

Social Media and Political Engagement in Kerala: Communication Strategies and Voting Behaviour

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Muthu U. T.¹

Abstract

The social media political communication is a powerful tool to reorient the political behaviour of the target voters. This study provides clear indications on the use of political communications particularly in Kerala context. By conducting this study which is focusing on the effect of political communication that are propagated through social media on the perception on the voting choice of the voters of Kerala, the researcher aims to create a detailed document on the use of social media for political communication and how it influences the attitude, response and the voting choice. The study focuses on revealing underlying voter opinions and perceptions, helping political parties and politicians communicate their ideologies more effectively. The findings will offer new perspectives, filling gaps in the area of social media's influence on voting choices. Apart from this, this study is aimed to fill the gap and identify the factors which related to the social -political communication. This study will also assist the political parties, politicians and government to develop their strategies related to political communication through social media to attract the voters to vote for them or to make the voters to vote more responsibly in the elections.

¹ St Joseph College of Communication, Changanassery, Kottayam, Kerala

Corresponding Author:

Muthu U.T., Assistant Professor, St Joseph College of Communication, Changanassery, Kottayam, Kerala - 686104, India.

Email: drmuthu@sjcc.co.in

Key Words

Political Communication, Social Media, Voting Behaviour, Political Ideologies, Campaigns

Introduction

Social media has become the one of the most important tool for communication nowadays throughout the world. It is being used for various communication purposes in all sects of the life, let it be a personal or official communication, individual or group communication, business or corporate communication, social or political communication etc. Social media communications is playing a vital role in the communication process of both the micro environments and the macro environments. Social media communications have made significant impacts on the various segments like personal, family, social, government, business, political etc. In the recent years one of the macro environments which faced a significant impact by the social media is political environment.

For many centuries, throughout the world, political communication has been a crucial practice followed by the political parties to propagate their ideas and ideologies to influence the people to cast votes for them. These propagandas have evolved over the centuries in their content and format and the evolution and development of the various media. In the later stage, political communication has developed in the forms of direct advertising, particularly during the election period in all the types of elections at the local, state, or national level, etc. Campaigners employ almost all the forms of conventional advertising techniques to promote their ideologies among the voters to persuade them to get votes. For many centuries, these political communications have taken different forms, including wall painting, pamphlets, loudspeaker announcements, political meetings, banners, etc. All these forms of political communication incurred high costs to the political parties and the contestants. But with the advent of information technologies and related fields like the Internet, e-communications, etc., the price incurred for political communications has reduced significantly. Mainly, the invention of social media has facilitated almost cost-free political communications that could reach millions of people. Moreover, nowadays, political parties have started engaging professional advertising agencies to make political communication promotional strategies. For the past few decades, the

dynamics of political communication has transformed from brick wall to social media pages. Political communication through social media has been done after considerable research and brainstorming about the economy, demography of the voters, voters interest and behaviour etc. The political communications that are propagated through social provide lot of awareness and information about the political parties, politicians and their present and past activities etc., either favourably or unfavourably.

The credibility of the information or messages that are shared through social media is a big challenge. Moreover, many people those who are engaged in the social media have higher degree of freedom to express their views or opinions in the social media. The present study is aimed at to explore the impact and relevance of using political communication through social media in the state of Kerala in India. The study investigates the voters' Perception of social media political communications in influencing political involvement and voting choice. It is further hypothesized that the Perception of the role of political communications is mediated by one's participation in the voting decision.

Political Communication

Political communication is a subfield of communication and political science which is related to how the information spreads and influences the political environment, policymakers, and the citizens. Political communication is an interactive and practical process where the information related to politics is communicated to various political groups, news media personnel, the public, etc. This process adopts the downward approach where the communication flows from the top-level leaders to the bottom-level people and citizens. The communication moves in an upward direction only for the purpose of getting feedback or opinions from the people or general public. In recent days, the political communications made by the political leaders have become more prominent and trend in social media. Government political parties engage various types of media to propagate the political communication to the targeted groups and citizens to make awareness or to influence them to get their support during the election period or at any point in time. Besides, various political parties adopt a different types of political communication strategies to attract and persuade the voters. Political communication is one of the essential factors in any democratic system. Political campaigns during communications are one of the usual political

communication processes. Political campaigns include various modes of communication to provide information related to their political parties, politicians and their political promises etc., which are aimed at persuading the voters to vote for them.

Social Media

Social media sites nowadays play an essential part in spreading political communications very rapidly with significant effect. Social media has evolved with technological advancement where political communications can be made instantly and can be propagated immediately. The Internet has become the most popular and most instantaneous platform for a different types of communications, including political communication. This is made possible by the websites, blogging web pages, social networking sites, etc. Social networking site is an online platform where people build social relations with other persons who share similar interests, opinions, and information related to the same background. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social media networking sites as Internet-based applications that allow the user to develop a social profile within a closed group or have a list of known users and can view their friend list and that of others within the system or group. They include Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Telegram etc.

Social Media and Political Communication

The influence of social media on politics has been growing tremendously. Social media campaigns provide an advanced platform for developing political representation to spread their thoughts, grab issues on the action, and establish assistance groups in society like volunteers. In social media, people share and like a lot of messages and information every day, and this will be more during the election period. And social media has become more powerful media than any other media in terms of the promotion of political communication, specifically during the election period.

Several studies have been carried out on the effect and influence of social media on various communications and promotions (Han, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Peters (2009) states that social media is the new generation of digital

communication technology that is evolving very steadily and has been used commendably. Social media use various networking websites as its variety of excellent communication. Boyd and Ellison (2009) defined social media as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a world or semi-populace profile within a bounded organization, (2) articulate a lean of other users with whom they share a connection, and (triplet) view and traversal their leaning of relationships and those made by others within the system. There is more definition available that exists to clarify the term, but this can be the clearest one in all. Through a long time of political communication, political parties and leaders can informally interact with the public through social media platforms, even one-to-one interaction.

Robertson et al. (2010) found that the social media platform Facebook has a significant effect on the Choice of young voters. Banaij and Buckingham (2010) state that young voters could get various information related to the various political parties, political leaders and contestants etc., from social media, which are not available in the general media, and this information are very much helpful to the young voters in making decisions to whom to vote. Robertson et al. (2010) mention that people can share information about the political alliances made by the political parties and their candidates on social media. Further, they can discuss and express their views and opinions.

Political Communication in Kerala

In Kerala, where the political environment is an integral part of the common man's life and with the population of the highest literacy rate in India, it would be difficult for the politician to propagate their ideologies very quickly (Dhanuraj et al., 2016).

The political trends in Kerala vary drastically and have been remained unpredictable since its inception. Most of the pre-poll and exit poll surveys go wrong as the voting behaviour and the voting patterns of the people of Kerala elicit direct influence from various reasons ranging from local to national. With the advent of social media, the behaviour got more unpredictable and gave many surprises in almost all the elections, including the parliamentary elections in 2019.

The voting behaviour of people in Kerala has been influenced by political communication through social media in recent times. Political parties have planned detailed analysis to develop the strategies by engaging both official and unofficial propaganda managers. Though conventional advertising media like banners, billboards, hoarding, pamphlets, newspaper advertisements, etc. has been widely used, the social media political campaigns also gained much focus by the various politicians in the various political parties. Moreover, the political messages which are posted on social media have got much attention and spread very rapidly across the various social media group, including political and non-political groups.

The content of the social media political communication also comes under the scope of the study as they are made from various places and persons who have no official responsibility in the parties' political campaigning. The contents may have favourable and unfavourable messages about the political parties and the politicians.

Nowadays, politicians mainly focus on making political messages instantly with more personalised content. But the main challenge is that politicians do not have much control over the political messages once the statements are released on social media because the social media users can manipulate and alter the notices in the way they want. Moreover, the people may interpret the messages what it means either favourably or unfavourably. The voters of Kerala are very much conscious and aware of various developments in the political arena and could make discussions or debates related to political matters very easy.

Review of Literature

Beliefs

Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) describe beliefs as an association of an object with some attribute. Kotler & Keller (2006) define belief as a descriptive thought that a person holds about something. Many studies have acknowledged the significance of beliefs as an important antecedent in studying the consumer attitude in offline environments (Pollay & Mittal, 1993, Andrews, 1989) and online environments (Wang et al, 2009; Wolin et al, 2002,). Bauer et al (1968) presented two belief factors, viz. social and economic factors, in a broad perspective. Based

on this Pollay & Mittal (1993) developed an extended version of seven factors; 'product information', 'hedonic/Pleasure', 'social role and image', 'good for the economy', 'materialism', 'falsity/nonsense', and 'value corruption'. The seven beliefs introduced above have been extensively discussed in various research papers. Many scholars have studied the significance of beliefs as an antecedent to attitude concerning conventional advertisements (Pollay & Mittal, 1993) and online advertisements (Ducoffe, 1996; Wolin et al, 2002; Wang et al, 2010).

Involvement

Involvement is the extent of the psychological bond the people have developed towards a particular activity or product category emotionally. Several studies have found that the power of these emotional bonds or the degree of involvement decides the intensity, difficulty, and degree of cognition and behaviour in the decision process (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Houston & Rothschild, 1978). So, to understand the people's behaviour, attitude towards the brand and brand advertisement, purchase frequency etc., involvement acts as a fundamental framework (Chaoying et al., 2011;). Stone (1984) defines involvement as the time and intensity of effort expended in pursuing a particular activity. Engel et al. (1995) also describe that involvement could be measured by the time spent in product search, the energy consumed, and the extent of the decision process. Scholars have debated that involvement can be visualised in behavioural theory.

Attitude

Attitude involves some kind of evaluation and its consequent development of feeling on the product or services. Runyon & Stewart (2002) define attitudes as learned predispositions to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given subject. Attitudes are a reflection of object-evaluation relationship (Fazio, 1989). In that way, attitudes can be identified as a two-dimension link. The first dimension is a representation of the object and the second dimension is an evaluation of that object (Fabrigar, MacDonald, & Wegener, 2005). There is a connection between these two dimensions associated with strength related to attitude (Fabrigar et al., 2005). Mahmoud (2012a), from the perspective of social media advertising, describes attitudes as a predisposition to like or dislike advertising messages on social media. Many stud-

ies have found that consumer attitudes towards social media advertising as a demonstration of advertising effectiveness (Saxena & Khanna, 2013; Nevarez & Torres, 2015; Jung, et al., 2015). Similarly, people tend to develop an attitude towards the political communications that are propagated through social media.

Response

Responses towards advertising on social media are the behaviour that social media users take after viewing an advertisement on social media. These behaviours may be seeing the webpage of the advertisement or social impression advertisement on social media for obtaining more knowledge about the products or brands. In the context of online advertising, behavioural responses are expressed as “clicking on advertisements” and “leaving the page showing the advertisements” on social media (Wolin et al., 2002; Wang & Sun, 2010a, 2010b; Mahmoud, 2012). In terms of social media political communication, the behavioural response is expressed as ‘opinions or debates or critics or support that are provided to the social media political communications by the social media users or people. The response is a participatory process for encouraging positive behavioral change in individuals and communities through the strategic application of targeted messages and providing a supportive environment (Briscoe & Aboud, 2012). Response in social media encompasses social and community mobilization, as well as communication, approaches, being a product of information, education, and communication (IEC) strategies (Koenker et al., 2014). This type of communication goes beyond the mere dissemination of perceived necessary information (Portsmouth, Trede, & Olsen, 2012). It is instead a two-way process that involves three cyclical stages – listening, dialoguing, and actioning (Portsmouth et al., 2012)

Perception of Voting Choice

People involved in social media political communication tend to believe that their attitude and responses for the political communication social might have influenced the voting choice of the people. Campbell et al., (1960) describe voting behaviour as the outcome of the interaction of long-term and short-term influencers. The long-term influencers include family members and other people

involved in political socialisation, past voting history, and strength of party identification. Short-term influencers have candidates' characteristics and situational factors on the voting day. Della & Kaplan (2007) express that according to rational expectation theories, the voters sort out bias and cannot be persuaded very quickly, whereas according to behavioural approaches, the voters can be influenced easily. In this way, the persuasion of media on the voting choice of the people is an essential factor to be studied.

Smith (2008) believes that generally, in social media, political communications with defaming messages tend to get more popularity than political communications with positive notes or contents. Rarely can the voters get away from the trap laid by the various persuasions made by the political parties and politicians, and they tend to vote based on their own rational thought process. This may be because of the higher degree of exposure to social media political communications (Sadoulet, 2007). Howard (2005) expresses that electronic polling methods and the two-way involvement of the voters improves the confidence of the voters which leads to rational voting in the democratic process.

Statement of the Problem

The technological innovations and development over the past two decades have brought in significant changes in the way of expressing speech to everyone (S. Arulchelvan, 2014). As we all know that the freedom of speech and expression of personality is a fundamental right of the common man guaranteed by the constitution in India. In India, for the past decade, the advent of social media platforms has changed the dynamics of political communication in a very different way compared to the political communications that were used before. The political communications that are propagated through social provide a lot of awareness and information about the political parties, politicians and their present and past activities etc., either favourably or unfavourably.

The credibility of the information or messages that are shared through social media is a big challenge. Moreover, many people who are engaged in social media have a higher degree of freedom to express their views or opinions in social media. They can debate, discuss, criticize or support the various things happening in the Also; the technological advancements enable the social media users to change and alter the different messages or communications that are

already propagated in the social media. These alterations or changes in the contents of the political contacts that are made may be in a positive way or negative way.

Prior to the social media period, the political parties and politicians directly and majorly influenced the voters through various political promotional activities and there was very less influence on the other external factors which influenced the voters in their voting choice. But during this era of social media, besides political parties and politicians, there are many intermediaries who are also playing a significant part in influencing the voters either directly or indirectly. These intermediaries may include sponsors, bloggers, followers, reviewers, social media users, etc. Even ordinary social media users who forward the political communications in their social media groups or to their friends, family members, or relatives indirectly influence the voting choice of the people. It is hypothesized that these social media political communication has a significant effect on the society or voters in making Perception towards the voting choice. This is the research gap identified for this study. So it is intended to study the effect of political communications that are propagated through social media on voting choice or behaviour. Also, it is intended to explore the belief of the people towards the social media political communication, involvement of the people in the political activities in the social media, the attitude of the people towards the social media political communication, and the response of the people towards the political contacts. There is little research that has been carried out in social media advertising in the Indian context, as the research has been done mainly in developed nations.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To understand the belief of the people towards social media and political communication.
2. To understand the involvement of the people in political activities in social media.
3. To study the people's response towards political communications in social media.
4. To evaluate voters' Perception about the influence of political advertisement through social media on voting.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the level of belief the voters have towards political communication and social media?

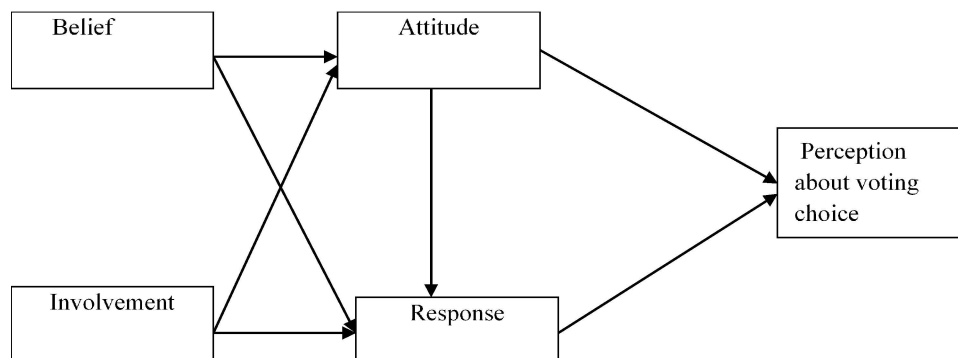
RQ2: What is the level of involvement the voters have in social media with regard to political activities?

RQ3: What is the Perception of voters towards the voting choice?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is adopted from the framework of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) where they used four variables viz. belief, attitude, intention and behaviour. The Fishbein- Ajzen model postulates that the sum of an individual person's belief acts as the informational base that eventually decides his attitudes, intentions, and behavior" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). An attitude is a perception towards an object (e.g. good or bad) and this attitude is according to Fishbein and Ajzen developed by beliefs about this object. A belief is an opinion that relates to concepts or attributes through information from previous experiences. Beliefs can relate to the consequences of following or adopting a particular behaviour. The theoretical framework of the study is given in fig.1

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Variables of the study

The present investigation is an exploratory study undertaken to develop a framework for the belief, attitude, involvement, response, and Perception about the voting choice by the people about the political communications that are propagated through social media.

The identified independent variables of the research model were:

i) *Belief in Social Media Political Communication:* This variable indicates the peoples' or voters' belief in political communication and social media concerning informativeness, credibility, user-generated content, goodness, and value.

ii) *Involvement in Social Media for Political Communication:* This variable indicates the involvement of the people or voters in the social media political group as a member or follower; and administrator.

iii) *Attitude on Use of Social Media for Political Communication:* This variable indicates the attitude of the people or voter towards the use of social media for political communication and its content or message.

iv) *Perception about voting Choice:* This dependent variable indicates the Perception of the voters about the voting choice

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the dependent variable (Perception about voting Choice) and independent variables (Belief and Involvement) and the mediating effect of mediating variables (Attitude and Response) on dependent and independent variables.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive and exploratory. The research technique adopted in this study is the quantitative research technique. The sample population for this study was the voters living in the state of Kerala. The sampling technique used in this study is non-random sampling, and the convenience sampling method was adopted for this study. That means, the voters who are from Kerala and who are willing to participate in this research survey were selected as sampling respondents. The universe of the study is

chosen as the entire state of Kerala. The questionnaire is circulated through the Google form to about 1500 people to respondents in Southern, Central, and Northern Kerala. After the questionnaire was distributed to the various respondents, the total number of responses received was 604. So the sample of this study was 604. The collected data were tabulated and analysed through SPSS software and Smart PLS software. The statistical tools adopted for this study are simple percentage analysis, analysis, T-test, ,Annova, , Correlation.

Data Analysis

Social Media and Political Communications

It has been observed that for number of social media visit the most of the respondents under this study have visited more than 3 social media regularly. This shows that people are more active in the social media platform and this provides very good opportunity for political parties and leaders to propagate their political communications directly to the voters very effectively and efficiently. It is also observed that for age, occupation, residing district and region have significant association with number of social media visit and for gender, education and location, there is no significant association between them and number of social media visit. So the political parties make political communications according to age, occupation and location of the voters.

It has been observed that for favourite social media majority of the respondents have chosen Instagram as favourite media. Nowadays, more and more youths are preferring Instagram than any other social media mainly because in Instagram mainly photos and video reels are shared than the texts. So the political parties should create political communications in the form of pictures and video reels so that it could be propagated in Instagram so that more young voters can be targeted. It is also observed that for age, gender, education, occupation, residing district and region have significant association with favourite social media and for location, there is no significant association with favourite social media.

It has been observed that for Social Media ranking, majority of the respondents were given Rank 1 for FaceBook. So, political parties and leaders should propagate their political communications in FaceBook. It has been observed that for

ranking for topics discussed in social media majority of the respondents were given Rank 1 for Cinema, Rank 2 for Music. So the political parties and leaders should try to embed features related to cinema and music in their political communications so that more people may get involved in the political communications.

Belief

1. The t test for the variable Belief resulted that the significance test of mean resulted that for all the items in Belief factor and the deviation from their means is positive and significant at 5% significant level. This shows that respondents have favourable belief towards use of social media for political communications.

2. The findings from ANOVA test for Belief show that i) there is no significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables gender, education, occupation and residing district towards Belief variable; ii) there is significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables age, location and region towards Belief variable.

3. The findings from correlation analysis show that the variable 'Belief' has significant positive relationship at 1% level among variables Involvement, Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice. This means that higher the belief, then there will be higher chances of Involvement, Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice.

It has been observed that the most of the respondents under this study have favourable belief towards use of social media for political communications. This shows that the social media political communication has become prominent among the people or voters.

It is also observed that the respondents irrelevant of their gender, education, occupation and residing district have favourable belief towards use of social media for political communications. It is also observed that the belief towards the use of social media for political communications differs among the age groups; corporation, municipality and panchayath locations; and North Kerala, Central Kerala and SouthKerala regions. This may be because of the different

levels of usage of social media by the people belong to various age group and the different geographical locations.

As belief has positive significant relationship with Involvement, Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice, which means that higher the belief, then there will be higher chances of more involvement, positive attitude, active response and favourable perception on voting choice. So the people who believe in use of social media for political communication will tend to be more involved, develop favourable attitude, and would make active response. So the basic function that the social media political communications should perform is that to develop belief among the voters and social media users.

Involvement

1. The t test for the variable involvement resulted that the significance test of mean resulted that for the items, 'Interest In Read Political Message', 'Interest In Forward Political Message' and 'Prefer SM Clarification' the deviation from their means is positive and significant at 5% significant level. This means that the respondents have significant involvement on the above activities. The significance test of mean resulted that for the items, 'Interest In Search Political Message', 'Member of Political Group', 'following pages of political parties' and 'Get Information From Party Social Media Page' the deviation from their means is negative and significant at 5% significant level. This means that the respondents were not that much involved in the above activities.

2. The findings from ANOVA test for Involvement show that:

- i) There is no significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables education, occupation and region towards involvement.
- ii) There is significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables gender, age, location, and residing district towards Involvement.

3. The findings from correlation analysis show that The variable 'Involvement' has significant positive relationship at 1% level among variables Attitude, Re-

sponse, and Perception on Voting Choice. This means that higher the involvement, then there will be higher chances of Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice.

It has been observed that the most of the respondents have agreed that they are interested in reading political messages in social media and also interested in forwarding political messages in social media. This is a very good opportunity for the political parties, political leaders and electoral candidates to create and develop political communications or messages related to their political agenda or policies and promote them in the social media more effectively and efficiently. Majority of the respondents also prefer social media to get clarification about the facts behind the political communications or messages about the political parties, leaders or electoral candidates.

It is also observed that respondents are not that much involved for activities like interested in searching about political messages, following pages of political parties, member of political group and get information from party social media page. So the political parties and leaders should come up with innovative ideas which would make the voters to search political messages in social media. They should develop their social media pages and websites in more interactive way so that that would provide improved user experience to the voters or social media users. This would make the voters to follow the party pages and get information from the social pages of the political parties.

It is also observed that the respondents irrelevant of their education, occupation and region do not differ in their involvement towards social media political communication but for demographic categories like gender, age, location, and residing district there is a difference in the involvement towards social media political communication. So the political parties and leaders should come up with various strategies to target these demographic categories to make them involved in the social media political communication.

As 'Involvement' has significant positive relationship with Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice, this means that higher the involvement, then there will be higher chances of Attitude, Response, and Perception on Voting Choice. So if the political parties and leaders should focus on developing strategies which would make the voters and social media users to become more in-

volved in the use of social media for political communication. If there is a significant positive change in involvement towards the use of social media for political communication could be made among the voters, then it will have a significant positive impact on attitude and response. Moreover the people who are interested in use of social media for political communication should develop their awareness and knowledge in more responsible way in propagating the real facts rather than fake political communications.

Attitude

1. The t test for the variable attitude resulted that the significance test of mean resulted that for all the items the deviation from their means is positive and significant at 5% significant level except for 'Agree Information Taken From Party Page' ($t = 1.634$, $p > .05$) and 'Agree Explanation True' ($t = 0.399$, $p > .05$). This means that respondents are somewhat agree that the information were taken from party page and the explanation give were true in social media.

2. The significance test of mean resulted that for the items, 'Agree SM Info Decide Merit' and 'Agree Info True' the deviation from their means is negative and significant at 5% significant level. This shows that most of the respondents disagree that social media information decide the merit of the candidate and information in social media are true.

3. The findings from ANOVA test for attitude show that i) there is no significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables, gender, age, education, and occupation towards attitude; ii) there is significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables location, residing district and region towards attitude.

It has been observed that most of the respondents have agreed that they have favourable attitude towards the use of social media for political communication for most of the items. For the items 'Agree Information Taken From Party Page' and 'Agree Explanation True' the respondents are not fully agree but somewhat agree that the information were taken from party page and the explanation give were true in social media.

It is observed that the respondents irrelevant of their gender, age, education, and occupation have favourable attitude towards use of political communication in social media. It is also observed that the respondents belonging to demographic categories location, residing district and region have difference of attitude towards use of political communication in social media. This difference of attitude can be overcome by developing and propagating the political communications which are specific to the particular demographic categories related to location, residing district and region. Several political communications may be developed in a decentralised way by the political party authorities and party members belonging to a particular location, residing district and region. So certain percentage of decentralisation of development of political communication must be necessary because the party authorities at the local level may know about the various facts about the voters in their location, residing district and region.

As Attitude has significant positive relationship with response, and Perception on Voting Choice. This means that higher the attitude, then there will be higher chances of positive response and perception on voting choice. So the political communications that are made and propagated in the social media should ensure that it develops a positive attitude among the voters and social media users. The political parties should focus on creating the political communications which develop positive attitude among the voters and the social media users. Also the political communications should provide more and more encouragement and motivation to the voters and the social media users which would further develop positive attitude. Because a significant positive change in Attitude, will lead to a significant positive impact on response and perception of voting choice.

Perception on Voting Choice

1. The t test for the variable SAP Satisfaction resulted that the significance test of mean resulted that for all the items in perception on voting choice, the deviation from their means is positive and significant at 5% significant level. This shows that respondents agreed that social media political communication have influenced their perception on voting choice.

2. The findings from ANOVA test for perception on voting choice show that:

i) There is no significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables gender, education, and occupation towards perception on voting choice.

ii) There is significant difference between groups and within the groups for the demographic variables age, location, residing district and region towards perception on voting choice.

It has been observed that the respondents agreed that social media political communication have influenced their perception on voting choice. This is a good opportunity for the political parties and political leaders to influence and persuade the voters through the use of political communication in social media. To successfully achieve this they have to come up with the political communication which are genuine and real. The political communications should be made in such a way that they are more engaging, entertaining and also provide useful information and experience to the voters and social media users.

Limitations

Mainly this study was conducted in state of Kerala and with limited number of respondents. To test the proposed research model, this study used a convenience sample of customers who were willing to respond, therefore the findings cannot be generalized universally. The data collection for this study was done mainly through online .Google form questionnaire were used to collect the data through online, so the response from the respondents may have limitations with regard to google forms. This study only examines the factors related to belief, involvement, attitude, response towards the social media political communication and perception of voting choice. Also, there may be some constructs that may have influence on social media political communications and perception of voting choice which are not included in this study.

Conclusion

Social media political communications are essential means for political parties, political parties or electoral candidates to get in touch with the voters or citizens

and persuade them to vote for them. Also, it is very much imperative to understand that the social media political communications also have impact on the attendance of the voters on the Election Day. The use of social media for political communication has changed the dynamics of political campaigns and advertisements and it also made political parties and leaders to have more concern about the voters. Social media political communications enable political leaders to have direct communication with the voters. This hugely reduces the spending of money towards political advertising. The speed with which the information and communications are disseminated in social media is really very quick. Voters and social media users have developed belief, involvement, attitude and response towards the social media political communication.

The findings showed that Belief, and Involvement have significant positive effect on Attitude and response towards use of social media for political communication. Also the findings showed that the Attitude and response has significant positive effect on the perception on voting choice. Further it was also found that the Attitude has partial mediating effect between response and the independent variables belief and involvement. Also it is observed that response has partial mediating effect between perception on voting choice and attitude. This study has provided in-depth knowledge to the researcher to recognise and understand the various factors related to belief, involvement, attitude and response. These have been presented in this dissertation report at proper places. The findings of this study work would present very good insights to various political parties, leaders, voters, social media users and other stakeholders.

Further Studies

The findings of this study show that the proposed framework is appropriate for using social media for political communication and its influence on people's Perception of voting choice. This can be applied to evaluate and analyse another media type. In the future, additional independent variables can be included which are appropriate to those time periods to improve the soundness and stability of the present research framework in several other political environments.

In this study, the focus is shown on the factors related to belief, involvement, attitude, and response. In the future, this framework can be tested for other particular aspects related to subjective norms, perceived behavioural control,

perceived risk, etc., to test the effect of the use of social media for political communication on the Perception of voting choice of the people. Also, more variables related to social media usage may be included in this framework to evaluate the model in the future.

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About the Author

Dr Muthu U T, is an Assistant Professor at St Joseph college of Communication, Changanassery. She holds a PhD from Madurai Kamaraj University, where she researched the impact of social media on political communication. Dr. Muthu has taught at prestigious media colleges, including S N College, Kollam, "Iqbal College, Peringammala. She has authored a book titled, 'Big Ideas of Visual Age, Latest Trends in Television Advertising', edited book chapters, and published research papers in UGC CARE-listed journals. She also serves on editorial and advisory boards of peer-reviewed academic journals. Her academic and professional expertise spans journalism, mass communication, and political communication.