# USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNING A CASE STUDY OF PANVEL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ELECTIONS, 2017

RAJAS K. PARCHURE

MANASI V. PHADKE

SAHIL DEO

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Rajas K. Parchure
Manasi V. Phadke
Sahil Deo

Education : An Ennobling Influence

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS
(Deemed to be a University)`
Pune (India), 411 001
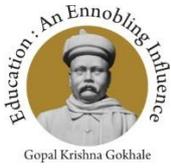
STUDY TEAM

Rajas K. Parchure	:	**Project Director**
Manasi V. Phadke	:	**Project Co-ordinator and Principal Author**
Sahil Deo	:	**Data Analysis and Co-Author**
Vishal Gaikwad	:	**Research Assistance**
Vilas M. Mankar	:	**Technical Assistance**

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FOREWORD

1. 1st General Elections to the newly formed Panvel Municipal Corporation were held on 24th May 2017. As with any election, this election too saw aggressive campaigning by political parties and their candidates. The political campaigning was done not only through TV, newspapers and radio, but also through the new social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.

2. Heavy usage of social media for election campaigning was first seen in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014. From thereon, social media has changed the ways elections are contested at every level. Whilst Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections receive a lot of interest from political scientists and academicians, there seems to be a serious lacuna in terms of documenting and analyzing the trends observed in local body elections all over the country.

3. I am glad to note that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune has taken the lead in terms of creating relevant research interventions in local body elections in Maharashtra. In the run-up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections, GIPE team tracked the newspaper and social media campaigns of 64 candidates in 4 wards of Panvel. Their findings are very interesting indeed.

4. This report suggests that it is the rich, veteran, male candidates who are more active in terms of using social media in political campaigning. Social media is a free platform. Then why is it more actively used by the richer candidates? The answer probably lies in the presence of media firms, which offer campaigning services to candidates, including managing their media presence. However, even with the presence of media firms, it is the male and the veteran candidates who manage to grab a bigger share of the social media platform; this points to the fact that even today, local politics is controlled and led by male politicians, whose citizen engagement grows with experience.

5. This analysis is definitely relevant in terms of discerning the trends today, but it is also extremely important for posterity. In the next elections, this analysis will serve as a baseline tool to track how the social media penetration has increased at a local level.

6. I congratulate Dr. Rajas Parchure and Smt. Manasi Phadke for creating such a timely and interesting study. I am further pleased that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics is publishing the survey findings in a booklet form elucidating their methodology and analysis. I am sure this will help in creating electoral information and analysis in the future, thereby contributing to free, fair and transparent elections.

Shri. J. Saharia
State Election Commission
Maharashtra

September 1, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very pleased to present this report titled "Use of Technology in Electoral Campaigning: A Case Study of Panvel Municipal Corporation Elections" to the readers and scholars of decentralization.

The run-up to all elections witnesses fierce campaigning by all candidates desirous of winning the elections. Media campaigning space, which earlier was almost fully occupied by newspapers, TV and radio, has been now definitely been invaded by social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Political candidates use social media to disseminate information, showcase their achievements and to create a citizen connect.

To what extent is social media used in local body elections in Maharashtra? Which social media platform is seen to enjoy highest usage? Are there patterns in social media usage done by candidates belonging to different age groups and income categories? What kind of content gets posted on social media platforms before local body elections?

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics was given the interesting task of analyzing these research questions. We tracked the electoral campaigns of 64 candidates in the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections to analyze the information posted in the run-up to the elections and to correlate it to candidate attributes. Our results are very interesting and have been presented in detailed in this report.

Let me express my gratitude to Shri Jageshwar Saharia, State Election Commissioner, Maharashtra, for granting this interesting study project to the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. Shri Shekhar Chenne, Secretary, State Election Commission, Maharashtra, was a mentor for our team and guided and supported us at every stage of the project.

Mrs. Manasi Phadke has been the chief co-ordinator of this project and has been driving all the processes right from design of the study to writing the report. I congratulate her for coming out with a timely and interesting publication. Since the data was to be collected by digitally tracking the political campaigns, we needed a data mining consultant in the team. Mr. Sahil Deo and his team at CPC Analytics gave us excellent data support during the course of the project. Mr. Vishal Gaikwad provided research assistance for the project. Mr. Vilas Mankar gave us all the technical assistance needed for this publication.

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Prof. Rajas Parchure
Offg. Director
Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics
Pune

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September 1, 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Panvel Municipal Corporation went into maiden polls in May, 2017. The Corporation is a newly founded one, with a very interesting mix in its population. The governing area of the Corporation includes Kharghar, with its high rise buildings and tech-savvy culture, Panvel, which largely developed as an industrial area, and some fringe villages, which have graduated from being governed by a Gram Panchayat into being governed by a Corporation. All this implies that the voter base in Panvel shows a high level of heterogeneity, and its mix of socio-economic stratifications will call for different strategies by candidates or political parties to reach out to the voters.

With such a high level of heterogeneity, political parties would clearly have to use a combination of old, time-tested strategies of voter mobilization such as political rallies, distribution of pamphlets and door-to-door canvassing together with some new technology-based strategies. These could include emails and Whatsapp messages, launching of campaign websites, hosting vlogs, Youtube videos or simply reaching out to voters with social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter.

There is no existing study on how technology platforms have been used in local body elections country-wise. Panvel, because of its heterogeneous mix of population, is an interesting Corporation to study politicking because political parties are bound to use old ways of mobilizing voters, together with the new methods of doing so. The present study aims to document, study and analyze the role of technology in politicking in the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections in 2017.

ABOUT PANVEL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) came into existence on 1 October, 2016. It is the State's 27th Municipal Corporation and in fact, the first Municipal Corporation in Raigad district. The Municipal Corporation of Panvel now turns into the ninth Corporation in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

Originally, Panvel Municipal Council was set up on August 25, 1852, as the principal Municipal Council in the nation by the British. With proximity to Mumbai and the huge industrial set-up created in Panvel over a period of time, there has been an increasing demand from the residents of the area that the civic issues in Panvel require attention and budgeting as is needed in a big city. For the past 25 years, there have been an increasing number of demands from the residents that the Municipal Council of Panvel be converted into a Municipal Corporation.

In fact, the notification to convert Panvel into a Municipal Corporation was first issued in 1991, but it was put on hold in the absence of a ground report on the requirement and needs of the area.

On December 9, 2015, the government appointed a Committee under the Divisional Commissioner of Konkan to present a report on the formation of the Municipal Corporation. The Committee submitted its report on May 6, 2016, after which the administration started the processes to issue a GR forming the new Municipal Corporation. The Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) finally came into existence from October 1.

The PMC was formed incorporating the territories of the erstwhile Panvel Municipal Council, CIDCO, Taloja MIDC,MMRDA and 29 revenue villages belonging to Panvel taluka together spread over more than 110 hectares.

Panvel Municipal Corporation was divided into 20 Prabhags for the purpose of the 2017 maiden Municipal Corporation elections, with 4 candidates contesting in almost every ward. A total number of 78 seats within 20 Prabhags were finally created and contested in the 2017 elections. In keeping with the Maharashtra State policy of 50 per cent reservation of seats for women in all local body elections, 38 seats out of the total 78 seats in Panvel were reserved for women candidates.

Given the heterogeneity of socio-economic classes within the Panvel Municipal Corporation area, it was obvious that use of technology for contesting the elections would be seen more prominently in the more affluent wards. Wards 16, 17, 18 and 19 are the more affluent wards in Panvel with a higher proportion of middle and upper middle income groups staying therein; whilst there were no formal data sources to suggest these facts, the socio-economic profile of Panvel was discussed in detail with the Panvel Municipal Corporation team and residents to identify the relevant wards for the analysis and site visits were carried out to confirm the same.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There has been increasing evidence of usage of technology in elections all over the globe; however, the preferred format of the actual technology being used has kept on changing.

Developed countries obviously show a higher level of technological penetration in terms of politicking. As far back as in 2000, US Presidential contender Senator John McCain made very innovative use of the internet to collect campaign funds. In that year, of the total $28.1 million that Senator McCain raised from individual voters, more than a quarter i.e. $6.1 million were raised online. Email messages were used as a personalized form of contacting the voters to raise finance.

In the 2008 US Presidential campaign itself, then-Democratic Senators Barrack Obama and Hilary Clinton announced their intentions of running for President online; the internet suddenly became the new announcement platform. With a need to articulate the intentions and plans with the announcements, candidate websites started being launched in the 2008 US Presidential elections. In fact, candidate and party websites in the US became the lifeline of politicians desirous of reaching out to large voter bases at low costs and of discussing their electoral strategies and plans with their faithful. This sparked off a lot of literature in political sciences about whether campaign websites are an effective medium of reaching voters.

Over a period of time, web videos and blog sites became common as platforms to reach out to voters on different issues. Weblogs and online videos have been particularly favoured by many candidates in the Bundestag elections in Germany. After 2006-07, the developed countries saw very high penetration of the mobile phone technology which reflected in text messages being used as a form of reaching out to voters at a very personalized level.

Finally, social media has emerged as the all powerful tool of politicking and of convincing voters to vote for a particular candidate or party. As campaign websites became common, their content and presentation too reached a level of standardization that made it difficult for candidates to distinguish themselves from the others. Further, while websites did allow for feedback, there were limited ways in which the voter could react to the candidates' strategies or discussions online. It is here that Facebook turned out to be a game-changer in terms of politicking. The platform not only offers the candidate to present his plans with real-time visuals, but also offers the voter the gratification of instant comments on the candidate plans. It also creates a logical platform for hosting online discussions amongst various stakeholders, thereby increasing candidate visibility amongst the public.

The Indian elections have not remained impervious to this outbreak of technology in the field of politics. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections saw some of the most massive usages of the Internet, with the BJP war-room engaging around 3700 consultants and IT engineers to work on internet driven big-data to rework positioning of their lead candidate, advertise, raise

finances and reach out voter bases through differentiated strategies. Social media was also heavily used in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections; Narendra Modi's campaign boasted of managing 3.67 million followers on Twitter, 12 million likes on Facebook and the party's 68 million page views on Google Plus.

Further, some very unique digital events such as Chai Pe Charcha were also hosted by Mr. Modi which saw a unique combination of the internet, DTH, satellite and the mobile to get in touch with people at tea stalls and certain pre-planned localities.

While the BJP may have been the party to really exploit the potential of the internet and consolidate position as the most tech-savvy party, it was the Aam Admi Party (AAP) which was actually the front-runner in terms of sensing the potential of digitization as a politicking platform, as per Dr. S. Y. Qureshi, the former Election Commissioner of India. Dr. Qureshi points to the member enrolment strategy of the AAP through a missed call as a fore-runner of using digital platforms for voter engagement in India.

That the age of digitization has arrived in India is undeniable. The 2014 LS elections were the first elections wherein the full power of the internet, mobile phones and social media was exploited to reach out to voter-bases across the country. This relatively new method of politicking has attracted academic attention too, with few papers documenting the change that technology has brought about in the world of campaigning at the Parliamentary election level.

However, no papers document or study or analyze the impact of technology in local body elections in the various states of the country. It is against this backdrop that the present study serves as a useful and pertinent addition to the understanding of how political campaigns are run using technology at the local level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

As has been indicated earlier, the age of digitization is clearly here. This study aims to document the role of technology in running political campaigns in local level elections in the Panvel Municipal Corporation in Maharashtra. Following are some of the main research questions that the study aims to attempt.

1. Traditionally, political rallies and Sabhas are the favoured ways of reaching to the voter base in the campaign period. However, these necessarily entail physical contact with the voter and assume that the voter would have the ability and/or willingness to attend such rallies. Hence, politicians have always heavily used media platforms such as TV, newspaper or radio to get through to their voter bases. Have the politicians now started also using internet based campaigning platforms such as websites and/or social media based publicity drives?

2. Can we quantify the extent to which new-age tech media is used as compared to traditional media platforms for politicking?

3. Within the new tech-campaigning methods, what is more popular? Do politicians tend to use websites and/or vlogs or youtube videos, or do they prefer more of feed-back based social media platforms?

4. Which social media format is favoured more? Is it Facebook, Twitter or Instagram?Can we also analyze whether preference of contesting candidates to use technology depends on age, gender or literacy?

5. Does use of technology depend on the assets that the contesting candidates have at their disposal?

6. What is the correlation between number of criminal cases filed against a candidate and his propensity to use social media?

It is important that these trends be identified and documented at the present stage from point of view of analysis. This documentation will also prove beneficial over a period of time when researchers try to understand how the penetration of social media has changed over a period of time in local body elections in Maharashtra.

The next chapter outlines the design of the study and the sampling considerations.

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CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND SAMPLING CONSIDERATIONS

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The present study aims to understand the penetration of technology in the process of politicking and reaching out to the voters. Technology has created new ways in which contesting candidates can reach out to their voter bases. How deep is the impact of this technology? Has technology replaced the more traditional media sources such as newspapers, or does it continue to play a complementary role to the traditional media bases? Within the available technology options, are there ones which are definitely more popular in use than the others? It will also be interesting to see whether use of technology by political contestants depends on age, gender, literacy, or the socio-economic status of the contestant.

The above research questions imply that this entire study has to be centred around those parts of Panvel that minimally have an access to technology, and ideally have tech-savvy contestants as well as voters. If the contesting candidates use a Twitter handle to tweet about certain civic issues in Panvel, but the voter class largely does not own smart-phones and hence is not privy to the tweet at all, then the use of technology will automatically be limited.

Given the huge heterogeneity in the socio-economic classes within Panvel, it was hence important that the sampling of the study be done sensitively.

SAMPLING CONSIDERATIONS

Before creating a sampling plan, it would be pertinent to revisit the formation of the Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) in 2016. As has been mentioned above, the PMC was formed incorporating the territories of the erstwhile Panvel Municipal Council, CIDCO, Taloja MIDC, MMRDA and 29 revenue villages belonging to Panvel taluka together spread over more than 110 hectares.

This by itself is enough to highlight the tremendous socio-economic heterogeneity in Panvel. The Corporation encompasses not only the semi-urban areas within the erstwhile Municipal Councils, but also the rural areas which were governed by Gram Panchayats. Add to this the high-rise IT towers that one sees in CIDCO, and one gets a feel of the heterogeneity within the Panvel population.

Panvel Municipal Corporation was divided into 20 Prabhags for the purpose of the 2017 maiden Municipal Corporation elections, with 4 candidates contesting in almost every ward. A total number of 78 seats within 20 Prabhags were finally created and contested in the 2017 elections. In keeping with the Maharashtra State policy of 50 per cent reservation of seats for women in all local body elections, 38 seats out of the total 78 seats in Panvel were reserved for women candidates.

Given the heterogeneity of socio-economic classes within the Panvel Municipal Corporation area, it was obvious that use of technology for contesting the elections would be seen more prominently in the more affluent wards. Wards 16, 17, 18 and 19 are the more affluent wards in Panvel with a higher proportion of middle and upper middle income groups staying therein; whilst there were no formal data sources to suggest these facts, the socio-economic profile of Panvel was discussed in detail with the Panvel Municipal Corporation team and residents to identify the relevant wards for the analysis and site visits were carried out to confirm the same. Based on the fact that use of technology would be maximally seen in these wards, it was decided to sample the contesting candidates in wards 16, 17, 18 and 19.

Since there were 4 seats in each of the said wards, political parties were mostly seen to be fielding "panels." Thus, a party supports 2 male and 2 female candidates in each ward; this helps the party to split some of the expenses across all 4 candidates. At the same time, candidates also exploit complementarities in expenses. It was found that there were at least 5-6 panels in each of the chosen wards.

Four panels of the most prominent political parties were chosen in each of the wards implying that our study covered 16 contesting candidates in each of the 4 wards. Thus, the study was based on the use of technology done by 64 candidates in 4 high-income, tech-savvy wards of Panvel.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study entailed the following steps:

1. This study was interesting in that it was entirely carried out by digitally following the news about the chosen 64 candidates. No personal interviews of the candidates were held to discuss their politicking strategies.

2. We tracked political, election-based (digital) news of select candidates in select wards that appeared in the local newspapers. Newspaper-based advertisements and news articles were treated to be our "control group" i.e. traditional formats of reaching out to voters.

3. We also tracked the internet-based politicking methods such as campaign websites, vlogs, blogs etc.

4. Finally, the new politicking methods of using social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram were tracked for the selected candidates.

5. The study uses a mixture of lexicon based and machine learning based algorithms to provide the said analysis. Along with this, natural language processing (NLP) techniques have been implemented as a part of this study.

TIMELINE FOR THE STUDY

The elections to Panvel Municipal Corporation were announced on 17th April 2017. Candidates were asked to file their nomination forms from 29th April 2017 to 6th May 2017, after which scrutiny of the nomination forms and affidavits was carried out.

Profiles of the final candidates contesting elections were studied immediately post-scrutiny and candidates belonging to major parties within the wards were selected on 12th May.

The entire exercise of tracking the digi-campaigns was carried out in the last 10 days of the electoral campaign i.e. from 15th May to 24th May in the Panvel Municipal Corporation.

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CHAPTER 4

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

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The present study aims to understand the penetration of technology in the process of politicking and reaching out to the voters. Technology has created new ways in which contesting candidates can reach out to their voter bases. How deep is the impact of this technology? Has technology replaced the more traditional media sources such as newspapers, or does it continue to play a complementary role to the traditional media bases? Within the available technology options, are there ones which are definitely more popular in use than the others? It will also be interesting to see whether use of technology by political contestants depends on age, gender, literacy, or the socio-economic status of the contestant.

The study was carried out in the 4 most tech-savvy wards of Panvel, chosen after due discussions with the Panvel Municipal Corporation team and other residents in Panvel.

From a period of 14th May to 24th May, 2017, use of technology in contesting elections was tracked digitally for 64 candidates belonging to different political parties in 4 wards of Panvel.

Nearly 2330 newspaper articles in English and Marathi media were tracked and data was also digitally gathered from 8450 Twitter and Facebook posts.

Following are the major findings of the study.

1. **40 per cent of the campaigning is carried out using social media, 60 per cent of campaigning still uses traditional platforms such as newspapers**

   One of the first objectives of the study is to compare the extent to which different media platforms are used by contesting candidates in local elections. The usage of newspapers as well as of other digital platforms on the starting date of the study (15th May 2017) was indexed to the number 100. The usage of the platforms was tracked for the next 10 days and subsequent index numbers were created to understand the patterns in the usage.

   The following graph shows the timeline on the X axis and the index of usage of media platforms on the Y-axis.

Graph 4.1: Presence of Newspapers and Social Media in the Political Campaign in the run-up to Panvel Municipal Corporation Elections, 2017

Presence of news and social media
Panvel Corporation Elections 2017
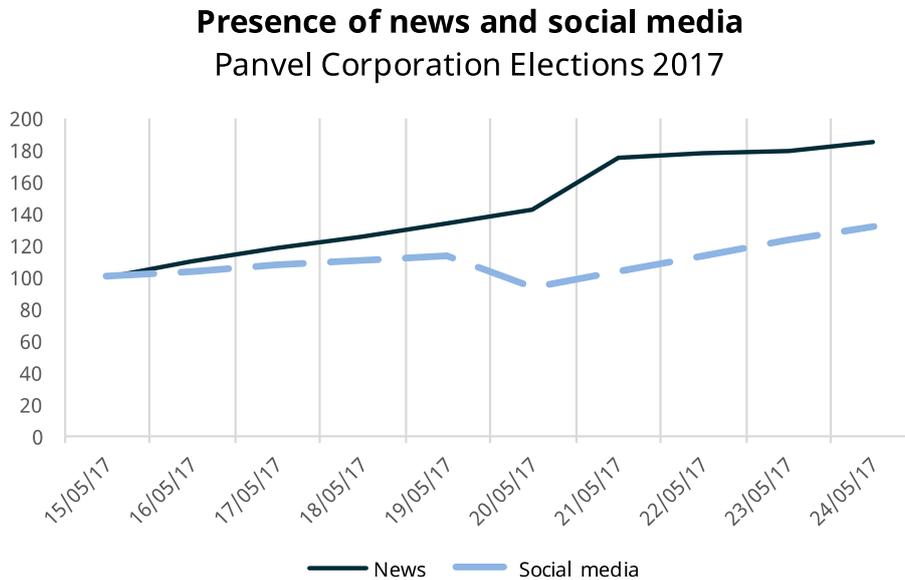
This graph compares the campaigning on different platforms in the run up to the Panvel elections. While there was an equal coverage/advertising/outreach on social media and print media in the beginning, as the elections near, there is a divergence. Despite the growing usage of social media for candidates to reach out to voters, traditional forms of advertising still prevail and dominate. Closer to the election, outreach through newspaper advertisements was much more than through social media posts, as the graph shows. There is a cyclical trend in social media, whereas the trend in news outreach has been constantly increasing.

Even as candidates have adopted campaigning through social media, they recognize the fact that there is a much larger voter base not yet connected to it, which can be reached out to through traditional means only. Despite this, social media outreach and campaigning occupies a disproportionally large share of the total outreach. This could be attributed to the low cost of outreach and the influencing potential of social media users.

It is very interesting to note that in the entire campaign exercise, there was negligible use of dedicated campaign websites. In the entire run up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections, none of the political parties active in the elections made use of temporary but dedicated campaign websites; party and candidate related news was directly posted on the FB account of the contesting candidate. There was also negligible usage of Youtube videos; this might have been due to the incompatibility between Youtube videos and Facebook, which emerged as the single most powerful way of campaigning during these elections. Thus, candidates either used traditional platforms or opted for social media. Hence, the graph does not offer any indexation to analyze trends in the usage of internet-based platforms such as campaign websites or Youtube videos.

Based on the data collected 10 days prior to elections, we may claim that of the total outreach attempted by contesting candidates, around 38 to 40 per cent was attempted on the social media platform in the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections; the traditional newspaper based campaigning still commands -60-62 per cent of the total campaigning share.

2. **While 40 per cent of the campaigning takes place on social media, the social media model is seen to be largely "managerial" and not "participatory"**

Why do people use social media? The underlying theory of 'Social Media Logic' is what provides the initial framework for this entire report.

According to Djick and Poell, social media represents a dramatic shift in the way that information is conveyed in societies.[1] Whereas in the past, governments and media organizations existed as the proprietary sources of information, social media has allowed for a much more complex system in which individuals can now not only impact but dictate information.[2] The second principle of social media logic discusses how the ability to assign "popularity algorithms", such as likes and retweets on Twitter, empowers and legitimizes those who can amass a large enough volume of interactions.[3] Inevitably, this allows for individuals and movements to advocate government reforms purely through the democratic legitimacy developed by means of assembling large online communities and sentiments.[4]

The fundamental concept behind this theory is that there are two types of information systems that allow individuals to engage and learn about an organization.[5] One system is known as 'single-loop' learning and revolves around government agencies controlling or "managing" the flow of information in order to ask questions such as, "is this service efficient and what could be improved?"[6] This is commonly used by bureaucratic actors as it does not require dramatic innovation and arguably maintains the status quo.[7] One may refer to this model as the Managerial model of citizen interaction, with one player dominating and managing the flow of information.

The second system is known as 'double-loop' learning and differs from the former method by allowing information to flow from a complex network of sources to better address complex questions.[8] In this form of organizational learning, citizens can engage with ministries to determine not just what policies they are working on but why the ministry behaves in the way that it does; it allows them to question the actual operating procedures of the government.[9]One may refer to this model as the "Participatory" model of citizen engagement,

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[1](Van Dijck and Poell 2013)
[2](Reddick, Chatfield, and Ojo 2017)
[3](Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010a)
[4](Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010a)
[5](Gilson, Dunleavy, and Tinkler 2009)
[6](Reddick, Chatfield, and Ojo 2017)
[7](Argyris 1976)
[8](Macintosh n.d.)
[9](Im, Porumbescu, and Lee 2013)

where information originates from multiple sources and is used by multiple sources to enact government change.

What was social media used for in the run-up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections? Content analysis of the social media posts suggests that social media was largely used to disseminate information and "manage" political news relevant for the candidate. Thus, social media was largely used as an alternative channel of disseminating news, almost as an option to newspapers. However, at no point in time was it used to solicit opinions on a pinching civic issue, or to understand the needs of the voters. Thus, as observed in this campaign, the social media engagement model used was totally a managerial model and the potential of social media as a participatory tool wasn't exploited at all.

3. **Non-optimal usage of social media platforms was evident from lack of usage of the hashtag "#" campaign**

Hastags are used to draw attention to a particular comment, or make tracking and classifying comments based on a particular issue easy. A hashtag allows users of social media to piggy back on a larger 'public agenda' which enables them to disseminate their message beyond their immediate influence group.

In the run-up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections, we tracked the usage of hashtags only to conclude that they were hardly used. This clearly indicates lack of understanding of one of the key features of social media by users in the Panvel campaign. It also again confirms our earlier observation, that use of social media has been restricted to one being akin to a digital newspaper and that its key features remained unexploited.

4. **Between the different social media platforms, Facebook completely dominated the Panvel Municipal Corporation campaign**

Another research question created in the design of the study was to identify which social media platforms contesting candidates prefer in the run up to the elections. The study of the Panvel Municipal Corporation election campaign showed a complete domination by Facebook amongst the different social media platforms.

Approximately 79% of the content was generated on Facebook, while 19% was on Twitter. The remainder content (2%) was captured from Instagram.

Graph 4.2: Usage of social media platforms by contestants in the run-up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections

Usage of social media platforms by contesting candidates in the run-up to elections

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
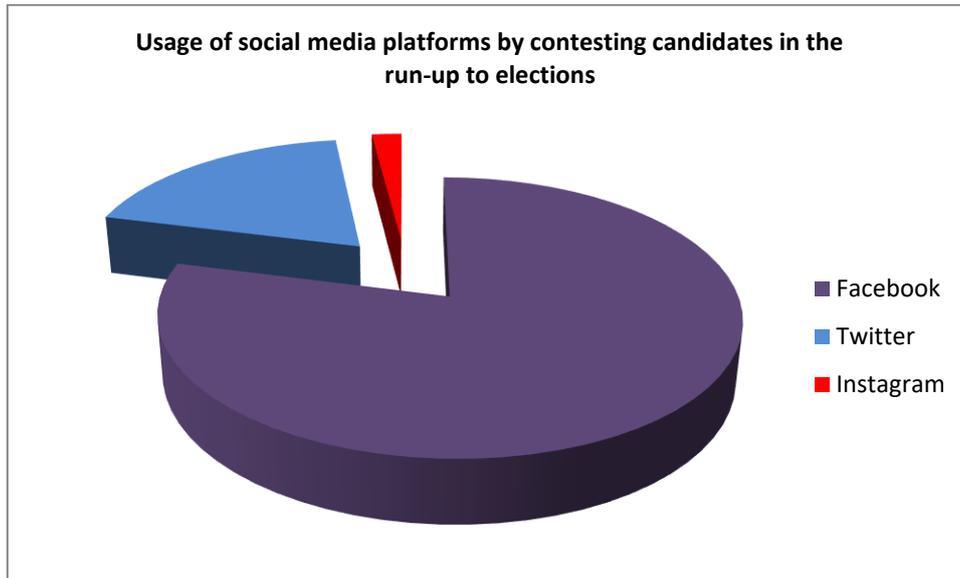
5. **Age and usage of social media: Younger candidates are more tech-savvy, but optimal usage of social media platforms is observed in candidates aged 41-50**

The graph given compares three variables, namely, overall usage of social media, citizen discussions on social media platforms, and news given on social media platforms by contesting candidates in different age groups.

Graph 4.3: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Age of Contesting Candidates

21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70
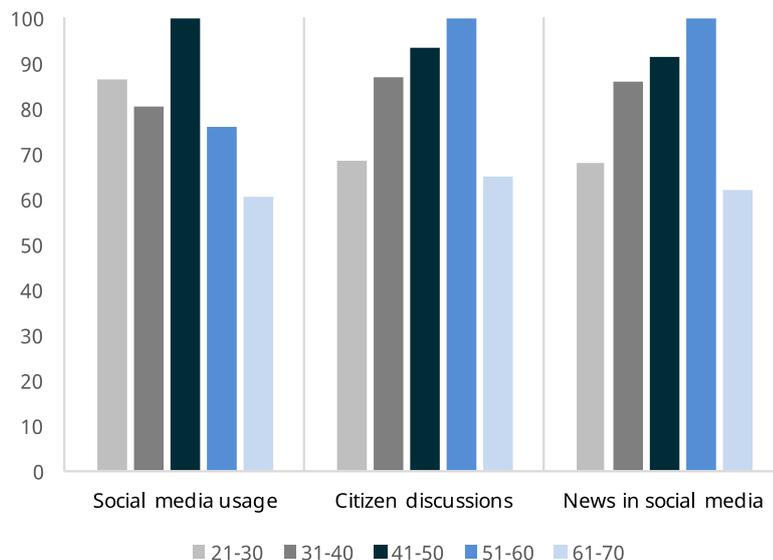
The variable "Social media usage" refers to the actual use of social media made by the contesting candidates. This would typically include FB posts, tweets on Twitter or photographs of social or political events being posted by the candidates.

Once the content is posted, reactions of the citizens to the same are captured in the variable "citizen discussions." These discussions could include comments or likes on the posts, or sharing of the original posts on the citizens' homepages. Thus, the variable "Citizen discussions" helps us to understand the citizen engagement that the content on social media generates.

Finally, the variable "News in Social Media" helps to understand the usage of traditional media platforms by contesting candidates. If the news of a political rally is covered in newspapers, and if the candidate gives a link to that news on her FB page, then this kind of an integration of traditional and social media is covered under "News in Social Media".

Maximum values of all the three variables were indexed to a value of 100 to create Indices of Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media.

Based on the definitions and index values of the variables given above, it is now possible to discern the trends in media usage by contesting candidates belonging to different age groups.

It is interesting to note that the very young candidates, belonging to age group 21 to 30, do create a lot of content on social media. Thus, they are active in terms of posting content on FB or Twitter; however, these posts do not tend to enjoy high levels of citizen engagement. Thus, voters have not reacted much to content posted by the younger candidates. However, citizen engagement is higher for the older, veteran candidates belonging to the 51-60 age group.

Again, the graph above indicates that the instances of younger candidates integrating their traditional media presence onto social media, with which they are friendly, are quite low. All of this implies that younger politicians seem to enjoy lesser presence on traditional media, which gives more coverage to the senior and veteran politicians. Whilst these senior politicians may not use social media that actively, they get higher coverage in the news and manage to post more meaningful content that creates citizen engagement. This trend may be because of the experience and networks older candidates have established over time, which automatically generates more coverage and discussions about them. Moreover, their popularity and continued presence can ensure more likes and followers to begin with. Thus, counter-intuitively, it is actually seen that social media platforms are used more extensively by older candidates and not younger candidates.

Looking at the data trends, one might conclude that optimally using social and traditional media to drive citizen engagement is primarily done by the candidates who range between the 41 to 50 years old..This is the age group which is experienced enough to use social media for maximum benefit and young enough to adapt to the new trends.

An explanation of the surprising phenomenon of older candidates using social media optimally might lie in the presence of marketing companies, which actually offer a bouquet of services including social media management to contesting candidates. Given that these services are easily available to all contestants and political parties, the issue is not so much of how to use social media but rather what to use it for. As has been argued earlier, the older candidates have far more experience and anecdotes that can be easily shared on social media and hence, data shows more usage by the older age groups.

6. Gender and Social Media Usage: Male candidates typically use social media more aggressively than female candidates

Graph 4.4: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Gender of Contesting Candidates
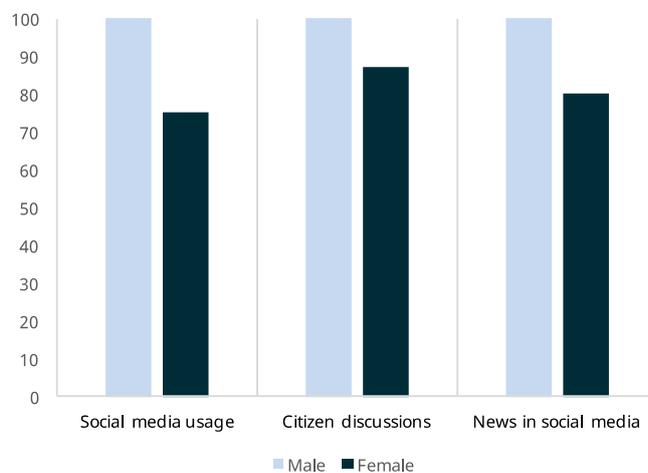
This graph shows the relation between the gender of the candidate and their social media presence and usage. There is a dominance of men in social media usage, citizen discussions as well as in integration with traditional media.

Of the 70 candidates analyzed by us, 8.5% had a Twitter handle and 31.5% had a Facebook page or profile that was actively being used for campaigning. Among this as well, there is a disproportionate share of men. While 14% of all the men have a Twitter handle, no woman has a presence on Twitter. The presence on Facebook is more equal, with 33% of all male candidates and 30% of all female candidates having either a page or a profile.

Even with the presence of marketing companies, usage of social media by male candidates is much higher, indicating much more aggressive political profiles. This is corroborated by the fact that they also manage to integrate their presence on traditional media with social media much more than women. Voter banks too seem to respond to posts by men more actively as compared to posts by women.

Again, as earlier, the issue is not of how to use, but rather what to use the media handle for. Our analysis of the fifth round of Municipal Corporation elections in Maharashtra suggests that 74 per cent of all women candidates are housewives, without prior experience in politics.

The male domination in politics manifests itself in various ways and usage of social media is no exception.

7. Education and Social Media Usage show no clear correlations

<div align="center">

Graph 4.5: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Education of Contesting Candidates

</div>
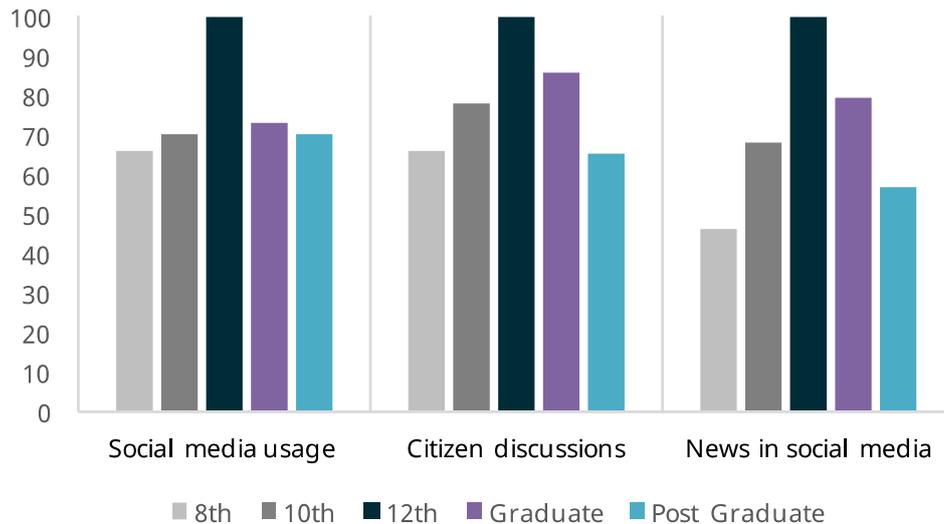
This graph shows that there is no clear relation between the educational qualification of the candidate and their social media presence and usage. The candidates with HSC are the most dominant group in all three parameters. The candidates with a graduate degree come second. Those with a post graduate degree and those who have passed 8th standard use social media the least.

This again could be attributed to the marketing companies, which manage social media presence on part of political parties or contesting candidates. These companies are the great levellers and hence, the difference in literacy levels do not reflect in differences in actively using social media.

8. Candidates with higher assets are seen to dominate the usage of social media

Graph 4.6: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Assets of Contesting Candidates
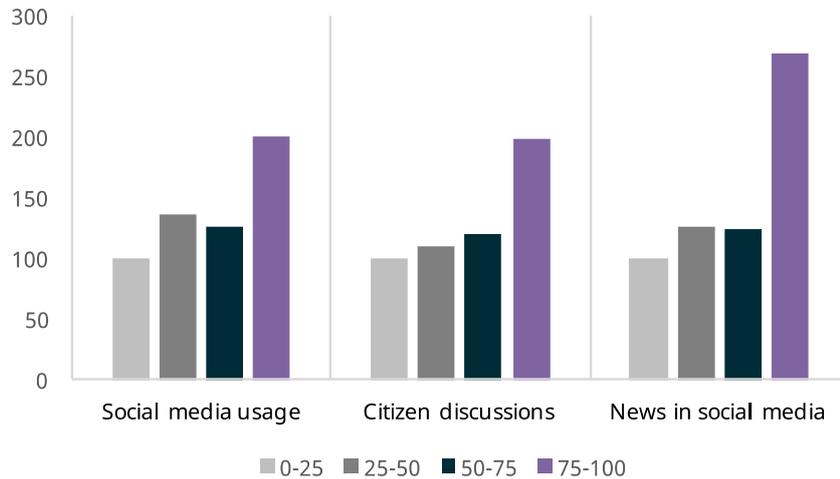
Assets are declared by the contesting candidates in the affidavits that they have to submit to the State Election Commission prior to the elections. Using the minimum and maximum values of the assets as were declared by the candidates, we created an asset holding index with 0 and 100 as the minimum and maximum values respectively. Usage of social media, when correlated to this asset holding index, gives interesting insights.

The above graph shows the relation between the asset holding of the candidate and their social media usage, presence and outreach. The results show a clear trend where candidates with the most money perform significantly better than others on the three parameters.

This again could be because the candidates with money can employ people or hire social media managers to take care of their online presence. Also, candidates from a higher economic class will try to appropriate voters belonging to the same class who use social media. Candidates with lesser assets may devote their limited resources to targeting ground voters with similar asset holdings and a possibly low social media usage.

9. Usage of social media is prominently higher amongst candidates with criminal records

Interestingly, our analysis shows that social media is used more aggressively by those candidates with criminal records as declared in the affidavits.

Graph 4.7: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Criminal Records of Contesting Candidates
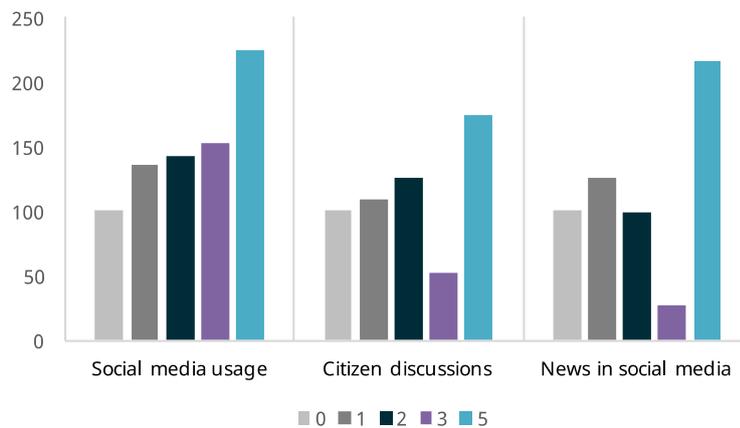

There is a surprising trend, where candidates with higher number of cases are most active, while those with 0 cases filed have the least usage. Cumulatively, the number of people with criminal charges are more present and much better represented in news and discussion than those without criminal charges.

There are two conjectures one can make here, without any backing of data. One, candidates who are more popular in general, have a higher social media presence and being popular and active in politics naturally means presence of higher number of cases filed against the candidate. Another possibility is that people with a criminal record are trying to attempt an image makeover on social media, and showcase their good work

While only 1 female candidate had a criminal case filed, 18 out of 43 male (42%) candidates faced one or more criminal charges.

10. Observations pertaining to usage of social media by political party affiliation

Graph 4.8: Social Media Usage, Citizen Discussions and News in Social Media by Political Party Affiliation of Contesting Candidates
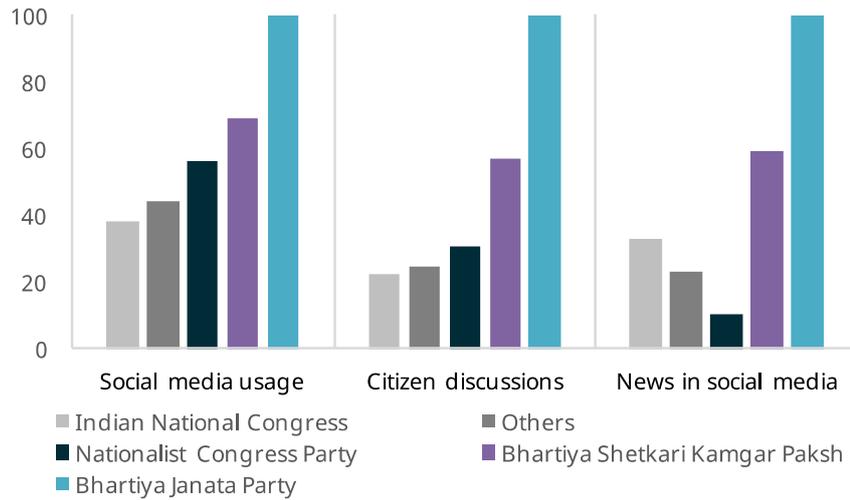
The graph shows the relation between the political party affiliation of the candidate and their social media usage, presence and outreach. BJP leads on all three fronts. This might be driven by the importance the party places on social media as a tool to reach out to voters and citizens at large.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The present study was carried out to assess the usage of technology in political campaigning in the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections held in 2017.

Since the Panvel Municipal Corporation encompasses population with huge heterogeneity in its socio-economic classification, it was expected that some voter classes within Panvel would not be users of smart phones or the internet and accordingly, use of digital and social media platforms would be more visible only in the more affluent parts of the Corporation.

Accordingly, wards 16 to 19 were identified to be wards with upper middle class population in majority residing in it and 64 contestants from these wards were chosen to understand how technology was used in political campaigning.

The study was entirely carried out by digitally tracking the candidates to understand their presence on traditional print media vis-a-vis social media. The study uses a mixture of lexicon based and machine learning based algorithms to provide the said analysis. Along with this, natural language processing (NLP) techniques have been implemented as a part of this study.

In the 10 days run up to the elections in Panvel, nearly 2330 newspaper articles in English and Marathi media were tracked and data was also digitally gathered from 8450 Twitter and Facebook posts.

It was found that of the total campaigning coverage, 38 per cent was carried out through social media, whereas the rest was carried out through print media, in the form of publicity through newspaper articles. Thus, whilst social media is gaining in prominence, the traditional media campaigns are seen to be vital by political parties and candidates.

However, even if social media occupies nearly 40 per cent of the campaign space, usage of the same is restricted to posting content and news about the candidate and not for soliciting citizen opinion on relevant civic issues. Thus, the social media model is seen to be "Managerial" and not "Participatory" in its usage.

Even though younger candidates are more tech savvy and quick in posting content, social media was seen to be used more aggressively by candidates belonging to 41 – 60 age group. Similarly, male candidates were seen to be using social media much more aggressively, whether in the form of carrying out citizen discussions or whether in the form of feeding more news about themselves. There is no clear trend that helps to correlate literacy levels of candidates to usage of social media in politicking. However, richer candidates with more assets as declared in the candidate affidavits are seen to have a definitely higher presence on

social media than the others. Interestingly, candidates with higher number of criminal records use social media more actively than others.

Analysis of these trends cannot be completed without mentioning the media marketing firms, which offer a bouquet of campaigning services to the contesting candidates, including managing their media presence. It is due to these companies that the younger or more educated candidates are not seen to be using social media more actively than the others.
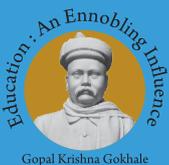
These companies are thus, great levellers and help all candidates from all demographics to access and use social media to their advantage. It is here, however, that the basic profile of the candidate becomes important. The experienced male candidates in the 40-60 age bracket have a lot more to post on their FB accounts and a lot more to tweet about, thus helping the companies to establish their profiles better.

The study really thus goes to show that just as media might help in establishing a candidate better, it is equally true that an inherently strong candidate will automatically be able to use the media more to his advantage than the other people.

Social media was thus, actively and aggressively used by candidates in the run-up to the Panvel Municipal Corporation elections. In the coming years, the usage is bound to increase as candidates will want to make use of a virtual presence to reach out to their voters. It remains to be seen when social media will truly come of age and will be used for garnering citizen participation, and not just to post news and manage citizen opinions.

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