leaders who were active on social media with their own personal accounts such as on Twitter, used the platform to create an individualised profile of themselves that appear to be independent from their party. Social media platforms

allowed the individual political leaders to communicate to their voters on an individual and personal level, which were beyond being a party representative. Even though the messages were the same as that of the leader's party, they were now associated more with the leader than the party.

There were no contrasting principles or ideology propagated by individual leaders that were in opposition to their own political party affiliation. However, the personal outreach to their voters through social media was akin to an add on. Consequently, the personal publicity through social media was like a building work on the foundations laid by the party principles and ideology. For example, the right wing conservative party talking of majoritarian views and nationalism prepared the groundwork for Modi as the projected leader for the prime ministerial candidature. In addition to the nationalist leader, Modi also had personal credentials of being a good administrator while serving as the chief minister of the state of Gujrat. These credentials were heavily highlighted through social media.

> Social media presence has brought change to a great extent, for example, you can take the campaigning of Narendra Modi. He was continuously tweeting about all the development works while being a Chief Minister of Gujarat. Social media presence formed an opinion and image in the minds of people. In this case, Narendra Modi was being seen as the pro development leader. (Shivangi Singh, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

According to an academician in political studies (quoted above), Narendra Modi created a pro development leader's image through social media. He had been constantly updating his Twitter feed with information about developmental works taking place under his name. As a result, he was credited with bringing about many

progressive developmental approaches to the state where he portrayed Gujarat as a very business-friendly state.

While analysing the Twitter account of Modi and his social media team members, it was quite evident that they wanted to project an image of Modi as a "Vikas Purush" i.e. a leader committed to the single aim of development. Many of his personal initiatives such as Narmada river front project, solar energy project and many others were heavily highlighted with pictures and details with credit to Modi (no mention again of his political party).

> In 2013 Modi was branded as Vikas Purush- Development man. People never actually understood their ideology. People never saw the individual policies that were going to come with BJP govt. Party ideology takes a backseat. And social media definitely plays a huge role in this. (Praem Hidam, personal interview, 17 August 2016)

One such example has been the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in India. The BJP has traditionally opposed many policy decisions that allowed foreign companies to have advantage against competing Indian companies. However, Modi through his personal and publicity accounts on Twitter, publicised his credential as someone who is business friendly without distinguishing between Indian or foreign companies. Here, we see that Modi has clearly been trying to create his own personal image and identity that is independent from his party. (See Figure 5.4 and 5.5).

PMO India ✔
@PMOIndia

Following ∨

My definition of FDI for the people of India is
First Develop India: PM @narendramodi

7:34 AM - 25 Sep 2014

511 Retweets **453** Likes

💬 55   🔁 **511**   ♡ **453**   ✉

Figure 5.4: Pro FDI Tweet

Narendra Modi ✔
@narendramodi

Following ∨

Today's FDI reforms will give a boost to
employment, job creation & benefit the
economy. #TransformingIndia

Major impetus to job creation and
infrastructure: Radical changes in
FDI policy regime; Most sectors on
automatic route for FDI

Figure 5.5: Pro FDI Tweet

Personal social media accounts also became important tools in internal party battles

amongst heavyweight politicians. For example, in the selection of the Prime

Ministerial candidate for BJP, Modi raced ahead primarily with the help of his

personal campaigns across the country and a very active and strong personal campaigning on social media. Even before the general elections 2014, he became the highest followed political leader in India and subsequently became, the most followed global political leader on Twitter with 29.7 million followers (See Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6: M Modi, highest followed political leader in the world on Twitter

In sum, social media, provides many advantages to individuals for their personal promotion and publicity due to the direct interactive nature of this medium. It is a personal medium for individual political leaders to reach their constituencies and allows popular leaders to amass online followers with their personal charisma. It enables leaders to develop their own fan base or supporter network independent of the party. The personalised nature of social media platforms allows the political leaders to go beyond and/or across political affiliations where they publicise their personal beliefs, characteristics and virtues to create a bigger outreach than their party. This in turn gives them power within the party since the electorate is attached to the leader and not to the party. As one interviewee noted:

> Individuals do get highlighted. It is a personal broadcasting platform, which I can control. It is especially helpful when I have any differences with the party, when the party is not on my side, I can have an alternative to reach out to public and highlight myself- in a way it empowers. (MLA, personal interview, 07 August, 2016)

An Idea equals a person

An important and interesting observation that stood out in the analysis of data was the strategy of equating a person with an idea or vice-versa. As part of party's overall strategy (online, offline) campaigners aimed to project a leader and an idea that represented the party and make them synonymous with each other. This strategy was very similar to the concepts in advertising where a brand is created, promoted and advertised with the help of key words (values, characteristics) to the consumers so that the consumers find them inseparable and associate the product with a specific word/idea (Goldman, 1987). For example, the social media strategist for one party explained that associating an individual leader with a heroic/positive/noble idea increases the likeability of that leader among the public because people associate the big ideas with that personality.

> We love heroes…what you see in the form of pictures of Arvind (AAP leader), for us they are actually personification of the idea. People need faces they can identify with…over a period of time we made sure that when we talk about honesty we have an image of Arvind along with that…the person is the representation of that idea. (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

The AAP campaign strategist's equating of 'honesty' as an 'idea' with his party leader made strategic sense, since this new party came out of a two-year long anti-corruption movement. The political campaigning efforts of this party therefore, were aimed at almost 'patenting' the words 'honesty' and 'anti-corruption' exclusively for themselves. This was reflected in the Twitter analysis as well as the focus group discussions. Hashtags like honest or honesty were frequently and repeatedly tweeted while mentioning the party leaders name in AAP's Twitter account (See Twitter analysis in Appendix).

A further aspect of 'personalising an idea' is the way that it is appropriated to the political leader instead of the party. Today, the Indian media widely perceives the AAP, for example, to be a 'one-man' party, as the other main party figures were classified as dissidents before being removed from the party by the current leadership.

Similarly, the personalisation of ideas strategy in the BJP campaign was also reflected by its voters:

> Humne vote ek person ko kiya, jiski image aisi thi ki woh matlab development laayega ya change laayega (English translation- we voted for a person whose image was such that seemed he would bring development and change (Shivangi Singh, focus group interview, 17 August 2016).

In short, therefore, where a political party had one very dominant leader, there was concentrated efforts to adopt and identify some key ideas with that leader rather than the political party. Subsequently, the political leader then symbolised and personified the idea and the party. By contrast, parties who had leaders who were less popular, related the ideas to the party rather than the leader. For example, the opposition

Indian National Congress (INC), evidently tried to put more emphasis on the greatness of the Party over their party leader (See Twitter analysis in Appendix). Figure 5.7 shows the main campaign poster of the INC for 2014 General Election, in which the text translates as "It's not about me, it's about us" and also shows the party logo (the "Palm logo" below on the right)

Figure 5.7: Congress party election campaign advert, 2016 (Source: The Indian Express

Whereas, the text in the main campaign poster of the BJP (Figure 5.8) translates as "It must be Modi government this time" and "One mission NaMo (Narendra Modi) for PM 2014". This poster does not even have the party logo.
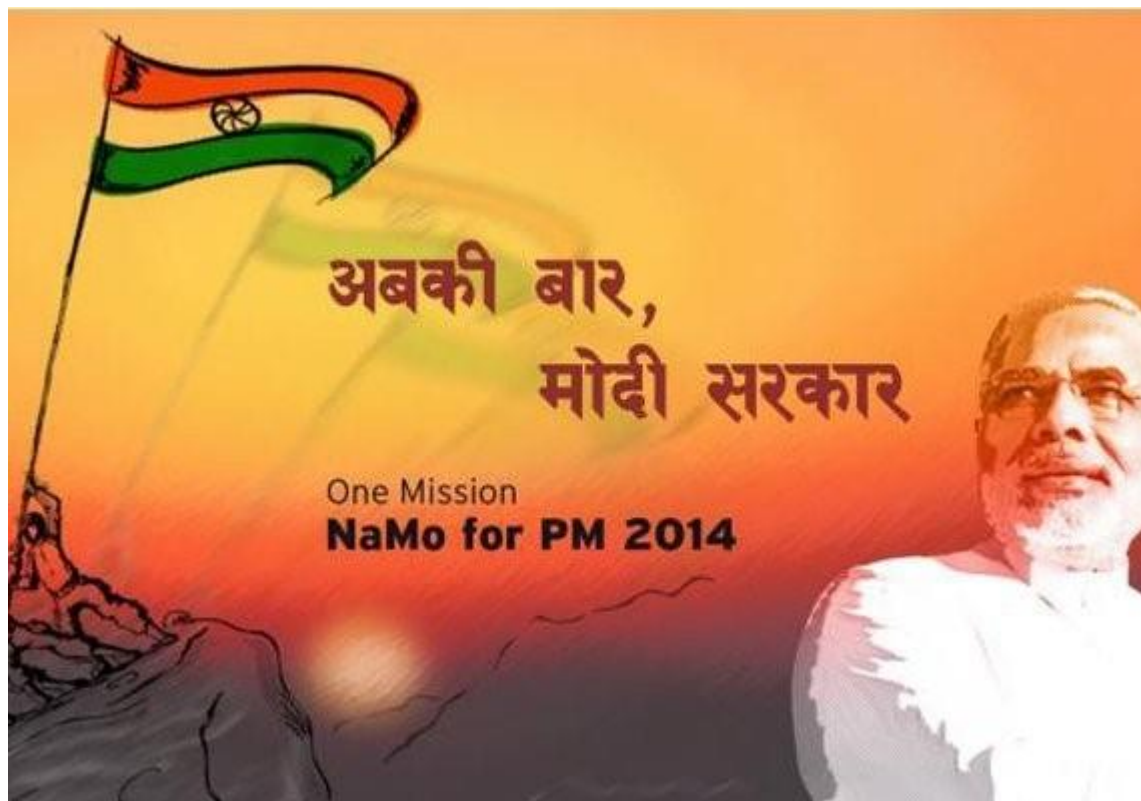
Figure 5.8: BJP party election campaign advert, 2016 Source: Twitter

The social media strategy reflected and further developed this approach. In case of stronger political leaders, the personal Twitter feed of a political leader as well as their party try to employ the strategy of personalisation where either the ideas were related to the individuals rather than a party or the personal characteristics of individuals were exemplified as the representative of the party ideology.

5.2.2   Privatisation

As discussed in chapter 2, the characteristic feature of privatisation is a shift in the focus on a leader from an occupier of public role or office holder to the leader as an individual person. Privatisation can materialise in various ways, such as humanisation, emotionalisation and celebritisation.

Curating a more human profile?

> [The] reason behind sharing personal stuff on SM is to attract people's attention. Tweeting about issues does not get much attention but if I put any sort of photo from personal life, that would get instantly get multiple likes. (MLA, personal interview, 07 August, 2016)

Tweets do not always have to be in public interest, people including politician use it as a personal communication platform and it is natural to relay personal matters on the platform. SM has made the line between public and personal thinner. Personal, everyday matter tweets can make a politician seem like ordinary person. (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 17 August, 2016).

Anybody can tweet personal things or something for everyone. But I may think he (political leader) is also like us, like any ordinary person (upon seeing personal tweets from a politician). (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 17 August, 2016).

An important observation from Twitter feed and the interviewees indicated that the Twitter timelines of the leaders and party associates consisted mostly of political issues and policy matters. However, their timelines were also suggestive of an effort by them to not limit them to just political and policy matters. This phenomenon can be described as curating a more humane public personality of the political leaders by tweeting about or including the political leaders in pictures, videos, texts, related to the leader's personal life, their faith, beliefs and cultural orientation. For example, there were several pictures identifying politicians as a family man or showcasing

them as God fearing or having an early morning yoga regime. (See figures 5.9 to

5.14).

Figure 5.9: PM Modi Twitter account snapshot, seeking mother's blessings

Modi does yoga and meditation every day. New photo gallery: abplive.in/incoming/2014/ …

RETWEETS 18 LIKES 4
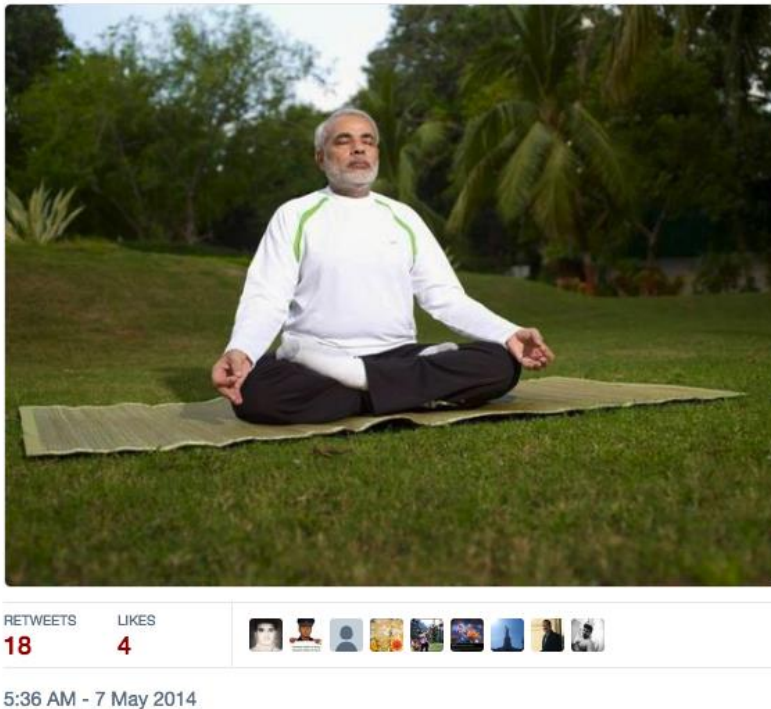
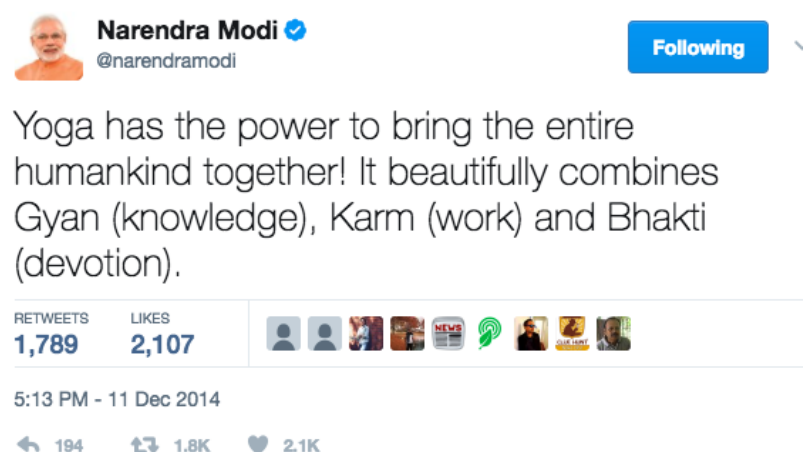5:36 AM - 7 May 2014

Figure 5.10: PM Modi doing Yoga- social media promotion reported by mainstream media

Figure 5.11: PM Modi Twitter account snapshot, using selfie for promoting to younger generation

Figure 5.12: AAP Twitter account snapshot, showing leader doing religious rituals

Figure 5.13: AAP Twitter account showing its leader's personal side- Eating with common people on the floor

While analysing the Twitter activities during the 2014 general elections, two political parties, the relatively new (AAP) and the established major (BJP), had two things in common: First, the use of social media by the leader of the political party to connect to their voters and second, that both were more successful than others in the election results. Both these parties, expressed the desire and the belief in social media as a political tool to interact, engage and get closer to their electorate. Both of them used the social media extensively to propagate their own individual ideas, values and personalities to the electorates. It appeared from their Twitter timelines that there was greater effort to keep the Twitter feed more personal than closer to party ideology. The frequency and number of leader centric personalised tweets and hashtags was much greater than the party centric ones for both these parties (See Twitter analysis).

Similarly, social media was also used to collect valuable feedback, understand trends and sentiments, and be responsive at once to new political developments. Thus as one interviewee noted:

> What people think about me and my work, their opinion, I can know it directly from them on Twitter. Best part is I can reach out to people directly and they can do the same. Paper and TV do not allow this sort of reach. There are more merits than demerits of social media. (Pijush Hazarika, MLA, personal interview 07 August 2016)

This points towards the importance of two-way communication via social media and the politician's understanding of its benefits. It can be safely concluded that social media was successfully used by the political parties who wanted to understand the

general population and present themselves as being closer to them both in terms of the reach and similar values, lifestyle and associations.

There was at least one aberration to this approach where the Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was not present on social media and did not have a personal Twitter feed. They were of the view that the party leader should have a mystery element in him. He should maintain a distance from the general public (a class apart from the mass public), and be a larger than life figure to be able to be a charismatic leader in Indian politics.

> In a country like India, certain level of secrecy or mystery is important for keeping their attraction (Emanuelle Moshahary, personal interview, 03 August, 2016)

> You can't keep everything out in the open, you shouldn't. Leader is to lead, if he looks like everyone else, how will he lead? (Ashok Jain, Congress, personal interview, 13 August, 2016)

Only in the aftermath of a disastrous campaign in 2015 did Rahul Gandhi create an active presence on social media.

Looking back, regarding the benefits of two-way communication, however, there were some alternative viewpoints that emerged from the interview data. The two-way communication on social media was not seen as beneficial in all situations for both sides of the spectrum. One of the focus group participants was of the view that political leaders and parties did not want to entertain any negative or anti-leader/party sentiments claiming that:

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> There is another aspect in terms of two-way communication, it is not always two-way. If my views are not acceptable they would block me, or thrashed or abused on social media. (Urvashi, focus group interview, 18 August, 2016).

According to this participant, a real two-way communication would mean a healthy acceptance of both positive and negative feedback and the current system was not really a two-way communication between the politicians and the electorate but more controlled top down marketing by political leaders.

In sum, however, it was evident that individual leaders who used the social media such as Twitter accounts, to engage with their voters reaped better rewards in the 2014 general elections. They were responsive to new trends and developments and were able to project themselves as not merely the leader of a political party but also a commoner by showing their "human" side.

> Twitter is personal account. Once in a while you need to establish that this people idealizing are eventually humans. Like, if he shared Diwali festival picture on Twitter, once in a while we do find some pictures like this, especially while doing the campaigns because that "human connect", it should not go missing. (Charanjeet Singh, personal interview, 19 August, 2016)

Creating a celebrity status

The interview data suggests that the number of followers that a political leader has and the number of likes and retweets that their messages get, are considered to be

important factors towards ascertaining the popularity, the reach and the significance of the leader or his affiliation. This is in line with similar phenomena for other public figures from different industries such as, entertainment, business or sports, where one of the factors determining one's success is follower count on their social media account. For example, one of the experts in contemporary politics viewed huge social media fan following as a significant factor in attracting more followers and eventually more votes (quoted below).

> I think it has a psychological impact on the mind when you see a person having a massive following. That is called manufacturing consent. As a voter, if I see one billion likes on a leader's account, I would be attracted by such massive liking and I too will follow that leader. (Imran Khan, personal interview, 21 August, 2016)

Similarly, a young politician from BJP considered being in trend as a crucial aspect of being in politics and viewed the "going viral" on social media as a tool with the potential to accelerate one's popularity.

> Politics is about what's trending. Popularity on SM is fast forward way to create positive image, going viral is important. (Pijush Hazarika, MLA, personal interview, 07 August, 2016)

Although, most interviewees suggested that the popularity of individual leaders on social media was a sample of their popularity among all kinds of electorate (online and offline), this idea was contested and rejected as an urban phenomenon by some.

Twitter, Facebook, social media, set the agenda but don't determine the outcome of election. Because there is a huge disconnect between rural and urban. In rural regions, internet social media penetration is not much. Majority of Indian population is not on these platforms. (Karishma Thakur, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

See, there are a lot of benefits, because through social media anybody can be known faster than going to different places from city to city, from road to road, door to door. But naturally it is not sufficient because everybody is not on social media and specially the people are in the rural areas. (Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 17 August, 2016)

Yet, most interviewees held the view that the social media provided at least some inclination to the overall popularity a leader may command.

However, a natural derivation from the fact that a particular political leader is followed by a larger number of people provides a psychological advantage to the person as he gathers a sort of celebrity status among the voters. Such interpretation of social media popularity seemed to be more naturally occurring to young urban voters, as they have been part of the social media phenomena for the last decade or so, where they become the part of the creation and consumption of online popularity and celebrity status. Therefore, for the young urban Indian voters, it was of important significance that the political leaders have a celebrity online presence. Interviewees often appeared to view leader's social media popularity as a "convincing" factor. Some simply regarded politicians and leaders as equivalent to celebrities from other fields of entertainment where social media could be used to drive popularity.

It is a very convincing thing, when a celebrity or leader has a SM account. When Kim Kardashian, Kylie Jenner and Sonam Kapoor are so popular due to social media, people want to view them, then why not Prime Minister." (Pranav Kumar, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

The interviews revealed that the political leaders, political parties and their social media team had deliberately prioritised relentless strategies to have an active online presence through raising important issues online and also posting interesting facts about the leaders. In examining the Twitter timelines of political leaders it was apparent that they were either tweeting about important policies and issues themselves and/or also indulged in retweeting or liking tweets of other people which were of interesting nature. Interestingly, the individuals who were affiliates or "mouthpieces" (those who spoke on behalf of the leaders) of political leaders, kept a healthy mix of tweeting about the public and private lives of their respective political leaders with interesting retweets (such as, trending tweets) or tweets of personal nature, such as festival greetings, details from politician's everyday life etc. This strategy was much like increasing social media activity to stay in trend most of the time through multiple account holders who officially spoke in support of the leaders. Below is an excerpt from a political leader's interview where she stressed the importance of being visible on social media as a marketing strategy. In her opinion visibility and presence on social media are important factors in establishing an individual as worth voting for, or, in other words, as a product worth spending on.

There is a psychology behind such activity on social media. Looking more human, connecting with people, letting your people know what you do…jo dikhta hai, so bikta hai (That which is seen, is sold) (Netta D'souza, Congress party member, 20 August, 2016)

Another interviewee, who is a political leader in a rural part of India agreed that celebrity status works as it creates charisma and people are drawn to the leaders who have a larger than life figure of some sorts. This is in line with personalisation that is common in Indian politics (see chapter three)., individualisation of political leaders like Narendra Modi, is not, therefore, a new phenomenon, but a norm in Indian society and culture. Cult following has been seen recurring in the past for political leaders and influential personalities in other fields (See Chapter three).

> India has always had cult following. Indian people are such that individualise everything. Even while wishing for something they wish for personal not for community so it is vice versa. Modi is individualised through social media. Everything is centred on Modi, no other leader but Modi. (Emanuelle Moshahary, MLA, personal interview, 03 August 2016)

social media can be seen as paving the path to personalisation for Narendra Modi in the 2014 general elections by generating this sort of cult following helping him to become the centre of attention. Thus, social media has become the new tool for personalisation and especially celebritisation in political campaign.

Yet the same interviewee also warned of the danger of excessive social media coverage:

> Too much SM use exposes your strengths and weaknesses. For keeping their attraction and continuity and also for keeping a cult following, mystery is important…in a country like India, certain level of secrecy or mystery is important to create a cult following." (MLA, personal interview, 03 August 2016)

It draws from earlier infamous observation (see chapter two) in the Indian politics about "Mai-baap culture", meaning voters looking up to their leaders as powerful rulers and caretakers. Therefore, the political leaders, want to create an aura around themselves and carefully create a public image of someone powerful who, if on their side, can be their saviour.

Additionally, with the developments in social media, similar patterns of creating a public image of political leader can be observed, especially amongst the old conservative parties. Most of the older politicians were initially apprehensive of using social media for the reason that it will make them more accessible. But even this section is now following the trend by adapting themselves.

Such as, the leader quoted below believed that the social media was for the youngsters and not for serious politicians. Implicitly meaning, social media was a platform for non-serious conversation, which does not have much consequence on their political campaigning (excerpt below).

> It is a new platform and every new thing new looks attractive and everyone wants to try it. It is very popular among young people… Those who are using SM, Twitter will do it for max five years and after that it will reach saturation. These things reduce the significance of a person coz he is so readily available. For example, Donald Trump is not trustworthy. No-one knew him some time ago and suddenly through SM he is in news but he is not trustworthy. He has just built his image recently through social media. (Emanuelle Moshahary, MLA, personal interview, 03 August 2016)

Yet some of the urban voters, as well as the political leaders, and their social media associates, were of the view that the times have changed and the voters expect more accessibility, transparency and credibility from their leaders.

> Before Sushma Swaraj (BJP-Minister) joined Twitter, we hated her and thought that she is drama queen and frivolous coz of the stuff she said. But on Twitter we see that she responds and work is being done. (Shivangi Singh, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

> By a social media account you can understand people and it goes both ways. Political leaders understand the audience by observing more closely and the voters understand the politicians more closely by seeing their regular activities on social media. Guessing who is a good politician is easier on social media. Approaching politicians is easier on social media. Young generation sees things differently. So, social media is a medium to engage with them. Like Shashi Tharoor is so popular among young people. (MLA, personal interview, 17 August 2016).

Overall, the celebrity status was considered to be a positive dimension in Indian politics and social media was considered (to various degrees) an enabler in achieving that status among their constituent voters.

Consistent with previous research, is that there was a difference between the "have and the have nots" in respect to smart phones and internet penetration (ownership). Mostly urban voters, or voters with smartphones in semi urban or rural areas, had significant power to influence the political discourse in and among their friends and family. The interviews and focus groups indicated that discussions or trends on social media are not just limited to the online world. In fact, social media is

increasingly able to penetrate the offline world, indirectly influencing mass audiences from all age groups and backgrounds as the following interviewees confirmed:

> Youth is the target audience on social media as they are more present on social media compared to old people. And also, they share the information from social media to the outside world and to those who are not on the platform. (MLA, personal interview, 17 August 2016).

> Yes, people from lower strata of society, rural vernacular levels consider cosmopolitan people as elites and whatever these elites do is followed by vernacular sections. It is like colonial, imperial mind-set. If a leader has big following among cosmopolitans, it would naturally impact. (Pranav, focus group interview, 17 August, 2016)

> From the perspective of a debate happening at a tea get together in the evening in a very small village it's a huge enabler. Because those people have information which other people around them don't have. That is why social media is a big driver for change. That is why people like me give immense importance to social media rather than other medium. (Charanjeet Singh, personal interview, 19 August, 2016)

5.2.3   Amplification

Being a dynamic medium and due to its reach, social media plays the role of amplifier in the electoral process, which according to some parties make it more effective than the mainstream media on occasions. On social media, political leaders target certain influential personalities, celebrities, activists etc. to create a support base by creating an effective 'indirect' contact with voters. These influencers generally have huge fan following on their social media accounts and otherwise as well. They broadcast their opinions in support of certain leaders, which spreads out to the followers. This strategy is similar to the "two step flow of information" proposed

by Norris & Curtice (2008) (See Chapter 2), where politician or party influence the views of activists or socially important people (influencers) who have large following on social media. This indirect and mediated contact with voters has mobilises the voters and it is especially effective on younger voters and those less engaged with political happenings. As it can be deduced from the interview excerpt below that as part of the campaign strategy, campaign related material is posted on different social media platforms, for it to be picked up by mainstream media and broadcast to the larger population.

> There is something called like influencing the influencer… so, if they see something happening on social media it is very likely that it will break into the mainstream news, thus into newspaper and other surrounding mediums. So, our target is to make sure that these influencers, these changers are influenced by the content that we create. And it works. (Ankit Lal, AAP strategist, personal interview, 21 August, 2016).

5.2.4 Immunity from mainstream media

One of the important social media campaign developments is how it has been adopted by different political leaders where they identify themselves as against the powerful elites.

> On TV/ mainstream media, editors, reporters, anchors have more authority but on social media, it's in my hands. My opinion matters there. Social media definitely acts as an enabler for personalisation and leaders/politicians benefit from that. (Pijush Hazarika, personal interview, 07 August, 2016).

Social media is identified as an "enabler" allowing different voices, giving platform to dissidents and broadcasting opinions that challenge powerful establishments. To some degree, political leaders around the world have used this nature of identification on social media to qualify themselves as someone who is not the usual but the new normal. Donald Trump successfully persuaded more than half of the US population that he is an anti-establishment, outsider who will radically change the system. He successfully used the social media as a medium to propagate this representation (Graber & Dunaway, 2017).

In case of Indian 2014 general election, the current Prime Minister of India who won the election has been credited with being the pioneer in using the social media. It has been well accepted by many researchers (see chapter two) that Modi "bypassed traditional media by using Twitter" to great personal advantage.

> Narendra Modi has definitely used social media very well. Targeted urban voters as explained earlier. He used it coz it eliminated the need for mainstream media who can broadcast manipulated news. (Pijush Hazarika, personal interview, 07 August, 2016).

> It is especially helpful when I have any differences with the party, when the party is not on my side, I can have an alternative to reach out to public and highlight myself- in a way it empowers. (MLA, personal interview, 07 August, 2016)

Modi has used the social media to build a new narrative about himself, different from that presented in traditional media and set a wider discourse on economy and development issues. In the past, he had been heavily criticised by mainstream media for his role in the 2002 Gujrat riots. Noticeably, in the run up to the 2014 general election, he used social media extensively to neutralise the issue. His personal

Twitter account was different from his party's official Twitter account where he focussed more on identifying himself as a viable prime minister candidate with characteristics, values and with a developmental agenda. Modi used social media to establish himself as an outsider, who was anti-establishment and, who would change the system. Since the traditional Indian media has often been seen as corrupt and manipulated by powerful interests, Modi's insinuation of being persecuted by the same media struck the chord with the voters. Hence, bypassing MSM via Twitter to reach citizens directly proved essential, especially with younger, internet-savvy voters who have migrated from MSM to social media.

> Because media also doesn't give the correct picture. If they are biased to a particular party…or particular candidate also… so, if the politician can have another platform to defend himself then it is for the reader and the listeners to decide after seeing the thing on the television or reading or listening to the politician what is the correct position. (Ms. Manasvani Yogi, personal interview, 17 August, 2016).

Conclusion

The themes drawn from the analysis in this chapter suggest that personalisation in its different forms, is integral to political campaigning in India. Social media platforms are being used in political campaigns as a strategy to accelerate the personalisation process. The main aim of the political campaigners behind social media use is to highlight the political leaders and project them as individuals who are not just party leaders. They are highlighted in different sorts of persona such as a common man, a religious person, an emotional person or even as a celebrity.

The themes derived from leaders' Twitter accounts and most frequented hashtags also indicate towards high levels of personalisation focused on highlighting the leaders in one way or the other. In short, evidence from the Twitter timelines of the political parties, individual party candidates as well as campaign strategists corroborate the interview data.

It is evident that Assimilating social media in political campaigning has strengthened personalised politics because of factors like social media's reach in the public and the possibility to facilitate one to one and two-way interaction between the voters and the leaders. The prospect to communicate individualised and leader-centric messages, construct celebrity image and fan following and giving insight into the personal/private lives of politicians has made social media the campaigning platform of choice for politicians in India.

The next chapter reflects on the findings here in the wider context of personalisation of politics outlined in chapters one and two.

Chapter 6:   Conclusions

This final chapter summarises the results of the data analysis and empirical findings. Further, it presents the implications of the findings in the context of the wider literature on personalisation. Subsequently, by revisiting the research questions it identifies the contribution that this research makes to the current state of knowledge in the domain specific. Finally, the research implications and areas for further study are outlined for the wider range of academics and practitioners.

6.1   Summary of results

The findings from the data and analysis suggest that the nature of news and media content creation and consumption has evidently transformed over the years since the advent of social media and this has impacted on political campaigning. It is clear that through social media, both the voters and the politicians have got a platform on which they can access and deliver media content, view and participate in political discussions and directly communicate with each other. Clearly, the advancements in communication technology and availability of low cost mobile devices and internet packages in India has widened the reach of political messages. Although, only a small percentage of population was active on platforms like Twitter (around 10%), this segment of the population is deemed crucial as they potentially act as influencers for a wider section of the population, even those offline. This finding reveals the massive impact social media currently has in Indian politics. The finding is in line with the previous argument presented in chapter two, which elaborates on the "two step flow of information" (Norris & Curtice, 2008) where politicians and parties target few influencers on social media such as, activists who further influence

the mass opinion in their favour. Also, the different social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, allow the creation and consumption of media content in a range of formats, available to the public at different levels i.e. rural (low bandwidth or weaker internet regions) and urban (higher bandwidth regions). It was found that trends on social media are not just limited to the online world because content from social media travels to non-social media users through word of mouth. The older or rural poor population, who may not have access to mobile technology receive the information via the other social media users around them. This phenomenon can be linked with the trends in the 1980s in India, the time period when television was introduced in the country and many families did not have a TV set. During this time, people went to those few members of the society who had a television set, and thus the information was passed onto the non-television owners. It can be concluded that discussions or trends on social media are not just limited to the online world. In fact, it has been able to penetrate the offline realm of India quite significantly, influencing masses from all age groups and backgrounds. In reality, social media platforms have been functioning as an effective amplifying tool for manufacturing mass opinion.

Further, the analysis suggests, as also noted in chapter two, that politicians understand the importance of being present online (Kruikemeier, 2014) and there is also an expectation among the electorate from their leaders be accessible on the social networking sites (Gainous & Wagner, 2013; Chopra, 2014). This is due to reasons explained above and other factors such as change in the lifestyle of an average voter, where social media has become an integral part of their life and just like rest of their world around them, an average voter expects to connect with their political leaders on social networks.

More specifically, the data analysis suggests several reasons for the assimilation of social media in election campaigning in 2014 general elections. One of the main reasons was to widen the political leader's accessibility and reach to the public. Getting highlighted on social media added to the politician's popularity by providing him with a 'celebrity status'. Some statements from voters confirm that a politician's follower count on social media determined his status as a celebrity and coaxed them to follow that particular politician on social media. While, the data from campaign strategists and politicians suggest that factors like being "consistently viral" (trending) on social media is considered essential for a leader especially during the campaign period. Stories about a leader's personal life, everyday routine, food habits, family, ancestry and the like were strategically, and regularly, publicised on Twitter to keep the public curious for more and obsess over leaders. Fresh hashtags and one-liners that put focus on a leader as separate from the party and boasted about a leader's virtuous personality traits were regularly created for the Twitter timelines in order to create fan-following. Simply put, social media enabled the politicians to more easily achieve celebrity status among the public, which is considered to be an essential criterion in Indian politics as argued by campaign strategists.

This finding is close to the reasoning by Coen (2015) in the "age of celebrity politics" (discussed in chapter two), where she establishes the relation between personalisation, privatisation and celebritisation as being interconnected and internet and media playing the role of a major catalyst in contemporary political personalisation process.

Further, where the political party had one very dominant leader, there was concentrated effort to relate, adopt, associate and identify some "key ideas", such as honesty, with the political leader instead of the political parties. Subsequently, the

political leader then symbolised and personified the idea and the party. In case of the parties with comparatively less visible and less popular (on social media) leader, the ideas were related to the political party rather than the leader. For example, the Indian National Congress (INC) Party that is in opposition today, evidently tried to put more emphasis on the greatness of the Party over their party leader.

Social media was successfully exploited by specific political parties and their leaders in presenting themselves as somebody closer to the public, in terms of the reach (approachable) and in portraying similarities in terms of values, lifestyle and associations. There was a demonstration of "human self" on social media, in addition to a political leader's identity as an office holder. The data suggests, most of the leaders used the social media such as their Twitter accounts to engage with their voters on a personal and human level, understand the voter population's likes and dislikes, be responsive to the new social trends and developments and construct their image as the leader of a political party who also had a "human" side.

This finding is consistent with arguments in the literature review, where Bennett (2012) stresses that voters select candidates based on their personal lifestyles and values (Capara & Zimbardo, 2004; Lazersfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948; Visser, 1994). The finding also matches with the argument presented in the earlier chapter that on social media, politicians have a positive impact on otherwise politically disengaged citizens as the politician's image portrayed on social media seems "more human, relaxed with a sense of humour and capable of having a beyond politics life" (Loader et al., 2015).

Further, we gather from the findings that political leaders symbolised and personified the idea and the party. They used the social media extensively to propagate their own individual ideas, values and personalities to the electorate. There was greater

effort to keep the Twitter feed or other social media accounts more personal than closer to party ideology. Establishing an individual leader as worth voting for appears to be the main campaign strategy. When the political party had one very dominant leader, there was concentrated effort to relate, adopt, associate and identify some key ideas with the political leader instead of the political parties. This finding is very much in line with the concept of personalization established earlier where it is argued that personalisation manifested in politics in different ways. It can be in the form of individualization, privatization, emotionalisation, personification or any other form that focuses on a political candidate's private life or professional life over his party, policies and other party members; and personalization in politics has several dimensions through which personalisation functions at different levels according to the degree of focus on and around the candidates (Kruikemeier, 2014; Van Aelst, Sheafer, Stanyer, 2011; Coen, 2015).

Also, the personalised nature of social media platforms has allowed many political leaders in India to go beyond and/or across their political affiliations and editorial censorships. They use the platform to publicise their personal beliefs, characteristics and virtues to create a bigger outreach than their party. Social media has identified itself to a great extent as an "enabler" that has given both the voice and a platform to activists and dissidents to broadcast their opinions against powerful establishments without engaging with or being affected by the mainstream media.

Importantly, in a country like India, which is a parliamentary democratic system and theoretically, such a system should be party-cantered, politics here, has historically been leader-centric. In the "mai-baap" culture or "nanny state" culture (see chapter 3), where political leaders are anyway deemed to be the saviour like figures, heightened personalisation via social media fits reasonably well. Traditionally,

individual politicians have been more prominent than their respective parties, political personalisation is traditionally deeply rooted here. India is a peculiar and interesting case study because social media penetration is continually getting deeper and also because the majority younger tech savvy population is significant.

6.2   Research Implications

The previous section summarised the data analysis and findings of the research conducted. It has also highlighted the contingencies that evolved in the process, comparing and contrasting them with the current body of literature that has been presented in the previous chapters. The findings suggest that concepts such as personalisation, privatisation, presidentialisation, personification and emotionalisation have been well researched and theorised in the current body of literature. This research confirms most of these theoretical understanding. However, this research extends relatively new line of academic research and understanding that explores the development of social media, its role and influence in society and politics. Specifically, the contribution to knowledge is in the research domain of the social media and its influence in political campaigning in parliamentary systems with high levels of personalisation.

It has been highlighted in new research that the traditional concepts in political campaigning has been relevant and useful in explaining the assimilation of social media in politics. However, there has been very limited research which has been exploring this new domain in the context of Indian political campaigning. This has been for the reason that the expansion of internet technology and social media usage and its use in political campaigning has been a relatively new development in India. Therefore, the 2014 general elections presented a good context to study this

new phenomenon. As reported above, social media, especially Twitter had been used extensively and strategically, by some of the major political leaders and parties in the process of political campaigning during the 2014 general elections. The results show that many other political leaders did not consider this sudden media development of any importance earlier, but have eventually integrated social media in their strategy as well. An interesting finding from the study suggests that smart phone owners and users of social media had a significant power in influencing those who did not have access to social media. Therefore, the political parties applied the strategy of influencing the influencers through this platform.

In current understanding, the "influencers" are the individuals on social media with big following and have influence on those followers. However, this research shows that the online influencers had their influence extended to offline users.

This research then opens up many lines of enquiry that should be carried out in the future. First, further research must be conducted to study the nature of personalisation, the influence of different social media platforms on it and the different strategies that political parties and individuals develop for using social media for political campaigning. Secondly, how the influence of the influencers (accounts with high number of followers) effect the sentiments, narrative and opinions of online as the offline public, must be further studied. As this is a comparatively new field of research, rapid development and changes are happening in this area. Academic research will need to keep pace with it to further our understanding of it, in various contexts.

Conceptually, this study contributes to the academic understanding on overarching issue of personalisation in politics and social media usage in political campaign. It adds to the existing knowledge of different facets of personalisation such as

individualisation and privatisation and how they play out in a country with younger voting population and increasing social media presence. Additionally, it also shows how political leaders use the social media for 'two-step flow of information', amplification and immunity from mainstream media scrutiny towards promoting themselves.

The findings of this research helps further our academic as well as practical understanding of social media and its usage not just limited to political campaigning but individualisation, privatisation, humanisation and personification by individuals or organisations in other industries as well. Importantly, social media is still a growing phenomenon in India and its usage and implications on politics have been estimated to grow enormously in the coming years. India is the largest demography and economy in south east Asia. Any socio- political developments and trends in this country are bound to have implications and follow suit in rest of the region. It is therefore important that the developments in India are closely and critically studied.

This research was carried out on a limited scale in a specific time and space. Since this study was conducted as party of my MPhil study, there was limitation of time and other resources. Therefore, to validate the internal as well as external validity of the findings, further research must be conducted on bigger sample and maybe replicated in other countries for other political campaigns. A more detailed quantitative survey of voters to study the contingencies and to elaborate on voter assessment of their virtual relationship with political leaders may be carried out.

Appendix

	Sub-category	Themes	Twitter Hashtag Terms	Narendra Modi- BJP election candidate @narendramodi	Arvind Gupta- BJP IT Cell Head @buzzindelhi	Amit Malviya- BJP IT Incharge @malviyamit	BJP Party account @bjp4india
1	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Modifier	0	25	0	43
2	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#ModiMantra	0	22	0	22
3	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Moditva	2	17	2	0
4	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as a commoner and approachable	#ChaiPeCharcha with NaMo (Tea & chat with Modi)	27	50	5	8
5	Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#NammaNaMo	0	33	5	2
6	Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AamchaRahul (Our Rahul)	0	0	0	0
7	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RahulSpeaksTo…	0	0	0	0
8	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskKejriwal	0	0	0	0
9	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskAtishiAAP	0	0	0	0
10			#AAP4Honest				
11	Privatisation (Emotionalisation)	Highlighting leader, Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AmethiKaVishwas	0	0	0	0
12	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#NaMoin…	Over 100	Over 100	Over 100	15
13	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#AKin…	0	0	0	0
14	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RGin…	0		0	0
15	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#Pappu…	0	8	4	0

16	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#KejriDiwas	0	2	0	0
17	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#NautankiAK	0	5	0	0
18	Individualisation	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#AbkiBaarModiKiHaar	0	0	0	0
19	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Modi…	39	40	Over 100	Over 100
20	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#NaMo	0	69	Over 100	Over 100
21	Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#AbkiBaarModiSarkaar	0	58	52	28
22	Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#Modi4PM	0	15	24	40
23	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Kejriwal…	0	0	96	0
24	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Arvind	0	0	19	0
25	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Rahul	2	2	20	0
26	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Gandhi	11	2	20	0
27	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#TeamCongress	0	0	0	0
28	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressRocks	0	0	0	0
29	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJP	81	1	27	22
30	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJPManifesto	9	0	10	46
31	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAP	0	3	55	0
32	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#NaxalAAP	0	16	8	0
33	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAPWave	0	0	0	0
34	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressManifesto	0	1	0	0
35	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#Congress	Over 100	0	0	0
36	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#INC	1	0	0	0

Table 7.1: BJP Twitter timelines analysis

Sub-category	Themes	Twitter Hashtag Terms	Shashi Tharoor Congress @shashitharoor	Youth Congress @iyc	Sanjay Jha-Congress Spokesperson @jhasanjay	Congress Party Account @incindia
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Modifier	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#ModiMantra	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Moditva	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as a commoner and approachable	#ChaiPeCharcha with NaMo (Tea & chat with Modi)	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#NammaNaMo	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AamchaRahul (Our Rahul)	0	0	1	80
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RahulSpeaksTo...	0	2	5	0
Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskKejriwal	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskAtishiAAP	0	0	0	0
		#AAP4Honest				
Privatisation (Emotionalisation)	Highlighting leader, Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AmethiKaVishwas	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#NaMoin...	0	0	0	0
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#AKin...	0		0	0
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RGin...	0	7	5	Over 100
Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#Pappu...	0		0	0

Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#KejriDiwas	0		0	0
Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#NautankiAK	0		0	0
Individualisation	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#AbkiBaarModiKiHaar	0		16	0
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Modi…	23	61	Over 100	
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#NaMo	1	0	0	0
Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#AbkiBaarModiSarkaar	0	0	0	0
Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#Modi4PM	0	0	0	0
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Kejriwal…	0	0	10	0
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Arvind	0	0	8	
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Rahul	9	31	28	
Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Gandhi	9	31	37	
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#TeamCongress	0	0	16	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressRocks	0	0	8	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJP	8	35	15	20
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJPManifesto	0	1	10	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAP	7	1	15	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#NaxalAAP				
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAPWave	0		0	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressManifesto	0	1	0	0
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#Congress	27	Over 100	Over 100	45
No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#INC	0	7		

Table 7.1: Indian National Congress Twitter timelines analysis

	Sub-category	Themes	Twitter Hashtag Terms	Ankit Lal- AAP Campaign Strategist @ankitlal	Arvind Kejriwal- AAP Party leader @arvindkejriwal	AAP Party Account @aamaadmiparty
1	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Modifier	0	0	0
2	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#ModiMantra	0	0	0
3	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting celebrity Charecteristic	#Moditva	0	0	0
4	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as a commoner and approachable	#ChaiPeCharcha with NaMo (Tea & chat with Modi)	1	0	0
5	Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#NammaNaMo	0	0	0
6	Privatisation (Emotionalisation	Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AamchaRahul (Our Rahul)	0	0	0
7	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RahulSpeaksTo…	0	0	0
8	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskKejriwal	0	0	50
9	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting leader as approachable	#AskAtishiAAP	4	0	11
10			#AAP4Honest	10	3	53
11	Privatisation (Emotionalisation)	Highlighting leader, Highlighting Personal Charecteristic	#AmethiKaVishwas	1	0	Over 100
12	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#NaMoin…	4		3
13	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#AKin…	58		Over 100
14	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting leader as a celebrity	#RGin…			0
15	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#Pappu…			0

No	Category	Highlighting	Hashtag			
16	Privatisation (Celebritisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#KejriDiwas			0
17	Privatisation (Humanisation)	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#NautankiAK			0
18	Individualisation	Highlighting Opposition leader (mocking)	#AbkiBaarModiKiHaar	1		0
19	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Modi…		35	20
20	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#NaMo	22		3
21	Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#AbkiBaarModiSarkaar			0
22	Individualisation	Highlighting leader over Party	#Modi4PM			
23	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Kejriwal…	Over 100		Over 100
24	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Arvind			
25	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Rahul		7	
26	Individualisation	Highlighting leader	#Gandhi		2	
27	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#TeamCongress			0
28	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressRocks			0
29	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJP	15	14	18
30	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#BJPManifesto			2
31	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAP	Over 100	2	Over 100
32	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#NaxalAAP			
33	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#AAPWave	23		Over 100
34	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#CongressManifesto			0
35	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#Congress		2	0
36	No Personalisation	Highlighting Party	#INC			

Table 7.3: AAP Party Twitter timelines analysis

Hashtags Studied for BJP	Hashtags Studied for INC	Hashtags Studied for AAP
Modifier, ModiMantra, Modi, ChaiPeCharcha (Chat over Tea), NammaNamo (Greetings from Modi), NaMo (Narendra Modi), NaMoin…(Modi in a city), AbkiBaarModiSarkar (Let's form Modi government this time), Modi4PM, BJP, BJPManifesto, Pappu (Stupid for Congress leader), NautankiAK (Dramatic Arvind Kejriwal-AAP leader), KejriDiwas (Fools Day for AAP leader), NaxalAAP(Maoist naxalite AAP)	AmchaRahul (Our Rahul), Rahul, Gandhi, RGin... (Rahul Gandhi in a city), RG, RahulSpeaksto…,Team Congress, Congress Rocks, INC (Indian National Congress, CongressManifesto, AbkiBaarModiKiHaar (Let's make Modi lose this time)	AskKejriwal, AskAtishiAAP, AmethiKaVishwas (Amethi's trustworthy candidate), AKin…(Arvind Kejriwal in a city), Kejriwal, Arvind, AAP, AAPWave

Table 7.4: Hashtags studies for each party to check social media personalisation

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Appendix