The Role Of Social Media In Electioneering: A Study Of 2018 General Elections In The District Peshawar

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Abstract

The study's goal is to show how social media affected the 2018 General Elections in Peshawar. The influencing function has the potential to support or undermine a phenomenon, giving it both positive and negative characteristics. Therefore, the focus of this study was on how social media helped to highlight the consequences of the 2018 General Elections. The use of social media during the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar was examined using a survey method. Both the "Agenda Setting Theory" and the "Cultivation Theory" are the foundations of the study. SPSS software is used to examine the data using a quantitative technique. The 2018 General Elections and social media have a significant association, according to analyses using correlation, regression, ANOVA, t-test, f-value, and coefficients. Because these were the first general elections in the nation where social media was heavily used by both the candidates and the electorate, it is therefore determined that social media had a significant impact on the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar. Social media emerged as the most effective instrument for the 2018 General Elections in the District Peshawar, despite the fact that there are other elements that affect voters' choices.

Keywords: Social Media, Elections, IFES, PECA, New Media, Agenda Setting Theory, Cultivation Theory

Introduction

The choices made by electorates in Pakistan are influenced by a number of variables. Elections in Pakistan are greatly influenced by a number of elements, including biradrism, kinship, party allegiance, religion, necessities, and demands. Nevertheless, despite all of these reasons, social media significantly impacted the 2018 General Elections. The study is an effort to highlight the significance of social media in the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar as media emerged as a new component in the political landscape, notably in the 2018 General Elections. This study determined that social media overrode traditional influences, altered the entire situation, captured voters' attention, and spread the PTI strategy of appealing to voters' needs, interests, and demands in their election manifestos, leading to the party's victory in the District of Peshawar.

The study at hand employs a quantitative methodology for its analyses. According to how each group perceived and analyzed the role of the media during the 2018 General Election, Peshawar District residents were divided into four groups for the purpose of the sample. Politicians affiliated with various political parties, journalists ranked according to their experience and seniority in the media industry, Peshawar academics working in the fields of sociology, political science, and journalism were also included in the sample. The size and total number of respondents were set at 400 in accordance with Yamani's formula (1967).

Media Role in Elections

Free media, which has long been seen as the cornerstone of democracy, is essential for influencing political discourse during elections. The development of new media, such as social media websites, blogs, email, and other new media platforms, opens up new channels and opportunities for inclusiveness, empowerment, and information and knowledge sharing. This is true despite the fact that traditional media outlets (print and broadcast) that are free and impartial encourage transparency and the transmission of essential electoral information. Both traditional and contemporary media can serve as crucial watchdogs, venues for political campaigns, gathering places for public discourse, and public educators, ultimately advancing democracy. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has used new media more frequently in its programmes to assist credible and transparent elections in light of the changing role of the media in elections (Serrato 2018).

The way candidates and their campaigns interact with voters has changed as a result of new media, which has made it possible for two-way contact and involvement in ways that were never before possible. In order to stay up to date on election news and events, people are accessing social media platforms more regularly. 16 percent of eligible voters in the United States used Facebook and Twitter to follow election news and learn about politics during the 2014 midterm elections. Compared to 2010, when 10% of registered voters performed the same thing, this is a huge increase. Additionally, a growing number of Americans are using their cellphones to stay up to date on political news; in 2014, 28 percent of registered voters did so (E 2021).

Increased Internet accessibility globally, that played a big role in the 2014 Indian elections, has led to many politicians and citizens in developing countries using new media. When he became prime minister on May 26, 2014, Narendar Modi surpassed President Obama as the second-most "liked" leader in the world on Facebook. During the most recent general elections in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission aggressively engaged voters on social media to respond to inquiries regarding the electoral process.

Both of the major candidates for president and their parties maintained active Twitter and Facebook accounts. Social media is widely recognized as having played a crucial role in promoting transparency before to the vote, which led to the first election of an opposition candidate for president in Nigerian history (Findlay 2013). (E 2021)

About 44 million people, or 25 percent of Pakistan's population, use social media. Through social media mining in "R" language, more than 50 Facebook sites with political material and up to 30 million followers were discovered.

According to Raymond Serrato's investigation, the major political parties are using Facebook more frequently as the elections approach. However, there hasn't been much discussion of how groups and people utilize these social media sites or what might be done to allay any potential worries. They

discussed four social media-related challenges for the integrity of Pakistan's elections: user

privacy[1], fake news[2], bots[3] and so-called trolls[4], and campaign financing (Serrato 2018).

In a climate where the PECA (Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Cyber Crimes Act) has also been abused to target critical journalists, it will be essential to safeguard diversity and freedom of expression, particularly during the elections.

Two months before elections, Pakistani residents still don't understand how political parties or other organizations are using Facebook to promote to them. Facebook has

said that it will create a political ads archive, demand identity verification from advertisers, and invest in artificial intelligence to stop bad actors from abusing the platform in order to boost transparency. Facebook is not the only one responsible, though. The Pakistani Election Commission, citizen organizations, and political parties can all take an active role in identifying and deterring the abuse of social media during Pakistani elections.

Serrato discovered that 46 percent of PTI tweeters and 52 percent of PMLN tweeters

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[1] If Pakistani political parties must safeguard voter privacy and ensure that the media companies and did not obtain data improperly. Millions of mobile phone numbers can be purchased in Pakistan on a thriving black market, and Facebook's Custom Audiences feature may be used to connect Facebook accounts to these numbers, making unknowing people targets for political campaigns and marketing. Despite Facebook's terms of service require it, Facebook does not guarantee that advertisers have the consent of the individuals whose data is being matched in this way.

[2] Information disorder, or "false news," is anticipated to be a concern during the elections. Many Pakistanis have seen the report about Nawaz Sharif allegedly using Cambridge Analytica. The story, which was first reported in Eurasia Future, was subsequently removed due to inaccurate reporting, but not before it created a commotion in Pakistan. People may purposefully circulate false information, fabricate stories, and twist the truth in an effort to harm politicians, organizations, or political parties. Disinformation should not be confused with factual errors or reporting misinformation because false information may occasionally be spread without malicious intent.

[3] Another barrier to fair elections is the use of bots on social media. Bots are accounts that, to put it

simply, have been created to automatically produce activity, such following certain accounts on Twitter and retweeting, or like to propagate their message. Bots, which can be quite harmless, are routinely used to provide weather reports or updates surrounding natural disasters. Bots can, however, disseminate false information and malign political persons or groups when used for evil. Many political parties or politicians may unknowingly have bots among their supporters because bots are widely used on Twitter. According to a study by Serrrato, there is a significant likelihood that more than half of the Twitter accounts that are now tweeting about Pakistan's two largest political parties are automated.

[4] "Trolls" are among the election-related concerns. Actual people are used as trolls by businesses to influence online discussions. They frequently intimidate people, disparage them personally, and sow discord. They have the same potential to poison public debate as people who hurl shoes or ink at candidates at public gatherings. The Election Commission and other federal agencies should act quickly when they come across questionable social media posts, in addition to citizen groups submitting posts or abusive trolling to Facebook or Twitter.

were probably bots based on a sample of accounts. The posts on social media should be carefully read by Pakistani voters. Additionally, they must be certain that the tweets and posts they share are from reliable sources. According to additional information, social media managers have acknowledged that Pakistan's political parties are already employing fictitious personas to slant the conversation and present a particular image on social media (Serrato 2018).

After Pakistan's historic general elections in May 2013, IFES set up the website (www.pakvoter.org) as a repository for data on the nation's electoral system, elections, and political processes. Over the previous two years, (Pak voter) has built up a substantial network through forums on Facebook and Twitter. Check out the website and associated social media sites for the most recent news and ideas. With the use of the portal, IFES wants to encourage participation from young people, individuals with disabilities, and current and prospective female voters. (Elchahabi 2015)

The IFES has made several steps to leverage new media to improve political and electoral processes. When new media enables voters to keep an eye on electoral fraud, hold candidates and officials accountable, and take part in political discourse, it best embodies the spirit of democracy. However, there are several challenges with this civic engagement tool, such as moral and ethical issues. Because they lack the expertise and editorial oversight of traditional media, new media could serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of false or misleading information. The mixing of traditional and new media as vehicles for the dissemination of information has spurred discussion about how to protect free speech while avoiding inciting speech as well as drawing the line between the censorship and regulation. In addition, despite its rapid globalization, many groups in the society still have little to no access to new media and technology. (Elchahabi 2015)

Everyone is in the limelight in the social media age, where everything is covered by the media.

Users of social networking services like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Line, WhatsApp, and others are in the millions. As a result, the internet's enabling development has allowed politicians to use social media strategy (Kumar, 2019). Social media, also referred to as the New Media, has changed the way that politics is communicated, with politicians and political parties now using it as a new platform for connecting with voters (Plattner, 2012).

Online media has distinguished itself as a democratic medium in contrast to newspapers and television since users are free to voice their thoughts. Social media usage during the election process spread like wildfire over the globe. It is widely recognized as a key component of modern electoral campaigns. The internet is a useful tool for spreading information and ideas about candidates and political parties, as well as for mobilizing people behind a cause.

Due to social media, which in Pakistan have developed into a more informed and politically active society, the public, in especially the youth, has the chance to utilize it well. Consequently, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 2018 General Elections yielded unexpected results, and a new party seized the opportunity to rule the province despite the two already-dominant parties.

Due to the increasing importance of social media, political parties modified their tactics to use it as a tool for their election campaigns. PTI started using social media for pre-election marketing with the intention of influencing people's attitudes, especially those of the young.

Using the hashtags "Ab Ki Bar Modi Sarkar" "This Time Modi's Government" and "Acchay Din Annay Walay Hain," "Good Days are ahead". Modi waged his 2013 election campaign on social media. The PTI adopted the chants, including "Banay Ga Naya Pakistan" "New Pakistan will be created" and "Tabdeeli Ayi Ray." "Change has Come" PTI earned support from the general population, which encouraged their allies to be enthusiastic and upbeat. Ravi B. K. (2018) As a result, the

situation was changed, and in the general elections held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018, PTI was successful in capturing the majority of seats.

Research Questions

1) To what extent did social media play a role in the 2018 Peshawar District General Elections?
2) How did social media prove to be the most effective instrument for the District of Peshawar's 2018 general elections?

Literature Review

In 2019, Kumar & Nataraj examined how social media was used in the Indian election campaigns. Considering that 242 million individuals in India use social media. Therefore, it is used by politicians as well to engage with the public for their cause rather than meeting people face-to-face, which is a challenging undertaking. Social media has become a crucial component of political campaigns run by candidates for office in India as a result of its rapid growth and widespread acceptance for a variety of uses.

Based on interactions through social media, Metaxas and Mustafaraj (2014) developed their analysis of electioneering in the United States. They found that around 66 percent of the public uses social media during elections in the country. Social media can be used for organizing and quick responses in addition to providing information. However, it is unappreciated manipulated by the press and the general people. Politicians use social media to spread the word about their causes both before and after elections. Social media is widely used and widely available, so its data can be used to forecast future events like election results. The authors assert that it is reasonable to anticipate that all candidates and political parties will rely on social media for support.

The authors assert that it is reasonable to assume that all candidates and political parties will turn to social media platforms for assistance in order to feed their followers'

inspirations, raise money, and sway the public's opinion in favor of the candidates.

The director of Chile's electoral services, Garcia (n. d.), critically analyzed the media's role in the election process and came to the conclusion that citizens' access to information about the election, including when and how it would be held, was made possible by media coverage. In order to be regarded as a universal vehicle of information, the media must be fair, inclusive, and accountable for monitoring public policy while disseminating information about the parties and their manifestos. Since of the gradual use of media technologies through internet networks, which have been revolutionizing this process because they offer free and simple access to, the author claims that traditional mass media is losing its significance. The author makes the case that traditional mass media is becoming less significant, which is due to the progressive adoption of media technologies through internet networks. This process has changed as a result of the free and simple access that internet networks give to political parties and candidates.

According to Hopmann, Praesatekaer, and Albaek (2012), media and party agendas can have a significant impact. Both the parties and the media have an impact on each other, but the party agenda has a bigger impact than the media. Parties attempt to influence the media's agenda in order to influence voting behaviour because they are knowledgeable about how the media interprets important public problems.

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The function and parameters of the mass media's role in the election process have been outlined by Kelley (n. d.). One of the many things the media does is play a part in elections by disseminating campaign propaganda to a big

audience while also being selective in who it targets. It reduces the enormous amount of output produced by propagandists to fit it into the time and space allotted for covering public affairs. They even reject major and minor party organizations that would allow them to participate in politics on their own. Media disseminate propaganda using a standard format. This is significant because, in addition to using various methods to convey the same information, they also tend to lead

This is important because, in addition to using many methods to deliver the same ideas, they also influence politicians to use various methods of expression.

According to Stier, Blier, Lietz, and Stohmaie (2018), social media has an impact on political communication. They polled lawmakers and audiences on Facebook and Twitter about the issues that they felt were most important. According to the writers' investigation, politicians utilized Facebook and Twitter for various objectives, and while they were more linked on Twitter, political contact on Facebook was frequently hampered by technological issues. Most of the time, audiences talked about other topics, although politicians used 42.3% of their remarks to promote campaigns.

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda Setting Theory and the Cultivation Theory are the ones that apply to this study the most out of all the political communication theories.

Agenda Setting Theory

According to the agenda setting theory, a certain subject becomes a public agenda due to the influence of the media. Mc. Combs and Shaw utilized agenda setting for the first time in 1972. The concept elaborates on the relationships between the attention that the media places on a problem and how the general public or media consumers react to or perceive that situation. The agenda setting theory is a hypothesis that explains how the media affects political activity during elections by altering patterns of behaviour. The hypothesis

subsequently sparked countless later explanations of how the media frames and primes topics for its audience. The discussion also touches on how the media portrays a certain incident to its audience. It is also feasible to assert that the mass media is responsible for establishing and influencing public opinion and agenda. Intentional or inadvertent, such mass media effect on public agenda or opinion is possible. (Riaz Saqib 2019)

It is argued that social media greatly affects its users by instilling what they should think about general elections; as a result, it is more appropriate to examine the 2018 general elections, as media significantly influenced political socialization and the electorate's decision-making during this election.

Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner and his colleagues have a platform to present the cultivation theory at the Annenberg School of Communication. According to the manipulation hypothesis of cultivation, if a news story is repeated frequently, it becomes ingrained in the viewers' or listeners' thoughts.

People react more quickly to news stories in the media. It is asserted that media consumers could experience terror as well as awareness or education (Riaz Saqib 2019). This idea served as the study's theoretical foundation and was applied to Peshawar District residents who used the media in connection with the 2018 general elections. According to this notion, there are three types of users: light, moderate, and heavy. When it comes to news stories presented by the media, heavy users tend to believe them more than moderate or light users. It was also looked at how the general elections of 2018 have changed as a result of the perception shaping of light, moderate, and heavy media consumers.

Research Design

To investigate the impact of social media on the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar, a survey method was adopted. The District of Peshawar served as the study's

domain. For the purpose of gathering data, 400 respondents were chosen by judgmental selection and used convenient sampling. The independent variable media and the dependent variable 2018 General Elections were combined to create a closed-ended questionnaire. 28 items made up the questionnaire, and the responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis and Results

The study's data were quantitatively examined. The quantitative approach adopted for this study was intended to form and calculate the Data. Correlation, regression, ANOVA, and coefficients are applied using the SPSS software to determine the relationship between social media and the 2018 general elections.

Table 1: Correlations

		Social_Media	Election_2018
Social_Media	Pearson Correlation	1	.938[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Election 2018	Pearson Correlation	.938[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The strength of the correlation between the two variables is demonstrated. Correlation values range from -1 to +1, with -1 denoting a strongly negative correlation and +1 denoting a very positive correlation. According to the aforementioned findings, social media as an independent variable and the 2018 election have a correlation value of.938, indicating a

significant positive association between both variables.

Regression

To determine the link between the two variables, regression is performed. This association could be substantial or not, negative or positive, and significant or not. The study's regression results are shown below.

Table 2:
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.938[a]	.879	.879	5.97270

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social_Media

Table 3: ANOVA
ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	103219.857	1	103219.857	2893.493	.000[b]
	Residual	14197.893	398	35.673		
	Total	117417.750	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Election 2018

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social_Media

Table 4: Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-27.783	1.203		-23.104	.000
	Social_Media	1.957	.036	.938	53.791	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Election_2018						
F-Value = 2893.493 with sig value = 0.000, R^2 = .879,						

Regression results are shown in the table above. Social media is used as an independent variable in this connection, while the 2018 election is used as a dependent variable. According to the coefficient results, the beta (B) value for these two variables is 1.957, indicating a positive association. The association is significant at the 5% level of significance, as indicated by the t-value of 53.791 and significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05 or 5%.

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Additionally, F-value demonstrates the model's overall importance, which is seen from the conclusion that it is 2893.493 with 0.000 significance. The entire model is therefore also important. The percentage change brought on by one variable in another variable is represented by the coefficient of determination, or R-square. The R-square value in the aforementioned table is.879, or 87.9%, which indicates that social media had an 87.9% influence on the 2018 election or that it has contributed to the shift in that election.

Conclusion

Social media is widely used for electioneering and is seen as the simplest political communication instrument. The media sets the agenda while considering the needs and interests of the politicians, and then they use their power to appeal to the general public.

Develop their concern by repeating the news and advertisements frequently to influence their minds and help them reach their objectives. The study at hand attempts to answer the question, "How much did social media affect the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar? the General Elections of 2018 were heavily impacted by social media, which was employed during those elections for the first time in a larger quantity. The active role of social media during the electioneering outweighed the preceding significant elements, influencing electorate decisions and changing the election's outcome. How did social media prove to be the most effective instrument for the 2018 general elections in the District of Peshawar? was examined and put to the test by the respondents' questions: whether social media provided adequate news coverage, whether it covered all the parties, whether it helped the parties promote their manifestos, whether there was strong support between the parties and the social media, whether it spread the political parties' agenda, whether it captured the public's attention in time for the 2018 General Elections, and whether it adopted the political parties' agenda, whether social media captivated the public's attention in time for the 2018 General Elections, whether it adopted political parties' platforms, whether it emphasized voter concerns and interests to sway them, whether Social Media was the most effective instrument for the 2018 General Elections. The responses were evaluated and judged to be significant, demonstrating that social media was the most effective tool for the 2018 General Elections in the District of Peshawar.

Suggestions

- Effective social media use requires resources. Funding is necessary for political parties to identify internet users and produce social media advertisements. Regulations regulating the disclosure of social media spending by political parties and other third-party supporters must be passed by the Election Commission. As of right now, neither the Elections Act of 2017 nor the Commission's Election Rules of 2017 directly address social media use. However, the Election Act of 2017 grants the Election Commission the authority to put together a campaign monitoring squad, which may investigate online political advertisements or keep an eye out for any Act or Rule violations.

- The Election Commission is typically expected to develop a Code of Conduct that addresses the moral usage of social media for the 2018 elections. Parties should act honorably and refrain from any unethical or manipulative online behaviour, code of conduct or no. Citizen organizations have the ability to closely monitor social media usage during elections and alert the appropriate authorities to any instances of inciting violence or disseminating false information.

- Judiciary must check over the elections and accountability of the politicians and ensure strict implementation of the rules for the code of conduct of the elections.

- Election Commission must have an active portal for the awareness of the masses regarding the social media use of politicians so much so that the masses can identify the false or real news.

- Election commission must ensure free and fair elections and must strictly put actions against the mismanagement and rigging in the election.

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