



Political Parties and Election Communication Strategies

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Abstract

Political movements and institutions, from the most primitive to the most complex cannot exist without communication, which is essential to the symbolic representation of authority and to competition for, and exercise of power. The conduct of modern, democratic politics also depends on participation of citizens, for which extensive means of public communication are indispensable, so political communication comprises of different elements and variable in the society in different proportions and levels. It can be termed as a mixture of opposites and a bundle of contradictions in idea or ideology, cause for concern. It comprises of active variable ranging from citizens, groups, political parties, movements and even governments, so political communication comprises of all communication processes that are of importance with respect to political decision making. India as democracy has adopted direct electoral system to elect members of legislative bodies and government at different levels. Voter is a key component and communication with voter to influence his vote preference has been one of the most important subjects in the history of political communication. The people of India are electing their representatives since 1951-52, the year when first Loksabha elections were held. Candidates and political parties use different advertising tools to impress the voters and to convey their messages effectively.

Introduction

Firstly need to understand election eventually means a process through which public selected person for public office or to work, make decisions on their behalf, as it is in general terms what we meant. Not only India but many countries hold elections .As India is a democratic country it clearly defines that elections are the backbone in India. If back to history the general elections were held in 1951. The House had strength of 489 seats, with members chosen from the 26 states of India. Presently, there are total number of 545 members in the house with two unelected members as representatives of the Anglo-Indian community in India. A total of 543 members are chosen by the general elections after that election continue to be important events in the country.

It is noted that large number of people casted their vote. Total more than 30 million people including 4.25 million women had acquired the right to vote and 15.5 million did use their right to elect government. It was the first ever election in the Indian Republic. Elections were held for 489 seats. The total number of eligible voters were about 17.3 crore. The Indian National Congress (INC) won 364.

The Election Commission is important body that conducts the elections in India. The Election Commission has the high-ranking government officials and is formed under the



guidelines of the Indian Constitution. The Election Commission is a highly powerful body and is granted with a great degree of autonomous powers to successfully conduct the elections. The work of the Election Commission starts with the announcement of important dates of the election, nomination in and result set c and activities continued throughout the time-period, when the elections are conducted in the country. We all also know that voting day is holiday in country. We all know congress was headed by Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru attracted many of people to vote for congress and after Independence congress legacy was maintained over many years.

“Today, political communication encompasses the study of the role of communication in political life in the fullest sense, including the media, opinion polls, public sphere, political marketing, publicity, advertising, public relations, and propaganda, with special emphasis on electoral periods

The term political communication was first used to refer to the study of communication from the government to the voting public (now called government communication); it then came to designate the exchange of political discourse between the politicians in power and their political opponents.

The field expanded to include the study of the role of different forms and means of communication in a polity, role of media in forming public opinion, and was further enlarged to cover the influence of ideology, partisan politics, schools and streams of political thoughts, and the influence of public opinion on political life etc.

Political communication must serve to reminder that not all political speeches of the day come under the heading of political communication. Only those which become the subject of conflict and polemics enter into this category. Since it is the arena where contradictory politics of the day are fought out, it follows that the content of political communication varies with time.

Wining seats and numbers of votes by Major parties

Major Parties	No. of votes	Seats won
Indian National Congress (INC)	47,665,875	364
Communist Party of India (CPI)	3,484,401	16
Bharatiya Jana Sangh	3,246,288	3
Socialist Party	11,266,779	12
Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party	6,156,558	9
Independents	16,817,910	37

Since then, number of factors and methods has been used and influenced the election time behavior of the voters. With the march of the time we have achieved milestones of development, especially in the field of education, social and gender equality, economic growth and legislation, law and order. These progress and exposure to the new world and new thoughts have influenced the social attitude of the public. All these factors along with technology with their growing importance in society have been incorporated in election communication and have shaped the ways, means and methods of election campaigns.



Election Communication Required

Communication is something to convey message, information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, information as by speech, visuals, writings, advertisements etc. Communication is the key to disseminate information, ideas, agendas, thoughts between two or group, or to persons. Thus there is the process for communication that sender, message, and a receiver. Communication also required plan that have to be executed and steps that must be followed with timings, resources, money used to achieve an objective or a goal.

Election communication plan minimizes the responses time and enhances transparency. As free and fair elections is not only an end product but, a process in itself effective information management energizes the process at every level and also with effective plan it build confidence.

Election communications clear as to who, to talk to whom, at when and how and no more words to be spoken. It is something about getting the correct information from the correct persons in a correct manner and at correct time. Now a day's all modern tools for communication are available like mobile phones, wireless, social media, and many more, using these tools communication with public is very easy as political actors can directly deal and communicate with voters. Also communication teams organized at the offices of returning officer, district election officer, and chief electoral officer all these officers take care of all things done in a systematic manner.

All activities during elections directly connected to the chief electoral officer and election commission of India. Political communication is to require inform voters about symbol and candidate , dates of poll , to motivate voters to vote for particular party and candidate and also to educate voters regarding symbol and procedure through voters must know to which party they are going to vote for and recognized the symbol and candidate name of particular party. Political parties and campaigns aswell as for interest groups, governments or other organizations that are either inherently political or have political agendas. Election communication is assumed to be necessary for political parties because they can maximize political support.

“It plays an active part, not simply as witness to exchange of discourse but also as the modifiers of the different elements in the discourse process. Political communication is also ‘public’ in the sense that it takes place in front of the public which regularly brings discussions.”⁸ This visibility of political communication is the fundamental principle of our political system where the mass decides publically.

It is any communication message which keeps a more or less direct relationship with the political dynamics of the social system, irrespective of political actors-public and governmental institutions, political parties, social movements, pressure groups or citizens-and whether they behave as communicators or receivers.

Its connections with the concepts of power, ideology, interests, conflict and consensus, any political communication message has always an intentional and persuasive element, which sometimes may become manipulative or false. These concepts are fundamental to understanding any political communication message. It is necessary to stress the essential role played by power and the ideological and interest conflicts which derive from it.



Depending on the circumstances of the political messages it can adopt the nature and form of news, simultaneously perhaps, with a propaganda or disinformation content. In addition they may be expressed using the techniques and language of advertising and public relations in political communication process.

Political communication is primarily persuasive in nature; and it basically serves the function of transmission of political information. In practice it may also include more or less unabashed degree of propaganda or disinformation. Political Communication thus refers to all process of information including facts, opinions, beliefs, ideologies etc transmission, exchange and search engaged in by the participants in the course of institutionalized political activities.

Political communication covers Activities directed towards the formation, mobilization, and deployment of individuals, parties and similar political movement. All forms of organized campaign designed to gain political support for a party, cause, policy or government, by influencing public opinion and behavior.

Many processes involving the expression, measurement, dissemination and also 'management' of public opinion, this includes informal, interpersonal, discussion. The activities of established mass communication and mass media in reporting, projecting or commenting on political events. Informal political socialization is the formation and maintenance of political consciousness.

"The study of political communication during the twentieth century, beyond the story of the rise of the organized and systematic political mass media, has been shaped by a trend towards 'mass politics' based on universal suffrage with in large-scale bureaucratically organized societies"

The modern study of political communication virtually began with the study of propaganda, especially as a response to the uses made of new means of communication during and after the First World War to promote patriotism and other ideologies amongst national mass publics. The early equation of political communication with propaganda was reinforced by the example of the Soviet Union and the Nazi Germany, both of which used their monopoly of control of public means and methods of communication for their own different projects of social transformation.

German sociologist Dahrendorf "claims that for the process of political communication to occur in a democracy two kinds of audience must exist in that polity. He makes the audience distinction as active and passive"

The image of all-powerful electronic media in political communication comes not from the Communist countries but from the development of propaganda and public relations in the West during and after World War I (1914- 1918). "The fear that governments could manipulate the masses at will was greatly stimulated by Adolf Hitler's spellbinding abilities as an orator, not only in front of large crowds but as transmitted around the world by radio broadcast. Hitler was very interested in how the media could be used to solidify his leadership"

Radio and television broadcasting emerged in the twentieth century around the world as government-controlled or government-regulated media of communication. Government control of broadcasting ranges widely: from the U.S.



In a world in which geographical and political boundaries are weakened by the process of globalisation, it becomes even more imperative to grasp the ways in which communication is used to build political identities and to support political action. Political information restores importance to the elements behind the discourse. The contradictory logics at the heart of political communication are given human embodiment. Thus public sphere plays important role in this. Public opinion is most often characterized with respect to direction, intensity, breadth, and depth.

Political communication campaigns typically have multiple and sometimes inconsistent objectives: to inform about the policy and proposal; to establish and modify the ideology and party 'images'; to identify a movement or party with certain issues; to attract and convert wavers; to mobilize supporters. Political communication and Indian independence struggle slogans have shown a capacity and willingness to engage with many currents of contemporary thought, often in a self reflexive manner.

A list of detailed, prescriptive rules required for the elections to be considered fair is very wide, and is composed of the conditions placed on three levels: "procedural, communication and control level the desired realization of the communication function refers specifically to the need to ensure:

- a) Equal access of parties and candidates to the means of mass communication,
- b) No possibility for the mass media to be influenced by the government,
- c) Unrestricted coverage of the campaign and the election by the media,
- d) Freedom of candidates to communicate with voters"

"According to a recent Pew Research Center study, 62 percent of Americans get their news via social media platforms. What they might not realize is that the news they see is heavily filtered"¹⁵. On the other hand, social media gives users more direct access to candidates than ever before. "With social media, voters may believe they have an intimate relationship with a candidate they will probably never meet in person. Within traditional media (print and broadcast), print media displays the greatest diversity of all, in both ownership and content. Print media ranges from daily to weekly newspapers, from news magazines to a range of special interest publications.

Print media also includes one-off publications such as fliers and leaflets. Out of all of the mass media formats, print media is also the oldest, as written text on stone, cloth or paper. In today's world print has a smaller audience than other forms of mass media. This is due in part to literacy levels, access, and wealth. Simple personal preference is also a factor.

Print media in a sense has more longevity, as it exists for longer periods of time; however, the new information technologies put this into question, as the internet is accumulating old news since its initial spread. It has been detected that greater media exposure improves the degree of learning, without affecting the levels of news forgetting.

Agenda-setting theory has largely documented a link between the media agenda and the public agenda, related to people's primary concerns. However the link between media agenda and political agenda -those issues which are considered as priorities by politicians- has not yet been consistently shown.



In addition, a number of studies have shown that in many contexts, even if readership is less than television viewership, newspapers set the agenda in terms of topics and debates for other media – and for politicians. This may be due to the fact that print media can often afford for more in-depth stories. It may also be a result of print media's more 'serious' profile than other forms of media, habits of politicians in terms of media use, and assumptions by politicians about the power of newspapers. While this influence may be changing with the new media revolution, it probably still remains true to an extent.

While the media landscape is ever expanding and diversifying, radio remains the most prevalent and accessible form of media worldwide. Where FM radio is sparse or non-existent, AM radio is often still accessible. Already in 2002, 95% of the world's population was covered by analogue radio signals. The advent of satellite radio has also greatly expanded the variety of radio programming available to individuals worldwide.

Although satellite radio remains relatively expensive, traditional radio is popular because of its relative cheapness. A handheld radio will still need batteries, but these costs are a fraction of those associated with other forms of media. Furthermore, a lack of electricity is not necessarily a limiting factor for radio. Radio also transcends limitations due to literacy. This makes it a particularly vital source of information for rural or poor areas, or contexts where women are less likely to be literate than men.

In locations where it is both accessible and *affordable*, television continues to be the most popular form of media. "According to the International Telecommunications Union in 2009, there were significant regional differences in television ownership." Television remains one of the most dynamic and ever-expanding forms of media. In addition to terrestrial television programming (by way of transmission towers), there is now satellite programming available to viewers.

New media consists of the Internet, mobile phones, social media networks such as blogs and micro-blogs, social networking websites, video-sharing sites, and others. In other words, "new media is a broad term that describes a range of media that are utilized for many different purposes. Some of the things that make new media different from traditional media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines) include:

- i. They are usually interactive;
- ii. They use digital, online and mobile technology;
- iii. They are often audience-created and user-driven;
- iv. They function in real-time;
- v. They are usually borderless;
- vi. The information is often short-lived;
- vii. They are more difficult to regulate – and to censor;
- viii. The infrastructure for publishing or broadcasting is usually cheaper for individuals to access;
- ix. They do not always adhere to journalistic standards and ethics"¹⁷.

However, the line between traditional media and social media is often blurred, with most 'traditional' journalists using the internet as a key source of information for stories; and



many traditional media creating online editions or transforming into fully multi-media outlets. New media offers new opportunities for elections stakeholders.

New Media as Watchdog- New media has begun to play a key part in reinforcing transparency in democratic processes, including elections. Short Message Service (SMS), i.e. text messaging, is now being used around the world by many election monitoring groups for quick gathering and disseminating of information on election irregularities, quick-count processes, as well as other purposes

New Media as Public Educator - The decentralized, multi-media, and interactive nature of new media has opened up its potential as a public education tool

New Media as Campaign Platform - Creative use of new media for political campaigning continues to grow, and candidates and parties now use a full range of tools to woo voters. Many political parties and candidates of course have their own more-or-less sophisticated websites. Online campaign techniques differ not only in medium but also in message, tone, and timeframe. It appears that it is not so much the quantity of new media usage by candidates that appeals most to voters, but the quality and interactivity.

Media as Open Forum for Debate and Public Voice- new media has become one of the most vibrant platforms for people to voice views, share information, interact with leaders, and debate key elections issues.

The regulatory challenge posed by new media so far has been the following: old media can be regulated in a way that does not constitute censorship and enhances, rather than restricts, freedom of expression. Such regulation of new media has proven impossible. New media can be regulated, but the content of the Internet, is so diverse and widespread that regulation has been heavy-handed and has amounted to censorship: interception of emails, closure of web sites, and pressure or legal action against Internet service providers.

Literature Review

An election is a process in which people vote to choose a person or group of people to hold an official position. Lavidge and Steiner (1961) have emphasized that “advertising has three main functions namely- create awareness about the product, develop positive attitude towards brand, and result in action in form of purchase”.

Moriarty, Mitchell et.al (2003) define advertising as “a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the near future”

“The Parliamentary Elections (Election Advertising) Regulations is an official set of legislated rules and guidelines that regulates the use of posters and banners, as well as online advertising platforms, during the periods of political campaigning in the General Elections. As of 2016, the latest formal consolidated version of the regulations is from 2011”.

According to Brader (2006)” the extensive evolution of the media, political advertising remains the primary means by which candidates, parties, and other sponsors communicate directly with voters. The largest expense in a typical campaign for major office is political advertising.”

According to the EFA(Election Financing Act), an “election communication” is a communication to the public during a pre-election period or an election period of a message



that promotes or opposes a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated”⁶

Druckman developed his methodology in pursuit of evidence that “newspaper audiences commanded more political knowledge than television viewers due to a fundamental difference in the depth of coverage that each medium offered (Druckman 464-465). He cites previous studies that alternatively support the correlation between newspaper readership and issues knowledge or else complicate the question with the introduction of prior political knowledge as a factor to weigh”

A broad definition of “political” is of or pertaining to a process whereby intentional changes are effected in the rules governing the relations between individuals”¹⁰

By a narrower definition, however, “political communication” refers only to the activity of certain specialized institutions that have been set up to disseminate information, ideas, and attitudes about governmental affairs. This narrow definition is often implicit in institutional studies of political communication. For example, studies of psychological warfare may focus on across-the-lines broadcasts and leaflet distribution (Lasswell 1927; Lerner 1949; Daugherty & Janowitz 1958). Studies of election campaigns may focus on the use of television, posters, and speeches (Herring 1940; Ostrogorskii 1902; Childs 1965)”

Objectives of the study

To find out the strategies of election communication and commensurate electoral success or failure in successive general elections.

Research Question

What are the origin, nature, structure, pattern and evolution of election-related communications of major political parties of India?

Need and Importance

Indian democracy is the largest parliamentary democracy in the world and its dynamics is motivated and influenced by political communication in general election communication in particular. The changes in strategy and patterns of election communication also directly or indirectly affect the entire political system as well as society at large. Vision, Mission and functioning of the government follow the line which is drawn or emerged during election communication, therefore it is very pertinent to analyze the patterns, methods, strategies of election communication and its impact on voters. The proposed study will try to find out the mode, patterns and factors in the process of election communication. Such finding will help to understand the political communication and its impact in India more precisely and extensively. The proposed study would also be helpful in giving new insights to political communication research in mass communication.

Methodology

The present research study is analytical as well as descriptive. It is descriptive in so far as it states the decisions of the parliament that have been considered over the years.



The researcher will analytically and critically study election.

The proposed study is aimed to analyze the election communication patterns with special reference to Lok Sabha elections from 1991 to 2014. Total 8 elections were held and numerous changes took place in election communication strategies and its implementation. Since study is focused on the critical analysis of the election communication during the period of around 24 years, therefore a mixed methodology of

- (i) Exploration and analyzing the secondary data and
- (ii) Experts Survey is adopted.

The study is principally found on primary and secondary data gathered from diverse sources which includes Constituent Assembly Debates, Statutes, Parties manifesto, Books, National and International Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Published Interviews and Online Databases.

Election Communication in India: Background, strategy and Action

India is the largest democracy in the world. "All the citizens of India have the rights to actively participate in the formation of the government. They have the right to elect their representative on the basis of adult suffrage."¹ It is the constitutional rights of every individual to elect or reject their representative. It is the Preamble to the Constitution of India which gives emphasis on sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. If we look into the Constitution of India, it has been clearly mentioned in Part XV, Article 324-329 about the adult suffrage and the formation of the government in our country. So, election is the inevitable part of the Indian society where people elect their representative to form the government to run the system smoothly.

Election in India is a grand affair. If we look into the Indian society, it has been divided in the line of caste, class, religion, language and ethnicity. There is so much diversity in the country. Bringing all these differences under one umbrella is quite a difficult task for any government or the society. But, the Constitution of India successfully accommodates the rights of every single individual irrespective of their social and cultural differences. Even the national anthem has accommodated the entire region from north to south and east to west, and all the diversity in it. With all the differences and diversity, citizens of India respect the Constitution of India and follow the rules and regulations of it. It is quite a tough task for any institutions to maintain the discipline in such a diverse country. It is difficult to imagine a common election in a diverse country like India. But, thanks to the Constitution of India, which made this task easy and successful. It accommodated all the citizens and safeguard their rights. It gives them the rights to express their views and put forward their thoughts. It enables them to choose their own representative. And a fair election come into existence to form a government to run the country.

Election is one of the important elements of a democratic nation. People enjoy their rights to vote and actively participate in the formation of the government. Voters have the power to decide the fate of the nation. In India, election is observed with care and curiosity. The fate of the nation decided upon the election result. So people handle it carefully



with a great enthusiasm. Both the citizens and the political parties are keenly interested as well as affected by the election result. If you look into the election and party politics in India, there are couple of things which plays an important role in the Indian election. Election manifesto of various political parties and the campaigns are the most crucial elements of any election. Election manifesto is all about the plan for the growth and development of the country which will be carried forward after winning the election by the political parties. Other than the election manifesto, it's the campaigns which decide the fate of the political parties. And an effective way of communication is necessary for the campaigns. If we look into the 16th Lok Sabha election, it is more about "the communication strategies of the Bharatiya Janta Party which helped them to win the election. So it is important to understand the nature and pattern of the communication in the election which decide the fate of the political parties and manipulate the election outcome"

The electoral system in India is quite a complex and big task. Especially, when it comes to the general election/ Lok Sabha election, it demands a big workforce and resources to conduct the election smoothly. In order to complete the pooling throughout the country it needs millions of pooling personnel, security forces, and the law and order become stringent. It also a time taking process, lasting from one-two months. During this process both the government officials and the political parties keep themselves busy with the election related issues. Government officials are in a pressure to conduct the election smoothly without any disturbances or troubles. The political parties are busy with their campaigns, promising the mass a good governance and development. The election is the only machinery in India which immune the citizens, give them all the power to decide their fate.

Election in India determine the government which is consist of both the Lower House (Lok Sabha) and Upper House (Rajya Sabha), the State consisting of Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council, Union Territories, the President and Vice- President of India. Conducting election for all these institutions is one of the largest event in the world. In order to conduct the election smoothly there is Election Commission which was formed according to the constitutional norms of Constitution of India. Under Article 324 (1), Election Commission has power to supervise, accept and reject the election. It is the election commission which decide the date and time of the election. Election Commission has power to dismiss an election or disqualifies the nominees. Election Commission has all the power to probe into the matters related to election.

It is the Election Commission which conducts the election smoothly and fairly with pride and respect. The electoral system is safeguarded by the Election Commission of India. Of course it is the Constitution of India which has set these rules, how to conduct an election and how the matter needs to be handling. Because of the importance of constitution, ours is a constitutional democracy. It is the Constitution of India which safeguard the rights of people, pride and honor of the country. Even the election is conducted according to the constitutional rules and regulations. According to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 election should conduct for the both the houses of parliament as well as the state legislative assembly and legislative council. Article 327 of the Constitution of India gives power to the parliament



to make law regards to the elections, electoral rolls or any matter related to election in both the houses in center and state.

All these matters are strictly follows the provisions made in constitution. Other than the constitution there is Supreme Court of India which enacts the laws formulated by the parliament under the constitutional provisions, and the election commission of India implement in the process of election. And all these things carried out smoothly under the guidelines of the constitution. It is the Constitution of India which is the soul of the Indian democracy.

Election in India involves political mobilization and organizational help in a large scale. There are thousands of candidates, millions of voters, difficult geographical locations, which makes the election tough and tiring. Despite being a tiring and tough task, election in India always take place in a particular interval without failing. There is regularity in the election process which makes the electoral system more strong and authentic in India.

It is important to study the election and understand the various elements of election and electoral system of India. Since election decide the fate of the nation it is necessary to know how the election takes place, how people perceive it, what is the role of the political parties, and the communication between the political parties and the people. This study is going to look into the philosophy behind the election, and why it is important for a nation. What exactly a democratic nation? It is important to follow the election and the elements associated with it. In order to understand the election in India this study will focus on the recent Lok Sabha election. In order to understand the people, it is essential to understand the mode of communication, and how people perceive it. This study will focus on the process of communication, how it plays a role in the election process and how the various stakeholders use the mode of communication which is available around them.

Development of Election Communication India

At the most fundamental level, the media are channels of communication, serving to relay messages to various audiences. Put simply: Freedom is when the people can speak. Democracy is when the government listens. The media is the messenger (Howard 2004). Both traditional and new media play critical roles in elections. First, the media serve as watchdogs: they scrutinize the electoral process, analysing how well institutions and electoral actors have performed, and highlight successes and failures to help the public hold them to account. Second, the media act as platforms for campaigns. Candidates and parties use the media to disseminate their plans, promises and visions for the future. Third, the media provide a forum for election-related public debate and discussion.

They allow ordinary citizens to be heard, thereby helping them influence political agendas and other voters. Fourth, the media is a public educator. In addition to providing voter education information, journalists offer useful analyses of the news, presenting various interpretations of events and statements. Such analyses help individuals make informed choices of action. With regard to elections, national and international media play slightly different roles. While the local media can find themselves constrained by risky domestic



contexts, international media are often more free to report on the politically sensitive or controversial aspects of elections. Yet international media have been criticized for pushing certain angles or presenting a lopsided view of certain electoral processes (ODI 2014). It is also usually the case that the international media focus on Election Day rather than the entire electoral cycle.

Until recently, the mass media primarily engaged in ‘one-to-many’ communication. That is, one author or institution communicates messages to many people at the same time in a relatively impersonal way. Examples of one-to-many mass media are television, radio and newspapers.

The internet and social media have dramatically altered the media landscape, mainly by facilitating many-to-many communication. Unlike traditional media, social media allow for the simultaneous delivery of individualized messages to vast numbers of people. Furthermore, each user has the ability to share, shape and change the content of the information (Crosbie 2002). Within this new media, it is much more difficult to distinguish between producers and consumers, and ordinary people are now empowered to be ‘citizen journalists’ by breaking news stories and disseminating information.

Since the first elections in 1952, political process and elections in India in terms of media coverage has been compartmentalized by some analysts into three distinct phases³⁸. Prannoy Roy calls the first thirty years’ post-independence as the ‘docile phase’ when media was at its weakest; and high illiteracy resulted in 80% of governments being voted back to power. The second phase beginning in 1977 Roy refers to as the ‘volatile or angry phase’ when 60% of governments were thrown out of power in the face of an aggressive media. In the third phase panning the growth of satellite television, Roy argues, a deluge of information to the electorate through radio, TV and mobile has led to a more informed decision making by the voters replacing a blind anti-incumbency of the “volatile or the angry phase”.

There is evidence to suggest that since 2011, political communication in India through mass media has entered an interesting and a highly complex fourth phase where internet and online communication has emerged as an independent variable influencing political communication running parallel to the legacy media.

Findings and conclusion

The goal of strategic political communication during election campaigns is to use information and communication as strategically and effectively as possible to reach the objectives that have been set. The strategic goals of parties and campaigns are thus imperative, which suggests that an understanding of strategic political communication during election campaigns requires an understanding of political parties and campaigns as organizations. For example, some parties are more vote-seeking, while others may be more policy-seeking. Such party characteristics will influence both the priority given to campaigning and campaign communication, and how the parties plan and run their campaigns.



At the same time, campaign practices and communication are always dynamic and shaped by the contextual conditions formed by the political system, the media system, laws and regulations, the political culture, and the type of parties and party competition. What works in one context may thus not work in another context. While there are cross-national patterns in campaign practices and campaign communication, more detailed analyses usually reveals country-differences beneath the surface. Hence, while it is important to identify macro trends, it is also important not to oversimplify. The country context matters and filters the innovations and import of campaign practices. Modernization theory thus holds stronger explanatory power than the Americanization-thesis, and rather than standardization of campaign practices, research suggests hybridization. Still, this review has shown that research on election campaigning and campaign communication suffers from several deficits. Most important is the lack of longitudinal and comparative research, which partly follows from the lack of specified and standardized independent and dependent variables. Only with a comprehensive theoretical framework and clearly specified and standardized independent and dependent variables can comparative research on election campaigning and campaign communication flourish, and only then will it be possible to provide firm answers to questions about differences and similarities in election campaigning and campaign communication across time or space; their antecedents; and their consequences. One thing holds generally true though: At heart, election campaigns are nothing but political communication.

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