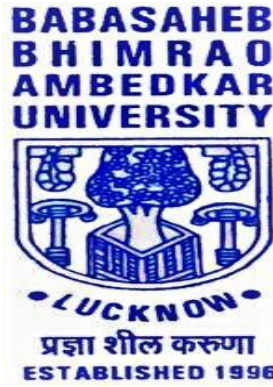


# ***Political Discourse in Social Media and Its Impact on the Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh***

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR  
UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW**

**FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

***Research-Thesis***



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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "Political Discourse in Social Media and Its Impact on the Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh" submitted by Mr. Santosh Kumar is an original research work and has not been previously in part or full submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma to this or any other university.

The thesis submitted to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Lucknow, satisfies all the requirements as stipulated in the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D. Regulations) 1999 as amended in 2010 and it is fit for submission and evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University.

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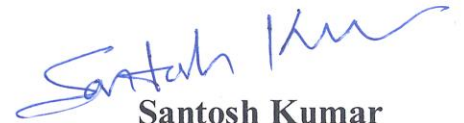
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*Dedicated to My Grand Parents Late Devi Shankar*

*Pandey and Ramshree Pandey*

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that, the thesis entitled, "Political Discourse in Social Media and Its Impact on the Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh" submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Lucknow is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted partially or wholly for any other degree of this university or any other university. This thesis contains original research work and complies with the plagiarism norms.



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- 2- “Politics in the Age of Social Media in India” Amity Media & Journalism Review, Volume 7, No1, April 2018, ISSN 2319-5126
- 3- “Social Media and Women Discourse: The Role of Social Media in Raising the Voice of Women During Corona Pandemic in India.” Research Paper accepted for Amity Journal, Noida Campus for the publication in the issue of January, 2021.

## **Abbreviations**

BAMSEF- Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation

BJP- Bhartiya Janata Party

BSP- Bahujan Samaj Party

BVF- Bahujan Volunteer Force

CAA- Citizenship Amendment Act

CAGR- Compound Annual Growth Rate

CD- Compact Disc

CSDS- Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

DVD- Digital Versatile Disc

ECI- Election Commission of India

FICCI- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry

IAC- India Against Corruption

ICT- Information and Communication Technologies

IMAI- Internet and Mobile Association of India

IT- Information Technology

JNU- Jawahar Lal Nehru University

MIT- Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NDA- National Democratic Alliance

NDTV- New Delhi Television

NITI- National Institution of Transforming India

PR- Public Relations

PRA- People's Representation Act

PTI-Press Trust of India.

SP- Samajwadi Party

TCS- Tata Consultancy Services

TRAI- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations

UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund.

UN-United Nations

USA- United States of America

USSR- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WWW- World Wide Web

# **Chapter-1**

## **Introduction**

**CHAPTER- 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Social Media- An Introduction-**

The term media refers to the channel in the communication process which also includes sender, receiver and feedback. Mass media includes different kinds of channels which amplify the messages to reach the masses. The mass media have always been present in every age. The history of mass communication dates back to great civilizations like that of Egypt and Babylonian. The importance of communication was understood by the Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle<sup>1</sup> in ancient times. Both philosophers believed communication as an art of persuasion. They found communication as the legitimate area of study (Andal 2005:04). In earlier ages, the religious places were crucial channels of mass communication. Their aim was to disseminate the religious, social and political contents. The Church was capable to communicate to the masses in Europe. When the modern means of communication were born, the monopoly like those of religious bodies and other social entities on mass communication started to shrink. In these circumstances, a struggle started on the issue of dominance between the religious and newly emerging independent mass media system during the reformation and counter reformation movement. This was also the time when the technology of mass communication also got a social status in many parts of the world (McQuail 2005:24). The social media can be defined as a channel of communication that provides an opportunity for the people involved in the communication process to share their personal and professional interests on a forum (Marriam – Webster, 2011). Social media can also be defined as a group of applications which are supported by the internet and are based on information and communication technologies (Baghel, Batra, 2015:18). Social media is one of the most popular activities on the digital platform in the contemporary global scenario. In the year 2018, more than 2.65 billion people were engaged online in social media. This number is estimated to rise 3.21 billion by 2021. The global spread of social media became over all 45 per cent in 2019. The advancement of digital technology and building the digital infrastructure in the developing countries is anticipated to shoot up the social media penetration in the world. The growth and development in the mobile telephony has also given new impetus to the social media penetration in the world today (Statista, 2020). Social media is the latest development in the realm of mass communication. From personal to professional,

social media is playing the role of a catalyst. Social media is also helping the users to increase their awareness which subsequently facilitates them in opinion making as well as for the participation and mobilization of people for different purposes including political (Akar, 2011). Social media is the conversation among the users who actually interact among themselves. Social media are virtual communities where people share and express themselves through various ways like audio, text, visuals, photographs etc. The social media is also based on the user generated contents. These are web based public platforms which use various electronic devices for the purpose of communication. In fact, the information and communication technologies are the fundamental infrastructure behind the functioning of social media. Today, this media has become an integral part of life. It impacts all aspects of life now ranging from social to political. The internet has eliminated a lot of hurdles of public communication specially the existence of gatekeeping which makes the social media as a unique media and also different from mainstream media. The emergence of social media and its extraordinary growth thereafter is not based on imaginary grounds instead it has become reality due to the needs of society. Various kinds of social media have opened new opportunities for the common people to participate in the communication process actively rather than being a passive recipient of the messages. It can be cultural, social, related to trade and business and politics. The use of social media for political purposes now has become a common trend in all over the world. The former President of United States of America Barack Obama should be given the credit of being first in breaking the ice for the introduction of social media in the political and electoral process in his country. In fact, social media facilitated him to become popular in the USA. In fact, the social media has become the voice of the common people in the world due to interactive nature. Past instances suggest that this platform of public communication is being used for several purposes. This has also changed the pattern of protests in the world as well. In fact, the social media has facilitated the mass participation and mobilization. The youth has particularly voiced themselves through social media. There are instances when the youth have expressed their anguish against the establishment successfully. It seems to be very unprecedented. The politicians are now using various social media to communicate the masses. Social media has strengthened the participatory democracy in the world. Citizens are no more passive stakeholders in the democratic processes. Instead, they are now the active participants in their respective political systems (Roy, 2015).

Social media is a popular platform of expression in the contemporary world. Most of the online active net savvy people use social media for different purposes. The sudden emergence of social media is one of the key factors behind the attraction of this media. Initially, the use of social media was confined to the technocrats as these were only having the expertise to use this complex mechanism by that time after the emergence of internet and the need of sharing of information through this digital platform. With the passage of time, the technology of social media became more users friendly and inclusive because common masses now were not the recipients of the messages only, but they had become the content generators as well. The user generated contents later became the mainstay of social media. Unlike the mainstream media, the social media provide an opportunity to exchange the user generated information among the users. Social media are also known for empowering the ordinary people. In democracies also where the press is considered as the fourth estate, the political communication is initiated by the elite or leadership at the top levels. But social media is very democratic as far as political communication is concerned. This alternative media provides even the marginalized sections of society the opportunity to express them freely. (Taprial, Kanwar, 2012).

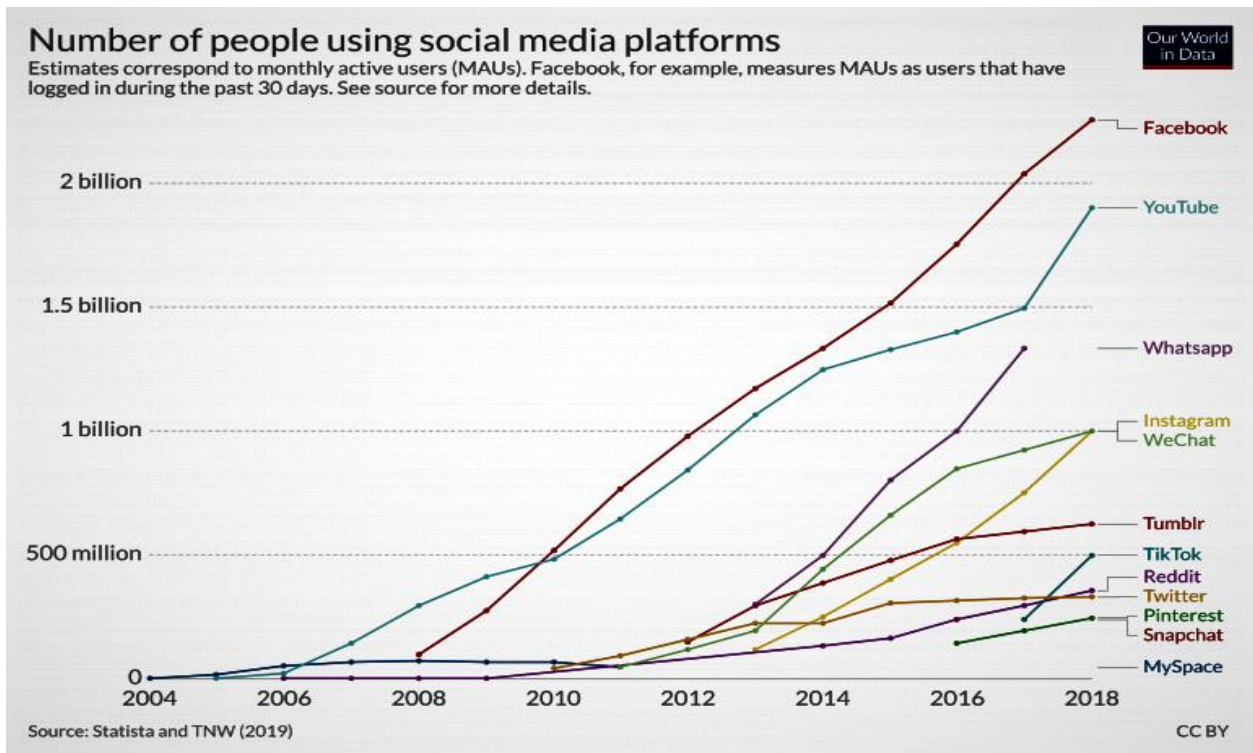
According to Dan Gillmor, the author of a famous book, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People and for the People*, the internet has affected both the governments and the mainstream media decisively all over the world.<sup>2</sup> The participation of the consumers in the news generation process would transform the entire scenario of news business in the world (Patnaik, 2009:26-27). Social media has changed the news and information scenario all over the world. It has also affected the thinking of the people and the way they wish to comment on any of the personal or public issues. Most importantly, they don't have to linger on for what they express on this platform. They instead get the immediate reaction on their expressions. This alternative media is therefore termed as the media for and by the people. Because of these features of social media has developed a democratic nature. The common masses who engage in this platform find themselves empowered despite of being at the grass root levels. It simply means, this media has significantly democratized the information. It has been beneficial not only to the individual persons but the professionals also. This platform provides the professionals with an opportunity to feel the pulse of the common masses which is there targeted audience. In earlier days, the people concerned could be approached only through the traditional patterns of communication. But the social media has facilitated to communicate with them with a single click. In fact, the social media has broadened the

horizon of mass communication. This media also gives an opportunity to mobilize the targeted audience for the communicators from businessmen to politicians. In 2014 General Elections there were 14.9 million first time young voters who were predominantly coming from the information technology savvy generation. They were easily approached through the social media and were mobilized towards a political ideology. The social media was behind the record voters' turn out that was 66.4 per cent<sup>3</sup> in the said General Elections. The politicians who are active on social media have better opportunity to connect with their voters in comparison to those who refrain from this digital platform. This is not necessary that the influence on the users of a political ideology would turn them into potential voters but still the influence on these people is quite significant (Chopra, 2014: 1-4).. Since, people to people direct communication is considered more effective pattern, the social media have the same potential. This is participatory in nature therefore it provides an opportunity to everyone in the world to participate in the communication process provided he has access to the internet. The communication process in social media is an online process that gives an opportunity to all stakeholders to express. It is basically an online conversation where the participants communicate with one another irrespective of any of boundaries (Sajitha, Patil, 2013: 69). The social media is a kind of facility which is found on different electronic devices and is based on the internet. In fact, these popular media are driven by the internet. The users are connected through their personal profile and later they may discuss various aspects of their personal and public life ranging from, politics, culture, society, economy, environment etc. These media provide an opportunity for all to expand their brand marketing as well as to use the same for, social, economic and political discourse (Parvathy, Suchitra, 2015:1-2). The online presence is the fashion of the day from business to politics. This modern platform provides face to face communication with the recipient of the messages. In fact, recipients of the messages are not the passive participants in the communication process. Social media is one of the most talked and debated subjects in the contemporary world as well. The number of people active on social media is so huge that it is recognized as the modern digital world. In fact, this is an age of cyber space expanding beyond political and geographical boundaries. Facebook, which was launched in 2004, has made stupendous growth within only one decade. The advent of social media is not so old, hardly a decade and more but its popularity has established new records. It can be called as a new nation in the cyber world (Ghose et al, 2013:14).

The invention of web 2.0<sup>4</sup> by O' Reilly, was introduced in the world of communication in 2005. This gave birth to new dimension in the mediated communication. It is said that social media has transformed the communication patterns and challenged the monopoly of broadcast media in mediated communication spectrum. The messages of social media are very effective, and they emphasize on social interaction. Because of social media, the users are not the passive recipients of the messages only instead, they also prepare the messages to be circulated through social media. In this way, social media decentralize and democratize the information. The social media is a facility of transformation from only the content user to producer of the contents (Patrut et al 2014:15). Emergence of internet was a turning point in the history of communication in the world. The revolution in this filed was possible due to the advent of the internet. The emergence of internet has been so quick and accurate that this gave birth to a revolution. The stupendous growth and development of information and communication technologies not only strengthened the digital infosphere but also gave birth to new patterns and platforms of communication. Social media is one of the outcomes of revolution in the field of information technology (Shirky, 2011:01).

The birth of social media may appear to be of present era but there are historical evidences to confirm the existence of this media centuries ago. The people would use the smoke, beating of the drums and fire signals for the purpose of telecommunication in ancient Egypt, Greece and China. In 550 BC, in Iran the horse riders and hoarse carts were used primarily to transport the mails from one place to another for the purpose of communication. The industrial revolution was a turning point to usher the new age communication technologies in the world. The invention of telegraph, telephone and wireless telephony were the milestones which changed the way people communicate. The requirements at two levels – governmental and business were the primarily two important factors that boosted the use of new age communication technologies for the purpose of communication. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, specially, in the post-world war two period is credited to have facilitated the growth and development of satellite and subsequently internet. ARPANET, E Mail, and Bulletin Board System were some of the outcome of these developments in the arena of digital communication.

Figure 1.1 Growth of Social Media Users in World



Source: Our World in Data

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is known as the age of information revolution in the world. Because of spectacular growth and development in the digital communication technologies, were born the social media of today's world. Friendster, Fotolog, Photobucket, Flickr, Orkut, Facebook, Digg, Ning, Twitter, Netlog etc. In the past few years social media have occupied a major space in the infosphere in the world. (Baruah, 2012). Social media is different from the traditional media. This mass media subsequently results into the development of networked societies. Social media is not restricted within elites in the context of initiating the communication process. It is very much associated with all walks of life from businessmen to politicians and from Bollywood to the common masses. The social media has transformed the way people communicate from interpersonal, group to mass communication levels. This has provided the policy makers with an opportunity to make the direct access. All the stakeholders are actively participating in the communication process. Beneficiaries have also become the stakeholders in the entire process from policy making to implementation. In traditional media of mass communication, the recipients are generally shot the messages while their feedback emerges thereafter. This may take some time while in social media the feedback is instant. In the traditional way of mass communication, the communicator uses channel to communicate with the masses who are the passive recipients of the messages only.

The social media is a system where masses interact with the masses. The social media has revolutionized the mass communication in the world. The emergence of new media has decentralized the media and communication industry and has shifted it from few hands of elites to the masses. It is basically the actual democratization of media where even the person at the most down step can directly communicate to the person at the top level. The right to freedom of expression has turned into the people's right to express. There are vast field of interests in social media. People express on various issues like political, economic, social, and environmental enthusiastically. Social media has given the users an opportunity to become an opinion leader and subsequently he becomes one of the architects of shaping and reshaping of public opinion on this digital platform. The introduction of smart mobile phones has given an opportunity for maintaining all time connectivity and anywhere irrespective of any physical or cultural obstructions. Social media is defined as a media for society, for the people to get more social and start conversation. Be it a thought or opinion, a picture, a video, a quote etc. they can be shared with others on this popular platform. It is important for the professionals as well as it provide a direct interaction with the recipients of the messages. In comparison to real life, big personalities from different walks of life like media, politics films etc. remain present and accessible for the common masses. The term social media involves two different words, social and media. Social reflects a group or community where people live together and share their views, faith etc. It is a community where the people live and carry out various kinds of works. It is a situation of mutual co-existence where people depend upon each other and share the information. As far as social media is concerned, it is a digital and virtual world which is based on modern information and communication technology (ICT). Its meaning therefore differs accordingly. Many use this for their personal purposes while it becomes serious business when it is to be utilized for growth and development of an organization. It brings positive and constructive changes when applied responsibly. Being casual on social media may result into destructive developments as well. After all this new media is potentially very strong depending largely on the user and his objective (Chopra, 2014).

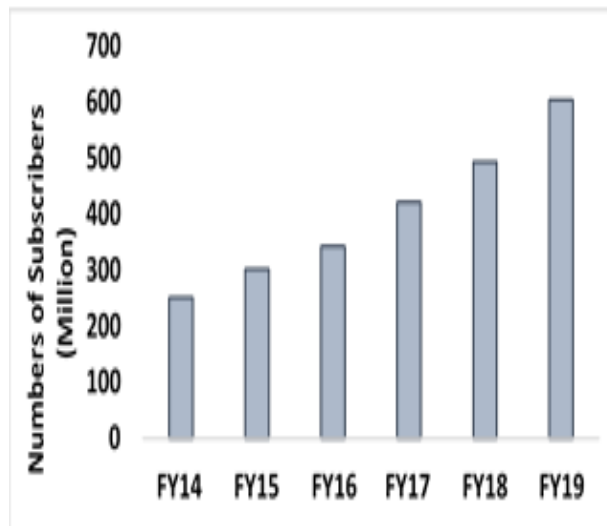
## **1.2 Evolution of Information and Communication Technology, Internet and Emergence of Social Media.**

This age is called an age of information and communication revolution. Mediated communication has become an integrated part of life. The advent of agriculture ended the nomadic life of the people. Arrival of machine in the human civilization began the era of industrialization. Now it's the third major change when the information has become so important that it now impacts every aspect of life. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed tremendous developments in the field of communication technologies. Advancement of printing technologies established the print media significantly. The second wave started when the telegraph was invented followed by the invention of telephone, photography, motion pictures and projector. The invention of vacuum tube by DeForest gave birth to the idea of radio and television. The latter half of previous century is known for the major changes in the information and communication technologies. This can be termed as the fourth phase of communication revolution. The 21<sup>st</sup> century began with the major changes in the economy, culture and society. This was the beginning of globalization. The communication technologies played an important role in this process. Mobile, telephony, internet and satellite communication are the key elements in the entire process. Marshal McLuhan in his book, *Undertaking Media: The Extension of Man*, has described the idea of global village. He says, "The speed of information in the global village mean that every human action or event involves everybody in the village in the consequence of every event." (Sharma,2004: 03-04). The last decades of previous century are known as the period when the foundation of information revolution was laid down strongly. This was the beginning of the evolution of sophistication in the field of mass communication channels, information and communication technologies. The age-old existing media technology started to become obsolete while the new technology which was the blend of major channels of mass media came into being. This was the beginning of new age communication system backed up by communication satellite. The advent of wireless technologies opened new pathways for the functioning of mass media. The computer had already knocked at the door of communication spectrum. Further sophistication in the communication and information technologies changed entire mass media scenario. Earlier, computer used the existing worldwide telephone network for the functioning of internet but the emergence of modem facilitated the smooth functioning of information technology. The development of electronic mail and World Wide Web<sup>5</sup> (www) were the two major outcomes of these developments. Then started digitization which

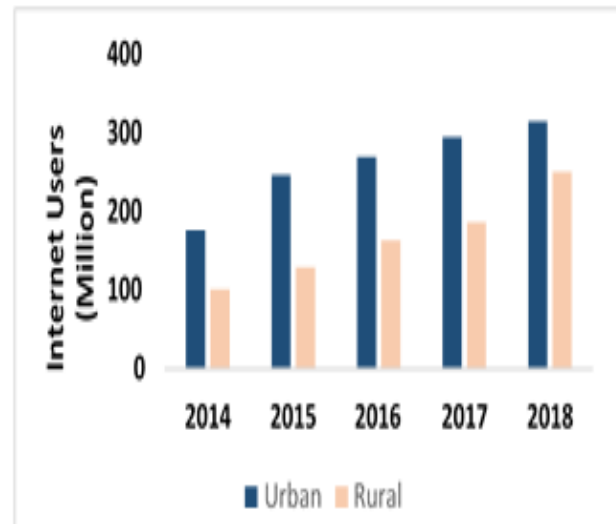
introduced the drastic changes in the field of information and communication technologies. (Kumar, 2015: 557-560)

**Figure 1.2 Growth of Internet**

**Exhibit 1: Growth of Internet Subscription, India, FY14 to FY19**



**Exhibit 2: Internet Users in Rural and Urban Areas, India, 2014 to 2018**



Source: IBEF, IMRB, LSI Research

Source: IBEF, IMRB, LSI Research

The ICT is a system that provides an opportunity not only to capture, store and the process of information but also facilitate the mechanism to display this processed information. Internet is the major outcome of these developments. The emergence of ICT is not confined merely to technology, these have affected the life in different dimensions effectively. (Chakravarthy, 2004: 1-2) The people now have the opportunity to receive full – motion video on cell phones. The technology at the other end has also allowed the users to transmit the contents they received on their television sets to their personal computers or the cellular phones. These transmissions are possible irrespective of geographical obstruction at the lesser cost. The newspaper, magazine, radio, television, photograph and films can be accessed on a single handheld device anywhere and anytime. These contents include all the features essential for infotainment like graphics, pictures, videos, text, and music. This is considered as an outcome of revolution in the field of information and communication technologies. The new media

technologies have expanded the existing technologies. Earlier the existing technologies could not serve the vast spreading audiences while the advancement has facilitated better connectivity as well as the establishment of big corporations in the field of mass communication. (Baran, Davis, 2012: 32-33).

In mass communication, the messages are transmitted in a high speed to a large number of audiences through the media that has capacity to amplify the quality and quantity of the contents desired to be communicated. It can also be called as the transmission of messages to a large number of audiences generally anonymous and heterogeneous. This type of communication has the capacity to influence the attitude, behavior and opinion of the targeted audiences. This is different from other types of communication like intra- personal and inter personal. The channel plays an important role in the mass communication process. The evolution of communication technologies has affected the mass communication significantly. There have been significant developments in the field of information and communication technologies. The stupendous growth in computer, internet connectivity through broadband and the extraordinary penetration of mobile telephony are the key factors behind the revolution in mass media (Yojana, 2009). The inception of sophisticated technologies in the mass media has been a significant and decisive development in the recent past. This new communication technology-based mass media is also referred as new media. The new media can be defined as, “on demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device as well as interactive user feedback, and creative participation.” On the other hand, the new media<sup>6</sup> is also defined as a digital platform where the content is unregulated, networked, user friendly and interactive. New media technologies have also facilitated the convergence which is the base of new cyber media revolution. It is basically a combination of various technologies like internet, digital devices etc. The user- friendly aspects of new media are very important. This provides the user an opportunity to access the information at any place or time with just one click. The modification of new media technologies has empowered the consumers in particular where they are the decision makers. The social media, a form of new media, is also based on user generated contents. The new media is a blend of many different technologies. They involve connectivity of computers, the internet service providers, telecommunication networks, information superhighways based on fiber optic networks. It basically brings three major aspects together communications, content and computing together (Shukla, 2014: 9-10).

The revolution in the field of information and communication technologies has impacted the media practices all over the world. Over the centuries, the technology has been decisive factor in the evolution of mass communication. The ongoing developments in this field won't have been possible without two factors- satellite based communication and origin of computer. Satellite has sophisticated the transmission of information and efficiency and the device called computer has emerged as a great facility for the collection, processing and dissemination of information. Another important factor is the convergence of media which has brought various media of mass communication in a single window. Both convergence of technology and contents are the major outcomes of the media convergence<sup>7</sup>. The capacity of transmission has been affected significantly. The development of various electronic gadgets like DVD, CD, digital camera, printers etc. are advantageous for the growth of mass media all over the world. They have filled the gaps between the private and public communication and on the other side between the regular professionals involved in the information gathering and processing and common masses. This has facilitated the democratization of information where consumers are not the passive receivers instead, they are stakeholders in the entire communication process. This is not only the new media but the traditional media have been benefitted with this communication revolution. ( McQuail, 2005, : 38-39).

The Post -World War two period is known mostly for the negative reasons but it boosted the growth and development of information and communication technologies. Since “the cold war was fought in the minds of the people” (Pt. Nehru), the mind and idea both got the prominence. The travelling of these ideas was not possible in the absence of modified communication technology. Therefore, both the USSR and the USA aspired to achieve the best of communication technologies. In this circumstance, the mass communication and its technologies were given high emphasis. In this era of Post- World War Two, the information and communication technologies grew by rapid stages. The disintegration of the USSR marked the beginning of a new era in the world. Old global order was replaced with the new one. This was the US led global system- socially, culturally, economically and politically. The concept of globalization with the support of liberalization and privatization started the process of transformation of the world into a global village. The penetration of capital from the North to South was another significant development. In this unipolar world, two key factors emerged exceptionally- one was transportation and another communication. An automobile revolution speeded the movement of the people from one place to other. On the other hand, there was another revolution in the field of information and communication

technologies. These technologies witnessed sophistication in its functioning. The ICT was no more restricted to a particular field or class instead it became the part of routine life. These technologies introduced significant changes right from academics to the field of medicine. Entire scenario of generation of information and its delivery to the recipients through the channel was changed dramatically. Now, the generation of information and its delivery became faster and accurate. In fact, the refinement in the information and communication technologies facilitated to eliminate the complexities of both personal and public life. The penetration of ICTs in life is visible everywhere. In fact, it changed the life style comprehensively. The end of Soviet Union also globalized the world trade and commerce. The ICTs facilitated the global trade and commerce significantly. After the formation of World Trade Organization in 1995, this process was further accelerated. ICT helped the development of global business while the need of ICT in business helped the technologies to be quick, refined and accurate. ICT also used by the governments all over the world to eliminate the red- tapism and bureaucratic hurdles in the governance. The use of ICTs by the governments in the third world countries facilitated the government- people relationship and also strengthened. The use of ICT's in the governance has facilitated the democracy in true spirit at the grass root level. The information and communication technology has revolutionized the entire mass media scenario in the world. Though there have been tremendous developments in the field of communication technology over the past couple of centuries, the introduction in the field brought gradual changes. This is the significant difference between the communication technology of past and present. In fact, the technology has become decisive player in bringing the changes in different walks of life. The modern communication technology has impacted the thinking of both the state and its people. The information war at the global level tells other side of the importance of communication technologies at the global level. (Singh, 2018). India is known as the global power in the arena of information and communication technology. Its importance can be understood that the Union Government opened new Ministry of Information Technology in 1999. The aim of this step was to facilitate the development of software as well as to enhance the manufacturing of hardware in the country (Sharma, 2004: 5-6).

The induction of ICT's in the sphere of mass media has been exceptionally important. The digitization of communication technologies has made mass media industry growing by leaps and bounds. Social Media is an outcome of revolution in the field of information technology. Internet is one of the major outcomes in the field of ICT. Some consider it not as a

technological achievement but as a turning point in the history of communication technology. This is available to facilitate communication in different walks of life like politics, family and society. This is the advancement in the field of information technology that has transformed the entire spectrum of telecommunication and mediated communication significantly. These developments have facilitated the communication qualitatively specially the interactive media. Internet has come into being as an outcome of various developments in the field of electronic communication. Internet which is also the base of new media is also termed as latest modification in the channels of communication process. Internet has the extraordinary potential to spread the information with more accuracy and quickly in comparison to the traditional media. Internet has given birth to new infosphere where the communication has significant value to influence the social, economic and political life. (Sharma, 2004, 10-31). Internet is basically a huge network of various connectivity in which numerous numbers of computers are connected to one another with a purpose to share various kinds of information like text, graphics, audio, video etc. The messages are transferred from one place to another in a sophisticated manner. The internet has become very powerful tool to establish connectivity with other people. It is also a process in which people can connect with other likeminded people and thus develop the communities with an objective to exchange their views (Sharma, 2004: 41). In India, internet was slow at the time of its inception but after some time, the internet started to grow by rapid stages. According to a report issued by the Internet and Mobile Association of India that in 2013, there were 2013 internet users in the country. This can be divided as 137 million users in the urban areas and 68 million users in the rural areas. Overall, there were 16.9 million internet users in the said year in the country. (Downey, Neyazi, 2014). The WWW is a kind of platform of internet that is known for its ability in the field of graphics. This facilitates the users to navigate freely. For this purpose, they can choose the graphical images or text. Singlegress.com is the very first social networking site which was launched in 1997. In 2001 Ryze.com was launched and introduced new beginning in the social media spectrum. This site facilitated the users to create their profile to surf as well. Facebook came into existence in 2005 (Sharma, 2004: 41)

### **1.3 Digitization, Mobile Penetration and Expansion of Social Media-**

With the emergence of digital consumerism, the growth in consumption of digital contents has increased manifold in the country. The digital revolution is an important element in digitization<sup>8</sup> has resulted into the growth and development of various industries in India.

Since digitization improves the quality of processing, it significantly improves the production, it has impacted various industries positively. (Maiti, Kayal, 2017). At this point of time, India has the potential to guide the world for a better future as a mobile and digitally prosperous society. There are all important facilities available for making India as a digital power from infrastructure to the policy of government. Besides, there is a big market in the country. It has been an intelligent approach to transform from the age of personal computers to hand held digital devices. But it is not an easy path to go smoothly instead there is a big need of constant efforts made by both private and public sectors simultaneously. India's millions of internet users make it a potentially powerful country in the world in respect of information technology. It is important to note that many in India still deprived from this digital revolution, still, there is big demand of digitization in the market of country. In fact, its boon for the internet penetration with the mobile handset which is more personalized form of device. The McKinsey Research finds that there is a big possibility of further internet penetration in the Indian market. But there are many hurdles in the development of infrastructure essential for the internet and mobile penetration in the country. (Narsimhan, 2011). It is expected that by the year 2020, most of the people would be connected digitally which would be a complete culture of computers connected among themselves in millions of numbers, the internet, mobile telephony and social media. It is now estimated that the induction of broadband in the cyber system in India has been a major reason for digitization of India. The respective governments have been keen to avail the benefits of this digitization. The aim of government behind the digital revolution was to transform the entire society into a more empowered society. The infrastructure that has been strengthened further aims to empower the citizens through digitalization. (Bamzai,2017)

The mobile phone specially the smartphone has become a boon for the penetration of social media. Their affordability and portability have made them popular among the social media users. In this way, they facilitate significant scope for political discourse<sup>9</sup> according to the need and convenience. The penetration of smartphone has strengthened the connectivity between the users and their political leaders. The studies show that almost 90 per cent of the voters having smart phones are connected with their political leaders. In fact, mobile phones have boosted the growth and development of social media. The popularity of mobile phones can be understood by the fact that political leaders use mobile apps to disseminate their messages to the voters. Mobile has now become an integral part of the political campaigns. During the 2012 Presidential Elections in the United States both the popular leaders, Barack

Obama and Mitt Romney used mobile apps to reach their respective voters. These apps facilitated the voters to engage in the political communication with their leaders as well as to actively participate in the electoral process. Besides, the established news media set ups have their individual apps which help to establish the link between their audience (Smith and Duggan, 2012). The revolutionary changes in the field of communication came after the invention of telephone in 1876 and most significantly after the invention of wireless by G. Marconi, an Italian engineer. Mobile phone which turned into a smart phone became a milestone in the penetration of internet all over the world. In 2004 when only five per cent people had the mobile phones, there was a message of Atal Behari Vajpayi circulated, "This is Atal Behari Vajpayi speaking." It was the first message in the country aiming for political campaign based on technology and database. Gradually, personal information became the precious product and the sale of these products became the rage of the day. Meanwhile, the internet shook hands with mobile resulting into the modification of phone into smartphone which made social media as an integral part of human life. Very soon the social media was equipped with the power of influencing likes and dislikes, behavior and personal habits of the people (Singh, 2018: 3-4)

There have been significant changes in the entire mass media scenario over the past many decades due to the use of modern means of communication specially the digital communication. This modern form of communication is individual centric in comparison to the previous one which was not personalized. The penetration of mobile telephony is a major milestone in the birth of a networked population. This development has also facilitated the birth of new mobile culture in the mass media scenario. Social media, subsequently has been benefitted by this development. (Campbell, Park, 2008). Before the liberalization of Indian telecommunication industry, telephone was considered as an elite device confined to some handful people of society. It was not accessible until there was a shift in the policy of government of India. This scenario changed with the opening of Indian space for the private companies. Mobile was introduced in India in 2005 while just after a decade of its inception there was big change introduced in this industry. By 2005, almost four and half million subscribers were being added monthly. At this juncture, there was a significant improvement in the telephone density of India. Though there were shifts of political leadership in the country yet the ongoing policy of mobile telephony remained unchanged. (Kumar, Thomas, 2006). The expansion of mobile telephony has given new vistas to the Internet to grow in India. Another significant contribution to the growth and development of mobile telephony

has been the advent of 4G and low data tariffs. Because of the competition among various companies on the price, the cheaper mobile set and data facility are available that has played an important role for the mobile and internet penetration in India. Both government and private sector companies have been at the utmost attempt to facilitate the mobile and internet penetration in India. The use of broadband communication technology is another major landmark in the growth and development of mobile and internet in the country. Jio company has been providing the cheapest data that has played an important role to access the internet with the mobile phone. This has actually established new norms in both mobile and internet industry in India. This stupendous growth and development of mobile and internet has added new wings towards the growth and development of digital contents at various platforms. The advertising industry is likely to record the CAGR at 30.8 per cent by 2021 which would facilitate the advertisers. The surge in the video on demand has been significant. Many well-known companies are venturing into digital media domain in Indian market. This has been a boon to the growth and development of social media. Internet on mobile is now credited to be the primary reason of the accessing the social media in India. In the year 2016, mobile accounted for approximately 32 per cent of overall advertising on social media. In fact, the mobile penetration is a key aspect in the entire digital media sphere. Mobile telephony has now become a big reason for the sustainability of the digital ecosystem (FICCI,2017).

#### **1.4 Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Global Political Scenario-**

Thomas Friedman<sup>10</sup> has called the world “flat” due to the expansion of information and communication technologies and subsequently the emergence of mass media which has facilitated the global connectivity. (Zakaria,2011). This was Barack Obama who is credited to have exploited the substantial potential of social media to mobilize the voters in his favor before and during his electoral campaign in the political spectrum of the world. He opted for the digital media platforms for the purpose of communicating his voters directly. This political discourse was a significant development as this resulted into massive voters’ turnout in the Presidential elections. In the 2008 Presidential elections, the Presidential candidate, Barack Obama utilized the Twitter for the interaction with the voters. Because of this reason, these elections were named as the social media elections. He subsequently started to be followed by millions of people. This was enough to realize that the time to come would witness the outstanding role of social media in the political communication in different parts of the world (Khosla, 2018). Some of the events in the recent past has made the social media

immensely popular at the global level. The Brexit and election of President Trump are some of them where the online campaigning made remarkable impact on target audience and the mobilization of the people towards some certain agenda and issues. (Rajan, 2019). There have been several changes in the world due to the emergence of digital media at the global scale. The theoretical developments have posed challenges which undermine the existing theories in the study of digital media and its impact on the people's life. It is important to broaden the approach in this respect to feel the pulse of ongoing practices in the global political spectrum. The research on digital media have been restrained to some issues only. The main concern of the studies conducted in the USA and European countries has been to understand only the role of social media in the political participation and engagement. While on the other way, the focus has been to study the control of state and stringent regulation on mass media in the authoritarian regimes. These two perspectives on the digital media have been fruitful and resulted into several outcomes but they were confined. The diffusion of internet has introduced several changes in the both democratic and non -democratic states. But other changes take their origin from difference in political context, institutions and political culture. The penetration of digital media is no more confined within the developed world but this is also accessing the developing countries. In 2010 the digital penetration was 70 per cent in the USA while it was only 30 percent in China. Mobile penetration has facilitated the growth of internet in the world. By the end of 2010 there were five billion active cellular phones in the population of almost seven billion. The Arab Spring of 2011 prove that all the people don't use the digital platform to impact the politics. The social media are growing at the global scale and when the revolution broke out in Egypt, the Facebook was the third popular social media after google and yahoo (Shapiro,2009). Facebook is the popular social media in the USA and also there are other social media in different countries. In 2008, Orkut was very popular in Brazil and hi5 in Mongolia. Sonico was another popular social media in Latin America. It simply indicates that the social media are getting popular day by day all over the world to connect them with the like -minded other persons to share various aspects of their life including political events. There is digital divide<sup>11</sup> as well in the distribution of this digital miracle. In Africa, the penetration of mobile telephony has been quite remarkable with the substantial growth of internet even better than the developed world. This digital divide is within and across the countries. The early adopters are more beneficial than the laggards. The use of language is another factor where English dominates the digital world while in the mean-time the use of other languages is also increasing. Mandarin is one

of the prominent languages to be used in the world of internet. The literature of studying this media at the global level is filled with the studies of Europe and the USA while in the non - democratic set ups and outside of the liberal democratic politics, the key concern of research is the democratic reforms and censorship of mass media by the authoritarian regimes. Sola Pool (1990) is very positive for the role of communication technology to play in the democratization and liberalization process. The civil society is a catalyst in adopting the digital media in North America, China, Middle- East and many authoritarian regimes. The communication technology is playing an important role in raising the political voice of reform and development in many countries. This is mobilizing the people and enhancing their participation in the democratic reforms in many countries as happened in the Arab Spring. The radical character of technology helping the political process in different parts of the world. Technology is not enough but the citizens engagement and political participation<sup>12</sup> depend on many local aspects like the civil society, political culture and socio- economic development etc. (Jorba , Bimber 2012: 16-22)

There has been an important development in the world due to globalization. Simply, the term globalization is understood as the emergence of free and liberal economy and relaxing of international border for trade and commerce, it has also impacted deeply the cultural and the domain of information and communication technologies. Internet has been instrumental in not only propagating the idea of globalization, but also has emerged as a tool to introduce drastic changes in the field of society, culture economy and politics. In these circumstances, the role of world wide web is of immense value to transform this world into the global village<sup>13</sup>. Social media, particularly has been playing an active role in the process of cultural and political globalization. (Baghel, Batra,2018:18). The advancement in the field of information and communication technologies have introduced significant changes at the global level communication spectrum. The communication technology has demolished the boundaries of the closed societies and has introduced several changes to facilitate the process of globalization in the world. The undemocratic regimes have been brought to light on one side while on the other, the attractive aspects of liberal societies have been introduced through the internet in the backward societies. The social media has facilitated the transformation of dictatorship into liberal regimes in many parts of the world. This political transformation would not have been possible had social media not used extensively for the communication and mobilization of the people under these regimes. (Chidi, Chimee, 2016). In 2012, there was the use of social media for political mobilization in Romania. Because of

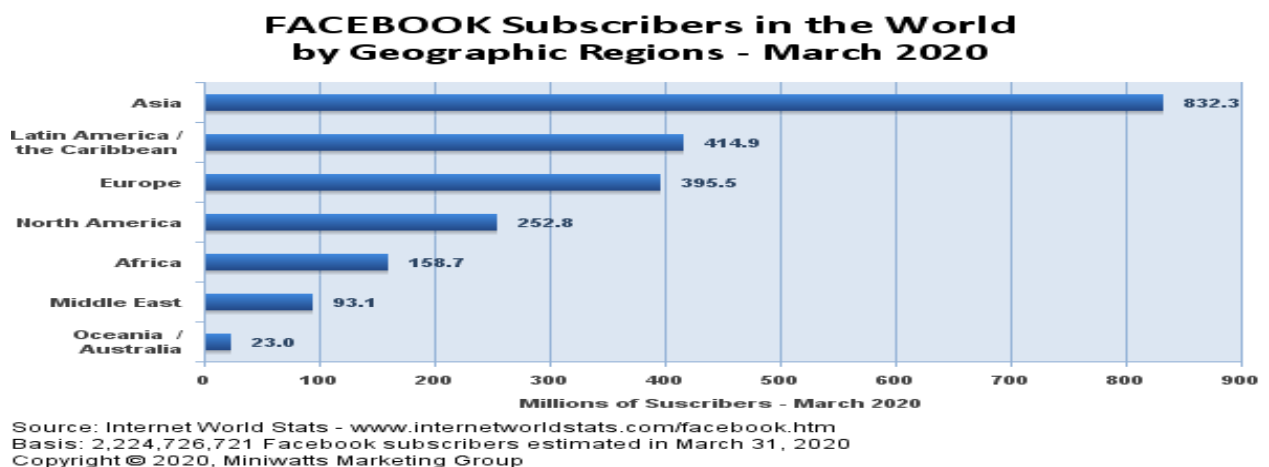
the use of the cyber media, the movement was made widespread from local to national level. (Antonio, 2013). Entire Middle East witnessed outstanding political participation and mobilization of the people against the editorship and in support of democratic reforms. The term Arab Spring is used to denote the widespread discontent in the Arab World against the decade old regimes in support of the democratic reforms. This movement was initiated in the North African state, Tunisia in the winter of 2010 and very soon it covered a major part of Africa and Asia. Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are the countries where this movement became a wildfire. Since it was started in Tunisia, it is also called the Jasmine Revolution. There were massive protests against the sitting President Zine el- Abidine Ben Ali. There were large scale protests in Egypt against the regime of Hosni Mubarak's Government. The Tahrir Square became the center of these protests in Cairo. Finally, the Hosni Mubarak had to quit and gave his powers to the Egyptian army. The regimes in respective states started to control the mainstream media due to their role in the mobilization of protestors. Stringent control was imposed on the mainstream media. Amidst all these circumstances the social media became the alternative platform for the protestors for communication in the Arab world as well as in different other parts of the world. The Facebook, Twitter and the BlackBerry messenger proved their potential for the political mobilization of the people specially the youth in the region. (Ravi, 2018: 39-40)

### **1.5 Understanding the Role of Social Media in Political Discourse-**

Social media has given an opportunity to the users to interact according to their needs. Since the social media is based on the user generated contents, the user gets an opportunity of being the determinant of the kind of political discourse he or she wishes to have on these digital platforms. These media also provide an opportunity to the users to share their contents like photographs, audio, video or simple text and are noticed worldwide (Baumgartner and Morris, 2010; Hanson et al., 2010). The recent trends indicate that the political discourse in these social networking sites has got prominence as the users are not the passive recipients of the messages. Instead they are the active participants and therefore the communication process is cyclical in which the sender is also the receiver of the messages and vice versa. The users get political contents on these sites and also generates the political discourse. That is why the social media has become a source of political information specially for the young adults. These users develop their individual and collective perspectives on various political

issues independently. This facility distinguishes the social media from the mainstream media (Carpenter, 2010; Meraz, 2009; Wall, 2005). The social media has become a popular platform where the users not only share valuable information in the process of political discourse. Besides, the users are engaged in following their respective political leaders (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012; Pew Research Journalism Project, 2012). The people use social media for a variety of purposes. In fact, it is a multi- purpose digital platform where users share their contents for the purpose of either cognitive or behavioral (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). The youth have found online media as very compatible to them because they get gratifications by using these social media. The young users utilize the substantial potential of social media to give his opinion on various social and political issues. He also is eager to update his status while discussing the political events. In fact, he seeks to participate in the digital political communication process and does not want to stay merely a passive recipient of political information. Besides, the online political communication also offers the users not to hesitate and remain comfortable while expressing themselves. This facility encourages them to participate more in the entire communication process (Rainie et el, 2012). Whereas the conventional method of political discourse put them under severe pressure for being extra polite and also to adhere various local social and political norms (Papacharissi, 2004).

Figure 1.3 Facebook Subscribers



Source: Internet World Stars

The new cyber media has become the rage of the day in the democratic set up of India. The social media has facilitated the Election Commission of India in the registration of voters and subsequently the record number of voters moved to the polling stations and cast their votes in

the elections held in four states. There were 160 million newly registered voters out of 790 million eligible total voters. These were between the ages of 18- 24 years. The political parties have got new tool in their hands to approach the voters through social media. Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Admi Party won the elections against the big guns in Delhi. The social media has helped the party and the leaders to create a favorable political environment in the National Capital. The other side of social media is the misuse of the facility to fan the flame in the religious and ethnic issues. Amidst the rising cases of social media abuse, the government used the Information Technology Act, to stop the cyber anarchy at various places Political campaign on social media facilitates the leaders to communicate directly with masses. In traditional media, the source reaches the recipients of the messages through a channel. In traditional media, the communication is one way where the communicator sends the message without caring the taste of receiver. But the social media provides an opportunity for interaction where both communicator and receiver both keep on changing their position. A receiver becomes the communicator and can generate the message. Another significant aspect, that separates social media from mainstream media is that the previous is instant while the later does not have this ability. These qualities have made social media a suitable medium for the political leaders to remain in close contact with their target audience. The trend among the politicians all over the world of engaging their target audience through social media is getting the momentum day by day (New York Times, 2014).

Now it is an established global trend that people in different countries use the social media for sharing their views, information and communicate with their leaders on different national and international issues and affairs. This new media has emerged as an ideal platform for dialogue. The social media give more freedom to the people in participating on the political discourse directly and freely. It has also been seen that the social media has been more intact as it is not possible for the governments to suppress this media for their vested interests. After the Arab Spring, it is widely accepted that this media has emerged as an ideal platform for the political discourse. Simply, the discourse can be defined as to discuss or converse on an issue or subject. The new age is an era of technology specially the information technology. Social media are the platforms where people engage in conversation on various issues and subjects. The new media has facilitated the discourse just on the clicking of the buttons of keyboards of computers. In ancient times, the reach of the thoughts was limited and restricted by physical, social and political boundaries. The discourse through the social media knows no boundary. The thoughts travel across all the corners of the world. Social Media is the rage of

the day. This has decentralized the communication and information system all over the world. Earlier, the masses were depending most on the media houses to get the information. With the emergence of social media, the relationship between the media and people has changed. The common people are no more merely the passive recipients of the messages. They themselves are the stakeholders in the generation and processing of information. The social media being participatory in nature provides the people with a platform to share, debate and discuss various issues. Political communication has therefore got an effective dimension with the availability of social media. This is said as a major step towards decentralization and democratization of information. India being the largest democracy the freedom of speech and expression matter a lot. The 2014 General Elections witnessed the record voters' turn out that was 66.4%. The analysts came to the conclusion that the major turn out of voters was due to the participation of youth in the electoral process. In many studies it has been found that the youth primarily use the social media for various communications including political discourse. Uttar Pradesh is the largest state demographically. The birth of 2.0 web resulted into tremendous changes in communication patterns in the contemporary world. Social media caused many opportunities for the people in different walks of life. Politicians are not exception in this regard. The political discourses taking place in social media motivate the participation. Young, specially, are involved in this process of political participation. Social media have proved their potentials for the political marketing purposes. Politicians now all over the world use this platform to reach the vast areas by making simple efforts. The cyber politics is the latest fashion in the political spectrum for the world. Political messages are produced and uploaded in the social media with all care to produce the desired results. The online campaigns are the talk of the day. Political parties are equipped with all required resources to launch the online campaign through social media (Ravi, 2018: 45-46).

The discourse in social media has not only impacted the citizens all over the world, they have brought significant changes in the politicians as well. In India, cyber campaigns have become momentous from General elections to local elections at all levels. The presidential election in the United States is the best example where the potential of social media was experimented successfully. Earlier, the television debates were the significant factor in the field of US Presidential electoral campaigns, but the exceptionally use of social media changed the communication fashion, in the electoral campaign. Both Barrack Obama and Donald Trump mobilized their mass support through the social media. In India, the fashion of the use of social media for the electoral campaign was introduced by the BJP in particular. That is why

the Party had the first benefits being on the social media to connect the masses specially in the urban areas of India. The current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is known all over the world for his digital campaigns. The BJP claimed landslide victory in the 2014 General Elections. One of the reasons behind the success of this political party is its extensive use of social media for the electoral campaigns. The BJP has IT cells in all the districts of India to manage and maintain social media campaigns. The party is said to be in leading position as far as the use of social media potential for online campaign is concerned. In the 2014 elections the BJP had already carried the day on social media before others parties could estimate the significance of social media. The BJP has been aggressive in cyber politics right from the very beginning. Their IT cells produce and launch the desired messages to the intended audiences regularly to create favorable atmosphere. The BJP is very strong in the urban areas where the social media users are in large numbers. Earlier other political parties were of the opinion that the BJP is exaggerating its achievements. But the success of the BJP made them realized their mistakes. Now other parties like Congress, Samajwadi Party and even the BSP are reviewing their communication strategies. Congress has realized that the social media plays significant role in the shaping and reshaping the public opinion. The party has planned to hire trained professionals for the cyber campaigns. If compared between the BJP and Congress in the social media, the former is in far better position. The BJP has 6.5 million followers in the twitter while the Congress has only 2.5 million followers. The BJP receives 1.35 Crore Likes while the Congress only 4.5 million. Political communication is to connect with the targeted publics that are purposefully called the voters with a view to influence their opinion. Traditionally, the political communication was more interpersonal where the candidates would communicate to their respective voters while making door to door contacts. This was a long and tiresome process. But technology changed the entire communication spectrum. The networked society can be accessed through social media easily and comprehensively. Social media has become very momentous for the political communication purposes all over the world. Political communication is passing through an era of transformation due to the emergence of cyber media. This transformation has revolutionized the process of political communication. The people can now express their views through online media in the form of blogs. They can also give their opinion through short messages individually or in a group. The social media is now playing the pivotal role in the formation of opinion. Political communication is a process in which the communicators who are generally politicians, journalists, commentators and analysts communicate from

upward to downward in a traditional pattern of communication. The desired messages are created and sent to the desired target group with an objective of shaping or reshaping of public opinion towards of set goal. Generally, the political communication is a one -way process in which the recipients of the messages are passive. But the emergence of social media has transformed this rapidly. The political communication through social media is now a well -established trend in which the communication is a two- way process in which the recipients of the messages are no more passive. They actually are communicators as well. The political communication through social media is decentralized process in which the receiver is also the generator of messages in the communication process. Thus, it is a two-way process. Political communication earlier was comparatively less organized and professionalized as it is has now become. Political communication is has become a strategic approach. The professionals and advertising and PR agencies are more involved in the strategic communication campaigns. The political parties and interest group remain active not during electoral process but across the days, weeks and months irrespective of campaign for a particular- elections. The penetration of social media has brought this change in the communication approaches significantly. Though the entire broadcasting and print media industry has been transformed yet the social media is a catalyst in the entire political communication revolution. Exhaustive research studies in Europe and America have been carried out in the field of political communication. But this is not the technological and structural changes alone responsible behind this transformation, the political systems have also evolved accordingly. The role of civil society has been at the helm of affairs in different parts of the world. The Anna Hazare movement in India gathered mass back up due to the popular faces reaching the people online through social media. The civil rights activists all over the world have got prominence due to their access to the masses through the use of social media. The huge number of internet users in India has given a boost to the rise of social media in the country. Media is called the fourth pillar of democracy. A free and fair media is an important institution of a democratic set up. India is the largest democracy in the world and its survival and progress both significantly depend upon the free and fair media. Both kinds of media – electronic and print have grown manifold over the past many decades. The stupendous growth of broadcast media has helped a lot to reduce the gap between the voters and the leaders in the country. But most importantly, the control of broadcast media has been shifted from the hands of government to the private ownership. The verdict of Supreme Court in 1995 in the case of Cricket Association of West Bengal Vs the Union of

India played an important role in the decentralization process of broadcast media. In the verdict, the Court said that airwaves are public property. With this change was born the concept of questioning everything. This tendency of broadcast media helped a lot to strengthen the civil society and subsequently putting a restriction of the corrupt practices in politics (Hasan, 2014). The youth uses social media for various reasons right from personal to professional purposes. In fact, youth is the base of social media business all over the world. When social media was introduced in the world, the youth was the primary focus of this innovation in the field of communication. The fascinating features of social networking sites attract the youth. They can share download and create the contents of their choice on social media. The youth find social media as a facility to expand and maintain their connectivity with their friends. They find social media as a platform to raise their voice and expresses themselves. Most of the professionals behind the origin of social media are youth. The youth is innovative and full of energy all over the world. They share important role in the political, economic and social participation. They have been catalysts in the introduction of several changes in the political spectrum as well. As far as political participation of youth in the world is concerned, there are a third of countries where the minimum age of a parliamentarian starts at 25 or above. 1.6% parliamentarians in the world are in their 20s and 11.87 % are in their 30s. The average age of parliamentarians in the world is 53 while this is 50 in respect of women parliamentarians. The people between the age group of 15 to 25 shares a fifth of total global population (UNDP,2013).

### **1.6 Youth, Social Media and Political Communication in India-**

The age that lies between the adolescence and middle is termed as youth traditionally. Different agencies which determine the youth bases their mechanism on age as well. According to the United Nations, the people between 15 to 24 are termed as youth. India's National Youth Policy of 2003 said that he people between the age group of 15 to 35 would be kept in the category of youth. The National Youth Policy of 2014 reduced the upper age from 35 to 29 and considered the people between the age of 15 to 29 as the youth. Currently the people between the age 15 to 34 are considered as the youth according to the recent youth policy of India. India stands better among all major countries in the world in terms of the number of young populations. In 1971 the number of youth population in the country was 168 million which went up to 422 million in 2011. In Asia, India stands far ahead in this aspect of demography. Even China and Indonesia are left behind in the number of youth

population. The youth is the most important aspect of demography of any country. They are innovative and dynamic in their approach and their productivity is at the top provided they are provided with the required opportunities. In other words, the youth plays an important role in the growth and development of any country. The youth are the most important determinant for the prosperity of any society. If the substantial potential of youth is invested properly, they can transform the poverty into affluence. Though there are several challenges the youth are facing in the developing world. They are deprived from basic facilities which are considered as the prerequisites for the growth and development in different spheres like political, social and economic. Violence has hit them tragically in many parts of the world. More than 600 millions of youth are living in such territories where militancy and political instability are common features. The number of youth population among the other types of population is more in India than that of in any other country in the world. That is why India is termed as the youngest country in the world. India's 17.97 per cent of population in 2010 was youth. This growth is most likely to go on and by 2030 it is projected that the population of India would cross 17.97 per cent of world's population. (Youth in India, 2017). Youth is always at the center of all activities- be it social, political or economic. Youth is the future of any country and India is not exception in this regard. The youth is the most important capital of any society or country. Former President APJ Abdul Kalam had placed the youth of India on the top of all resources. He was sure to achieve the target of being developed even before 2020 provided the power of youth is invested in the process of development efficiently. It's a fact that Japan made tremendous progress in the backdrop of severe loss and demolition during the Second World War due to the efficient use of youth resource. The youth of India can also play such an important role in the nation building. India is the world's youngest country. The youth population of India is expected to rise by sixty-five crores in the years to come. India is predicted to continue to retain this place in the world even by 2050. (Tiwari, 2016). India's demographic profile is youth oriented. According to the National Youth Policy of India 2014, the people of age group between 15-29 years share youth population in the country. These people have varying hopes and aspirations for future. According to the Census of 2011, the youth comprise twenty-eight per cent of total population which contributes thirty-four per cent to the gross national income (Sanghi, 2017). Youth in India has been the forerunner of all developments ranging from literature to science and from religion to politics. From ages, the youth in India has led various aspects of social, political and economic life. "From ancient times, the youth of India has been the important channel to

communicate India's rich culture, intellect and civilization to the rest of the world. In 1893 an Indian youth called Swami Vivekananda addressed the World Religious Parliament at Chicago in the USA to let the world know the Indian idea of religious tolerance amidst the trend of religious and racial superiority. Another great Indian, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who had travelled to South Africa as a young barrister experimented with the idea of truth and non-violence which later became the significant tool for maintaining peace and harmony. The Mauryan King Ashoka had sent his young son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka for spreading the ideals of Buddhism. In the contemporary world, the Indian youth are spreading the light of their talent in different walks of life holding prominent positions. (Sharma, Bhaskar, 2017). The term, Youth, has been defined by UNESCO as a period of transition from the dependence on childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of as the members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age group. The youth, everywhere is at the center of all social, political and economic activities. The youth influences significantly the arena of public life be it social, environmental, political or economic. Keeping the diversified role of the youth the new media has also been used comprehensively in the formation of public opinion. It is now clear that technology is the most crucial aspect of allowing the youth to establish themselves. Technology has been very effective in addressing the issues related to the youth. This is the technology that helps us to advance significantly. In the developing nations the technology has proved to be very potential in finding the designated goals. Digital technology is a trend in the contemporary era. In India, the digital environment has facilitated the youth to stand strongly in this fast- changing world confidently and efficiently. The digital technology has reduced the geographical barriers as well as has enhanced the speed of learning. Just the click of a button facilitates the connectivity with new thoughts, ideas and actions. In the overall scenario, the youth has been at the forefront of technological innovations. The youth is one of the most essential -base of any system be it political, social or economic. The youth of any country can be called the trustees of posterity. It has been found that most of the developed world would have aging population while India would be the youngest country by 2020. The passionate and energetic young population of India constitutes approximately forty per cent of the total population. The world is today talking over India's emerging young population at various levels. In this backdrop, the youth would be playing pivotal role in the building of nation. It's a fact that the youth work in different types of profession and contribute their best. (Yojana, 2017)

The social networking sites are the favorite destinations for the youth in the world. He finds it more attractive and user friendly. Another important feature of social media is its being comparatively cheap. That is why the number of users specially the youth are increasing in the world day by day. The sharing of audio, video, text etc. with user friendly technology. This has attracted the youth to this new media for their gratifications. In fact, the social networking site came into being due to the initiatives taken by the youth. In these circumstances, youth all over the world is the large share of population that is involved in the communication through the social media. As long as the internet is expanding in the world, the social networking sites are attracting the youth in all parts of the world. The youth in world are using the social media for different purposes. In fact, the social media have become the integral part of daily life of the present-day youth. They share their belief, thoughts, pictures and many other expressions on the social media. The present youth if they have access to the net, spends a big time in the social media. The features of social media are compatible to the taste of the youth. Many incidents in the world suggest that social media is being used by the youth for the debates and discussions on the social, economic, environmental and political issues. The social media now affect the youth and their framework of thinking both negatively and positively. The youth find the social media as an appropriate medium to make friends both known and unknown. Building relationship has been the prime objective of the youth active on social media. The social media provides the youth an opportunity as the global citizen. They maintain connectivity irrespective of caste, creed, religion, region, race or sex. By this the actual process of homogenization has commenced in the world. The social networking sites have provided an opportunity to the people of different parts of the world to communication with one another. This process is of great significance to promote globalization and multiculturalism (*Rupa, Karnamaharajan, 2015*). Accessing the internet has become feasible in most parts of the world. The people between the age group of 12 to 21 is more inclined to social media in comparison to any other age group. The youth of this age group in particularly use the social media for the purpose of maintaining the compatibility with the changing environment. Besides, it is possible to connect with anyone anywhere with just a single tap. The youth is giving the top priority to the social media on the net in place of other important set ups like schools, colleges, family etc. These people also find the social media as an ideal platform where they could portray exactly what they are not. The social media also gives the youth an opportunity to exhibit their manipulated traits publicly (*Crawford,2015*). Though the people from different walks of








life are connected with each other on the social media platform, the youth and teenagers in particular are connected with this cyber social spectrum. The youth are so particular in this media that they even continue their connectivity in different occasions when they are supposed to stay there. These social media platforms have become so important in the lives of the youth that their moral, social, political, educational etc. behavior is determined by these sites significantly. Subsequently, the social media is influencing the youth both positively and negatively. Positively, the social media has brought them into the mainstream of global developments and maintain them up to the date. Besides, this also give an opportunity for the socialization may- be it is more virtually. The youth gets into the most advanced platform of expression. This helps them developing their professional skills and subsequently they have an opportunity to explore more in the area of their choice. In fact, the social media has opened new dimensions in the life of the modern-day youth (Mageto, 2017).

A large population of Indian youth is today using the social media regularly. The TCS in its study found that since after the availability of smartphone in the hands of Indian youth, his involvement in the social media has increased significantly. The youth in the country between the age of 12 to 18 years, the tendency of using social media has increased alarmingly. They spend a big part of their time on social media for maintaining a relationship with their friends and batchmates. 72 percent of them are having smartphone with them and more than half of them can access to the internet at their own home. As an average most of the teens spend some 60 minutes as an average on social media for different purposes. (Bhati, Bansal, 2019). The social networking sites have impacted the Indian youth while giving them an opportunity to express themselves online. The youth in India, generally communicate online through social media for maintaining their relationships. They spend a good amount of time on social media. With the growth of digital technology and the availability of smartphones have made them accessible to social media round the clock without any technical or physical barriers (Parvathy, Suchitra, 2015). A London based company which strives for the market research in the world has found that the youth in India that use social media daily is one of the largest social media users' demography in the world. The Global Web Index also concluded that the youth between that age group of 14 to 24 years prefer to use the social media for the purpose of filling their unscheduled time. These people share some 46 per cent of all the youth who use social media with this top priority. The other big group said that they use the social media for maintaining connectivity and also to for the purpose of entertainment. The survey also disclosed that the youth spend as an average two and half hours on social media platform

regularly. The study explored that the youth in developing world is more inclined to social media rather than the youth in the developed world. The newly emerging economies like India and Indonesia, the trend of using social media has got popularity ever since the government in these countries adopted the digitization as one of the top priorities for the modernization of their economies. The 16 per cent of Indian respondents accepted that they use the social media for the purpose of news and current affairs. They find this media quite compatible to maintain their level of awareness. In this way, India got the second rank along with Egypt and Thailand after Turkey where almost 20 percent of young users use the social media for the purpose of news. Another important reason for using the social media by the India youth is that they find it versatile and get a variety of contents on this platform. (The Telegraph, 2019). The social networking sites are the platform that facilitate the sharing of personal profile in the public domain. They also establish the communication channel between the users and his enclosed system on the website. These sites help to maintain the preexisting social networking system. The very first social networking site sixdegrees.com was launched in 1997. The sites could not gain much success in the market as after three years, it was closed down. At that time, the social media was a new experiment. Subsequently, the users could not be attracted enough to continue further. At the beginning, the Orkut was at the top of social networking site which accumulated some 64 per cent users. The social networking sites provide plenty of information from business to politics etc. (Madhvan 2007, Ahmad 2011). In India, the youth is active prominently on social media and they remain engaged on this digital platform for hours. Besides the business entities are using these sites to establish their identity in the fast-emerging Indian business scenario due to the expansion of economy. The social media are playing the multiple roles in the Indian spectrum. This is one of the main reasons behind the popularity of these networks in the country. The growth of social media in India has been quite spectacular ever since it commenced in the country. There were approximately sixty-two million social media users by the end of 2012 in India. The stupendous growth and development of mobile telephony is an important reason behind the penetration of social media in India. Both politicians and businessmen interact with the people for their purposes to be fulfilled on this digital platform. The social media has been growing rapidly in India. Currently, there are more than 51 million users on Facebook while on the other side the Twitter, a microblogging is another popular social media platform in India. The politicians in India have made social media very popular while maintaining connectivity with the activists digitally. It is now

established that this digital platform has become a need from political communication to campaigning in the General Elections. (Kaur, 2015)

**Figure1.4 Popular Social Networking Sites in India**

Social Networking Site	Monthly Visits	Mobile Traffic Share	Desktop Traffic share
Facebook 	1.6 Billion	99.25%	0.75%
YouTube 	1.2 Billion	59.96%	40.04%
Quora 	215.8 Million	98.89%	1.11%
Instagram 	191.1 Million	99.02%	0.98%
Twitter 	125.2 Million	97.81%	2.19%
Pinterest 	49.8 Million	98.40%	1.60%
LinkedIn 	29.9 Million	90.97%	9.03%

Source: SANNAM S4.COM

The social media in India grew almost simultaneously to the same at the global level due to India being a promising economy after the liberalization, privatization and globalization. The social media in India started to evolve in the last decade of the previous century. In 1997, the very first social networking site SixDegrees.com came into existence in the country. But it could not make any particular impact on the consumers because by that time Internet was not being used massively. Subsequently its journey came to an end very soon. Meanwhile, Orkut occupied the central position in the social media scenario in the country with the share of 64 per cent of users (Madhavan, 2007). In 1999 another social networking site called LiveJournal was born. The main purpose of this site was to facilitate the exchange of journals among the friends. Cyworld came in 2001 with some added features. In that very year Lunar Storm was established in Sweden. Ryze.com was established in San Francisco to maintain connectivity among the local businessmen. (Cohen, 2003). After the emergence of internet

and the social media, both the internet and social media users have increased exponentially. In the year 2018, the number of online Indians was 460 million which is a huge number. The social networking sites have become an integral part of the life of Indians. As far as social media in India is concerned, in 2008, Orkut was the biggest social networking site at the time of its inception. It was closed in 2014. But this did not dishearten the Indians from using the social networking sites. In 2018, the number of Facebook users crossed the mark of 300 million. The availability of cheap internet data and smartphone has been a boon to the internet users in the country. Because of this, the number of social media users is rising day by day. The mobile penetration has popularized both the internet and social media in the country. Even this has covered the rural areas significantly. The smartphone has become the source of news and current affairs for 35 per cent of the people in the country. Most of these users use smartphones for one or more social networking sites in the country. The WhatsApp messenger has become very popular in the Indian market ever since its inception. This has also paved the way for other applications in India. WhatsApp has also penetrated in the rural areas of the country. The people between the age group of 18 to 25 years have become the daily users of this messenger in India. The uncontrolled messenger has earned the notoriety as well due to its suitability for the fake news. In the recent past the fake contents on WhatsApp ignited severe social and communal tension even in the far -flung areas because the users believe the contents on it to be true. Thus, WhatsApp has become a rich source of fake news and disinformation in the country. (Diwanji, 2020).

### **1.7 Social Media and Political Discourse in Uttar Pradesh-**

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state demographically. This is, therefore the most significant state from the political point of view. The largest number of candidates in both Union Parliament and State Assembly are elected from the state. In the meantime, the social media have expanded both vertically and horizontally in the state. Though the state has not left any significant impact in the development of ICTs in comparison to some other states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, yet the respective governments have emphasized the use of ICTs due to the inception of e governance. The social media has become a prominent media for political discourse in all walks of life. Social media has become an important aspect of politics in Uttar Pradesh. Political parties have understood the use and significance of social media in the state there they are now striving to access this media substantially. Though the BJP was the forerunner of using the cyber infosphere to mobilize the voters specially the

young voters, considering the success of BJP in both the General and Assembly elections, the trend has been further expanded to other political parties in the state. Social media has proved its potential to access the common masses directly and easily. The political parties were seen using the social media platform ahead of 2017 Assembly Elections that is why these elections are termed as the historical electoral process due the extensive use of social media by different political parties. Besides, these elections ended the monopoly of the BJP in the realm of social media in state and provided new opportunity of connecting the voters to other political parties as well (Seth, 2016). In Uttar Pradesh, social media has given an opportunity to express the resentment and dissent of political candidates. This is not possible in the traditional pattern of mass media or political communication. Generally, the leaders don't talk openly in public against the candidate of their own political party who has been given ticket in the mainstream media. But social media has facilitated them the opportunity to express their anguish through many ways without coming directly in the picture. They can ignite their supporters on this platform who carry forward this discourse ahead to mobilize the opinion towards them. (Dainik Jagran, 2019). The social media has given boost to the electoral campaigning during the byelections in Uttar Pradesh. All political parties activate their information technology cell to disseminate the information to the common voters through social media. During by elections the BJP in particular has been inclined to use this media platform to access the voters directly. The youth, particularly, is the main target of political communication for all political parties in the state. The 2014 General Elections have been the trend setter for the use of social media for electoral campaigning in the state. Considering the BJP being the forerunner during these elections, other political parties strive to access the voters through social media. Chandramohan, the spokesperson of BJP admits that besides the traditional symbols like banners, posters, masks, the use of cyber media has become popular trend in the long and short terms electoral campaigns. Voters are disseminated the desired messages through the Twitter, Facebook and Messengers. Samajwadi Party uses Facebook and Twitter to access the youth in the state during the electoral campaigns The SP uses social media platform to communicate the ideology of the party and Mulayam Singh Yadav to the voters. Another political party, the Indian National Congress is lesser active on social media platform in comparison to the BJP and SP, but the party is trying its best to strengthen its capacity on this platform. (Jagran, 2014). Social media also has changed the contents of the political discourse in the state during different elections. The issues are not confined to localized approach only instead national and international issues and affairs do catch the

space during elections on social media. The issues range from Indo – US relationship to Kashmir and JNU even during local election due to the social media. This is unprecedented after the emergence of social media during the electoral campaign in the country. The contents which are shared on the social media platform are primarily prepared by the IT cell of different political parties. That is why they are fabricated and less represent the local taste. The IT cell generally bases its issues on emotions rather than on logic. Social media becomes an ideal platform to access the young voters emotionally (Sharma, 2017).

BJP is known to have used the social media platform for the political campaigning before and during the elections both at the national and regional levels. In Uttar Pradesh, the party uses social media in an organized way. Right from the booth level to the social media war room, the party has a team of professionals. These are trained and have the capacity to use the social media platform efficiently. The party has both IT and PR professionals for the purpose of political campaigning. In fact, the BJP is known to be the first political party of India to have hired the IT professionals for running the IT Cells. The professional equipped with the gadgets like smartphones are deployed at important layer of communication in the state. (Hindustan, 2019). Generally, one of the biggest political parties in Uttar Pradesh, the Bahujan Samaj Party<sup>15</sup> has been staying away from social media platform, Mayawati the top figure of the political party decided to communicate with the masses on various issues through the social media platform. She entered the Twitter with the account @sushrimayawati. Mayawati has not only provided the details about herself and important policies of her political party. She is using this account to access the urban youth who is equipped with both social media and smart phone. This account was opened with the objective to increase the access of the party to the voters specially the young voters. This is unprecedented because Mayawati earlier was of the opinion that social media was meant for the elite urban people and certainly not the common masses from where her core voters belong to. But this narrative of Mayawati changed when the BJP led NDA claimed unprecedented and land slide victory in the General Elections of 2014. She realized that the uses of modern communication technology could enhance the relationship between her and the voters. Another important reason for the BSP to be on social media platform is to respond the propaganda being carried out against the party by the opponents (Hindustan, 2019). Samajwadi party did realize the importance of social media for political campaigning in Uttar Pradesh. Subsequently, the party started to share relevant contents on two major platforms of social media- Facebook and Twitter. The main objective of the party is to expand both its

ideological horizons and the number of voters. The party streamed live roadshows on Facebook and got landslide response from the party activists on this popular social media. The party is using the social media with the help of professionals who are active round the clock and have vast experience in the field concerned. This team of professionals is based in Lucknow, the state capital. The center that is responsible to disseminate information on social media is known as War Room and is comprised of more than three dozen professionals. The war room is led by an experienced IT professional in the field of digital contents. This War Room collect the information in the social media provided by other political parties and then prepares the strategy for the purpose of responding the rival political parties. On one side the party aims to remain positive and constructive in its contents disseminated on social media as well as to use the real development as the main narrative on social media platform (Agarwal, 2017).

Congress has not been active on social media right from the very beginning. But in the mean-time the party has seen extraordinary growth and development of social media for the political campaigning in the state. Subsequently the party gradually started to appear in the social media platform not only to respond the political opponents but with the motive to disseminate the useful messages to its political activists. The party girded up its loins to use the social media platform for the purpose of political campaigning with the help of political campaigning strategist, Prashant Kishore taking the political equations of Uttar Pradesh. The War Room of Congress in Uttar Pradesh is situated at the Jopling Road. Indian Political Actions Committee, I-PAC, the Prashant Kishore led political campaigning company is active round the clock and spreading the messages to mobilize the voters in favor of Congress in the State. There are twenty -five members in the IT team of Prashant Kishore who come from the prestigious academic institutions of India like JNU and IIT etc. These professionals keep on conducting researches before designing the messages to be disseminated on social media. The party found the BJP as the arch political rival and is engaging in the social media platform to respond the party. The party has millions of followers on the social media platform. This includes particularly Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. The team believes that the people in Uttar Pradesh are changing their attitudes and are taking the messages on social media regarding the Congress party (Gupta, 2016).

### **1.8 Rationale for the study-**

Human civilization has always been blessed with the achievements associated with communication. Communication has affected various aspects of life. Communication and politics are deeply associated with each other. There is no possibility of political process in the absence of communication. This is the age of democracy which can't be successful without appropriate communication structure at all levels. Subsequently, political communication has emerged as the attractive academic field for researchers especially after the emergence of social media. The political communication researches conducted recently exhibit that social media specially the Twitter and the Facebook have emerged as a popular platform of political discourse specially among the youths. The political leaders in the world are using this platform extensively to access the voters. It has been established in various electoral campaigns that the use of social media resulted into big successes for the politicians who use accessed the voters through this medium. The early adopters of social media have been benefitted more. Barrack Obama and Donald Trump both used the social media to access their voters. The researchers have found that the use of social media in politics is a popular trend. The voters specially the youth who indulged in the discourse are found to have been mobilized through social media for a particular cause. Anna Hazare led movement India Against Corruption can be best example in the recent past where social media was used to mobilize the youths for political mobilization. This was an organized attempt of the use of social media in India. In the 2014 General. By 2019 General Elections, the use of social media increased comprehensively. Though the BJP has been forerunner in using the newly emerged information and communication technologies, the other political parties also showed significant interest in the use of social media for the purpose of political communication. The other political parties adopted structured and organized approach in the use of social media. Social media has emerged as a popular platform of political discourse in India. The Indian Against Corruption Campaign was a significant movement in respect of using social media for the political purposes. Social media not only organized the movement but also facilitated the participation and mobilization specially the youth in the country. Besides, the use of social media platform by the BJP gave popularity to its agenda among the youth in particularly. Amidst these circumstances, the study of social media and its role in the participation of youth becomes very important. The research study would eventually establish the use of social media by the youth for the political discourse and its impact in the political participation.

### **1.9 Review of Literature-**

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) in their study, *Mobilization<sup>16</sup>, Participation and Democracy* studied that the new media technologies have strengthened the communication between the candidates and the voters during the electoral campaigns. These developments also enhance participation in the political processes. Various types of online engagements and social networking sites are the two different aspects. Political engagement and mobilization of the youth are some of the consequences of these engagements. The studies on social media, political mobilization and youth have been focusing on different aspects of this online infosphere and its impacts. Some scholars have focused on different aspects of information and communication technologies for examples the use of smartphones. Theocharis and Quintelier (2016) studied the impact of Facebook on the political participation in Belgium. There are some other studies as well. They have made comparison of the impacts of using of various types of social media. (e.g., Pasek, More, & Romer, 2009; Zhang, Seltzer, & Bichard, 2013). Some others combined the frequency with which different social media are being used. (e.g., Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014). Ekstrom and Ostman (2015) conducted a research study on the Youths in Sweden. This research study was based on two- wave panel survey conducted on the youths of that country. The activity -based research found three broad categories of activity- creative productivity, compilation of information and interaction with the people. In this study, the researcher found that the creative productivity was o higher value as this instigated the youth to participate directly in the political arena whereas the effects of two others were indirect on the young users. The impact of creative productivity was so significant that it paved the way for both online and offline political participation on the youth in Sweden.

There has been a lot of speculation about the social media and its influence in different walks of life all over the world. Now there is a question whether social media has enhanced political participation in various political system specially in the democracies. There are evidences came after exhaustive research studies that social media does influence the life of people stretching from market to personal life, from social aspects to political arena. Its therefore, certainly an inter-disciplinary approach because it involves various aspects of human life. So, the findings are of immense value in different social sciences. Having made thorough study of various disciplines of social science like Mass Communication, Political Science, Sociology etc. some important outcomes have been found. The main intention is to find out that rational of the ongoing study that plenty of work has been done in the field concerned. The studies on the role of media in different aspects of politics have been carried out

extensively in the United States of America but in India such studies have not ample though mass media in India has been growing manifold and today it has vast effects in the different spectrums of the country.

According to Castillo, Mendoza and Poblete (2011), there are doubts and prejudices in the news and information that is available on the social media platform. They say that the credibility of contents based on news and current affairs in social media is questionable significantly. They conclude that the information which is available on the net is meant to be achieve some desired result based on false presumptions. This is basically the misinformation that aim to misguide the users for a particular purpose. Bonzo (2010), finds these digital platforms ideal enough for the inter- personal and group communication among the youth. This new media has enabled the youth to develop relationship among themselves through group communication as well. In fact, these media has enabled the youth to socialize themselves.

In 2010, Zakaria et al concluded in their studies that the people specially the young generations have adopted the social media and online digital platform to maintain connectivity with their friends as well as they are also using these platforms to socialize themselves comprehensively. Amidst this infosphere, the youth is existing with their hopes and aspirations. They also made it clear that though the youth are using these digital platforms for their satisfaction yet their involvement varies from place to place. At some places they are involved intensively whereas on the other they are just making themselves acquainted with only.

In 2015, Pardo came to the conclusion after having studied the “Impact of Facebook Use on Well Being.” In this study, the researcher found that the individuals who were involved in exploring the profile of others found this social media less gratifying in comparison to those users who themselves developed their own individual profile. It simply concluded that the use of social media has been a reason of satisfaction provided the users actively participates in the process of communication. In India, in 2015, Indrajit Roy Chaudhary conducted a study in the city of Kolkata on the subject, “ Impact of Social Networking Sites on the Youth.” He concluded that the these social networking sites have become an integral part of their life. These people spend a lot of time in these sites to maintain relationship and also the express themselves in many ways. The researcher studies both the negative and positive aspects of

social media in the capital city of Kolkata. He has said that these sites are playing a big role in the life these young people.

Bimber made an in-depth study on the use of internet and its impact on the political mobilization of the people. He conducted his study through the surveys on the netizens. His major finding was that internet has any impact on the voting behavior of the voters or political participation. He also concluded that there are common determinants to mobilize the voters for political participation both on line and off line. The major difference that he found in his studies was age as an important factor to determine the influence on them for political mobilization and participation. The youth, in particular, was more impacted by the online contents. According to him internet is not impacting the people indiscriminately. The people still have not clear idea to use the internet for the political purposes. It was very clear from his findings that internet did not make any decisive impact on the voting behavior of the citizens. (Bimber, 1999: 424)

Another study was conducted by Shah et al (2001) in the field of sociology. Their study was focusing on the use if internet and the social capital <sup>17</sup>. The concept of social capital belongs to sociology. According to this concept the social capital plays an important role in the decision-making process. Their findings suggest that the internet reduces the importance of social capital. These decisions can be political as well like political participation, voting behavior and political mobilization. According to them those engaged online may lose the social capital significantly because the online spectrum provides them with limited scope to connect to their social environment. These netizens are detached from their original surroundings and therefore despite of using the net consistently and heavily, they fail to get the social capital and become isolated. Those people who are engaged online and also participate in offline civic and social activities are better citizens as far as their political participation is concerned. In their survey research, Shah et al studied the three thousand respondents and came to the conclusion that the political mobilization does not find enough space online yet with the penetration of internet, there is possibility of increase in this mobilization. It is very important to know that the aforementioned researchers had conducted their study during the period when the internet penetration at the global level was at its infancy stage. On this ground, their conclusions don't stand strongly. (Shah et al, 2001).

Bheemaiah Krishnan Ravi has studied the role of modern media in democracy. According to him the advent of modern media has given birth to a platform where the politicians and

common masses can interact on various social, cultural, economic and political issues in India. With this, there is always an opportunity for the common masses to raise their voice through this media. The new media is not only playing an important role during the electoral campaigns but also it encourages the political discourse during normal course of time. Ravi discusses the Narendra Modi as the fore runner of using social media and having a huge number of followers in the cyberspace<sup>18</sup>. He talks about the significant role of social media during the 2014 General Elections. There was a big role of social media in the many constituencies where the BJP got a wonderful lead due to the campaign on social media. But Ravi has failed to find the reasons behind the success of BJP in the constituencies where traditional pattern of communication was more effective than the cyber media in his study. (Ravi, 2018)

Shaili Chopra (2014) has studied the politics in the age of social media. Chopra describes various incidents at the global level where social media played an important role giving special emphasis on the use of social media by the political parties and candidates in the Indian political spectrum. She describes the Aam Admi Party and the BJP as the leading political parties in the use of social media for political purposes. According to her social media has proved its substantial potential right from messaging the targeted voters to counter the views and lies of rival political parties. She has explained how social media was pivotal in mobilizing the voters during the 2013 Delhi assembly elections. She says that the online discourse was transformed into voters' turn out and election became a successful event both for political parties and election commission of India. She finds Facebook as an ideal platform for mass and popular discourse in comparison to other social media like Twitter which is more elite centric. She also concludes that the sudden floods of cellular phone in the market, facilitated the social media to reach even at the grass root levels. This on the other side helped the political parties to maintain the access with the people even at distance places. She also narrates how the voting percentage has been declining in the last couple of decades in the country. From 1984 to 1999, it has been as an average almost 56 per cent whereas. During the Delhi elections the record voting percentage was recoded at 67 per cent. She gives credit to the social media for this increase. This development in the communication system has inspired the youth to actively participate in the political discourse of the country. Consequently, the youth's role has increased in the formation of public opinion. Social media has been growing by leaps and bounds in the country as well as in the world. The issue of credibility is a major concern in the domain of social media. The Cambridge

Analytica<sup>18</sup> episode in Indian politics has given birth to a debate that the social media is cheating the masses and trying to influence their opinion through a scripted manner. Besides, the political parties are performing better where the social media is not accessible. Studies suggest that people still believe in the traditional media for news and current affairs and not on social media to a large extent. This is the major gap where the Chopra missed to fill. (Chopra, 2014)

In their work, *The Real Face of Facebook in India* (2019), Cyril Sam and Paranjoy Guha Thakurta<sup>19</sup> has described the use of social media for political purposes. According to the authors, the social media platform has provided the larger parties an opportunity to disrepute their political rivals. It is more of political management media rather than disseminating the information from political leadership to the ordinary masses. The political parties having resources are using the social media for the purpose of propaganda and not allowing the smaller ones to exist even in the cybersphere. Social media has provided an opportunity for the big players for the political communication monopoly in this communication spectrum. The social media has also become an opportunity for the big political parties to control the political discourse in India. There has been exhaustive studies and research on the impact of social media in different parts of the world but India is lagging in this respect. Whereas India is a country where media literacy and general education is required to be updated in the changed global economic and political scenario. This is the main reason that social media has become a tool to spread the inflammable contents in the country without knowing the possible negative consequences on the individual and society as a whole. The social media came in the life of the people with the said objective of transparency, better platform for expression on any of the issues. But in reality, it has allowed the unknown and invisible eye to keep a watch on the individual domain. The digital monopoly has given birth to unprecedented developments in different aspects of life. History is re-written in a way as brings more benefits to the political conglomerates. Such values are being sown as have never been in use in the domain of mankind ever. The authors are negative in their approach. While describing the social media, they are prejudiced and only talk about the dark side of the social media in the country. It is also a well-known fact that social media has broken the media monopoly and the enhanced the process of political participation in a democratic set up. Social media has strengthened the civil society and has facilitated the democracy to reach at the grass root levels. (Sam, Thakurta, 2019)

The literature regarding the social media and political communication focuses on various aspects of discourse in the social media. Since, the social media is the most recent development in the field of mass communication; the existing literature aims to develop a framework for the political communication in the social media. A number of incidents in the post -cold war period have been acknowledged as the catalysts in the development of social media for the political discourse in the world. This part deals with the research in the field of social media and politics. Since, information and communication technologies are impacting all walks of life, politics is not an exception in this regard. The area of communication is now recognized as one of the most popular areas of research in the field of political science. Since 1960's and onwards the mediated communication<sup>20</sup> where computer is at its base, has become momentous not only in the developing world but the developed world also. The beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed the rise of scholastic studies in the field of computer based mediated communication in the social sciences. In India, most of the studies based on mass communication have been primarily in the field of electronic and print media. Social media and its impact on political scenario are now understood seriously. Studying political impacts of social media would add significant knowledge.

### **1.10 Universe of Study-**

#### **1.10.1 Area Selected for the study– Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**

Uttar Pradesh is the most significant state politically. It has a diverse impact on both the regional and national politics. There is a famous saying that the way to Delhi is via Uttar Pradesh. The ruling party at the center made land slid victory in the 2014 elections in Uttar Pradesh and subsequently was able to form the independent government after three decades of coalition politics. Since Lucknow is the Capital of Uttar Pradesh, most of the political activities take place at this place.

#### **1.10.2 Selected Social Media for the Study-**

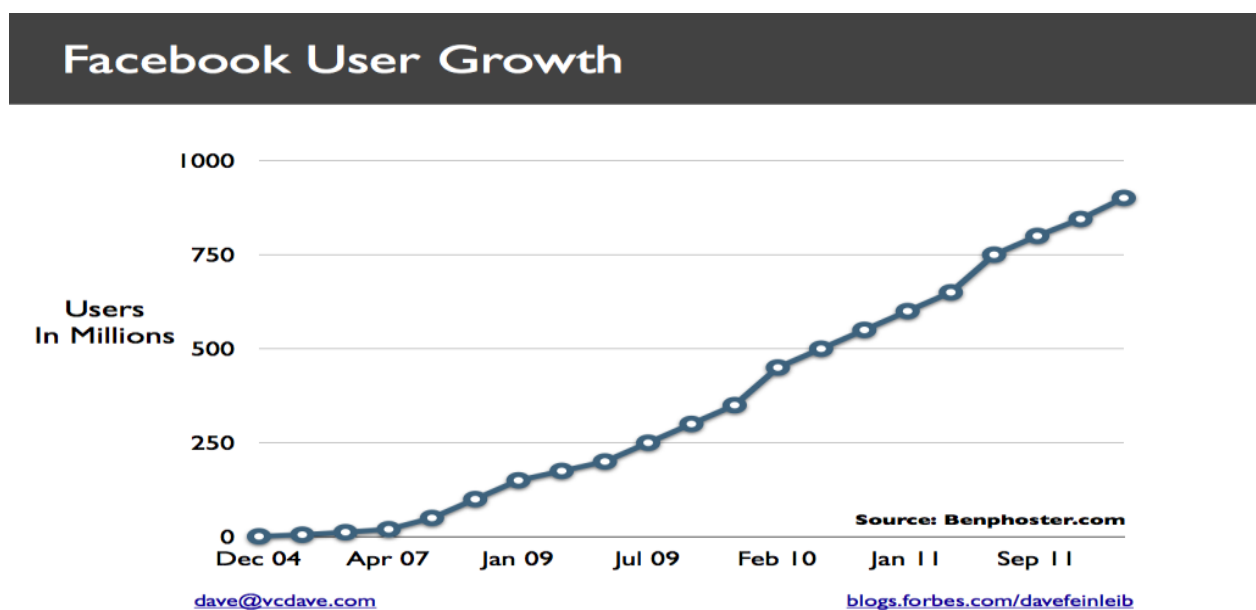
The researcher has studied the two-social media for the study- Facebook and Twitter. Since these the popular media in both in the state and country. The social media are very powerful platform of communication in the contemporary world. There are currently more than a couple of hundreds of social networking sites in practice. Out of these huge number of sites only 15 have millions of users. The number of internet users was 243 million in 2014. Out of

which the number of Facebook users was 114.8 million whereas the twitter user was 33 million (Bhola, 2014)

**Facebook-** According to the Statista, the Facebook is the most popular social media in the world with 2.4 billion monthly active users. This was established in 2004 with its headquarter in California, the United States. This was established by Mark Zuckerberg. The policy of Facebook is to facilitate the people in the world to strengthen communication among themselves. Initially, the membership in the Facebook was confined within the Harvard student's community. Gradually, the Facebook expanded to other academic institutions in the United States of America. The site gained popularity when it started to expand beyond USA to the UK where educational institutions could sign in the social media. By 2006, anybody above the age of 13 years could register in the Facebook. This made a remarkable impact worldwide. Anyone with a registered mail ID could now access to this social media worldwide. The most significant aspect of this social media was that it was free for all. The company would earn the revenue from advertisements. By 2007, the FB started to become more user friendly and developed such features as were very compatible to the users. Scrabble and Graffiti were two popular applications which started to get worldwide acclamations. By 2007, the company made it public that in 2007, the company has reached the mark of thirty million users. This made FB as the largest social media set up with a view to academic spectrum. The popularity of FB reached more heights in the world with esteemed and responsible people started to register themselves here in this platform. This now clear that after the Facebook expanded its territory at the global level, it truly became an international digital platform which offers all an opportunity to share their belief, apprehensions etc. on various local, national and international issues irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, region, race, gender etc. In this way Facebook may be called a virtual world but this media has decentralized the information. The growth of Facebook can be understood from the point of view of its expansion in the world by leaps and bounds. This platform is considered as the world largest virtual country with more than two billion subscribers. This is more than the population of China, world's largest country. Besides, this social media has reached to almost every part of the world due to the availability of digital infrastructure and affordability of cheaper data and the mobile penetration. Facebook is not confined within to share the wishes with one another instead it is a platform where the social, economic and political spheres are represented comprehensively. The Arab Spring was the first of its kind political event where the social media played a pivotal role in the political

mobilization of the masses specially the youth. The government had put stringent norms on the mainstream media, at that time Facebook appeared to be a digital platform where the youth could share their thoughts. Facebook has also been in controversy for many reasons. Most important reason among them has been political by nature. The Facebook was questioned in the US Congress for its manipulative and propagandist role. Recently, the Facebook India was in trouble after the Wall Street Journal exposed Ankhi Das and her team in the country to have relaxed the set norms regarding malicious contents because the these comments were posted by the BJP leader and the company did not want to harm its commercial interest in India which is a major source of revenue for the company. Besides, there have been a number of occasions when the credibility of Facebook was questioned seriously due to its roe specially in the political spectrum.

**Figure 1.5 Popularity of Facebook**

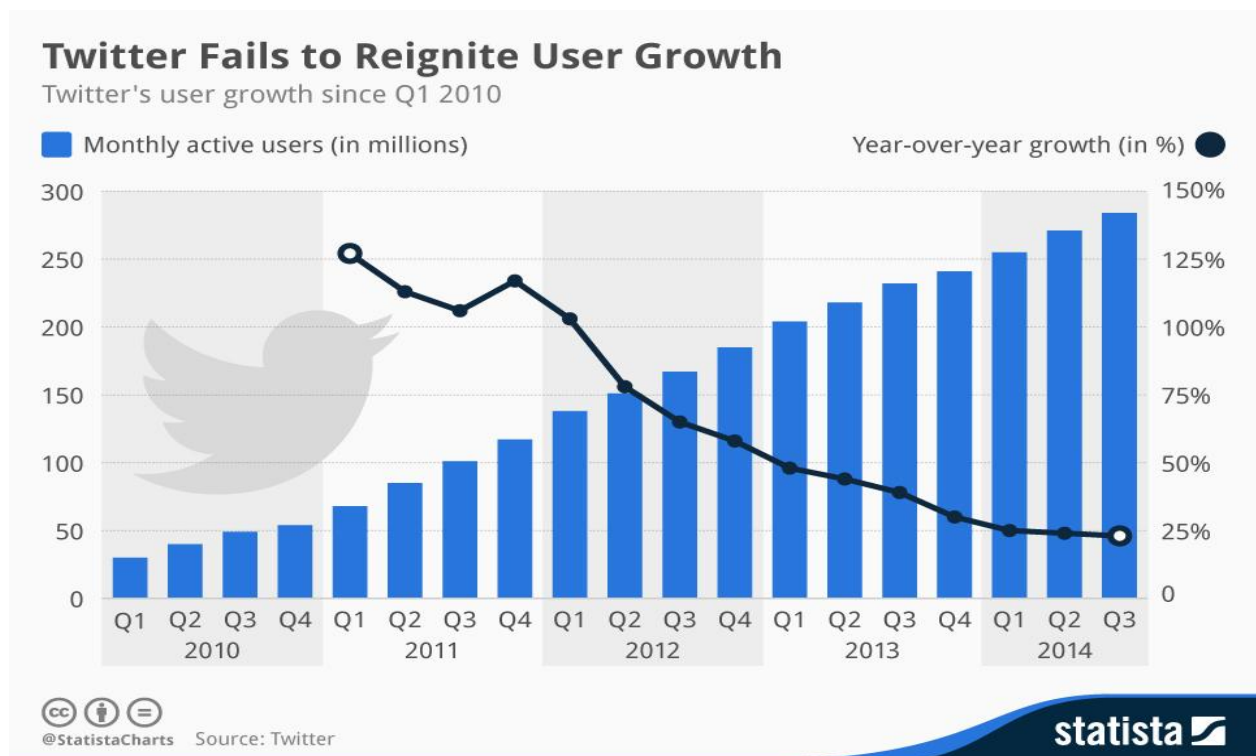


Source: Benphoster.com

**Twitter-** Twitter is another popular social media in India. This was born on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2006. (Arrington, 2006). This micro blogging site has not looked back since then. According to the BBC, the number of users on this site was 400 million worldwide in 2011 (BBC News, 2011). This is basically an online digital platform to debate and discuss any subject of interests by the users irrespective of any physical and cultural boundaries. It also allows the people to connect with one another. Its text limit is fixed to merely 140 characters. It simply means that no one can attempt more than hundred and forty characters that is symbols,

numbers space etc. The social networking site Twitter can be accessed through many digital devices like computer, mobile smartphones and other digital devices. There are various terms used in this platform. Followers is a number of users who are connected to some other persons like Prime Minister of India has millions of followers on Twitter. Hashtag is a symbol (#). This is used for the purpose of identifying a topic or subject for discussion in the digital forum. Newsfeed is the users' wall where all of his contents are available at one place. It's a US based company which is associated with the communication business based on user generated contents. The messages posted on Twitter are known as tweets. The user has to register on the Twitter and thereafter he can tweet and retweet the messages. But the non-registered users can only read the messages in this social networking site. The headquarters of Twitter is situated in the California state of the USA. Besides, there are some twenty five offices of Twitter in different parts of the world. The micro blogging site as the Twitter is also known as was founded by Ewan Williams, Biz Stone, Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey in 2006. Twitter crossed the number of 100 million users by 2012 and these peoples were posting 340 million tweets per day. By the end of 2018, there were 321 million registered users active on Twitter. There is a limit of posting the contents on twitter. A user can post the content of 140 characters. This is because this site was designed with a motive to become an important SMS service on the internet. But with the passage of time and the emergence of more sophisticated information technology, Twitter changed its functioning. Considering the importance of change in character limit due to the change in the communication scenario at the global scale, Titter changed its world limit from 140 characters to 280 characters in the year 2017. The company realized that the character limit was forcing the users to tweet again and again however this is an age of consumer friendly combabilities. The major difference between the Twitter and Facebook is that Twitter is known as the ideal platform for politicians, government officials, statesmen, and policy makers all around the world whereas the Facebook is known to represent all sections of society. Twitter has facilitated the digital politics in the world. Both the US President and the North Korean lead Kim have been exchanging dialogues on Twitter from time to time. Besides, in internal politics of India, Shashi Tharur is known as one of the leading proponents of political communication on Twitter in India.

Figure 1.6, Growth of Twitter

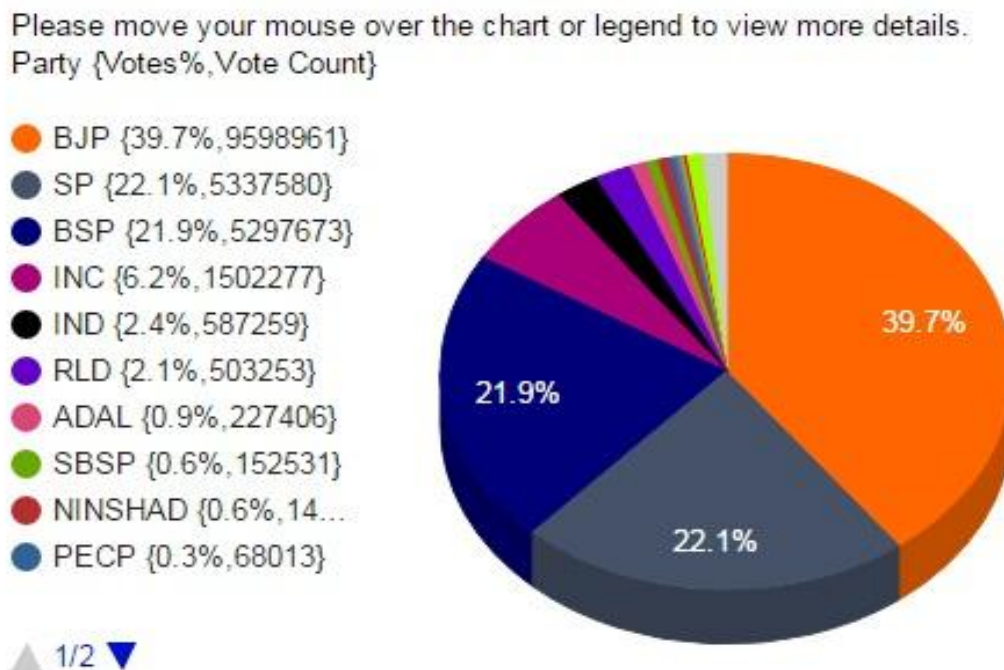


Source: Statista

### 1.10.3 Selected Political Parties for the Study

Political parties selected for the study are- the BJP and SP. The selection of political parties has been on the basis of their performance in the 2017 Assembly elections. On this basis, the two largest political parties are- the BJP and the SP. The BJP has been forerunner in using the digital media for the political mobilization. The party has used social media substantially for the same purpose. Samajwadi Party has also used social media to spread its influence in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The party led by Akhilesh Yadav used the social media for the political campaigning. The live streaming of rallies of Akhilesh Yadav were reaching the people directly in different parts of Uttar Pradesh.

**Figure 1.7 Vote Share in the 2017 Assembly Elections in Uttar Pradesh**



Source: fcroll.in

### 1.11 Research Questions

- What is the role of political discourse in social media in Uttar Pradesh?
- How is social media motivating the youth to participate in the political processes?
- How is social media different from the traditional mass media in the context of political communication?
- What is the effectiveness of social media in the political mobilization of youth?
- What is the role of social media in the political participation?
- Has the social media democratized the information?
- Does social media generate interest of youth in politics?

Social media is the latest development in the field of mass communication. But this mass media has grown manifold. Both politicians and voters are engaged in the communication process in social media. India has achieved great results in the area of information technology. This has enhanced the development of social media in India. Political parties have always strived to connect with the voters in the politics of Uttar Pradesh. Emergence of social media has connected the political leaders with the people. Has this connectivity

resulted into qualitative or quantitative outcomes in the politics of Uttar Pradesh? This is an important aspect.

The youth in Uttar Pradesh is highly active in social media. They access their favorite political candidates through this media. Political parties also initiate the digital campaigns on this platform. In these circumstances, the political discourse in social media has become important for youth of state. What is the outcome of youth's engagement in political discourse on the social media platform? This question generate interest to know more about the relationship among social media, youth and politics.

Mass media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy. Liberal media theory throws the light on the need and importance of free media in a democratic system. The traditional mass media has been concentrated either within the government control like Doordarshan and Akshawani before liberalization in 1991 or within few hands in the private sector like individual proprietorship in India. The arrival of social media has changed these equations. Now the question arises how have these changes impacted the political discourse in the political spectrum. Can we call social media as people's media?

Now its is an established knowledge that social media mobilizes the people. Most of the times, the Arab Spring of 2011 and the India against Corruption in 2012 in India are considered as the most relevant examples of political mobilization. This question generates interest whether the political discourse in social media can mobilize the youth in Uttar Pradesh.

In today's world of democracies, the political participation is considered as a prerequisite for the success. Political participation is actual success of democracy. Mass media facilitates the political participation. How is social media in this respect? This is an interest aspect to know.

Mainstream media is criticized for having the biased approach. The emergence of social media as an alternate media is considered as the democratization of mass media. Because of this anyone can access the contents anytime from any place. In these circumstances, it has been significant to know how has the social media democratized the information.

Youth is always at the forefront of the innovation. Social media has two significant aspects. Firstly, the youth can access this platform directly and secondly, he can do this process with his smart phone. Studies in these areas suggest that youth spend a lot of time with his

smartphone. In this way he also uses the social media as well. It is interesting to know whether his engagement has also increased his interest in politics.

### **1.12 Research Objectives**

Following are the research objectives of the study-

- **To find out the role of social media in the political mobilization of youth.**
- **To study the use of social media platform for political discourse by youth.**
- **To examine the role of social media in enhancing the political participation.**
- **To examine whether the social media has enhanced the interest of youth in politics**
- **To analyze the role of social media on the formation of public opinion.**
- **To examine the relevance of social media platforms used by the youth in Uttar Pradesh.**

### **1.13 Hypothesis**

The study aims the following hypothesis-

- The social media penetration has strengthened the political discourse among youth. Political Parties are also using this platform to persuade them.
- The social media has increased the political mobilization of youth in Uttar Pradesh.
- The social media has increased the political participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh.

### **1.14 Methodology**

The study aims to explore the impact of social media on the political participation of the youth in Uttar Pradesh. Both primary and secondary data have been used by the researcher. The mixed method of data collection has been found suitable. This is an exploratory research where the researcher aims to study the political discourse in social media and its impact on the participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh. The mixed exploratory research can be called such a problem as could not be interpreted evidently. The studies based on exploratory research also aim to develop an understanding on a phenomenon, event or problem. This study is basically trying to understand the impact of social media on the political participation

of the youth in India's demographically largest state, Uttar Pradesh. It is both qualitative and quantitative analysis of this new age media and its role in the political discourse. Political Discourse in Social Media and its Impact on the Participation of Youths in Uttar Pradesh requires both primary and secondary sources of data to study. The researcher aims to explore the impact of social media in political discourse empirically. For this purpose, the researcher followed three step procedure to collect relevant data. There are three significant demographic variables in the research study- age, education and gender. The political parties and youth are the focus areas of study.

**Methods of Data Collection-** The researcher has used the random method of data collection. The outbreak of Corona Pandemic obstructed the data collection process. In this backdrop, the researcher found the suitability of using online digital communication technologies to collect data. Following is the detailed description of method of data collection-

**Survey-** The survey can be defined as an attempt to collect relevant information and insights through the data collection. This process involves the designing of questionnaire. The researcher conducts the survey on 300 respondents. Because of corona outbreak, the respondents have been facilitated online google form. The 300 respondents are in the three-age groups of 18-22, 22-26 and 26-30 and are almost equal number of males and females. This selection is based on the random sampling method. A random sampling is a kind of technique which is used to select a respondent without any biased approach. In this sampling, each of the respondent has an opportunity for being selected in the process. Questionnaires contains over all 32 questions. These questions are divided into three broad categories. The first part consists of information based on demographic variable. The second part enquires about the social media using habits. Whereas, in the third part, the respondents would be asked to narrate the impacts of social media and their participation in the political discourse. The two social media sites have been emphasized in the questionnaire because the researcher has chosen the Facebook and Twitter as the social networking sites for the purpose of study. The selection of social media is on the basis of the users. Data collected through survey is explained on the basis of frequency and percentage.

**In-depth Interview-** The in-depth interview is a popular research technique. In this process, the researcher conducts the interview of a small number of experts belonging to the concerned areas of research. In this the interviewer are asked to provide the detailed insights on the topic of research. Since the participants are less in number, the researcher has

abundant of time to explore various facts and concepts related to his research. This is a qualitative method of research where the researcher tries to understand the perspective of respondents through the interview. The in-depth interview is considered suitable enough when the researcher has to collect the idea about a particular topic or thought. They are considered suitable to collect the qualitative data. Here, the researcher has conducted the in-depth interview of thirteen experts. These experts are further classified into four broad areas- Information Technology, Journalism, Media Academics, Social Worker and Politicians from the two concerned political parties- BJP and the Samajwadi Party. There were ten questions designed to be asked from the interviewee. Because of the outbreak of Corona pandemic, the researcher conducted the telephonic interview.

**Content Analysis-** The content analysis is a popular form of research. In the content analysis, the researcher tries to identify the patterns of communication. In this method of research, the researcher collects data from wide areas of communication. This can be in the form of visual, text or oral communication. In simple terms, the researcher studies, the digital media like social networking sites, newspapers, books or magazines. Photographs and films can also be examined in the content analysis method. The content analysis is of both kinds- quantitative and qualitative. In these both categories of research, the researcher codify the themes and other concepts within the ambit of available contents and then analyses the results accordingly. The researcher collected the data of six months from March 2020 to August 2020. This period was chosen deliberately as due to the outbreak of corona pandemic, the internet was used mostly by the people both the common masses and the political leadership. The Facebook and Twitter accounts of BJP and SP were accessed through the official web page of these political parties in Uttar Pradesh.

### **1.14 Chapter Scheme**

The study of the aforementioned area is concluded in the six following chapters-

**The Chapter One-** the first chapter introduces the topic of the study. In the first chapter of introduction the political discourse in the social media has been described. The chapter explains the social media as the new dimension in the area of political communication. India emerged as the IT super power in the world. This major development facilitated the digitization of communication system. The stupendous growth in the mobile telephony has changed the communication scenario from 1995 till date. Social media has become a favorite

destination for both candidates and the voters in the world. As far as Uttar Pradesh is concerned, the

**The Second Chapter** – The second chapter discusses the theoretical aspect of social media and political communication. This is an analysis of different theories and other related aspects about social media and politics. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of relationship between social media and politics. The main focus is on the role of social media in the political mobilization.

**The Third Chapter-** The third chapter is about the emergence of social media for political communication and the use of social media by major political parties in India. The strategy and planning to reach the masses through the media have been described comprehensively.

**The Fourth Chapter-** The Fourth chapter is a detailed analysis of the emergence of social media and political discourse in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state demographically and having substantial political capacity to influence the regional and national politics.

**The Fifth Chapter-** The fifth chapter is based on the empirical analysis of data collected by the researcher. The entire chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part of the chapter, the researcher describes the data with the help of tables and graphs. In the Second part, the discussion has been made on the basis of the inputs collected by form thirteen experts selected from different filed of expertise like IT, Media, Politics etc. The third part is the content analysis of social media data for the stipulated time of six months.

**The Sixth Chapter-** This chapter discusses the findings of study whether the social media persuade the youth for political participation in Uttar Pradesh. In this chapter the major findings and recommendations have been discussed by the researcher.

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<sup>1</sup>-Aristotle has also propounded the linear model of communication in which he has emphasized the speaker most. According to him the responsibility of persuasion is on the speaker in the communication process.

2- The book can be accessed on [http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Media\\_and\\_Free\\_Culture/We\\_the\\_Media.pdf](http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Media_and_Free_Culture/We_the_Media.pdf)

3- The 2014 General Elections witnessed the highest record voters turn out. This broke the record of 1984 General Elections which recorded the 64 percent voters turn out. For more details log on to, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/Highest-ever-voter-turnout-recorded-in-2014-polls-govt-spending-doubled-since-2009/articleshow/35033135.cms>

4- This is considered as the second phase of revolution in the information and communication technologies which provide the dynamic in place of static media. Social media is the outcome of these developments.

5- The world wide web is an information platform where an individual can access the documents and other digital resources with the help of URL or Uniform Resource Locator.

6- New media is digital based mass media which uses the information and communication technologies for the purpose of communication.

7- Media convergence is the latest development in the digital infosphere where many media outlets like television, radio and newspapers etc. are merged together and are brought into the single window.

8- In the digitization the analogue is changed into digital media systems.

9- In political discourse, many users participate to share information in the public sphere.

10- Thomas Friedman has analyzed various aspects of globalization in his famous book: *The World is Flat: A Brief History of 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

11- Digital divide refers to the people who have access to the digital media and those who don't.

12- Political participation is a process in which people engage in various political activities from voting to be the part of campaigns.

13- The concept of global village was introduced by Marshal McLuhan in his book *Gutenberg Galaxy – The Making of Typographic Man and Understanding Media*.

15- In 1995, the Supreme Court declared airwaves as the public property in the case, *Union of India Vs. the Cricket Association of West Bengal*.

16- Political mobilization refers to the active participation of the masses who are passive stakeholders in the political processes towards the political activities.

17- Social capital is a networking of various groups who share and process the information while contributing their inputs. Robert Putnam's work is quite significant in this regard

18- The British company Cambridge Analytica was accused of stealing millions of people's information from the social media Facebook for the purpose of political advertising without the consent of the users. More details are available.

**Chapter-2**  
**Theoretical Framework of Social Media**  
**and Political Discourse**

## **CHAPTER-2**

### **Theoretical Framework of Social Media and Political Discourse**

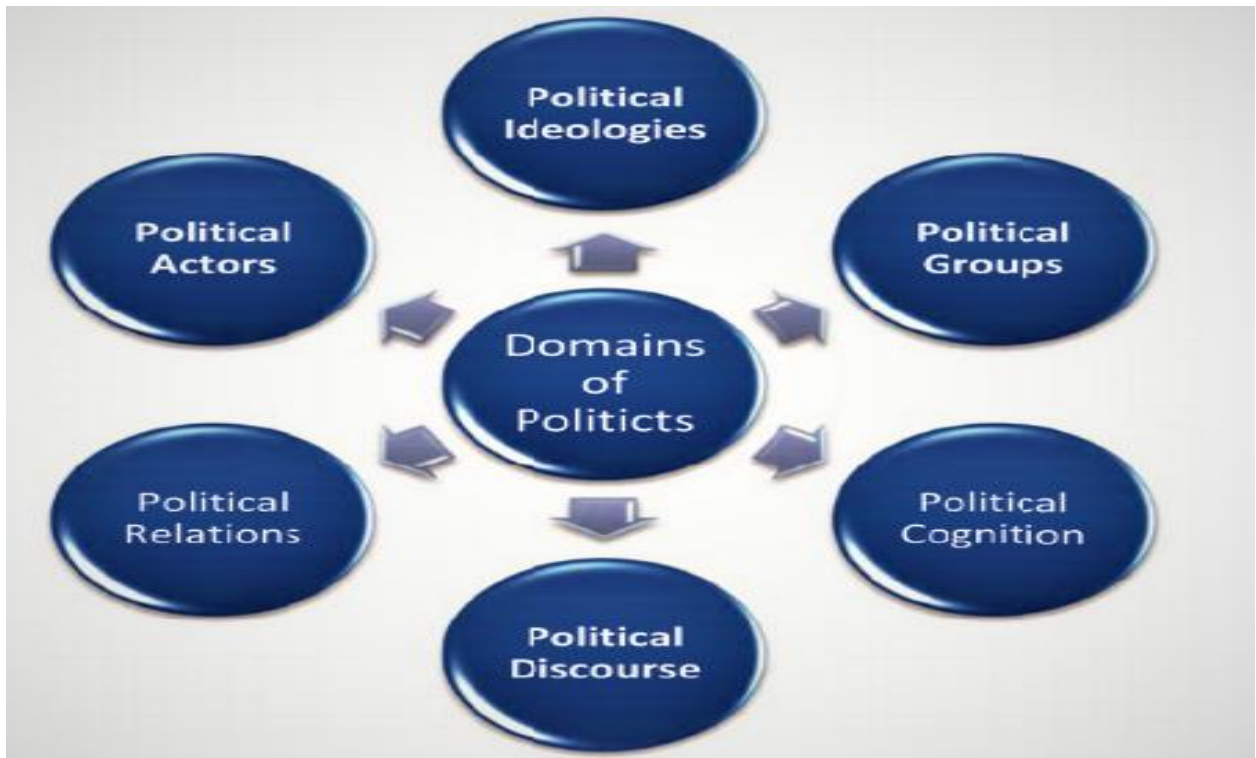
#### **2.1 Political Discourse and Social Media- A Theoretical Perspective-**

The basic aim of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical framework for the study of political discourse in social media, youth and political participation. In the contemporary world, the engagement of youth in politics is one of the most important issues irrespective of political systems. When man was born, he was surrounded by a number of difficulties and challenges against his survival. But he did not succumb. Instead, his empirical approach resulted into a lot of changes positively. These changes brought tremendous facilities for his ideal survival. Science and scientific temperament introduced significant achievement in his life. Man, now could differentiate himself from rest of the animal kingdom. The only thing that made a difference between man and the rest of animal kingdom is his ability to express himself. This placed him at the top and made him master of this world. With the passage of time, his communication abilities kept on changing. From inscribing on stones and wall paintings on the caves, he reached the era of mediated communication. The new age mass communication techniques transformed the communication process. It is said that there can be nothing so ground rooted as a good theory. (Sharma, 2004: 39). Theory can be called to be an attempt of conceptualization of an idea, value or facts. The term ‘theory’ originates from the Greek word *theoria*, which means to evaluate a subject or matter scientifically (Sunday, 2015). The theory can be called a model or a basic structure which has the capacity to maintain the spectacles to be seen through. The theory also establishes a connectedness between the abstract and real. It also establishes a bridge between two or more numbers or the phenomenon. A theory is also capable to explain and predict two or more variables while systematically connecting the ideas and abstractions. The theory stimulates new ideas and also arranges them in a proper manner. (Sunday,2015: 3-4.) The idea of theory denotes to look into a subject carefully and then to grasp the concept enshrined in it. A theory is, therefore needed to be studied comprehensively. The idea will later facilitate to explain such data which is, in other way, not possible to be experienced. It is important to know that just to interpret is not the basic aim of a theory. It goes much ahead of it. Subsequently, a theory concludes in prediction provided it has travelled through explanation. Simply, a theory is used to explain an event or phenomenon. A theory includes both facts and values which finally result into conceptualization. Here comes a point to blend both the findings and

conclusions of a researcher (Johri:1998, 4-6). A theory is considered to have some important characteristics. On one side, it should be based conceptually whereas on the other it should be helping in the relationship building and predictions. The formation of a theory is important because it lays down the scientific track essential for analysis as well as it connects the conceptual aspects to the real world (Wacker, 1998). The theory facilitates prediction which means that through the framework of theory, one can indicate a conclusion. Another aspect of theory is to explain the truth. Both values and facts are included in the theory. The theory is a framework to identify a subject scientifically. It is a kind of empirical approach to narrate the fact or concept. The theory is capable to explain the phenomenon, behavior etc. The experiment is the key factor of a theory which determines its validity. A theory can also predict about future events on the basis of scientific approaches. The theory makes it possible for the systematic analysis of a situation or an event. Denis McQuail describes the theory considering it as a normative set of ideas which actually can help the theorist to make sense of a phenomenon, guide predict or action as a consequence (McQuail 2005: 14). Theory is so important in this world that none can imagine it without the existence of a theory. Theory facilitates to view the world and our surroundings through scientific spectacles. (Thiele, 2002:1) A theory is considered to have some important characteristics. It should be conceptually based, relationship building and predictions. The formation of a theory is important as it lays down the scientific track essential for analysis as well as connects the conceptual aspects to the real world (Wacker, 1998). For long, there has been debate and discussion on the theory of media which facilitates the communication about the elite to the masses and also impact significantly the creation, expression and use of information by the masses. (Halloran, 1970). Theory can also be defined as a statement which is having the interpretation of various phenomenon and facts. These are linked to one another and can be established logically as well as can also be verified empirically (Parsons, 1938). Smith (1996) argues that the theories do not simply explain or predict, they tell exactly what possibilities are existing for human actions and other intervention; they define not merely within the ambit of our explanatory possibilities but also our in the ethical and practical horizons. A theory also assists in identifying various physical consequences and social phenomenon. It can also facilitate to interpret various aspects of these phenomenon. A theory enshrines multi-dimensional aspects in it. The importance of theory in the social science research is of immense value because it predicts the human behavior and other aspects of social life. Theorizing the role of social media in the political mobilization of youths has very restricted scholastic work in the field. Most of the research in this field of research is empirical,

theorizing the role of social media is of immense value in understanding the social media and politics. There has been a significant engagement of various stakeholders in social media like politicians, media professionals and the common people. It is therefore now essential to understand the role of communication technologies and its significance in the entire mass communication process on the digital platform in the form of social media (Boyd, 2010). The theoretical base is the foundation of any research -based study. It basically lays down the foundation of any concrete structure that is pivotal in the research study. Further, the study is carried forward on these foundations. (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). This research study aims to explore the role of social media in the participation of youth. The study is motivated by the fact that India is the youngest country in the world where the young population shares the largest portion of demographic spectrum. While on the other side, this is age of information and communication revolution. Social media is an outcome of this revolution and sophistication in the field of information and communication technologies. Now the role of social media in political participation and mobilization<sup>1</sup> is considered significant. Ever since social media has emerged as a platform to share and expression of information, the political discourse<sup>2</sup> in social media has been a major phenomenon on this digital platform. In this chapter of study, the terms social media and political discourse have been established to connect with mobilization. At the beginning is the description of evolution of media theory in the past many centuries specially after the commencement of industrial revolution in the world. At the beginning, the researcher connects the communication technological landscape essential for internet, social media and political discourse on it. Political discourse belongs to the field of discourse analysis. The basic aim of the discourse analysis is to understand different types of discourses carried out in different forums in the form of debates and discussions during the legislative business in the law -making bodies. (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). The field of political discourse suffers from negligence and least attention has been paid to study this important area. That is why this area has failed to develop compressively in the realm of knowledge (Dijk, 2006). According to Crystal (2006), the discourse can be defined as “to expand the language more than a sentence. This is basically applied to an area of spoken communication. This can further be elaborated by saying that it is a cluster of many said events. Foucault (1972) is of the opinion, the discourse is an attempt to exercise the dominance or control. This can also be called as communicating the conversational practices. This process facilitates to exercise

**Figure 2.1 Categories of political discourse analysis by Van Dijk (1998)**



Source: [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

and maintain the power relations. This is a systematic method of contemplation and expression through words. The discourse is basically a defined and confined area within which the issues are raised and discussed. Discourse can be of various kinds within a particular social framework. There is always a contradiction in a discourse. The thesis and anti- thesis result finally into the confrontation in expressions. In this particular process, each of group tries to be controlling the other one so that the dominance could be maintained. When various discourses conflict against one another in the communication process, ultimately the ultimate one exercises its control on the

other one. This process is called the discursive dominance (Sharma, 2011). Besides, there is the concept of dominant discourse.<sup>3</sup> This discourse is different from rest of other discourses. This discourse is also better than other discourses and places it at the top of the list of discourses. The dominant discourse is carried out by the kind of participants who belong to the elite and dominant class of the political and social spectrum of a set up. In this discourse, the dominant class of society disseminates such type of the information and contents as aim to impact the behavior of others within the ambit of a particular society. This discourse also represents a particular ideology with which others are expected to be persuaded. The

dominate discourse tries to dictate the behavior which the others need to adopt naturally. The dominant discourse has the substantial potential to transform the communication into action whereas the other discourse doesn't have the same level of potential. (Gee, 1989). In simple terms, the political discourse is defined as an attempt to communicate in such a way to influence the conduct of others. This basically aims to manipulate the communication with an objective to persuade the participants towards the compatibility of the dominant class. (Liebes and Ribak, 1991). The area of political discourse is very wide and thus covers a range of subject matters. There are also various methodologies applied to analyze these discourses. The term political discourse is an ambiguous word in its character and bears several meanings. In the first type, it can be originally in political nature whereas the other can be of the kind which does not have evident political context. There are expected more confusions regarding political discourse. It is also understood that all types of discourse are political in nature. (Shapiro, 1981). There are several definitions of political discourse which contain various terms like conflict and dominance in the communication process. That is why all discourses happen to be political discourse in nature. (Giddens, 1991, Dijk, 2006).

The online infosphere<sup>4</sup> has become a common trend in the world today. This has resulted into restricting various concepts in the realm of politics, journalism and society. The online discourse has changed the way people would communicate on different issues and affairs. This pattern of discourse that necessarily involve the online digital platform for the purpose of communication has revolution the public discourse. There are three broad categories of people who are engaged in this digital discourse process in the today. Actively participants are such users who contribute immensely while using the social media sites. These people either give their original ideas or share different social or political contents. The other category of participants is passive in nature as these people don't contribute originally instead, they share or read the contents of others posted on the online media. The third category of the people don't involve either directly or indirectly on any social or political issues. This is also important to know that the internet penetration has not been equal in the world. There are countries which have made tremendous progress in the realm of digital media whereas the countries like Indonesia and India have been left behind. This situation of internet penetration varies from 20 to 90 per cent. Those who are involved directly and actively are focused on public and political issues. They update the online infosphere regularly with their original contents on political issues particularly with a view to influence the political decision- making process as well as to let others know about their opinion.

However, the passive users keep on following these contents without caring their significance generally. Moreover, the digital penetration is historical and unprecedented as this has never happened before. The online infosphere has the capacity to get influenced and mobilized on the basis of political discourse initiated and discoursed for the purpose. The online infosphere is a global platform where anyone from any place can participate in the political discourse and express his opinion without caring of gatekeeping. But in some countries the online users are more active than other countries. India, Brazil, Indonesia, Poland and Turkey are the five top most countries where the citizens are more tend to participate actively in the political and public discourse in social media. This situation is impacted with the internet penetration. The people's engagement decreases with the increase of internet penetration. Though other socio-economic factors do impact the use of social media by the people of these countries. However, in terms of active users among the overall population these countries move downwards. When it comes to active users demographically, the youth overcomes this category as they lead the others in the social media on the basis of sampling and analysis of the findings in twenty -four countries. Though this varies from country to country. Gender is an important factor in some of the countries, females are engaged more in Australia and Brazil whereas in South Korea and Germany males are more engaged on social media. Democratic aspects are vital as one of the determinates of social media and internet penetration in the world. The established democracies are more vibrant to social media in comparison to the newly emerged set ups. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of study after the General Elections in both kind of set ups. The finding was that the new democracies were more inclined to social media for social and political discourse than the older ones when it comes to the citizens' actively engagement in the digital platform. (Ipsos, 2013). The inception of social media in the world has given new impetus to political communication. The cyberization has impacted the political arena as well. The common masses have found the social media as an alternative media which has given birth to new dimensions to these discourses worldwide (Servaes, 1999). Actually, social media has brought the scattered opinions onto the bigger cyber platform having provided the people an opportunity to participate in the political discourse. The contents on cyber media are not confined within the cyberspace<sup>v</sup>, they are impacting different aspects of social, economic and political life (Garbaudo, 2012). The social media has restructured the political communication which is now more participatory and democratic in nature. In this type of newly structured networked technologies system, the media professionals, common masses and the politicians are engaged significantly (Asp, 2014). Social media has emerged as a popular media for political

communication worldwide. This media is powerful platform for the common masses who can share their expressions and can interact with others on the basis of their convenience. In respect of political communication, this media also facilitates the citizen's participation in the democratic set up. In 2008, when the Presidential elections were held in the United States of America, the candidates used this platform for the purpose of political communication. They interreacted with the voters and tried to disseminate the messages to the voters for the purpose of persuasion (Stieglitz et al, 2012). This is essential in a democratic set up to initiate and participate in the political discourse which is primarily carried out by the media professional and political leaders in a wider social and political spectrum (Chadwick, 2006). But with the introduction of new age communication technologies, the political communication process has been changed. It is not confined within the political leaders or the media professionals but it now can be initiated by the common individuals who are not professional communicators. The new communication technologies have enabled the mediated communication in such a way as has given an opportunity to the common people to generate their own contents and initiate the political discourse. Besides, this has reduced the media professionals to express the news contents through their spectacles. As a consequence, their role as a gatekeeper is now reduced significantly. (Tewksbury, 1996). According to Forbes (2012), the social media have become a popular platform for political discourse in the world. There were more than 900 and 500 million users on Facebook and Twitter respectively. The digital accessibility has made this possible for citizens to participate in the political discourse actively. The political candidates also find these platforms to maintain connectivity with their voters round the clock. Thus, both politicians and common masses involve in the political discourse. The political candidates have exploited the substantial potential of social media for political communication during their electoral campaign. On one side there has been the use of social media for political communication in many parts of the world specially after the 2008 US Presidential Elections. Politicians in many parts of the world believe that the social media is not relevant for the political communication purposes. The German politicians has the same thoughts on the use of social media for the purpose of political campaigns (Christmann et al, 2010).

## **2.2 Evolution of Media & Communication Theory-**

The mass media technology has been a subject of consideration for society in different ways. There have been a lot many efforts by the scholars to establish the theoretical base in such a way as could promote the basic understanding how the mass communication technologies

influence various aspects of life. It is also clear that mass communication systems influence the human behavior in different ways but to establish the exact factors responsible is a complex phenomenon. There are various other factors also that influence the human behavior towards an area of human life like economic, social and political. In these circumstances, it is now clear that there is a need of a composite approach involving various theories and paradigm to predict the possible impacts on human behavior. (Johnson,2000). Thomson (1995) analyses the media trends and says that without understanding the media and communication systems of the world, it is not possible to identify the emerging trends in the networked era. The evolution of media technologies is basically an idea which means that all institutions are connected with each other. He attempts to understand the inter connectivity of media with other institutions. The theorists have given ample of space to different social science in theorizing and conceptualizing various aspects but the theorizing mass media is certainly facing a dearth of research. The theorists seem little concerned about media because they find it superficial and not of being high values. There are a number of historical prejudices also which actually obstruct the theorizing the mass media. There is a narrative which judge the formation of theories as a mythical matter and reject the idea of theorizing of mass media that it lacks the gravity. But on the other hand, there is stupendous growth of mass media industry in the world. From crude printing technologies to the global media giants, the mass communication has expanded in an exponent manner. Communication and the modern flow of information is not limited instead its globally effective. It is not confined just to communicate only but to develop new relationship. The modern communication media is impacting various aspects of life significantly. The communication mechanism in today's world transforms the longitudinal and chronological dimensions of social life. This given an opportunity to those who are physically not present in this vast communication sphere. The mediated discernibility has become a global phenomenon. Basically, the modern -day media provides a platform to share common issues on these platforms. Theorizing various aspects of mass media would mean they would serve substantial social and political views. (Thomson, 1995). The Chicago School by using the qualitative methods of research introduced new paradigm in the field of communication research. This paradigm is known as the cultural paradigm <sup>6</sup>. Interactionism was the base of this paradigm of identifying the effects of mass communication. This paradigm concluded that when the people communicate one another, their cultural aspects influence how the contents are interpreted within the framework of a particular culture. The media technologies have an important role to play in amplifying the contents across the cultures. (Carey, 1998) Harold Adam Innis had published two significant

studies on mass communication in the 1940s. He concluded that the media of communication has an important role to play in the effects of media contents. He gave two examples of two different empires in his studies. According to him the Egyptian empire remained confined locally because the messages which were inscribed on the rocks could not be transported to different destinations in the world whereas the empire of Alexander expanded comprehensively because they used alphabetical writings which could easily communicated to different places. Innis was of the opinion that medium had a profound impact on the audiences. (Soules, 2007). Marshal McLuhan <sup>7</sup> gave the idea, ‘Medium is the Message.’ He published a book in 1964 named *Understanding Media*. He emphasized the importance of medium in the communication process and said that this is the media that decides the fate of the messages communicated between the sender and receiver. (Morrison, 2006) Marshal McLuhan also gave the idea of global village. According to him the stories were passed over from one generation to another through story telling. The responsibility was had by the chief of tribesmen but the invention of television has changed the way of story- telling. Now the stories are told in the television screens everywhere. These stories are fabricated by big corporates as tool to promote their interests as well. The consequence of this development has been that the world is now shifted into a small village where the cultures are communicated through the television media. (Ong, 1982). In the United Kingdom, the Birmingham School was engaged in the research to find new ways of understanding media effects. I.A. Richards had made the profound impacts on the functioning of the Birmingham School. (Morrison, 2006) Raymond Williams discussed the media effects through the perspective of Marxism in his research studies. He came to the conclusion that the corporate and the governments have exploited the substantial potential of mass media to influence the common man to exercise their control for their interests. While on the other side the common users of media contents tried to interpret the meaning of the messages in their own way. (Higgins, 1999). Stuart Hall who was impressed by the Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony <sup>8</sup>. He applies this concept in the domain of mass media and says that an elite control the mass media production and the messages produced aim to exercise the dominance on others. He applied these effects on different fields like politics. When the dominated classes in society are educated to see hegemony at work, Hall insists, the power of the system is destroyed (Slattery, 2003). In the meantime, emerged the Paris School which emphasized the understanding of mass media through the cultural paradigm. The Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure is considered the leading proponent of this school. According to him the communicator and the recipients of the messages have arbitrary connections. In this situation,

it is important that the message should be understood by the recipients who are subsequently agree to the notions communicated to them. The main thrust of this school was to identify the meaning of symbols and various terms given by the mass media. Michel Foucault another noted scholar of this school is of the opinion that mass media generate a discourse with the compilations of various symbols and themes. (Slattery, 2003). Barry Wellman has studied internet and its various aspects since 1960s. He has profoundly studied the emergence of information and communication technologies and their impact on individual and society. He has used the term “glocalization” in association with use of internet. According to him, the people in a society were confined within a particular area. Internet has facilitated to the global exposure of local culture. Geography is no more an obstruction in the communication process due to the advent of internet and subsequently the networked society. Wellman (2009) uses the term “network individualism” for the netizens in the world. According to him internet has bridged the people who were scattered geographically. This connects the people beyond their local communities. Wellman was thus forerunner in predicting the networked societies which is today known as the social media broadly in the world. Facebook is the world largest virtual country which is having more than billion population. Steve Jones was one of the early pioneers to study the internet and its impact on different aspects of human life. He applied the theories of Chicago school to draw the conclusions based on the social connectivity through the internet. Sherry Turkle from MIT studied the impact of computer and internet on the children by using the theories of Paris School. Maria Bakardijeva studied the role of computer and internet on shaping of new dimensions in human societies. (Bakardijeva, 2005). There have been several changes in the field of mass communication due to the advancement in the mediated communication technologies. Internet has enabled the convergence of media technologies which subsequently has also resulted into the convergence of contents. Now, the producer and consumers both are the producers who generate the contents to pacify the thirst of cyber media. There are several user -generated social networking web based sites. (Jenkins, 2006)

### **2.3 Internet, Social Media and Political Participation**

After the emergence of internet as an outcome of evolution in the information and communication technologies, the researchers now have stated to focus on the role and impact of internet on the political participation. (Shirazi, 2013). Whereas it is clear that the human society has had impact of communication technologies in their different spheres of life. Political participation is not exception in this regard. Early communication technologies did

play an important role in the participation of the people politically in the world. Today, the communication technologies like internet has become so comprehensive that no parts of life can stay away from the substantial impacts on their behavior (Van Deth, 2001). In the past many years, the web 2.0 technologies have expanded vastly at the global scale. This is an opportunity of ocean flooding with different types of information. These create the user generate contents as well as also facilitate the distribution of these multimedia contents at the global level. These mass alliances result into the distribution of many information substantially in the widespread infosphere. (Singla, Christou, Gretzel, 2012). There has been an upsurge in sophistication and development of information and communication technologies all over the world. The internet is the major outcome of this development. Earlier studies in the field of social media and political communication has introduced the idea that the use of internet for the political discourse would impact politics decisively. (Kraut et al, 1998, Putnam, 2000). The idea earlier was that the internet would remain restricted only for the purpose of entertainment as well as the same would impact the social relationships adversely. (Kraut et al., 1998; Putnam, 1996). In fact, this view did not last long as there were many changes which took place at various levels like social, economic and political and most importantly at the level of information and communication technologies. Subsequently internet established as a mechanism to share the information. An important view behind this concept has been that the use of internet is a determinant for its impact on different aspects of politics. If it is used for the constructive and political purposes, there can be better outcomes as well. (McLeod & Scheufele, Moy, 1999; Shah, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Going through the uses and gratification model (Katz, Blummer and Gurevitch, 1974), the findings have established that the discourse on news and political affairs enhances the people's participation and subsequently their mobilization in the political process. (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005). The web is popular because its user friendly on one side while on the other the users can consume the contents on the basis of their convenience. This facility in particular enhances the scope of reaching the depth of various political issues and affairs. (Davis, 1999; Jones, 1995; Rheingold, 1993). The people engage themselves profoundly in the political activities on being involved in the exchange and discourse of political ideas with others. The internet has, in this way facilitates the participatory democracy. (Shah et al., 2005). Many studies have found that the social media impact the life of people comprehensively. Right from marketing to the political participation, social media has emerged as a powerful media of communication and participation.

The social media have made significant impact on the political communication and subsequently political participation in the contemporary global political scenario. The recent studies have suggested that social networking sites Facebook and the micro- blogging site Twitter have acclaimed widespread popularity across the world. Both the Twitter and Facebook have emerged as an ideal platform for both the politicians and common masses for the political discourse. The direct dialogues between the political leaders and the voters have enhanced the span of discussions on various political issues. This has also subsequently empowered the masses at the grassroots level to participate in the communication process (Stieglitz, Xuhan, 2014). Political participation is defined as the miscellaneous attempts of the people in a particular political set up. These efforts aim to influence the political mechanism of a country or the policies of a government particularly. In the modern political culture, the civic engagement of citizens is considered as a necessity for the system to be successful. The citizens are supposed to actively participate on various political activities like elections etc. They even can participate in other electoral process like getting elected having participated in the election. (Conway, 2000, 03). A number of theories and approaches like sociological, institutional, legal, political process etc. are known for finding the type of participation in the political spectrum of a country (Fowler 1993; McGlen and O'Connor 1998; Rinehart 1992).

Zizi Papacharirissi (2011) considers that in the digital era of 21<sup>st</sup> century social connectivity and self -portrayal in social media has become a trend in the networked communities. The researchers have made extensive studies in the contemporary online society. The social media environment facilitates the expression of self – identity. The network media environment has voiced various issues like sensitization of gender equality, civic engagement etc. (Papacharissi, 2011). There has been scarcity of studies regarding impact of information and communication technologies on the political participation. Most of the studies that deal with the political participation have been confined to the offline aspects and their impact on the political participation. Political participation, according to Brady (1999) can be defined as the activities which aim to impact the results effectively and politically. Initially, the political participation was conceptually analyzed as a part of electoral aspects such as campaigning during the elections (Berelson, 1954, Campbell et al 1954). But with the passage of time, the idea of political participation was not confined within the electoral campaign. Instead, this expanded in the vast territories of understanding political participation. Now different political activities such as petition, demonstrations and protests etc. are also included in the

process of political participation. In this way the idea and classification of political participation has expanded comprehensively. This includes both the conventional and non – conventional patterns of political participation (Milbrath, 1981). The concept of political participation has also been defined and categorized, keeping the communication technology in mind. Some of these activities of participation are also termed as the pre- political participation. These activities basically include the contents and consumption of news media- both print and electronic. The citizens watch political contents on television and also go through the text published in the newspaper. They, thereafter discuss and debate various contents among themselves on the internet (Ekman and Amna, 2012).

#### **2.4 Social Media, Youth and Political Discourse-**

Social media can be defined as a communication technology which is based on web and an interactive dialogue forum. Kaplan and Haenlein says that this is a web based on internet and different applications which subsequently create a platform for the web 2.0 and that also provide an opportunity to create as well as present the user -based contents on these platforms. Social media is a forum where people at different levels of society can communicate with one another. Social media is basically a capacity that has dramatically changed the way people, individual, organization and communities communicate for different purposes (Barua, 2012). The social media was started from a narrow cell with a motive to connect the friends and relative at large. But with the advancement of communication technology, the surge in the social media spectrum has been an outstanding phenomenon in the contemporary world. Social media has enhanced its substantial potential of connectivity for social, economic and political purposes. But still the use of social media by the youth in particularly is for the purpose of connectivity. For the youth social media facilitates the relationship with the friend. However, this new media has expanded the territory of friendship of youth. Subsequently, youth find the social media platform as an ideal junction where he could not only make new friends but also can also maintain his friendship for his purpose ( Devmane, Rana 2015).

For ages, the youth has been playing an important role in the political systems in the world. They have participated actively in different social and political changes at the micro and macro levels. Their innovative and energetic methods of transformation the existing order has been appreciated by the historians worldwide. On the other side, the youth himself faces a series of complexities in their life. Their problems range from employment to poverty and

from better future prospects to the settlement in their respective social spectrum. The Jasmine Revolution in the recent past was the most significant example to establish the role of youth in the political spectrum. Generally, youth is not organized politically and is found in a scattered way. They are found engaged politically for various purposes in their educational institutions. Subsequently, their political engagement does not follow formal political groupings. The political participation and the subsequent engagement of the youth in politics is in the local socio- economic and political context. There are many countries where, the youth particularly the women are discriminated. Though there has been scarcity of political scope for the youth worldwide yet their engagements both at the formal and informal levels are versatile in different political entities. In the third world countries, the youth is not engaged politically. In most of the countries, the youth below the age of 35 is sidelined in the political spectrum to participate within. The age of members of law-making institutions in these countries generally commences at 25. But they are unable to play active role in the mainstream politics before 45 or 50. (UNDP, 2012).

The cyber media impact various aspects of the youth. They find the social media as very compatible to their personal needs. But on the other side, the cyber media also impact their professional growth as well. They learn different professional aspects being associated with the social media. They not only learn how to manage their time and resources but also, they can communicate the same to their friends. These youth find the social media as very compatible for the purpose of social communication (Wakefield & Rice, 2008). A big number of youths in India are exposed to media contents. Youth alone constitute a major portion of India's population that is why social media has an important role to play in this media spectrum. There has been a speculation that youth is broadly concerned mainly to his own building instead of involving in the national affairs. This is considered as the main reason in his or her less inclination in political discourse. Studies on the political participation and mobilization of youth suggest that their participation is lesser as compared to the other constituent of voters in the country (Banerjee 2013). It has also been noticed that the social media has put some adverse impacts on the youth in different parts of the world. Since after the emergence of social media as platform and subsequent entry of various social, political and business organization into it has made this platform an attractive place where youth remains focus for the different business and political purposes in the world. The youth is using these social media platforms to access their relatives and friends whereas the business and political entities are accessing the youth through this platform for their interest. That is

why the social media has become so important for both youth and political candidates (Bhardwaj, 2017). With the advancement of technology and the availability of digital infrastructure in India, the access of social media has increased to the youth in India. Earlier, the use of social media was confined within the urban youth but with the availability of affordable data and cheap mobile phones, the social media has expanded its influence as the digital platform for the youth even in the far-flung areas of India. The smart phone has facilitated the social media with to be more effective and attractive for the youth. These are the major reasons why the youth in all over world find social media as very compatible to their needs. According to the Statista, India would cross the mark of 370 million users on the digital media platform by 2022. In such circumstances when the population of youth in India is major portion in the entire demography, the youth are expected to spend more time. Subsequently, both the political and business communication is to focus towards this particular area (Zaky, 2017).

### **2.5 The Agenda Setting Theory and Political Discourse in Social Media-**

The agenda setting theory can be traced back to as long as in 1920's. Walter Lippman said that mass media has become so powerful that it can play an important role in the shaping and reshaping of the image in the mind and hearts of the people. Walter Lippman never used the basic term of agenda setting but while describing the nature and capacity of media, he gave several examples when mass media become vital in playing the key role to settle an agenda. For belligerents, he says none would be having bitter views against the other provided they don't get information regarding how they need to have their opinion against the rival country. (Lippman, 1922, 9-16). Cohen (1963) has said that there is a big possibility that the media achieves its goal in fabricating the mindset of the people what and how they should look at a particular issue being exposed to them by the mass media. This particular thought of Cohen became the very base of McCombs and Shaw (1972) who subsequently came to the conclusion after an exhaustive research that the mass media has the substantial potential to influence the approach of the people during the electoral campaign. McCombs and Shaw (1977) also gave a second line theory within the ambit of agenda setting theory. They call it the attribute agenda. They were of the opinion that this is not the agenda setting of mass media alone but the "object attributes" also influence the thought process of the recipients of the messages. According to McCombs and Shaw (1981), the second level of agenda setting theory focusses on the thinking process of the audience. The first level talks about "how" in taking a particular issue by the media whereas the second level of agenda setting has added,

“what” in the thinking approach of the audience. This is not the mass media agenda setting approach alone, the psychological aspects have also a big role to play in the decision -making process of the audience. That is why there is a “need of orientation” in the entire communication process between the mass media and the audience. (McCombs & Weaver, 1985). Everett M. Rogers has identified three broad areas of agenda setting theory. These three areas depict the inner connectivity of mass and agenda setting theory. These are the agendas which are related to public, policy and media. He is of the opinion the agenda of a media is set up by the government on the basis of its priorities. Mass media keep on circulating round about these issues. This is the way media present various issues before the people. (Rogers and Dearing, 1988)

The agenda setting theory says that the emphasis on a particular information is a determinant of selecting a particular information to be amplified in the vast infosphere. As long as this is concerned with the social media, it simply means that though this promotes the participatory journalism. But on the other side this is selective in addressing the issues as this selection of issues is of high significance. The social media may pick up a particular message from the traditional mass media sphere and then can expand it to unlimited space. The excessive emphasis and exposure to some certain messages can give tremendous importance to the subject addressed (McNeil, Briggs, 2014). Donald L Shaw and McCombs published their agenda setting theory in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1972. They concluded that the agenda of mass media influence the public agenda significantly in the wide geographical and social sphere of the world. The agendas are set at various levels like agendas of objects and agendas of attributes. The agendas are also set on the basis of contents and objectives like agendas set for dissemination of political information. (McCombs, Shaw, Weaver, 1997). They were of the opinion that the mass media played an important role in the presidential elections of 1968. (Zain, 2014). Littlejohn and Foss (2009), say that the media contents put weight on the relationship between the mass media and the public opinion. The agenda setting theory also searches how the mass media try not only to set priority of issues before going to offer them to the mass audiences but also prepares a mind set to accept them. (Matsaganis and Payne: 2005). Thus, mass media is an important driver that carries the information to the masses with an objective to influence them how they should perceive a particular information and then how they should react on the information. Mass media therefore play an important role in the setting of agenda of public. (Iyengar & Kinder: 1987).

### **2.5.1 The Agenda Setting Theory and Political Communication-**

The political communication in reference to the agenda setting theory of mass media specially the news media has been studied earlier to find out the potential outcomes by the scholars representing the different aspects and disciplines (Carroll, McCombs, 2003). The agenda setting theory is not confined within the domain of mass media studies, it does remain relevant in other social sciences. In the domain of political communication, the agenda setting theory has become prominent ever since it came into existence (Reese, 1991). The agenda setting theory has been the matter of interest for both scholars- political science and media studies. But the efforts have not been very fruitful to evolve the conclusions that are accepted in both media studies and political communication academia. The political prejudices that are set as a political agenda by the mass media depend on various factors. They include particularly the editorial line of a particular news set up as well as various aspects of a content covered, processed and delivered by these media houses. (Walgrave, Aelst, 2006). During elections, the role of mass media increases significantly for political communication. Various factions try to promote their political agendas during the elections. The mass media is used massively for the purpose of political communication (Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans: 2008; Rogers and Dearing: 1988). Cohen (1963) explored the role played by the mass media in the formation and transformation of public opinion in the elections. The media of mass communication has a powerful role in influencing the values, perception and the frame of mind of the recipients of the messages. Thus, mass media contents create their influence on the people concerned effectively. These mass media also set the priorities of the agendas i.e. according to the agenda setting theory, the media determines the priority of issues to be presented before the masses. (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). Mass media play an important role in the shaping and reshaping of public opinion, their attitude, tastes etc. Mass media also facilitates the people's attention on any issue or issues. People are now exposed to various contents through the media outlets. Like people, the mass media also determine which contents are to be taken as priority basis and which are to be neglected. The agenda setting theory recognize how the mass media contents influence the people's thought, cognition and attitudes significantly. (Shaw, 1979).

### **2.5.2 Agenda Setting Aspects, Political Discourse and Social Media-**

There has been tremendous evolution of agenda setting theory in the past many years. The emergence of new infosphere has transformed the theoretical base of the agenda setting

theory. On the other side the internet has also impacted the social spectrum. The researchers are now exposed to many such changes in the realm of agenda setting theory. (Kim, Kim and Zhou, 2017). According to the scholars Dearing and Rogers (1988), the agenda setting theory is of empirical value and in the present scenario a comprehensive meta narrative is the need of the hour. Now it is also essential to know the role and impact of internet and new communication technologies on the agenda setting theory.

The change in the infosphere has affected the role and relevance of agenda setting theory in many ways. Internet is now the driving force in the participation of audience in many ways. This development is well noticeable in the academic research related to the agenda setting theory. The digital hemisphere has challenged the exiting bases of agenda setting theory whether the emergence of internet and social media have changed the dimension of agenda setting theory. McCombs who propounded the agenda setting theory and presented valuable pieces of research in the field concerned has given another dimension in an article, 'Agenda Setting, past, present and the future.' McCombs is of the opinion that because of changed mass media landscape in the age of digitization, the agenda setting theory has evolved accordingly. McCombs has also designed a basic theoretical structure to examine the agenda setting theory in the changed circumstances. This structure is having five sub structures in it. These are- fundamental impacts of agenda setting theory, attribute in the agenda setting sphere, role of psychology in the agenda setting, media and its different sources, results of different impacts of agenda setting theory on the audience. (Grzywińska, Batorski, 2016).

The emergence of digital era has changed the media landscape as well as the role and relevance of agenda setting theory. In this changed landscape, the different media copy the contents from each other. This situation is called 'news imitation' in the realm of digital media sphere. Because of this practice, similar contents appear in different websites all over the world. (Boczkowski, 2010). Subsequently, there are new trends emerging in the digital infosphere specially in the social media segment that the recipients of the messages are receiving the same kind of contents from different sources simultaneously. This is termed as the, 'convergent agendas.' (Merz, 2009)

It is perceived that the agenda setting theory has the capacity to impact the public opinion and facilitates the audience towards some certain issues as were set under the agenda. Whereas the emergence of digital media platform has introduced new concept to this very notion of agenda setting theory. (Feezell, 2017) Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) propounded the two- step

flow of communication theory. This is a process in which the political information reaches to the audience through filters which are termed as the opinion leaders. The people don't receive the information directly from the sources. The political communication is carried out through opinion leaders who play the pivotal role in the delivery of information to the desired audience. The social media can facilitate the transmission of information in a large area. But at the same time there is possibility of reducing the agenda setting capacity of mainstream media due to less exposure and poor participation by the people in the communication process through social media. In this way, social media reduces the intensity of exposure. (Prior, 2007)

This is an age of digital media. The penetration of digital media all over the world has made this a popular platform. Both the corporate and the political leaders want to exploit the potential of social media for the purpose of communication. The emergence of new media is an outcome of advancement of information and communication technology. The availability of new media has not only made the information accessible while on the other side the delivery and accessibility both have become smoother. Now the common people can access the mass media digitally in just one click. (Jenkins, 2006). The new media is based on digital communication technologies which facilitate the users to access the information through the digital device as per the choice anytime and anywhere. (Schivinski & Dabrowski: 2014). Earlier, the mass media was confined within print and electronic media and therefore various influences of media contents were also restricted within the ambit of these two major areas' consumers. The emergence of new media has transformed the entire media contents consuming scenario in the world. Subsequently, the impacts of mass media contents have also widened. (Chaffee and Metzger 2001; McCombs 2005; Prior 2007; Williams and Delli Carpini 2011).

### **2.5.3 Criticism-**

The advancement in the media and communication technologies have changed the entire media scenario in the context of agenda setting theory. Now the questions are being raised whether these advancements have posed the serious threat to the existence and relevance of agenda setting theory. This is important to know that the arrival of new media has impacted the concentration of audience and the classifications of various agendas. (Baxter, Knox). This new media has opened various dimensions of people's participation in the communication process. It is, therefore, expected that there is a possibility of ending of traditional notion

of agenda setting theory. (McCombs, 2005). The availability of information through various sources on the internet has created a lot of confusion among the public who access on the internet regularly to come to a common issue together. That is why it is very difficult for the public to come to a common agenda. (Chaffee and Metzger 2001). There is growing tendency in the world that people are now finding the digital media more compatible to reach the news and current affairs regularly. These users get and interact on various social and political news available on the internet through social media. It is therefore possible that the common agenda won't shape up as users are generators of the information in the social media. (Tan and Weaver 2013). The users now have variety of news and other information available on the net. It is, therefore challenged the established idea of agenda setting theory that the mass media sets the particular issues as their agenda and then supposes the audience to form the opinion on an issue on that particular set agenda. This have changed a lot due to the availability of social media and internet that is filled with a number of different information. (Gottfried and Shearer 2016).

## **2.6 Public Sphere Theory and Political Discourse in Social Media**

Scholars have been discussing the various aspects of public sphere in respect of mass media. They are also fusing their attention on the newly emerged cyber media specially the social media. The public sphere model of Habermas is considered as one of the milestones of communication sciences. This model simply explains the public domain where the people communicate for the different purposes of political communication. (Dahlgren, 2005) The fast -changing global communication scenario due to the emergence of digital communication technologies proves the relevance of this model of public sphere in the internet age. The ongoing practices in the realm of liberalization, privatization and globalization, in fact find the public sphere model of Jurgen Habermas <sup>9</sup> as very compatible instead of being an alien element in the communication sphere. (Khan, Gilani, Nawaz, 2012) Public sphere as a term was used for the first time by a German scholar and sociologist Jurgen Habermas. This was the decade of 60s of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jurgen Habermas discussed the concept of public sphere as a mass theatre where the people indulged in debates and discussions. This discourse is important to generate thoughts and then to result subsequently into public opinion. The public sphere theory is an important theory in the domain of media and communication studies. The concept of public sphere can be better understood in the book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. This book is written by Jurgen Habermas. The public sphere theory has been extensively described in this book. According

to Jurgen Habermas the individual in a group takes active participation in the discussion of various issues and thus forms his opinion. This opinion collectively is so strong as to restrict the government for taking such initiatives which are not popular among the publics. In simple terms the public sphere can be identified as a spectrum where the people may reach the conclusions without using any kind of violence. Habermas says that it is important in the public sphere that each should have a chance of starting a conversation and carry the discussion ahead and all should also have the right to raise questions to settle their doubts. Besides, all should also have a chance in expressing his desires etc. (Habermas, 1989) The CommGAP report of World Bank on public sphere says that the Public sphere is basically a platform where people discuss their various issues and problems. This is a process through which they try to express themselves and form an opinion regarding an issue. This subsequently impact the actions of the political leadership substantially. The public sphere is basically spectrum where different kinds of opinions are expressed to reach a common consensus on different issues. This sphere can be in the physical form where people directly exchange their views and form their opinions while on the other hand this facility also exists in the technological infosphere where people can also communicate through the media. A number of political theorists consider that the role of public sphere is momentous in the domain of democracy. This also facilitates the political set ups to function smoothly and in the public interest. (Young, 2000). Now, this has become a common practice to evaluate the role of communication sphere empirically. Jürgen Habermas approach to public sphere theory has gained popularity in studying the communication in the political systems. Habermas' work is considered as one of the leading notions in the realm of public -sphere. (Dahlberg, 2004)

The public sphere simply denotes to a kind of infosphere where the people can share their expression at a broad level and also form their respective opinion on different issues. This is basically a platform of citizens which is used for the purpose of political communication particularly. (Habermas, 1974: 48). Here the term public refers to a communication which is not personal instead it is public by its nature. (Papacharissi, 2002). This platform of public sphere is a facility where many people exchange their views on different issues simultaneously. Subsequently, they come to a common consensus on various issues. This process is considered as a prerequisite in the formation of public opinion. Public sphere is important for the success of democracy while providing the people's participations in the

formation of their opinion in particular. With the emergence of different types of mass media, this infosphere is affected significantly by opinion leaders. (Fraser, 1990)

### **2.6.1 Public Sphere Theory in Social Media Spectrum-**

The virtual public sphere of social media has been quite effective in the world after the emergence of social media as a mass media of communication. This was understood on the ground of Jasmine Revolution, Occupy Wall Street etc. political mobilization. The experts in communication and politics were alarmed by these incidents at the global level. They have been trying to identify the various aspects of the this newly emerged infosphere and its influences on the socio- politico spectrum. (Aday et el, 2012). The emergence of social media has been significant. The social media facilitated the public sphere in the new age and also created the atmosphere to mobilize the masses towards a certain direction. (Kavanaugh,2008) The public sphere is a subject of interest for many scholars coming from different fields of social sciences. This is a key concept in the arena of political and communication sciences. This is vital for any democracy to function smoothly while based on public opinion and public interest throughout. The outstanding growth and development of information and communication technologies and subsequent birth of cyber media has transformed the idea of public sphere and political discourses significantly. Social media in particular has become a change agent in the public sphere communication spectrum throughout the world. The social media has emerged as a widespread platform to provide an opportunity for political discourse in the new public sphere. This e participation has strengthened the communication while making it more participatory as well as giving democracy better strength. (Cela, 2015). Jurgen Habermas, a German Philosopher considers the mass media as a catalyst in shaping the opinion of the masses. Though this theory came into being in the decade of 60's, this has been crucial in the communication research since then and its very relevant in the contemporary media scenario. Habermas says that the people indulge in various arguments. Habermas makes this area of arguments as being carried out between the two entities – one where state and its instrumentalities are involved and other where the common masses communicate among themselves. This practice plays an important role in determining the role and responsibility of state for the welfare of its people. In the present scenario the mass media have emerged as a decisive player in the formation of public opinion. In this situation, the public sphere is dominated by mass media. In the public sphere theory of Habermas there are three components involved. These are public sphere, arguments and the state. Habermas thinks that the people are quite capable of making the arguments

rationally before they come to a common consensus on an issue of public importance. He says that the people should indulge in the political discourse because none of the people is alone capable to reach a consensus therefore its important that in the sphere of debates all should contribute exponentially. These debates are prerequisites in the formation and reformation of public opinion on an issue. These debates help the authorities in taking the valid decisions on various issues of public interests. In this respect the mass media plays an important role in the overall public sphere in the initiation and promotion of rational debates. But Habermas also says cautiously that this is not as fair as it seems to be because there are the interests of media ownership who try to manipulate these debates for their political and commercial interests. Mass media provide facility for the mass expression and help in the formation of and re-formation of public opinion by igniting the thoughts. Social media like Facebook, Twitter etc. have added further extensions to the public sphere model of Habermas. These new media are now very effective in not only the formation and reformation of public opinion but also generates dialogues among the people. These interactions on social media facilitate the formation of virtual public sphere and play an important role in the political discourse in a democratic set up. (Mukopadhyay, 2016)

### **2.6.2 The Liberal Model of Public Sphere-**

The liberal model of public sphere is different from the Habermas model. This model was developed by Jurgen Gerhards. According to Gerhards, instead of the common masses, the organizations play important and decisive role in the formation and reformation of public opinion as these set ups influence the debate and discussions in the public sphere. The public sphere model emphasizes more on the rational aspects whereas the liberal model focusses on the quantity. The pressure and interest groups along with the political parties paly the dominant role in the public sphere. These groups in different forms are so influential that they directly impact the public opinion and the decision -making processes. Jurgen Habermas finds rationality as the most character in the infosphere whereas the model of Jurgen Gerhards incorporates all kinds of communications from different sources may be rational or emotional.

### **2.6.3 Third Model of Public Sphere-**

There is the third model of public sphere in the communication spectrum. According to this model of communication, the mass media ignite the thought process in the infosphere. This is the mass media that is basically the constructor of public sphere. Mass media not only ignites

the communication process in this sphere but also let the people openly discuss and debate on the issues on various subjects. Mass media is a catalyst in the process of political communication. This model emphasizes the gatekeeper theory of mass communication where the mass media play the role of gatekeepers while allowing particular subjects only for the open debate and discussions in the public sphere. Mass media also impacts the political decisions of the people. The third model of public sphere basically focusses on the European aspects of political communication. According to the model, the media bridges the people and political institutions in Europe. Whatever is served by the mass media to the people is the ultimate and the people largely depend on the media to get the information about various activities at the political levels. In fact, the mass media act as a moderator in the public sphere of Europe.

#### **2.6.4 Criticism and Limitations of the Public Sphere Theory-**

The advancement in the media and communication technologies have altered the processes and elements in the communication system worldwide. This is now a trend that communication is affecting different walks of life from personal to social. This won't have been possible in the absence of digitization of communication technologies and satellite communication in particular. Only the application of digital technologies is no more the thirst of social science researchers. They are now studying different other aspects of these developments in the field of media and communication technologies. These developments have boosted the engagement of the citizens in the process of democracy. They are not merely the mute spectators. They are the active stakeholders in the entire spectrum of politics, media and democracy. But at the same time, there are questions being raised on the relevance of public sphere in the changed media and political scenario. (Mahlouly,). Postone states that Habermas tries to express the duality of social life. A number of criticisms of the public sphere theory are based on external ideas borrowed by eminent scholars. However, there are some internal aspects as well. These concepts stem from his dual approach of society. The revelations made by Habermas are based on the contemporary economic scenario in the world. These are basically the capitalist model of the global economy. This makes essential to study in detail as there are many basic perplexities in the approach of Habermas' theory of public sphere. (Sitton,2003).

## **2.7 Social Identity Theory and Social Media-**

The AP Psychology says that the social identity theory is an individual based framework within that one tries to establish his identity conceptually in an existing social sphere. This is such a structure as provides the emotional base to an individual within a particular social system. The people always try to maintain their bright side of their personality. Besides, the people also try to make a comparative analysis between the social group they belong and that one which does not belong to them. If this comparison results into the positivity in their individual presence in their respective social spectrum, they are necessarily satisfied. The identity of an individual is an outcome of years of transformation from an edge to another in the course of time. These are important phenomenon both at the individual levels and social level as well. The people try to fit themselves in their social context originally or after having made the required transformations in him. They are expressed through many ways both individually and collectively. (Reed et al, 2009). In the social context, individuals find different dimensions to establish their identities. For this very purpose, they try to adopt some certain behavior in the social spectrum so that that they could be identified easily. These subsequently result into the formation of broader identities (Arnold and Thomson, 2005). There is always a stiff felt to improve or increase the social identity because this is the base of life in the social context. The people make many attempts to establish their positive identity in their social surroundings everywhere. For this purpose, they try many ways to access a platform from where they could establish their better identity. This is actually an in -depth approach of an individual that also aims to satisfy the need of being identified amidst the social surroundings (Turner, 1982). There have been extensive studies to explore various aspects of social identities their impact on the behavior of the people. The motivations or other factors such as customs or some other factors which have been studied are important landmark in the social identity theory. The social identity theory defines that the people actually represent the groups and surroundings which they belong to. This theory was coined by John Turner and the British social psychologist Henry Tajfel in 1979. Social identity theory is based on a person's social identity which he represents in the social spectrum. This is important because the people feel pride in feeling that they come from a particular group, community etc. The people belonging to different groups try to express themselves in a way that enhance their self- image. In this theory, the people belonging to a particular group would like to present in such a way as to bring more satisfaction for them as well as to establish their better image that other similar groups. (Hogg, Williams, 2000). Social Identity

Theory is a theory based on social psychology is such kind of theory as try to interpret the inter group confrontations as well as to establish the self -image. Social identity theory is an outcome of efforts aiming to execute cognitive communities and gestalt developments. The principles of cognitive grouping can be applied to interpret the various kinds of prejudices and biases associated with other groups. Besides this theory also facilitates to develop an understanding about different types of approaches and perception of various groups. (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). A number of studies have been carried out to assess the negative approach of social identity theory in different disciplines of social sciences particularly in psychology. These studies were conducted to identify a large area of cognitive phenomena. (Smith, Hogg, Abrams, 1999). Different scholars have tried to understand the role and relevance of social identity theory through the perspective of various societal influences on them and subsequently the role of society in the formation and reformation of their approaches and attitudes which is reflected in their different behavior. This behavior ranges from their social activism to their voting behavior. It is therefore established that that the social spectrum plays an important role in the formation and reformation of approaches towards a particular situation. (Forehand and Deshpande, 2001)

### **2.7.1 Relationship of Social Identity Theory with Social Media-**

There have tremendous efforts to explore the reasons behind the mass mobilization in different disciplines. This has always attracted the intellectuals to find out what prompts the people for this mass mobilization. These developments are meant to influence various noble causes ranging from social to political reforms. (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009:645). In the recent past the emergence of social media has been a wonderful digital platform where the efforts are made to establish the identity of a social group on another. This is comparatively cheaper and quick media to communicate for the desired action. (Ellison, Lampe & Steinfield, 2009). The identity is the key concept of web media in the world. Through the cyber media, people want to establish and reestablish their identity. That is why, the researchers have made exhaustive studies to find out the role and relevance of social identity theory in the cyber world. The users now try to establish their identity through the online media significantly. They try to manage their different identities specially the group they belong to. (Zhang, Jiang, Carroll, 2010). The social media has facilitated the individuals in different societies to better represent themselves in their respective social group. This is of course an emerging context in regard to their social, organizational and political participation. (Chan, 2014).

### **2.7.2 Limitations of Social Identity Theory-**

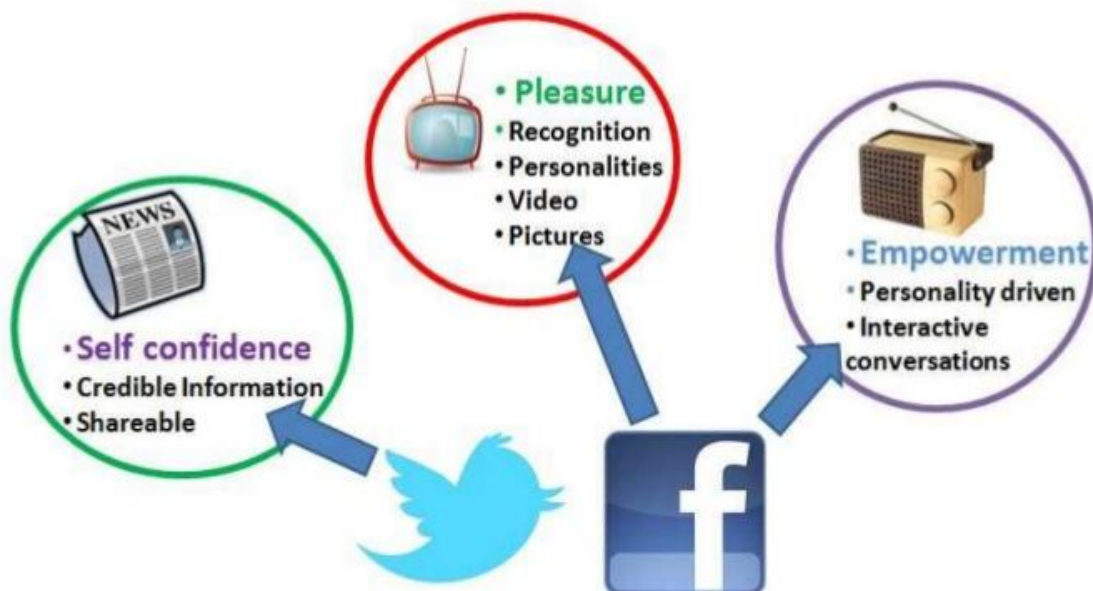
There have been several debates and discussion on the limits of social identity theory. The major cause of concerns has been the identity itself. The intellectuals have talked much on the role and relevance of social identity. There is also a debate on how and what circumstances the people are concerned for their social identity. Different social sciences define social identity in different ways. According to the sociology, the identity is basically the social rituals and their related areas. The psychologists are of the opinion that social identity is a compilation of set of rules (Stets and Burke, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995). Social identity theory is an effective theory to describe how the people strive for their social identities in their respective societies. But this theory has some certain limitations. It is considered that the substantial potential of social identity theory emerges in the backdrop of differences. If the differences within the group are more complex, the group is likely to be identified with more strength. In social media, there has been a clear-cut division of thoughts and groups and political identities try to establish their social identity in the backdrop of differences. At this situation the social identity turns to dwarf the image of individual identity. In social media discourse, the groups try to engage in such discourse as represents them as a group more than the persons within. This tendency is very much visible on the scrutiny of the social media contents of the political discourse including the youth. The research has concluded that the efforts are made at the level of group to enhance the self- respect and esteem over the other groups. This is also the basic tendency of the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). Another important factor in respect to the limitations of social identity theory is its being divided into two major categories. A group of theorists conclude that the social responsibility theory is associated with the group. However, others are of the opinion that this is more inclined to the individuality of the concern spectrum. The individual and group aspects of the social identity theory have been debated and discussed by many researchers in the contemporary scenario. This is also very clear that social media platforms are used by the people with a motive to increase their individual and group influence. The individual identity and that of group identity are quite visible in the social media spectrum (Jenkins, 2004). Some other aspects of social media theory have also been questioned by the researchers. It is considered that the debate and the discussion on the individual and group is absolutely futile and have failed to give the desired results. This is irrelevant to talk on these issues in the contemporary world. It is therefore not matched with the ongoing trends globally (Hogg and MacGarty 1990).

## 2.8 Uses and Gratification Theory in the Age of Social Media-

Learfield has made tremendous efforts to explore the media effects. He conducted quantitative research studies to reach the conclusions. There was one of the studies which concluded that the audience have an important role to play in allowing the contents to impact them. This theory is known as the Uses and Gratification theory. The theory simply means that the audience choose a particular media with the motive to gratify their needs. In this way the audience have an important role to play on the selection of media contents which subsequently may impact them as well. (John) The uses and gratification theory is considered as a kind of research associated with the media effects. (McQuail, 1994). At the initial period, the framework to study various aspects of media contents and its uses was taking a shape. The aim of this approach was to find out the reasons behind the satisfaction of the users while using the media contents. (Cantril, 1942). The uses and gratification theory was enriched by the adoption of experimental approach and various other factors like the process of communication in the delivery of the messages. (Klapper, 1960).

**Figure 2.2, Uses and Gratification Theory**

# Uses and Gratification Theory



Source – SlideShare

Many studies were carried out to find out the impact of media contents on the people in different categories like gender, age etc. In the 1920s, the well-known scholars like Herbert Blumer, Thurstone etc. studied the impact of cinema contents in the contemporary youth of the United States of America. (DeFleur, 1983). The trend of studying the uses and gratification studies increased in the decade of 1940s. By this time different mass media like television, radio, newspaper etc. had become the popular source of entertainment, information and education. Besides, the use of media increased for the purpose of propaganda before and during the second world war. Now the researchers were willing to know the impact of different contents of media on the personality and behavior of the listeners and viewers. (Wimmer and Dominick, 1994). Many researchers believe that at the initial stage of uses and gratification research, the main thrust of the scholars was to study the behavioral aspects. Later on, the trend of emphasizing the building of theory increased in the uses and gratification research. The scholars earlier were concentrated in narrow lanes. But with the advancement of mass media technology and the expansion of media, the researchers were now interested to understand the need and importance of the psychological and sociological aspects of various impacts of media contents. (McQuail, 1994). The scholars of Columbia University studied the impact of mass media contents on the voters' political behavior. These studies were carried out in the Presidential Election of 1940. These presidential elections were contested between the two powerful leaders Franklin Roosevelt and Wilkie. In these studies, the conclusion was that the mass media did not play any significant role in influencing the voting behavior. In fact, the traditional patterns of campaigning like person to person contacts were more influential. (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948).

### **2.8.1 Role and Relevance of Uses and Gratification Theory in Social Media-**

The uses and gratification theory stems from the communication spectrum. The basic aim of this theory is to know why people use the media and then how they get satisfied having consumed the media contents. The most significant aspect of using media is the need and fulfillment of gratification. (Lariscy et al., 2011) Social media can be called "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media is a practice where people exchange their views, audio, video, photographs etc. with their friends and this is how they educate one another about various, products, services and rituals etc. ((Murugesan, 2007). The importance of uses and gratification research in social media can be understood by the fact that this media is now

facilitating millions of users to communicate without any barrier. (Williams et al., 2012). A number of studies have been carried out to find out how the use of social media gratifies the users. The trend of using social media for political communication is increasing in the world. Now the political leaders find social media to use for the purpose of political persuasion. These leaders have been successful in their political campaigns. The uses and gratification theory is quite relevant to study the web media. This theory can be applied to explore the use of web for political information. The involvement socially is an important reason behind the use of social media by the people. (Kaye and Johnson, 2002). People use the social media platform to fulfill their cognitive requirements. They want to remain updated with day-to-day developments both at the local and global levels. The contents present in the digital media are helpful in educating the masses which facilitate them to form their public opinion. Digital media has integrated the users globally. Early, the viewers or the readers did not have the idea who else are also using the same media platform to fulfill their needs. But the advent of social media has facilitated this media socialization in the world. This participatory system has improved the significance of media users. Various brands have found the use of social media to initiate their advertising campaigns in this digital platform as they can access the consumers at a large scale with lesser investment. Political leaders do find this digital platform useful for their political campaign. The uses and gratification theory is applicable to the social media comprehensively depending on the use of a particular digital media. (Kane, 2015).

### **2.8.2 Uses and Gratification Theory, Political Discourse and Social Media-**

According to Kemp (2017), the popularity of social media is increasing day by day and it is now a common trend of using social media for various purposes. The recent studies suggest that a huge chunk of the population specially the youth in the world are using these, web based social media for the purpose of maintaining their connectivity with their near and dear ones. They found this media in proximity to share their views, thoughts, pictures etc. with their friends. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007: 210). There are several reasons to use the social media platform for different purposes all over the world. The people of all age groups use this cyber media extensively. Youth is in using the social media as they find it more suitable platform for their expression and they gratify themselves as well. The youth find the social media platform as an ideal way of expressing themselves. This is the most important reason of using the social media. (Young, 2015). Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) consider that various studies carried out for the purpose of identifying the reasons behind the use of social media are

establishing the fact that people find it an ideal media for self-expression. The uses and gratification theory identifies the purposes and reasons behind the use of social media. The users consider that while using the social media they find the gratification. This is applicable in all age groups but the youth is highly influenced by this media worldwide. This demographic share of the population has contributed significantly behind the rise of social media as the social media is a only platform whereas the user generated contents determine the fate of this new media The users get satisfaction while using the social media. This depends on various aspects of an individual, his personal attitudes and traits etc. (Katz et al. 1973). This is important to know that the research studies conducted by the scholars from different disciplines in the domain of social media is not very exhaustive. This is very much confined as even the social media is also a very recent phenomenon in the spectrum of communication. (Wan, 2009) The people use social media so that they could establish their identities in their respective domain of society, business or polity. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat kind of social media are used by a huge number of people for the purpose of knowledge, communication, expression, self- presentation, social interaction, documentation and creativity by the users in this infosphere. (Lee et al. 2015, Sheldon and Bryant 2016, Piwek and Joinson 2016).

### **2.8.3 Criticisms-**

The uses and gratifications approach is not away from difficulties. This enshrines a lot many complexities in it. There has been an opinion that the functional analysis can't be applied in the study of communication. Besides, the researchers have also denied the connectivity between the two concepts of functionalism and approach. This situation creates a type of confusion in the mind of scholars. One more limitation of uses and gratification research is that there are various terms and conditions which can't be understood by the scholars while studying the communication comprehensively. The terms use and gratification do create a confusion among the scholars. These aspects of the uses and gratification theory creates confusion and results substantially into the self-validation in the research. One more thing that has to be kept in mind is the meaning and concepts of the use and gratification. These terms are still not very clear what meant for. It is also not clear what are the necessary components of the uses and gratification theory. (Swanson, 1979) The uses and gratification theory has been criticized by various research scholars. Despite this theory being an important approach in the study of mass media contents and its different impacts on the audiences, there are some certain limitations of this theory. Katz (1987) says that this theory

believes on the self -assessment and is not clear about the social origin of uses that brings gratification to the audience. Besides, the theory was confined within the ambit of prejudices while there is a need to broaden the approach. (Katz, 1987)

The emergence of information and communication technology in the past several decades has recreated the importance of the uses and gratification theory. In fact, this theory has been relevant in every phase of mass communication stretching from print to internet. The internet has revived this theory with more influence as this is the participatory communication. (Ruggiero, 2000) Internet has impacted the communication process significantly. It is playing an important role in the way people discourse on various issues. The advent of social media has added new impetus to this new dimension of communication. These social networking sites are bringing a lot of gratifications to the users. (Raacke and Raacke., 2008). The uses and gratification theory establish the use of media and its contents by the people. This theory concludes why people use media and for what reason they depend on the contents of mass media. This theory discusses various impacts of media and its contents on the masses. The theory interprets how people use the media and its contents to gratify their needs.

## **2.9 Social Media, Youth and Political Participation-**

The research study in this chapter aims to establish the theoretical relationship between social media and political discourse. Over the past few decades, the social media has emerged as a powerful medium of communication. Various kinds of communication like cultural, social and political are very prominent in this media. It is therefore is affecting various aspects of human life all over the world. Political engagement through social media is a common communication practice in the democracies particularly. The previous studies on mass communication were largely focusing on the recreational part of this important media. These studies used extensively the uses and gratification model to reach the suitable conclusions. The less attention has been paid towards the substantial use and impact of this new infosphere in the political spectrum. The social media discourse has adopted an important role in the political discourse in democracies of the world. This discourse plays subsequently an important role in the formation and reformation of public opinion. The democracies have been strengthened by the participation of the people through the new media. On the basis of analysis of aforementioned theories, it is can be said that political discourse in social media has significant value in the contemporary media and political scenario.

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1. An attempt of action together towards a defined goal.
  2. It's basically the exchange of views aiming to solve a problem.
  3. The images are the forms of dominant discourse.
  4. This is the cyberspace which is filled with information.
  5. This is a network of computers.
  6. The cultural paradigm refers to the notion of cultural exchanges.
  7. He is a Canadian media theorist who has given his theory on media and communication. His famous concepts are- global village and the medium is the message.
  - 8-. Hegemony refers to the dominant on views etc. by others. Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist thinker.

**Chapter-3**  
**Evolution of Relations between Media**  
**and Politics in India.**

## **CHAPTER-3**

### **Evaluations of Relations between Media and Politics in India.**

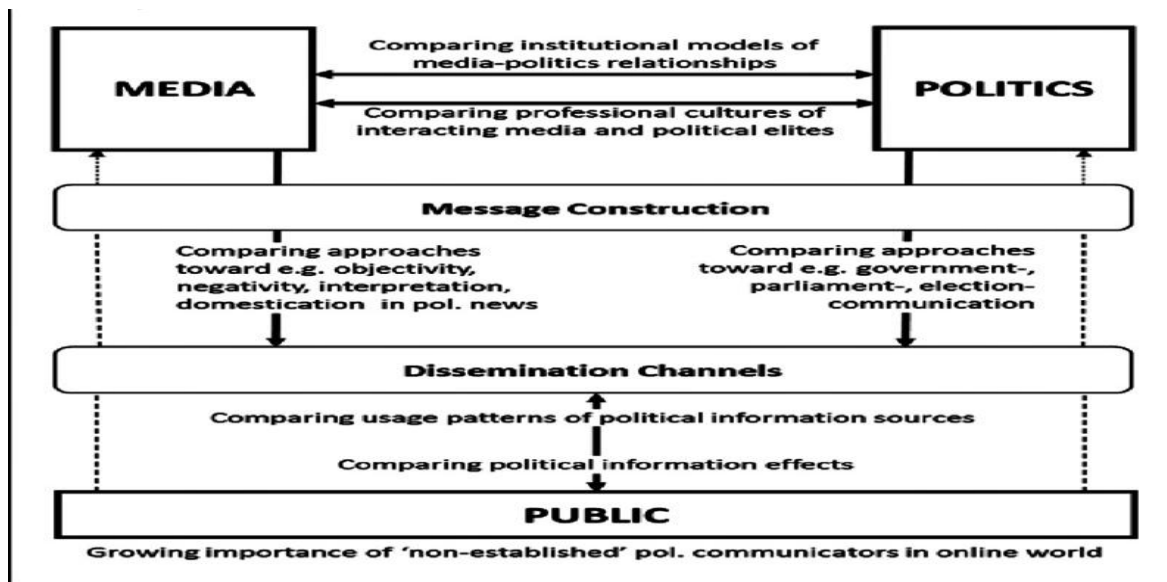
#### **3.1 Social Media and Political Communication in India-**

It is not so easy to generalize the Indian media system in India due to its being diverse in nature. Hindi media alone is so widespread and deep that it covers more than forty per cent of the total population. The population that speaks Hindi also accounts for more than forty percent of the total population of the country. The Indian media system is also a complex one as it assimilates various aspects of its religious, ethnic and cultural diversities. This is found right from the political economy of mass media to the social and cultural differences in the media ownership pattern. This subsequently impacts the process of political communication in the country in the backdrop of different aspects like poverty, urbanization and urban – rural divide. Unlike the western media system which have evolved in a chronological order as a linear system, the Indian mass media have evolved in a non – linear way because the different mass media have developed almost simultaneously in the country. Amidst all these developments, the news media in India has left significant impacts on politics across the length and width. Even now the news media has reached the grassroot level. Right from the British days mass media has been playing an important role in the political communication which now a days includes three major components- news media, political parties and the vast spreading mass theatre. (Neyazi, 2018).<sup>1</sup>

According to Norris (2000) the mobilization is one of the core functions of mass media. His study came in the backdrop of two eminent communication scholars- Robert Dahl<sup>2</sup> (1971) and Joseph Schumpeter (1952). Mass media facilitates the people in the process of participation by providing them relevant contents so that they could reach the conclusions comprehensively. The media empowers them with information which help them to come to the political opinion on their own. The people get the relevant information from the mass media and engage into political participation actively and the subsequent mobilization (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948; Norris, 2006). Political mobilization is in the form of people's participation in the electoral politics, organizing protests in favor of mass' interests and or expressing the political thoughts on different issues and affairs. (Neyazi, 2018). It is now well- established fact that the people largely depend on mass media to get the information on various issues including political. In this respect, both the conventional media and cyber infosphere help the masses by serving them the day -to- day developments both at

the national and international levels. The political discourse carried out on different media platforms serve this purpose of political mobilization ( Eveland and Scheufele, 2000). However, some scholars in the field of political communication<sup>3</sup> are of the opinion that media contents have negative impacts on the people. Robert Putnam has come to the conclusion that the people's interest went down significantly in politics. According to him, this is the most important factor in declining the people's engagement in the political participation in the United States (Putnam, 1995)<sup>4</sup>. Contrary to this, Pippa Norris argues that the rising disinterest about politics among the people is not due to the television media but actually the contents are responsible for this. He goes on to say that mass media have emerged as the catalyst in promoting the people's participation and mobilization in politics. (Norris, 1996). This is also significant to note that the emergence of new media or the internet has been a revolutionary change in the entire mass media scenario. The new media is more people's centric and has decentralized the information till the grass root levels. Now the users are the creators of the contents. This situation has made both people's participation and mobilization smoother. Unlike earlier model of communication where the communicator was more impactful and the feedback was having the limited scope, the new model is based on cyclical process where the receiver of the messages also plays an important role in the entire communication process (Shah, Culver, Hanna, Macafee and Yang, 2015).

**Figure 3.1, Political Communication System**



Source: Research Gate

Political communication can be defined as a sub-branch of Political Science and Communication. This area of study deals basically with the creation, production and

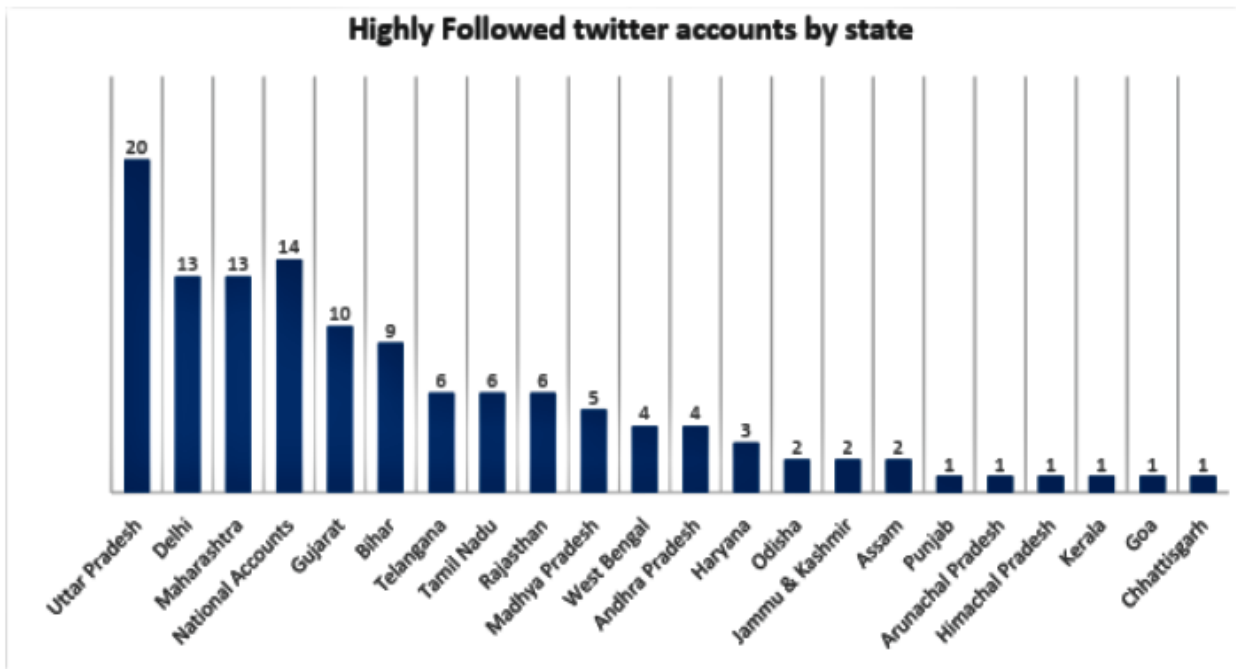
subsequently dissemination of information in the political context. This communication can be interpersonal, group or mass. The mass political communication takes place when the political leaders communicate with the masses in a mediated way. There is also a big role of opinion leaders in the process of political communication. Indian ventured into the modern political system with parliamentary democracy after Independence from the British rule in the subcontinent. At this time the political communication was confined merely to few rallies and aerial drops of published material to the voters who were to be persuaded for political participation. Over the past seven decades, Indians have undergone several changes at the level of society, economy and polity. Political communication did undergo revolutionary changes subsequently. With the advancement of information and communication technologies the latter half of previous century witnessed the rise of radio and television broadcasts. The information revolution changed the communication patterns and the explosion of digital media redefined the dimensions of political communication in the country. Initially, the political communication was significantly based on the rallies and the communication skills of the leadership. The digital boom forced the political parties in the country to think upon the use of this new media to connect to the voters specially the youth as they were the forerunner of this media. In the 2009 General Elections, most of the political parties hired the communication and the skilled PR professionals to sharp their respective political identities and image. (UK essays, 2017).

The history of human civilization is filled with such examples where technology was used massively to maintain the status quo in different regimes. (Habermas 1978, Unwin 2009). The modern concept of globalization and economic development takes one of its origin in the evolution of information and communication technology. This is an age of knowledge economy and all is based on the information and communication development which is considered the base of all development- be it social, economic and political. (Agarwal et al, 2018). The impact of ICT is quite visible in the Indian economic spectrum in the past couple of decades. The IT industry in India has grown manifold due to the stupendous growth in the information and communication technologies in the country. (Oliner, Scichel, 1994). Media industry in India has been growing by the rapid stages irrespective of various upheavals in the economy. The mass media industry in the country has been growing at the rate of 11 per cent per annum though the overall economy recorded sluggish growth. Now the industry boasts of being a setup of Rs. Once lac crores. It is estimated that by 2024 the mass media industry would cross the mark of Rs. Three lacs crores. There are more than one lac fifteen thousand

different newspapers and magazines published in the country whereas the number of television channels has touched 900 recently. FM radio stations have been installed across the length and width of the country. Digital media is the fastest growing sector within the mass media industry in the country. (Kumar, 2019). Social media is an outcome of these developments in the information and communication technologies. The internet which is a major outcome of these IT developments on the world has resulted into the birth of new scope and opportunities in various aspects of social, economic and political sphere. It is also considered that the networked people are more efficient in accessing the information in comparison to other people who don't have these skills for the same. The social media would not have been possible in the absence of either networked population or the sophisticated advancement in the field of information and communication technologies. In India, the social media is looked upon by many as an opportunity to access both the leaders and voters. The traditional mode of maintaining connectivity with the voters are being replaced with the digital platform where the politics is a quite dominant subject in the country. There is one more significant aspect in this entire episode is that social media has got an impetus due to the engagement of youth in the political communication process. Social media is giving better and easily accessible platform to this chunk of India's populous. There is one more aspect in this regard that the youth population has increased in the country manifold in the recent decades. This has added wings to the growth and development of social media in the country. (Kaur, Kaur, 2013). With the emergence of social media as a platform for political communication has given an opportunity to the marginalized has got an opportunity to express themselves. Subsequently, the use of social media is recognized for the political change as well. This can be seen in different political developments in the recent past. The arrival of internet in the Indian media spectrum has enhanced and changed the pattern of political communication as well as facilitated the participation of common masses in the process of communication. The people at the grass root level have got the opportunity to raise any issue concerning them. Internet has also changed the dimensions of media practices in India. Internet has become more effective with the convergence of media. During the Anna Hazare movement, both traditional and new media were used to mobilize the masses specially the youth through political communication. The use of social media for political communication carried this campaign against corruption beyond the borders of India and popularized the cause globally in support of Jana Lokpal Bill. The movement succumb because of internal paradoxes but the campaign established the effective use of social media for political mobilization specially the youth. The impact of social media was miscalculated

by the then Union Government as was admitted by the then Law Minister, Salman Khurseed that they had failed to estimate the substantial potential of social media. (Express News, 2011). Even the Facebook also released the data regarding the record number of status updates during the entire campaign. The Anna Hazare Movement against corruption proved the potential of social media for the first time in Indian media scenario and also established the fact that this new media was not meant to entertainment only and can't be used effectively for the purpose of political communication. The movement carried the cyber media into new space of politics and people. It is not enough to interpret the potential of social media. The Aam Admi Party which was founded in the backdrop of India against Corruption Movement<sup>5</sup> having understood used the social media for political campaign during the 2013 assembly elections in Delhi. The party could reach the first- time young voters as well as the while interreacting the voters online and discussing various issues affecting the voters directly. After a landslide victory of the Aam Admi Party in the elections, the Jamia Milliia Islamia University conducted a research study and came to the conclusion that both Aam Admi and BJP shared the maximum vote percentage and the social media played an important role in the electoral process in favor of political parties active online. The social media emerged as a new and effective platform for political communication in India. Even the traditional media used the contents being posted on the Twitter and Facebook in the prime time and prime space. The profound impact of social media on traditional media was the new in the arena of political communication in India. (Downey, Neyazi, 2014).

Figure 3.2, Highly Followed Twitter Accounts by States



Source: EPW

The presence in social media popularized both the India Against Corruption Movement and the Aam Admi Party substantially. Aam Admi Party used social media for political communication for reaching the youth. This move was the trend setter in the Indian political arena that presence in social media was significant for the politicians. (Downey, Neyazi, 2014). The importance of social media for political communication is felt even by the politicians and political parties who communicate to their core voters through the traditional media rather being online. The BSP Supreme leader Mayawati joined the twitter prior to 2019 General Elections. The party said officially that she wants to connect and interact with the people on various national and international issues through social media. In these elections her party has joined hands with the Samajwadi Party whose leader Akhilesh Yadav has been active in social media for years and is having 8.9 million followers in Twitter. Earlier, she was reluctant to join the social media by saying that it was very irrelevant for the cause she is struggling for. Earlier, she had announced that she was not present in the social media and had also condemned a poster circulated online by saying that it was a propaganda and her party was having no social media presence. During the 2017 assembly elections, the party was not present formally on social media but the BSP posted several contents in the social media like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp for the purpose of persuading the voters. Paresh Mishra was leading the social media team of BSP at that occasion. (The Hindu, 2019). The

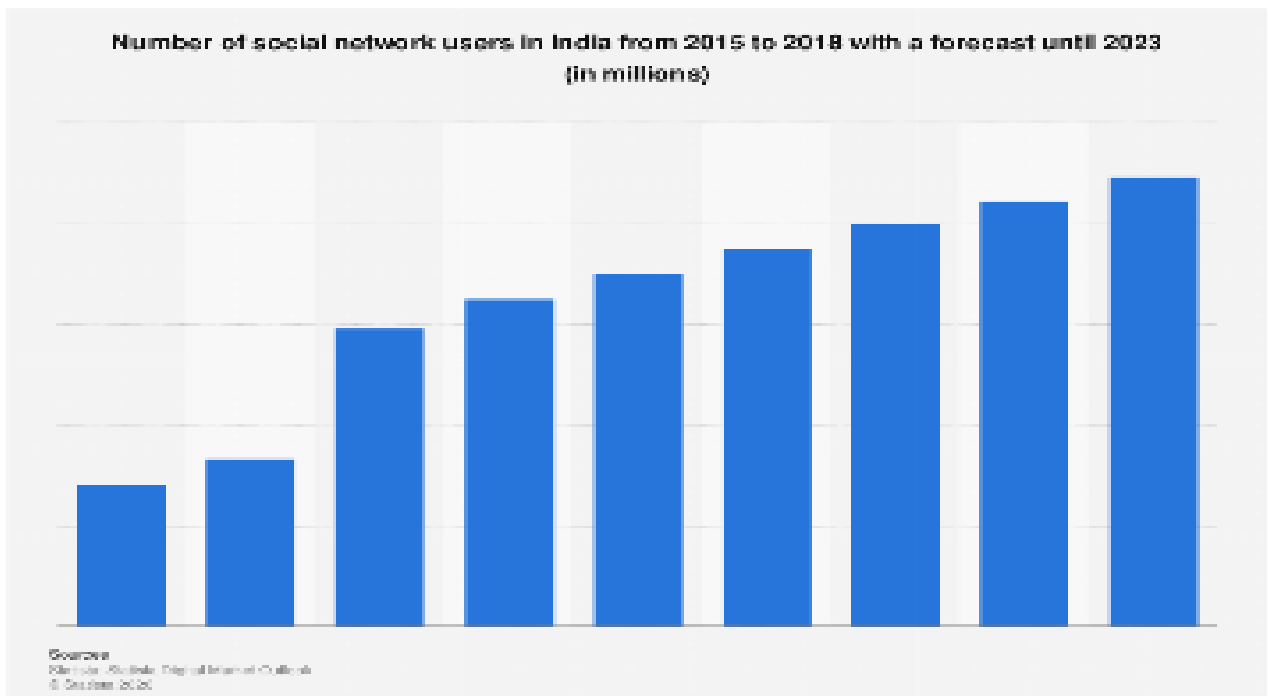
BSP would earlier punish the party leaders for posting contents on the social media. It can therefore be called a sea change in the approach of Mayawati. The BJP has been on social media since long and has made an access to the young Dalits in particular. In the 2014 General Elections the party established new benchmarks as far as the encroachment in the Dalit community is concerned. The BJP affected almost 25 per cent of the Dalit voters towards its side. According to the CSDS<sup>6</sup> study, the party has been getting some 10 per cent of Dalit votes share from 1996 to 2009. In the 2014 General Elections, the BSP failed to win even a single seat and in the 2017 Assembly Elections, the party could get merely 19 out of 403 seats though there were 87 Dalits candidates contesting under the banner of the BSP. Besides, there has been a rise on the youth-oriented organizations in the Dalit community like Bhim Army in Western Uttar Pradesh. The BSP was also reduced from 4.27 per cent in 2013 to 3.9 per cent. In Mandhya Pradesh, there has been decline in the votes of BSP from 6.29 percent in 2013 to only 5 per cent in 2018. In Rajasthan, the party made an insignificant improvement from in its vote share from 3.37 per cent in 2013 to 4 per cent in 2018. Even the Congress was doing better in the vote sharing category against BSP. This all has forced Mayawati to understand the importance of social media and not to ignore it anymore. (The Times of India Blogs, 2019)

The network society<sup>7</sup> is the latest outcome of the revolution in the field of information and communication technologies. From the nomadic ages, the human civilization has travelled to agricultural, industrial and now information and communication revolution. This information and communication have now become the base of all social, economic and political process in the entire sphere. The world has been transformed into a global village due to this new age cyber communication system. The postmodern age<sup>8</sup> is known for its electronic communication and its potential to introduce significance changes. According to him, the information society has grown at the rate of higher speed in comparison to the previous revolutions. (Castells, 1996, 2006)

The social networking has been a system where people communicate with one another with an objective to maintain relationship. The web based modern mechanism of networking is a system where people have an opportunity to connect with others in a controlled system where others are also available for the same purpose. The users are also able to make their networks public. (Boyd, Ellison, 2007) These sites have facilitated various people and groups to exchange and share their views and other contents with other users available in the networking system. (Nie, 2007). There is a substantial potential in the groupings of electronic

or virtual communities. The virtual communities are associated on the ground of common interest shared by all participating in the communication process. These virtual communities are grouped into small clusters for the objective of communication. (Taylor and Licklider, 1968)

**Figure, 3.3 Forecast of Twitter Accounts in India**



Source: Statista

The evolution of social media in India has been unprecedented due to the compatibility and availability of digital infrastructure. But the social media for political communication is not having the professional standards that are the prerequisites for the democratization of information in these platforms. Unlike the traditional mass media that is equipped with the gatekeeping mechanism effectively for the purpose of accuracy and meeting the ethical standards. The uncontrolled and unregulated nature of social media has given an opportunity in the hands of political parties to propagate their divisive agendas in the social and political spectrum. The Oxford Internet Institute has found in its report that India is one of the ten countries where the social media platforms are manipulated for the negative purposes. (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018). The NDTV made a research study using content analysis methodology to study the negative contents available on social media has concluded that there has been a rise of 500 per cent in the negative and abusive contents being prepared and injected in the social media platform by various political parties in this digital infosphere.

This was not possible earlier in the traditional mass media which has to maintain the ethical, legal and constitutional standards with accurately and effectively. (Jasiwal, Jain, Singh 2018). There has been a significant rise of hate and abusive contents on social media platform based on socio- religious aspects in the country. These contents aim at the religious communities and are posted frequently to polarize particular communities towards some certain ideologies. Social networking sites are the open platform for all without any discrimination. But this freedom is misused for the purpose of spreading hate in among the communities (Mirchandani, 2018). In the meantime, the WhatsApp group has emerged as a safe platform for the purpose of spreading negative and destructive contents. This App is equipped with such technology as complicates to access the origin of the contents. The political parties are using WhatsApp to access the voters easily and comprehensively where the reach of mainstream social media is hampered due to different reasons. (Subramanya, 2017)

### **3.2 Rise and Growth of Social Media in India-**

Technology has been a driving force of political communication in the past several decades. At a time when printing technology arrived in the use by the press, that changed various aspects of communication including the ownership. Emergence of broadcast media made significant impacts in the communication process both at the global and national levels. The satellite communication and emergence of information and communication technologies was another major milestone in the evolution of communication systems in the world and India. (McQuail, 2005:28). The emergence of social media has challenged the monopoly of both broadcast and print media in India. In the world as well as in India, the political leaders in various democracies are now using the substantial potential of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube etc. to communicate with their voters and to persuade them towards their respective ideologies. These digital technologies have become pivotal in determining the public opinion. This new media has impacted the political discourse having included new dimension in the communication process, most importantly the participatory nature. India witnessed the comprehensive use of social media in an organized way for the purpose of political communication and persuasion in the 2014 General Elections for the first time historically. The BJP is credited to be the forerunner in this process of introducing the social media. Being first the Modi led BJP availed benefits due to the use of social media as an innovative approach of communication to access the voters. After the successful experiment of social media platform by the BJP, Congress also geared up to use this digital media platform for the political communication. This changed the political discourse trend in

the Indian infosphere. This motivated the entire political system specially the political parties to be on the digital media gradually (Lokniti, 2019)

Communication is not confined merely to send or receive messages through a channel. It has gone beyond this communication process and now it is a cause of many other important social and political developments. Over the past many decades, communication is mobilizing and motivating the people to participate in the political process. It now engages the people in the thoughts of political spectrum. The communication has become an important aspect of social and political campaigns and movements. In fact, communication has become the base of all political mobilization. In politics, the political communication is increasingly affecting the scenario of political processes in the world (Micheletti,). The political leaders now hire the communication experts to plan and execute the communication strategies during and before elections. These are the common practices in many countries of the world. This is now a global trend to use the internet and communication for the political affairs. Political communication through mediated communication systems has been studied significantly by Jurgen Habermas, Manuel Castles, William Gamson and provide basic conceptual idea of political communication. (Benson, 2004). In today's world media plays an active role in the formation of public opinion. This mediated political communication environs the concept of public sphere given by Jurgen Habermas. The political communication has got the new dimension with the emergence of new media. Now the political leaders and parties aim to utilize the substantial potential of new media for their set agenda. (Savigny, 2002). The advent of digital media in the world has transformed political communication significantly. The social media has become a facility to by-pass the established media to communicate the desired audience without the interference of gatekeepers. This facility is being used by the politicians, non-state actors and pressure groups to achieve their objectives. At a times when the world is changing fast, the role of digital media has increased. Now the political leaders are communicating to create a public opinion towards their agenda. This is visible in the 2016 Presidential elections in the US, the efforts to persuade the west by Vladimir Putin after the rising tension with Russia and the USA after the inclusion of Crimean Peninsula in Russia, the BREXIT, a process of withdrawal from Europe. Amidst all these developments, the digital media has been found facilitating the political communication process. (McNair, 2017). Habermas argues that the mediated communication<sup>9</sup> mechanism facilitates the legitimization of the entire process of political communication provided that public sphere is

enshrined with an aware civil society that is involved in the political discourse. Besides the media is also needed to be free in its environment. (Habermas, 2006)

Social media today is the popular media of communication and discourse in India. This has gained popularity nationwide and is further expanding in far flung areas of India. This media has recorded quick and outstanding growth after its inception in the Indian scenario. No incident goes unnoticed by social media be it political, social or economic. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc. are very popular in the country. In 2008, Twitter was too young and had almost a million users worldwide who were tweeting millions of tweets per day. In the year 2016, there were 319 million users. In the 2016, Presidential elections in the USA, there were recorded 40 million political tweets were recorded. This was historic because for the first time, the USA had witnessed such a huge engagement of voters in social media during the Presidential elections. In 2008, the Facebook over took MySpace with 123.9 million users. WhatsApp came into being in 2009. Today in 2016 India is one of the largest hub of social media users in the world. (Lal,2017)

The facility to use this social media in different language make it more feasible. The popularity and accessibility of social media among the people of India can be understood by the fact that the Election Commission of India had to frame the norms for the social media use in the campaign of 2019 General Elections with to implement the section 126 of PRA<sup>10</sup>. This is also the time when in the infosphere, the fake news and manipulated contents are also flooding. Over the past many years many untoward incidents like mob lynching have taken place in the country being ignited through this infosphere. It is now proved that this digital miracle can also cause a lot of damage to the normalcy of life in the country. This trend is also setting new narratives in the country specially in the communal line. This manipulation of contents is also fabricating the distorted image of political opponents. The current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is given the credit to have broken the ice in the field of social media and digital communication for political campaigning and branding. Subsequently, the social media played an important role in the mobilization of the voters specially the youth in favor of BJP. By 2019 both the national parties the BJP and the Congress are having 15 million and 5 million followers on the Facebook. It is significant to know that the people in India now don't feel passive stakeholders in the political communication process rather they are actively participating due to the social media platform. The high-speed accessibility of social media makes it an important platform of political discourse in the country. (Bhattacharya, 2019)

### **3.3 Political Participation and Social Media**

Political participation can be defined as an act of citizens which aims to impact the functions of government towards a set goal. It can be straightforward or through an indirect way. The political participation includes various political activities such as participating in the electoral process, filing a political petition, participating in political rallies etc. (Verba et al, 1995). McLeod et al (1999) categorized the political participation into two broad segments- institutional and the other is deliberative political participation. The institutional political participation aims to impact the political institutions which and the deliberative participation refers to the expressions of citizens on different political issues such as political news and current affairs on which the citizens engage actively and give their opinion. In simple terms, the political participation refers to those activates of the people that directly or indirectly affect the political the political scenario. Besides, the citizens who live in a democratic set up could participate in the electoral process that is the opportunity to vote freely and fairly in the elections. In this way democratic participation is confined merely within electoral participation (Arendt, 1963, Dahl, 1998, Verba nad Nie 1972). According to Verba and Nie (1972) the political participation aims to impact the authoritative distribution of different, particularly political, values in a social set up to ensure democratic participation. Dahl (1996) was concerned mainly to the electoral impact. He considered that the political participation of all group is the actual participation in the democratic process. It can be understood in the context of Indian Constitution the people in India have been conferred the fundamental rights which prove that the constitution of India aims to give participation to all classes and groups. The Universal Adult Franchise mentioned in article 326, Fundamental Rights in Part III of the are some of the examples (Kashyap, 2019). The mainstream is media is considered committed to majoritarianism in democracies as well and is least bothered about the concerns of the minorities. Amidst these circumstances, the minorities turn up the alternative media for their inclusion in the political set up (Downing, 2001). Downing give the term Umbrella” for different media set ups which necessarily represent the voice of minority and therefore is an inclusive media. Social media, therefore, can be fit in this very frame conceptualized by Downing. The political participation includes the minority with their role in various aspects of political set ups. It is discussion and debates on politics, giving the opinion on various political issues, practicing an electoral or participating in it and opposing a particular policy or act of the government. (Miller et al, 1981). There are four kinds of participation in the digital infosphere. First is the “conversation” on any political issue with other people.

Second, is “information aggression.” This occurs at the time many people indulge in communication unidirectionally. Third is when the direction is turned and people communicate with many people. This is called “broadcast.” The last is “group dialogue.” This takes place at a time when many people are indulged in a group discussion on any of the topics. It is established that the social media has the substantial to provide all four kinds of opportunity to let the people participate in the communication process. (Weare, 2002). There was a significant research study conducted by Bimber (1996). He conducted surveys based on the use of internet and political participation to find out how the new age technology has facilitated the political participation. He explored that the internet has a role to play in the political participation of the people. According to him the political participation is basically the indulgences in different political processes like voting or coming into contact with the government agencies. Besides, Bimber (1999) also found in his research study that youth was more inclined to participate politically online in comparison to other older groups. He also concluded that there is no clear relationship with the use of internet and its impact on the behavior of its users.

The 2011 Arab Spring was unprecedented in many senses. This not only witnessed the political participation and expression of the same but also mobilized thousands of men and women in the Middle East and paved the way for the elimination of decades old political regimes in many countries. Amidst all these circumstances, the social media played a vital role in facilitating the political participations of citizens as well as their mobilization. Yemen, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt were the main countries to witness these developments of political participation and subsequently mass mobilization significantly. The social media was vital in the sense that mainstream media was tried to be manipulated by the governments in their favor whereas the social media was having no gatekeeper of this kind entire communication scenario. Youth were the forerunner of this political participation and subsequent expression. The use of social media for the political mobilization has been fruitful in many political and civil right movements in the world. The occupy Wall Street, London riots and San Francisco subway mob invited the use of social media to prove that this new has substantial potential in the mobilization of the mobs (Fox, 2011). The scholars have been of the opinion that this media has the power to mobilize the people through the political participation. (Abbas, 2005). The important role that the social media played in the 2011 Arab Uprisings in the Middle East also established the fact that the marginalized voices could get a platform from where they could express themselves politically. Social media is therefore considered by many

scholars as a remedy for many such types of ailments in the world. The social media was at the pivot in entire anti-establishment stance in Syria, Tunisia, Yemen etc. Because of these reasons the social media was debated and discussed by many communication scholars in the backdrop of Arab Uprisings (Smith, C., 2011; Taylor, 2011). A digital marketing company ADG Online, in India, conducted a survey to identify the role of social media in the political mobilization of youth in the Country during the 2019 General Elections. There were some startling outcomes of this research study which claims that almost one third of first-time young voters were the most influenced Indian nationals with the contents posted on social media from time to time. These youth were ignited to participate in the electoral process by these digital media platforms where they spend a lot of their potential time and resources. This online based survey which was conducted among 2.5 million participants online also concluded that there were fifteen crore first time voters. These young voters received the messages through the online sphere and were subsequently mobilized towards electoral process during the elections. There was also one more finding that as compare to the 2014 General Elections in the 2019 General Elections the mobilization of youth was more in numbers. The company concluded that around 30 per cent of the 150 million first time voters are under the significant exposure to social media. These voters receive plenty of messages through online media and draw the conclusions accordingly. These voters also admit that their political participation in the elections was impacted by these digital contents in the country. Overall half of the voters have been accessed by the political parties, 30 per cent framed their political opinion on the basis of the contents published online and rest 20 per cent got the basic information through online social media about various political developments in the country. The youth who were below the age of twenty-five were influenced by the political messages posted on the social media platforms. According to the report more these youth were using the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, ShareChat and the popular messenger WhatsApp for the purpose of political communication among themselves as well as with the political leadership. These youth also admitted that the interactions online amplified and strengthened their believes their believes about the electoral politics as well as also ignited the interest of these youth in the politics. (PTI, Economic Times, 2019).

Loader and Mercea (2012) consider that the use of different types of social media facilitates political participation. The new information and communication technologies could be a reason for the democratic governance in the world. This can further enhance the democratic participation bringing the major stakeholders on the track of communication due to the

presence of sophisticated communication technologies. It could also be participatory set up without involving the governments but in the opinion of the cyberlibertarians. The emergence of cyberspace is an outcome where the exiting restrictions don't find the space and the people are free to cooperate and live without the imposition of control and regulation as is common in the modern state system. Cyberspace gives an opportunity for the people and the communities to grow and prosper freely (Barlow, 1996). It is very clear from the viewpoint of eminent scholars that the cotemporary social media has the capacity to facilitate the democratic processes.

The emergence of social media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has impacted and changed the way of communication in the world. But the impact of social media on the democratic practices is yet to be understood comprehensively. Political ideology is the major determinant of the discourse on social media. There is a common understanding on the fact that social media has been very compatible in making the democratic processes functional smoothly. The social media has proved its potential previously in many political developments due to its scope of providing the people a platform where they can participate actively and not merely as a passive -recipients as it happens in the traditional pattern of political communication. The political developments in the Middle –East after 2010 is one of the best examples of the use of social media for political mobilization in the world. (Unwin, 2012). In India, the internet had made extraordinary growth by 2015. India became the second largest internet user country after China in terms of number of users which was 354 million users. A number of popular sites have come up due to the expansion of internet in the country. Facebook is the largest social media platform having 96 per cent of urban users. Besides, Google plus (61 %), Twitter (43%) and LinkedIn (24%). This level of people's engagement in social media platform invited the politicians to launch their political campaign for the purpose of political persuasion. The successful experiments of using social media by the politicians in the electoral campaign inspired the Indian leadership for the same. Subsequently, in 2014 General Elections, the use of social media. There are two important reasons why social media has become so popular among the politicians in the world. One is that they could easily and directly maintain access to the users and the other is its less expansive as compare to the mainstream media.

### **3.4 Use of Social Media Platform by Politicians-**

The common trend in the world is that politicians use this digital platform for the purpose of maintaining connectivity with their voters. In fact, the social media connect the leadership with their voters without the role of opinion leaders. The social media platform is also free from the gatekeepers (Kalsnes, 2016). The last decades have been significant and decisive for both media and politics at different places in the world. The emergence of cyber media as an alternative media<sup>11</sup> has emerged as one of the determinants for both media and politics. Social media is important in the civil society as it offers immense opportunities in the hands of common masses to initiate the political discourse and to participate in the same actively (Servaes, 1999). Cyber media is a platform on which different voices get an opportunity to participate irrespective of political boundaries. The expressions on social media platform boost the strength of common people and the leadership needs to remain active on this platform to maintain connectivity with the people at the grass root levels (Gerbaudo, 2012). The mass media is blessed to have given birth a new media termed as cyber media, interactive media or the social media. The popularity of this new media has become so vibrant that politicians now prefer to communicate with their voters through this kind of mass media. These media platforms facilitated the politicians and voters both to interact between directly on diverse issues. The practice which began in the 2008 Presidential Elections got full- fledged scope in the 2016 Presidential elections in the USA. In the 2016 elections, all candidates somehow applied social media in their political campaign. The microblogging social media web Twitter got the prominence in these elections. The 140 characters were used by the candidates for different purposes in these elections. (Mejova et al., 2013). The political leaders everywhere try to mobilize the voters for the purpose of bringing them in their favor. (Antonio, 2013). The political parties have become serious regarding the use of new media for the purpose of electoral campaigns. They want to exploit the potential of this digital platform for their set objectives. The traditional patterns of mobilizing the voters are now replaced with the use of cyber media. Social media is now the very part of planning for the electoral campaign. The politicians are now active on social media during any political event to communicate with their voters directly on their smart phones. The politicians are now engaged with their voters online while sharing the popular contents like text, pictures etc. for their voters. This has expanded the access of political leaders to the voters along with the use of traditional ways of connecting with the voters. Even the government institutions have started to use the cyber platform to reach the masses with their popular schemes. In this

way the political leaders at the national and regional levels, government institutions and political aspirants are using the social media to maintain connectivity with the masses. The top leadership including the Prime Minister of India keeps on updating the people online with the day- to -day developments. The NITI Ayog for the first time discussed the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan with the people online. Most of the political parties and political leaders, both at the national and regional levels are now accessible on popular social networking sites. Some politicians are less active while there are many politicians who remain active regularly and also react on the happenings in India as well as abroad. Rajesh Lalwani who is a blogger finds that the BJP and the Aam Admi Party are highly active on the cyber media while other political parties have also started to understand the importance of social media platform to maintain connectivity to the voters. The citizens are engaged by politicians when they initiate discussions on various issues of public interests in this cost -effective media. Besides the government institutions have been using this new media to not only engage with the citizens but also to improve these schemes. Now the citizens can raise various issues on this platform ranging from their safety to the issue of passport. This is how the social media has empowered the people to raise their concerns directly to the government. (Chopra, 2014: 8-10). Social media has become a popular mass media for both politicians and their followers. Unlike the traditional mass -media the politicians can directly communicate their voters any time. Besides, the social media amplifies and multiplies the messages at the earliest possible time with least efforts. Initially, this digital platform was confined within elites but gradually, this media descended to the common masses. Besides, the social media has also grown manifold. It is now not confined within urban areas but has penetrated in the rural areas as well. With the penetration of affordable mobile data and smart phone, social media is now accessible to a large part of India's population (Neyazi, 2013).

**Table3.1, The Most Followed Leaders' Account on Twitter during the 2019 Elections-**

Politician	Party	Total Retweets recorded in the election season (in million)	Total Likes recorded in the election season (in million)	No of Tweets in the election season	No of followers at the end of elections (in million)	State / Constituency
Narendra Modi	BJP	430	98	1,814	49.9	Uttar Pradesh
Arun Jaitley	BJP	108	26	3,672	14.8	Gujarat
Amit Shah	BJP	355	82	6,140	13.5	Gujarat
Rajnath Singh	BJP	27	5	412	13.0	Uttar Pradesh
Sushma Swaraj	BJP	21	4	174	12.7	Madhya Pradesh
Kiran Bedi	BJP	8	1	715	11.9	Delhi
BJP Official	BJP	403	121	23,927	11.0	National
Gautam Gambhir	BJP	35	5	167	9.8	Delhi
Akhilesh Yadav	SP	45	8	430	9.5	Uttar Pradesh
Rahul Gandhi	INC	80	21	234	9.5	Uttar Pradesh

Source: Economic and Political Weekly

It is expected that the number of internet users which was 125 million in 2011 would go up to 330 million users in 2016. This rise in the internet penetration would result into significant influence of digital revolution on politics in India. (Nair, 2013) Narendra Modi is known to be the forerunner in the use of social media for political communication. In the Gujrat Assembly election Modi used the social media platforms to interact with the voters. He used both Twitter and Facebook. Besides, he also used the Google plus to have live chat with the netizens in the state to attract the voters in favor of his political party. Thus, he became the very first Indian politician to use this digital platform. Modi has been keen observer of social media and through this media he directly came in communication with the youth specially the first-time voters. Modi was quite successful in reshaping of his image from controversy to the image of development man. He exploited the social media skills through his media management approach. He found social media as an ideal platform for political campaigning.

(Neyazi, 2013). Mayawati, the leader of Bahujan Samaj Party has been staying away from social media. Her appearance in the world of social media was unprecedented from her earlier stand as she would even take strict stand against those leaders who would use social media for the purpose of political communication. It is said that she is afraid from BJP's aggressive social media approach and access to the voters specially the young voters. She now considers that going digital would give her an opportunity to access the young dalit voters who is skipping her political party. Another reason of her being on twitter is coming up of youth dalit organizations like Bhim Army. She has a fear that such organizations may carry away the young dalit voters from her political party. (Singh, 2019)

Pal and Panda (2019) find in their studies on the 2019 General Elections that the BJP is the most present in this digital platform in comparison to other political parties. Out of 500 politicians in the country, there are 228 from the BJP who occupy the list of most followed politicians on the Twitter. They also found that the states of northern India dominate the Twitter as far as the number of politicians active on this digital platform is concerned. Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujrat and Uttar Pradesh. occupy some 60 percent space on the Twitter. These are among the top 500 most followed political leaders of India on this social media. Unlike the Congress and other political parties, the BJP is most active on the Twitter in an organized way as a single political party in India. The official Twitter account of BJP that is BJP4India is hyper active during the elections. This central twitter account generated more than 150 tweets per day during the election period in the country. There were eight out of top ten accounts from the BJP only which tweeted most with the highest frequency during the 2019 General Elections. As far as the Congress is concerned, the party was tweeting officially twenty times each day during the said period. Though the BJP was far ahead on the social media front from other political parties, yet other political parties understood the significance of social media and installed their identity on this digital platform for before the 2019 General Elections in India. (Rodrigues, 2019).

The 2014 and 2019 general Elections proved to be milestones in the use of social media by the Indian politicians for the purpose of political campaigning. These elections were not only the test of Indian politicians who have been using social media but also was also an examination for the world's largest online giants like Google, Facebook and its subsidiary WhatsApp. WhatsApp alone has 200 million users in the country. Elections in India are contested on some such issues as are inflammable in nature. Here is a responsible role of social media which has been under severe criticism due to its role in the cases of US elections

2016, the Cambridge Analytica and the morphed role of Russia in the US Elections. WhatsApp in the country is blamed to be a media that disseminates false and provocative contents that subsequently fan the flame of hatred on different ground like religion. The social media using trends in India aim to polarize the masses instead of constructive mobilization. Besides, social media is also centralized because only a handful people control the social media platform for their political purposes. Narendra Modi has the highest number of followers in the realm of social media. There are 46 million followers of Narendra Modi on Twitter whereas Rahul Gandhi who ventured into the realm of Twitter in 2015 is followed by only 9 million people. The 2014 General Elections were of high significance because the Modi led NDA made the use of social media for the political mobilization. By 2019, the opposition parties realized the use of social media for political mobilization. There were 250 million internet users in India. In 201, this number was more than doubled with 560 million users. This stupendous growth would not have been possible in the absence of cheap data prices and availability of affordable smartphones in the country. There has been sharp decline of mobile internet data prices nearly 2000 per cent in the recent past. But on the other side, a huge number of people are the victims of misinformation due to not having the idea of internet and political propaganda. These people are more vulnerable to misinformation. The social media giants have been taking steps to stop the misuse of this opportunity of having the digital platform. The social media sites like Twitter and Facebook launched massive efforts to stop the misinformation and fake news to spread. The Elections Commission of India also took initiative to instruct the political candidates to report about what they have shared on the social media platform. (Iyenger, 2019).

### **3.5 Role of Social Media in Political Mobilization in India:**

Political mobilization in the context of media and political communication is an attempt where an inactive group of people are motivated towards a particular objective that aims to welfare the masses (Coax et al, 1998). Mobilization is also a move from the investment of social capital that is basically the ground level system to financial capital where money power turns to be a decisive change agent to gain support for a particular political party or a political candidate (Putnam, 2000: 39). When citizens are engaged directly or indirectly to impact the functioning of the government, there is a big possibility of improvement in the delivery mechanism of the government. It improves the overall performance of government make it more efficient and quicker in decision making and brings the concept of direct democracy into reality. When the people are involved in the process of governance having been

mobilized, they become the active stakeholders in the governance and decision-making process (Berman, 1997). Karl Deutsch considers social mobilization as a prerequisite for the political mobilization and defines the social mobilization as a gradual elimination of existing social values. He says that this situation results into the installation of new social values and social behavior. According to Karl Deutsch the transformation of world from agrarian to industrial entity and subsequently the emergence of new age commercialization and urbanization have facilitated the political mobilization in the world. Deutsch also finds that the political mobilization has resulted into the membership of political entities at a large scale in different parts of the world. These developments also impact the governments and their social, economic and political policies (Deutsch, 1966). Both scholars of Sociology and Political Science have realized the complications of political actions in the world. There are the number of countries where the literacy rate is insignificant and are poverty stricken but there have been political mobilizations. The political processes have succeeded to mobilize their voters in particularly. India have had successful stories of democratization and political mobilization ever since she got freedom from colonialism. There were massive voters turnout decades after decades in the country. When India is compared with other countries who got freedom from colonialism at the same time, India stands at far better space (Widmalm, 2016).

The stupendous growth and development of information and communication technologies has given boost to the internet penetration which is now transforming the media landscape. A number of online media set up have come up to offer the users an opportunity to express themselves. Though there are many options for political contents available both at the online and offline level, yet the young adults are more inclined to the online media sphere. The research concluded that 39 per cent of the young adults use social media to avail the political contents for their gratification. (Pew Research Centre, 2012). The youth has been using the social media and different other such apps as could facilitate him in maintaining connectivity and expressing themselves on different issues in various parts of the world specially in democracies. The Pew Research on Internet has also established that there has been significant rise of using social media among the youth between the age group of 18 to 29. These young users are fond of using social media to express as well as to share the political contents which include political videos, political comments etc. (Rainie et al, 2012). This is also clear that the youth uses social media platforms to express his opinion on political issues that help to mobilize the people subsequently. (Campbell and Kwak, 2010). The theoretical

aspects of using newly emerged social media focuses on the impacts of using these web sites on different segment of demography as well as their role in enhancing the political mobilization. The young users are particularly inclined to these newly emerged information and communication technologies (Scheufele, 2002). There are two different theoretical aspects of using social media for the purpose of political mobilization. In the first aspect, the contents which are shared on social media increases the political knowledge among the people. This in the long run facilitates the learners to apply the knowledge in their personal and social info sphere. This learning creates a base to understand various political developments in their respective environment in relevant context. On the second aspect, the information that is earned on the social media platform help the users to gratify his appetite. The political contents help him having the satisfaction being in the political processes. Loaded with such rich political contents, the users participate in the discussion on different political issues and defend his opinion logically. This proves that internet and its latest genre social media has helped the users having substantial political information and subsequent mobilization (Kim, 2008). According to Hardy and Scheufele (2005), the political contents on social media promote the political mobilization while those who actively participate in the political communication process with others like chatting online are more inclined for the same. What is more important in the new media that is based on the user generated contents is that the mainstream media does not have the facility to provide equal participation of the users in the generation of contents. Emergence of social media has brought tremendous changes in the domain of political communication and political mobilization. This platform has established its identity as a catalyst in the political mobilization of public opinion. The exposure of US foreign policy by the Wikileaks has mobilized the global public opinion against the double standard in the diplomatic arena of the United States. Now the people can discuss various issues of national and international significance on social media. This mobilization has strengthened the civil society to keep a vigil in the functioning of the government in all kinds of governments but democratic set up in particular. (Neyazi, 2013). Though the use of social media by politicians has been the recent phenomenon, yet the 2019 General Elections are considered as an important phase when the politicians used the social media for the purpose of political mobilization comprehensively. This trend got acceleration after the BJP led by Narendra Modi recorded the landslide victory in the 2014 General Elections. It was considered that the social media played a big role in the mobilization of the people, especially the youth in the elections, that is why there was a record voters' turnout. The comprehensive use of social media is termed as the major reason for this massive

mobilization of young voters (Pal, 2019, Rao 2018, Pal and Panda, 2019). In India, the social media has got prominent space in the post liberalization period. With the penetration of social media, common citizens have got an opportunity to engaged in the political communication process. They are not merely the recipients of the messages. They themselves have become the stakeholders in the entire political communication mechanism. Earlier, the politicians were looking like distant drums who now have come within the proximity of their respective leaders. The emergence and expansion of internet is a boon to the common people in India. In the age of traditional mass media, the people were only exposed the messages irrespective of their choice and preferences. Social media has filled this gap and has given users the opportunity to create their own contents. On the other side, the social media has introduced the new trends in the communication process how the people communicate among themselves as well as the ways to communicate with their political leadership. Besides, the social media has also impacted significantly the electoral campaigns in India. The social media connect the politicians with their followers. Messages are amplified immensely. Single tweet has the capacity to reach millions in just one click (Meti et el, 2015).

### **3.6 Social Media in the 2014 and 2019 General Elections-**

Elections in India are considered to be one of the major global events because of they being diverse as well as complex. They are basically a process of mass mobilization from home to polling booths and vise- versa in a short span of time. She is the second largest country demographically and a house of millions of voters. Indian has adopted a universal adult franchise described in article 324 of Indian Constitution. (ECI, 2019).

**Table 3.2 Leaders and their Social Media Followers**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Most Followed Leader</b>	<b>Leader Following</b>	<b>Official Party Account Following</b>	<b>Following Multiplier</b>
JDU	Nitish Kumar	48,42,184	9,093	532.5
JKNC	Omar Abdullah	30,72,587	36,469	84.3
BSP	Mayawati	2,75,314	10,767	25.6
AITC	Mamata Banerjee	33,06,946	1,91,529	17.3
AMMK	TTV Dhinakaran	1,02,113	6,383	16.0
BJD	Naveen Patnaik	25,39,516	1,61,685	15.7
TDP	N Chandrababu Naidu	42,65,776	2,71,602	15.7
JDS	HD Kumaraswamy	97,059	6,545	14.8
AIMIM	Asaduddin Owaisi	5,24,399	43,311	12.1
SS	Aditya Thackeray	18,63,545	1,67,797	11.1
DMK	Udhay Stalin	24,80,817	2,89,634	8.6
SAD	SS Badal	3,31,611	53,101	6.2
SP	Akhilesh Yadav	95,02,948	16,92,198	5.6
TRS	KT Rama Rao	16,93,016	3,03,799	5.6
PDP	Mehbooba Mufti	1,68,632	37,164	4.5
BJP	Narendra Modi	4,96,85,274	1,20,05,992	4.1
NCP	Sharad Pawar	12,27,804	3,06,245	4.0
CPM	Sitaram Yechury	7,71,091	2,41,331	3.2
YSRCP	YS Jagan Reddy	9,19,136	3,55,629	2.6
ADMK	O Panneerselvan	3,39,894	1,39,897	2.4
MNS	Raj Thackeray	1,83,492	84,346	2.2
INC	Rahul Gandhi	94,83,390	51,66,879	1.8
AAP	Kumar Vishwas	54,85,421	48,98,184	1.1

(Source: EPW)

Media in the country has become so powerful that its narratives are playing vital role in the making and re making of public opinion before and during the elections. The General Elections 2019 were not exception in this regard. Mass media was an important element in the entire political communication process during and before the General Elections of 2019. Media played an important role in the settlement of agendas and political narratives for the political parties. (Kumar, 2019). In 2019 General Elections, the use of digital media was so comprehensive for the first time that these elections witnessed the major shift in the paradigm in the electoral politics of India. India by these elections has emerged as the world's second largest cell phone consumers in the world therefore subsequently the significant rise in the digital consumers through these smartphones was recorded nationwide. (Canalys, 2019, Mehta 2019)

The importance of social media can be understood by the fact that the Congress organized a workshop on social media before the General Elections, 2014 to give the basic training on how to use this media for connecting the voters and to mobilize them to the Congress party further. This is not the Congress alone; the BJP also established its IT cell to keep an eye on the netizens who could be transformed into substantial voters in about 160 seats. The BJP hired some professionals to run this mechanism as well as to analyze the social media data on the basis of gender, income and other demographic aspects. These professionals also analyzed how the users access the social media like mobile, PC, tablet, laptop etc. Earlier, the politicians were using the traditional media to communicate with the masses, but the emergence of social media have attracted them to access to the voters directly with less budget and efforts. The country, by March that year, had 165 million net users according to the TRAI. The study conducted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and IMRB, a market research entity came to the conclusion that internet users are increasing by leaps and bounds every year. They estimate that the number of social media users rose form 86 million users in October, 2013 to 91 million in December 2013. This is small population in proportion to the number of people who vote. But these social media platforms are facilitating the political discourse on various issues. It is estimated that there were 149 million first time voters in these General Elections. These number is quite important. According to a research study conducted by the Business Today in twelve cities, almost 95 per cent respondents said that they followed their political parties digitally for the political updates and campaigns. It was clear in the survey that more than 46 per cent of 1010 respondents who were using their franchise for the first time, were influenced by the contents

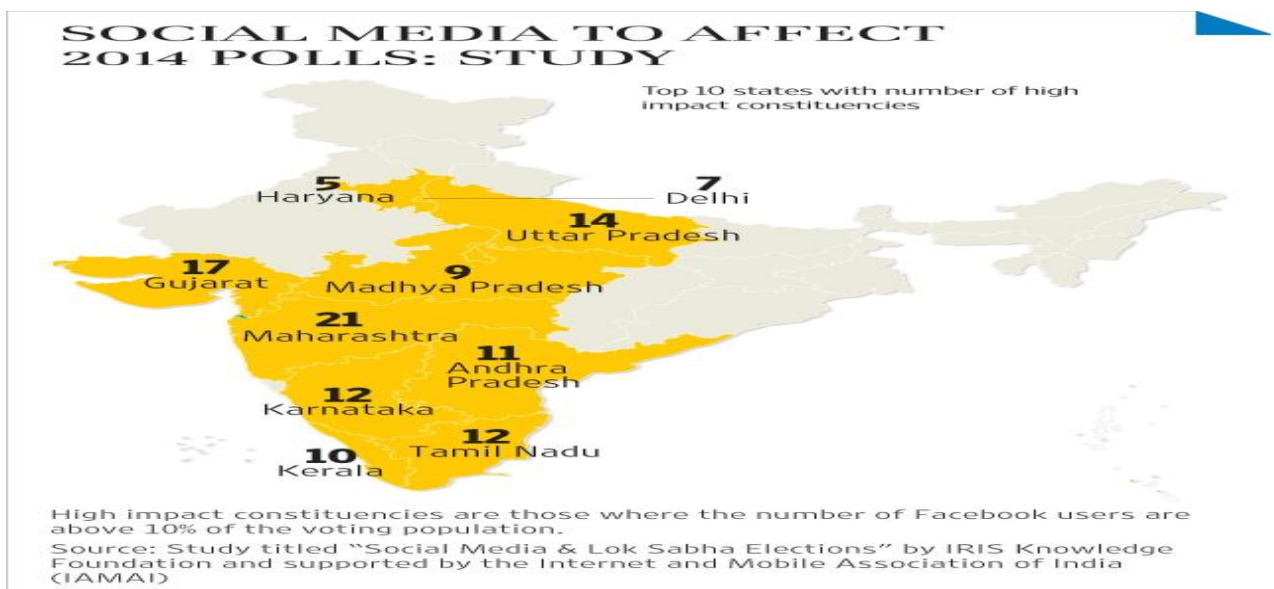
on social media. Another study conducted by IRIS Knowledge Foundation concluded that social media would make comprehensive impact on the 160 constituencies out of all 543 seats of Lok Sabha. Amidst all these circumstances, the political parties left no stone unturned in the use of social media in the overall communication strategy. Considering the widespread use of social media in the political campaign, the Election Commission of India instructed the candidates and political parties to keep an account on the expenses on social media campaigning in the elections. The candidates were also asked to declare their social media account and the political parties were asked to certify their advertisements before posting the commercials on these sites. Before the General Elections the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi was leading in the social media spectrum as far as the number of followers in the digital media is concerned. There were 2.6 million twitter followers and five and half million 'likes' on the Facebook. It is not about one leader, in fact entire party is active on social media comprehensively. The party leaders were communicating with the activists through BlackBerry and WhatsApp messenger platforms. The party manages the data of its workers efficiently through the professionals. The BJP also keeps on launching campaigns against the rivals on the various issues digitally. An individual Rajesh Jain owns a web portal named, 'niticentral.com' niti stands for new ideas for transforming India. The BJP is very organized digitally and its campaign aimed to achieve massive success in the 2014 General Elections. On the other hand, the Congress has been lazy in adopting the social media tools for political communication in the country. A website named fakeespress.com was launched to expose the rival BJP and its leaders. The party also started to train the activists at the grassroots levels in the cities having more than one million population. Both the political parties are hiring the professionals, volunteers and digital communication experts for the purpose of digital campaign. Apart from the BJP and Congress, the Aam Admi party is the third major party that is present on social media platform significantly. This party was born in the backdrop of a civil rights movement in India- India Against Corruption in 2011. In this campaign, the people, especially the urban middle class was accessed through the social media. This was the main reason behind the success of the campaign against corruption. The party had succeeded to make a huge database during the movement and then utilized the same to connect the potential voters. Social media is emerging as

an ideal platform for political communication because it's a two- way communication process in which the recipients of the messages are not the mute spectators. It also provides

direct opportunity of communication with any intermediary. They are instead the active members in the entire process. Besides, it is cheaper media to communicate effectively (Punj, 2013).

The three well known global social media platforms- Google, Twitter and Facebook impacted India's General Elections of 2014. The political candidates used these new media platforms with the traditional media to maintain connectivity with their voters. The three social media giants witnessed unprecedented traffic in their territory from India and during the elections. One of the reasons of the political candidates to access these social media is that the users like these platforms for political discourse. The Facebook alone has more than 100 million users in India. There were 49 million elections related tweets by the end of seventh round poll. Indian leaders have millions of followers on social media. Leaders like Narendra Modi, Shashi Tharoor etc. made access to every nook and corner of the country where people are accessing the social media for political dialogues directly to their leaders. These media also started to prepare for the elections for political advertising. The officials of these companies admit that General Elections in India helped these sites to become popular among the voters who now discuss politics on various issues (The Economic Times, 2014).

**Figure 3.4 Social Media and 2014 General Elections in India**



Source: IAMAI

Social media are platform which facilitate the political parties to maintain the access to the millions of numbers of users who subsequently are supposed to transform them into

substantial voters in the elections. In the dictatorships, the social media are used to maintain the regime permanently while in democracies, these media help to shape and frame wanted images and opinion about the politicians in and after the elections. But there are also incidents where social media have been used to spread the fake news and to spread the propaganda. There are also some developments to influence the election significantly. There is a study which says that in India one out of two voters has received the fake news during or before the elections through social media. In the Cambridge Analytica Case, millions of information on Facebook was sold to the third party without prior consent of the users. This information was subsequently used by Cambridge Analytica to influence the voters in setting their preferences during the elections. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram all are foreign based social media but they are very popular in India. It is therefore the possibility that these may be manipulated for some vested interests (Antony, 2019).

The 2014 General Elections in India are known for the widespread use of social media. This new media was used during the elections campaign because by that time the Election Commission of India was not prepared to restrain this media for the purpose of free and fair campaigning and to regulate the same as the traditional media were controlled. The politicians in the country have been trying to access the voters directly through the social media. Initially, the web pages were uploaded with the basic information useful for the voters. But the advancement in the information and communication technologies, modified the capacities of social media. In the first decade of the ongoing century, the social media emerged substantially. The political parties in India started to use this media for the mobilization of voters. (Meti et al, 2015) Besides, the 2014 General Elections are also recorded for the highest voters' turn out so far in the electoral history of India. Almost 554 million voters were there to litmus the fate of Indian democracy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections. The young demography of India which is predominantly below the age of 35 and shares the 65 per cent of the population was also at the helm of affairs in these elections. These youth were accessed directly through social media the communication technology which dominated in the electoral campaign in these elections. Earlier in 2011, India had already witnessed the effective role of social media to mobilize the masses specially the youth in the India Against Corruption Movement led by Anna Hazare against the UPA government. The gap between the 2011 IAC Movement and the 2014 General Elections was remarkable in the sense that within this period social networking sites increased their outreach massively in the different parts of the country. Even the rural areas were engaged in this

popular platform due to the availability of cheap smart phones and internet data. Besides, India also implemented the broadband technology to accelerate the functioning of social media. Amidst these circumstances, the youth were more engaged in political other discourses in the social networking sites. Social media effectively connected the young voters among themselves as well as with the political leadership. The 2011 Census predicted that by 2019 more than 130 million new and first -time voters would decide the fate of Indian democracy. These huge numbers have become the prime target of political parties through social media in the country. All political parties were inclined to reach these voters successfully through the digital media platform. (Mahapatra, Plagmann, 2019). Earlier, the success story of social media as a strong medium of mass communication had already been established in the Presidential Elections of the USA in 2008. Barack Obama extensively used social media for the purpose of mobilization of voters during the election campaign in the country. Voters round about the age of 25 were the main target audience for the campaign. This was a successful experiment of the use of social media for the purpose of campaign in elections for the world's most powerful post. (Dutta S, Fraser M, 2008)

### **3.7 Youth, Social Media and Political Discourse in India:**

The 2012 was an important year in the politics of the United States of America because many 18 years old youth cast their votes in the Presidential elections. These were born in 1994 a year when Yahoo!, Amazon.com, Sony PlayStation social media also came into being in this country. This young generation was under intensive influence of Web 2.0. The new media played an important role in the shaping and re shaping of their opinion. This media was also vital in facilitating them in the development of their social relationship and also their political behavior. According to Lenhart (2015), the 92 per cent of the teens who are between the age group of 13 to 17 years remain online the everyday out of which 24 per cent are permanent online constantly. The rate of using social media by the youth in the age group of 18 to 29 years was only 24 per cent in 2006 which became 90 per cent in 2015. (Perrin, 2015). The young population is currently driven by the social media in different countries. This has emerged as one of the determinants of youth's engagement and interest in politics specially in the democracies. In simple terms, the internet has become so significant that it is now driving the thoughts comprehensively which is a key element in the mobilization of youth worldwide. The new narratives based online are developing the perspectives of youth towards politics having accessed the information on these digital-platform. Online platform engages the youth meaningfully. But it is yet to be established that this engagement with social media also

engages the youth politically and subsequently the political mobilization. (Kahne, Bowyer, 2018). A lot of significant studies have been conducted to find out how the online engagement of social media facilitates the political engagement and mobilization of youth in the political spectrum, still this is not very clear that only engagement online instigates the youth to participate in politics online or offline. It is also a matter of interest to know whether activities of a particular types facilitate the youth engagement in politics. A meta -analysis made by Boulianne (2015) throws light on the relationship between youth and online sphere at the initial stage. It was found that the online infosphere has attracted the youth to engage politically but this engagement was insignificant as it was not very strong. The recent research studies on youth and social media have been carried out to find out the role of social media in the political participation of youth. These studies indicate the bright side of this association. Despite of these positive findings very few of these studies establishes the relationship between social media and youth statistically. This is because most of these studies depend on ‘cross- sectional survey data.’ These were very much confined their strength to examine the ‘hypothesis about the causal relationship between the variables.’ In this context, the studies which used the penal data had little possibility to introduce the positive outcomes in different studies on the relationship between the social media, politics and youth. (Boulianne, 2015, Kahne, Bowyer, 2018). In the contemporary communication scenario, the youth has become digital comprehensively. Since all types of media is increasingly transforming into digital, the youth is accessing these contents habitually through various forms of digital devices. A large number of youths is communicating with others through computer -based communication system. Mobile phones have added extra to this facility of communication. With the emergence of social media, they have got an opportunity to express themselves and their surroundings on this platform significantly. This phenomenon has eroded the gap between the mass communication and inter- personal communication. These have resulted into the formation of an “ego -centric” digital spectrum of information. The significant aspect is the absence of gatekeeping and free flow of contents worldwide. With this also rises the issue of credibility of contents. The general norm of identifying the credibility is to know the source of information. With this the concern is clear whether the credibility of source or medium as a whole be relied upon. (Sundar, 2008)

Youth is generally that part of population which that is basically between the middle adolescent and middle age. According to the U.N. the age group between 15-24 is youth. India is a country where the population of young citizens is more than that of any other

country in the world. In 2011, the number of youth population became 422 million. In this respect, the country is far ahead from China and Indonesia as these are the countries which impact the demography of Asia significantly. Youth are the asset of any country since they are the strength of execution of any plan. This strength determines the growth and development of any country. The National Health Policy considered the 13-35 years age group as the youth in 2003 while the same policy in 2014 amended its parameters and defined the youth as between the age of 15 to 29 years. It is expected that the youth population of India would rise to 34.33 per cent in 2020. Internet was overflowing with the presence of Indians at the mark of 566 million net users in 2019. Among these users, the 351 million were using various social media platforms. Indian ranks first in the number of Facebook users in the world. This is approximately 300 million subscribers. There are seventy-five per cent young users who are below the age of 35 years. (Bhattacharya, 2019) The youths in India have been enthusiastic to assimilate social media in their life. Initially, the social networking sites were considered to be the wastage of time and was also thought to be useful only for the business community to maintain the communication.

### **3.8 Mobile Penetration and Growth of Social Media in India.**

Communication technology has impacted politics significantly in all the ages. Right from the ages of Gutenberg to this day of mobile and internet. The trend has been that whenever there was the advent of any particular mass media technology, this was not confined within the spectrum of media only instead that impacted different walks of life including politics (Jeffrey and Doron 2012). Social media is expected to continue to maintain its growth and development worldwide. This number is likely to grow from 2.65 million in 2018 to 3.02 billion by 2021. This is one third of the entire world's demography which is involved in the virtual world. This extraordinary event would not have been possible has the growth of mobile telephony not been in an unprecedented way. By the month of July, 2019, the number of active social media users on mobile phones were 3.46 billion. The rising affordability and availability of smartphones has accelerated the growth of social media worldwide. Mobile internet is the base of this outstanding growth of social media. There are certain Apps which are regularly accessed on the mobile handsets in the world. The WhatsApp was accessed by 1.6 billion digital consumers monthly whereas the Facebook messenger was accessed by 1.3 billion users monthly in 2019. As the technology of mobile telephony is user friendly, this segment has recorded a major shift from conventional devices to mobile device to access the internet and social media. Social media giant Facebook was a web- based facility which later

also made itself available on the mobile sets. Instagram was initially based on mobile only this later on shifted to cross platforms in order to offer their customers both compatibility and feasibility. In 2019, the almost 61 per cent of users accessed social media on the mobile devices in North America. The penetration of accessing social media on mobile phones at the global level has been 42 per cent. (Clement,2019). The Pew Research Centre conducted a research study on the access of social media by the teens on the mobile devices brings several startling facts to light. Accessing social media on mobile is now a global phenomenon. 91 per cent teens go online with the help of mobile handset globally. 93 per cent youth of prosperous families go online with their handset at the global level. Mobile based internet has revolutionized the communication on social media. 91 per cent of teens who access the internet and social media on their mobile device use their phones for the purpose of communication with their friends and relatives. The messengers are facilitating the teens to maintain connectivity with their people. The teens are very interested to use the social media on their mobile phones. Facebook is the most popular social media site that is accessed on the mobile device. (Lenhart, 2015) The users in the fastest growing economies are accessing the internet and social media on their smartphones in the world. The majority of digital consumers who access the social media on the net is about 97 percent in the 11 developing countries surveyed in for the Pew Research Centre in 2019. India accounts around 70 per cent users who access the social media while using their mobile devices. (Silver et el, 2019). By the end of 2018, the data consumption in India had reached 9.8 Gigabytes monthly through the smart mobile phones. (Ericsson, 2019)

India is the second largest digital consumer after China with 560 million internet users and is estimated to cross 636 million users by 2021. The large portion of these digital networked society is accessing the net on their mobile device. This is due to the cheap availability of internet data in the country. In 2018, Indians 1.2 billion mobile subscriptions and these consumers downloaded 12 billion apps in this very year. The digital India campaign of Government and its initiative to empower the people at the grass root level digitally has been a boon to the penetration of internet and mobile devices. With the advancement of digital communication technologies, India has emerged as one of the leading nations to access the social media on the mobile handset. Broadband speed which is the base of the easily availability of internet and subsequently social media on mobile handset has been enhanced exponentially. In 2016 the average speed was 4.1Mbps which was an increase of 62 per cent from the previous speed. In the mean- time India adopted IPv6 internet protocol which is

another milestone in the evolution of information and communication technologies in the country as it has improved the digital infrastructure. Subsequently, the mobile users in the country are rising manifold. The users' number in 2016 was 389 million and is expected to reach the mark 969 million in 2021. The 4G communication is also to be approximately five-fold by 2021 with a CAGR of 38 per cent. The 3G and 4G connections would share 80 per cent of all the connections by the end of 2021. This was only 25 per cent in the year 2016. Amidst these circumstances, the mobile device has emerged as a suitable media to access the internet and social media in the country. The smart phone is no more restricted within the technological barriers. Instead, they have become the ideal platform both in urban and rural areas to access the social media. The consumption of mobile based data traffic was only 151 MB per month in 2015 which became 251 MB in 2016 only. This data indicates stupendous growth of digital consumption on mobile in various forms specially the social media. The popularity of access the internet and social media can also be understood by the fact that in 2016 the number of users who access the net on the mobile was approximately 300 million in 2016 is now expected to go up to 700 million in 2021. Mobile penetration in India has become revolutionary. The convergence of technology and contents have not been possible in the absence of sophisticated information and communication technologies. Mobile is now the popular digital device to access the internet and this has contributed significantly to the digital consumption in the country. With the availability and affordability of mobile device the users now consuming the digital contents through the mobile handsets. The market is another important factor where the fierce competition among the internet service providers has become a major reason for significant fall of data rates in the country. Now, the consumers can access online using their own digital device with the concerns of high data price. The users are consuming the digital contents on mobile device. The social media like Facebook and messenger like WhatsApp are the applications which share almost 80 per cent of overall data consumption on the mobile phones. (FICCI Report, 2017)

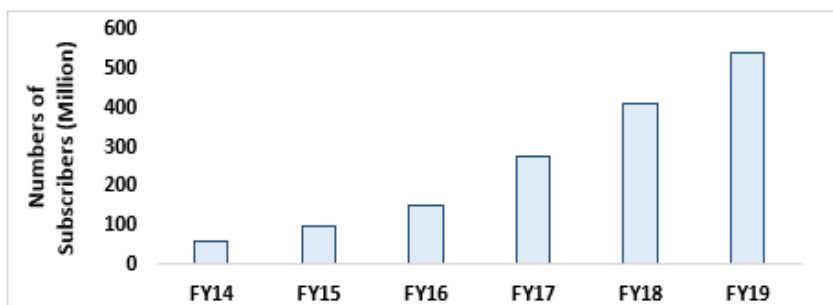
### **3.9 Digitization, Democracy and Credibility of Social Media-**

The Government of India launched the Digital India programme in July, 2015. The aim of this programme was to accelerate the digitalization in the country. The focus of the government has been to develop digital infrastructure so that the transformation of India into a digital economy could be accelerated with the help of fast emerging private sector (LSI, 2019). The internet revolution and the proliferation of information at the explosive scale has ignited serious challenges before the democracies worldwide. The major outcome of social media

penetration has been that the digital infosphere is filled with bulk of information which is not considered authentic and credible. The misleading information is a key issue of concern before the democracies. Even the governments are blamed to emerge as a big source of this disinformation. Though the autocracies are more prone to the dissemination of disinformation in an organized way with the motive to influence the political opinion of the masses, yet the democracies are also facing this tendency of political leadership at different levels (V Dem Report, 2018).

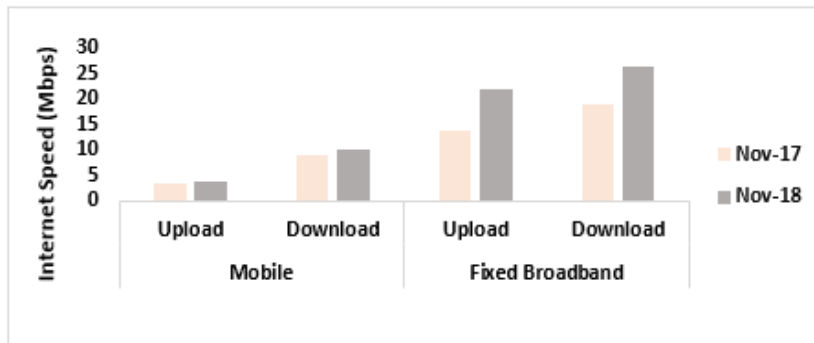
**Figure 3.5 Broadband Subscription in India**

**Exhibit 3 – Broadband Subscriptions, India, FY14 to FY19**



Source: IBEF, TRAI, LSI Research

**Exhibit 4 – Speed of Internet Connection, India, Nov'17 to Nov'18**



Source: Business Standard, LSI Research

- The Broadband subscription rate has increased at a CAGR of 54.78% between FY14 to FY19.
- Along with the expansion of subscription the speed has also improved specially in the last 1 year.
- Between Nov'17 to Nov'18, the growth rate of average speed rate has been 30%.

Source: Business Standard, LSI Research

There has been a significant rise of new media as a basic source of information (Kumpel et al, 2015, Weeks et el 2017, Srinivasan, Barclay 2017). The factor of credibility makes traditional media more trustworthy in comparison to the online media. This is important because the credibility of contents decide the value of contents posted online in the new media. (Heath et el, 1995). According to Ernst et el, (2017), the credibility is an essential part of media contents and it also requires the credibility of sources and channel in particular. On the other

side Rahman (2014) finds in his study that if the credibility of media contents is established, there is a possibility that the public opinion would be built more effectively. Stockwell (2006) argues that the credibility is not a stable element in the media system. It keeps on changing with the passage of time and circumstances. In this way, the media credibility is situational phenomenon. Sharma (2017) is of the opinion that there are some importance aspects of credibility like accuracy and correct line in the media contents. With the emergence of digital age, social media has become an important channel of communication. There are plenty of disinformation created in the social media round the clock risking the social and political spectrum of India. Social media has also emerged as a popular platform for the propagating an idea as well as to initiate the personal attacks on any individual, community or society as a whole. In fact, the social media is a new tool of information warfare in India. It has been observed that a lot of misinformation, propaganda and hatred contents are being communicated through social media. The political parties have established their permanent centers for the production of misinformation and sub-standard contents for the circulation through this new media. This information is posted on the social media and then the reactions are monitored and analyze carefully to mobilize the public opinion towards a particular ideology or political opinion. This is unprecedented in the largest democracy of the world where media plays an important role in the formation of public opinion. It is difficult to expect credibility and objectivity of the media contents as the misinformation is being disseminated louder than the fair contents. The media has been fabricated as the mouthpiece of a political party or ideology and they bring to the light the prejudiced narratives to the people. The fake news and trolling are the weapons to be used against the people who try to give their honest and unbiased opinion on the digital platform. Overall, out of 900 million, there are some 200 million voters who are connected digitally very well and they use the social media comprehensively. (Manzar, 2019)

The study conducted by CSDS in respect to the 2019 General Elections, says that there has been declining the role of social media towards BJP as one of the determinants of victory in the General Elections. The CSDS interviewed 24,236 voters in the 211 different parliamentary constituencies. As Compared to the 2014 General Elections, the Bhartiya Janata Party performed very well among the non -Facebook users. This was 30 percent in the previous General Elections while 36 percent in the 2019 General Elections. On the other side, the Congress party made tremendous success among the voters where the Facebook users are in plenty. In the 2014 General Elections, the Congress was at 16 percent while it rose to 20

per cent in the 2019 General Elections. The voters on social media have moved to the Congress from the BJP. In the 2014 General Elections, the BJP vote share among the social media users was reduced while the Congress has improved its influence on the social media users. The Congress made significant victory among the Facebook users while lost in the areas where Facebook users are lesser in numbers. In the North – East region of India, the BJP has progressed but there is comparatively lesser impact of social media on the voters. In the South, the BJP still had a hard nut to crack despite social media penetration significantly. There are three broad categories of voters among whom the NDA made important impacts. These are high caste, Muslim and ST voters. Among the upper caste, the voters' percentage was 65 percent in the intensive social media users as compared to 57 percent of non- users. In the same way, the percentage of Muslims was 15 percent to 9 percent while among the Scheduled Tribes this was 57 to 44 percent. The Muslim ranked at the second position just after the upper caste Hindus in the use of social media. The print media was found favorite among the voters who preferred the BJP to vote for. This was 41 percent. The 49 percent of the respondents said that they found television as the potential medium of political news and current affairs out of which 37 percent voted for the BJP. This percentage was only three percent of respondents who use social media to get the idea of political affairs.

There has been an advantage of being on Facebook WhatsApp and Instagram for the political parties in comparison to Twitter and YouTube for the ruling party. For the Congress, no platform usage correlated with their support other than Twitter, where increased usage led to less vote share. The BJP led NDA got more advantage as compare to Congress led UP because the latter don't update their accounts regularly with speed and accuracy. There is one more thing to be noticed that the number of expressions on different contents by the followers is not remarkable. The 'Chowkidar chor hai' competed with 'Main bhi chowkidar' significantly. Such phrases have been popular on the social media platforms. But it does not mean that the users have their independent thinking on the political post of different political parties. Rather they are influenced by the opinions expressed on these platforms. Very few users have independent opinion on social media. In fact, social media platforms are being used for propagating pre conceived narratives with a motive to influence the mindset of the crowd and further to persuade them towards the set political objectives. Here, social media loses the merit of credibility which is, on the other hand an important feature of traditional mass media in India. When the social media is compared with the traditional media like print and television, the latter seems to be hopeless on the ground of credibility. A number of users

who otherwise use social media regularly don't believe on the contents blindly. Rather, they refer to the print and television media to test the credibility for such contents (Mehrotra, 2019).

There has been stupendous growth of social media in India in the last ten years. Despite its utility, there is always a possibility for this media to be misused in many ways. Those who are educated can use this digital platform properly whereas the uneducated are most vulnerable to these social media abuses. The recent studies show that it was difficult to differentiate between the real news and fake news. The reports confirm the misuse of these platforms by the people who have vested interest in the mobilization of voters. The mob lynchings take their fuel to instigated from these media in India. WhatsApp is being misused for these kinds of purposes specially. WhatsApp is notorious for spreading manipulated and manufactured contents. The Election Commission of India invited the social media representatives to discuss the means and methodology to curb the ill contents on social media that basically violate the model code of conduct before the one set of 2019 General Elections. The efforts made by these companies proved to be a drop in the ocean as the damage already done is enough to impact the social and political spectrum comprehensively. (Lokniti, 2019). Since social media are also the sources of news, it is apparent that the contents in social media do impact the public opinion. It is therefore important that Indians should have credible information system so that their opinion could be more logical and based on true facts. It would be possible when Indians are having access to the credible information. A survey conducted by the Oxford University, came to the conclusion that large number of participants in the survey were worried about the disinformation they were made available through different media specially the social media. The social media platforms were filled with such contents as could harm the base of news and other information. Such contents are so abundant that they could produce adverse impacts. The social media and other associated apps are at the base of this infosphere of disinformation in the country. About 52 per cent of the respondents accepted that they were being made aware of the external environment through social media which is the biggest source of news for them. These people have been using Facebook and WhatsApp to access the news and information. The 51 per cent respondents were of the opinion that the contents they were being disinformed were of commercial and political nature whereas 50 percent agreed that the political contents were manipulated and didn't appear to be true. When it comes to the fake or baseless news, the online media is far ahead from rest of the journalistic sources. The Press council of India<sup>12</sup>

was also of the opinion that the paid news had become a big business in the mass media systems of India. This according to the council is a direct threat to democracy of India. This has not only impacted the social media and its credibility but also has also undermined the other institutions of journalism and mass communication in India. At a time when India accounts almost 10 percent of the global users of Facebook, this is also the responsibility of the social media institutions to try to maintain the sanctity of journalism in India. This is also noteworthy that the misleading information, paid news and disinformation emanate from the political parties and political leadership (Nielsen,2019).

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<sup>1</sup>.Dr Niyazi is a faculty at the National University of Singapore. His research aims at political communication; digital and social media etc.

2.Rober Dahl is a famous for his political theory of democracy.

3.The political communication is associated with Political Science and Communication which is concerned to identify how communication impacts politics.

4.Robert Putnam is an American political scientist who is known for his theory of social capital.

5.India against Corruption Movement was an anti-government protests in 2011-12 to support the Jan Lokpal Bill.

6- The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies was established in 1963. This is involved in the research of various social and political issues.

7- The term network society came in the use in the backdrop of information and communication revolution and digitization. *Manuel Castells used the concept of 'Network society' first of all in sociology in the late 20th century. In his view, a new social structure which is based on microelectronics and is ensured by information and communication technology is called as Network Society.*

8- Post modern age depicts the end of modernism that impacts the social sciences and humanities.

9- Mediated communication refers to the communication with the help of information and communication technologies that amplify the messages.

10- The People's Representation Act was passed by the Parliament of India to conduct the electoral process of Parliament and the State Assemblies.

11- The alternate media refers to such mass media as is separated from the mainstream media in case of production and distribution of its contents.

12- Press Council of India is a regulatory body for the print media in India. More details can be accessed on, <https://presscouncil.nic.in/>

**Chapter-4**  
**Social Media and Political Discourse**  
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#### **4.1 Mass Media in Uttar Pradesh-**

This state was known earlier as United Province during the British rule and today it is known as Uttar Pradesh. The state has been playing an important role in the national politics. In fact, this is the 'heartland of national politics.' The state was at the pivot in facilitating different empires in the various periods of history to stand and then to further expand. The state was at the prime focus during the establishment of 'Hindu Heartland', 'Muslim Heartland' and then the 'colonial heartland.' The current political significance of state begun during the British rule and has been in fashion till date after several decades of independence (Kudaisya, 2006). Geographically, the state of Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest state of India. It is 2,40,928 square kilometers in size. There are seventy-five districts in four broad regions of the state viz. Budelkhand in the South, Purvanchal in the East, Haritanchal in the West and Madhyanchal or Awadh Kshetra at the Centre. The state stands the largest in demography. According to the last census of 2011, the population of Uttar Pradesh was 199.8 million. The state shares some seventeen per cent of the total population of India. On the other side, the sex ratio in the state is 912 as compare to all India which is 943 after every 1000 male. The population density of the state was 829 as given in the 2011 census. The twenty two percent of the total population reside in the urban areas. The state has the 80 per cent Hindu population while Muslims are the second largest community. SC and ST constitute some 21 per cent of the total population. (Registrar General and Commissioner of Census, India 2015). Education which is a base for the spread of mass media, the state lags behind as compare to other states of India. The national average of literacy rate is 73 per cent while that of state is only 68 per cent. (Registrar General and Commissioner of Census, 2013)

**Tab 4.1: Socio -Economic Profile of Uttar Pradesh, (2010-2016)**

<b>Socio -economic indicators</b>	<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	<b>India</b>
Population 2011 (Million)	199.8	1210.6
Sex Ratio (Females per thousand males)	912	943
Urban Population (2011) %	22.3	31.2
Population density (2011) per square kilometer	829	382
Population BPL	29.4	21.9
Male Literacy Rate 2011, %	77.3	80.9
Female Literacy Rate 2011, %	57.2	64.6

Source: Office of the Registrar General of India and Commissioner of Census of India, 2011

Uttar Pradesh is the most decisive and significant state in the political spectrum of India. This state is not only remaining sensitive politically within but also determines the fate of national politics decisively. There have been nine Prime Ministers so far who have been elected from any of the constituencies within UP which is the largest state demographically. In the General Elections of 2014, the BJP won almost one fourth of its total seats from this very state only. This landslide victory facilitated the BJP to form the government on its own at the Centre. (Edmund, 2019). The state of Uttar Pradesh is an important political entity in India. There are eighty seats for UP in the Lok Sabha and 31 for Rajya Sabha. The state has been a pivot for

both ruling and opposition party in the country during and after elections. The BJP which is the largest political party of India has been focusing its strategy on the state of Uttar Pradesh. In the 2014 General Elections, the BJP won 71 out of 80 seats while its ally Apna Dal got two another seats. This outstanding performance of the BJP won't have been possible in the absence of its massive campaign targeting on the state of Uttar Pradesh in particular. For the last several decades, the political campaigns in the state of UP have been round about caste-based politics and two political parties- SP and BSP. The impact of BJP's campaign was so strong that there was record voter's turn out in the 2014 General Elections. This record turn-out was 66.4 per cent at the national level whereas in the Uttar Pradesh it was 58.4 per cent was highest ever and there was tremendous increase of 10 percent after the 2009 General Elections. (Vaishnav, Hintston, 2019) The political party having strong political base in the state of Uttar Pradesh has better opportunity to form the government in New Delhi. That is why all political parties, specially the national strive to take mileage in the state. The political party which aspires to be in the all-India politics has to perform significantly at the state level. The political party at the state level even has potential chance of dealing with the party in power at the Centre. Both the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party were supporting the United Progressive Government led by the Congress at the Centre though they were against each other in the state.<sup>1</sup> Issues of the state are not confined within the territory of the state but impact the political spectrum at the all-India level. Mass media therefore takes these issues at the top be it electronic or print media. The issues raised by the mass media play a pivotal role in the formation of public opinion both on the national and regional issues simultaneously. Mass media of both at the state and national level is well aware about the political importance of state that is why during all General Elections the mass media gave plenty of time and space to the state politics whether it's the close fight between the regional parties like SP and BSP or among the National Parties like BJP and Congress or between

national and regional parties. Mass media always portrayed the politics of UP as decisive battle for either gaining or maintaining the strength at the national level. This becomes clear during the tenure of UPA II Government from 2009 to 2014. Amidst such circumstances, the mass media portrayed the elections in UP as decisive be it national or state level. (Moinuddin, 2017)

Modern mass media is an important channel to connect the political spectrum with the masses. The people in the state are made aware about different political developments through various mass media like the print and electronic. In fact, the mass media is a catalyst in igniting the political discourse in the state having got the information either from the candidate or political party either contesting the elections or aspires to contest the elections. Mass media generate an environment for political discourse which has now become so important that every political party strives to access the people through this infosphere. In the last several elections the mass media have played important role in the formation of public opinion on an issue or towards a particular ideology. The mass media have also been successful in generating the interest of the people in politics and to let them participate in the debate and discussions. Actually, this discourse becomes very substantial after the emergence of mass media in this infosphere. Mass media has become an effective channel of mass communication carrying the political issues to the people. (Moinuddin, 2017). The contemporary mass media has become potential channel to impact the opinion of the common masses towards a particular issue or an agenda. This phenomenal development has become more effective with the advent of social media which now connect the people directly to the infosphere. Mass media do have certain agendas and the disseminate the information through that particular perspective with a motive to shape or reshape a public opinion towards an issue comprehensively. (Wu, Coleman 2009). Diana Owen says that in today's contemporary political scenario, the mass media have the substantial potential in the

political communication process. The new media also has emerged as networked communication system which facilitate the users to communicate freely on any issue. The growth of these mass media has been phenomenal in the past three decades. They have now 'radicalized' the way people react on various political issues. They are now transformed into more sophisticated mass media systems having more depth and width on political issues. The media in India have made various narratives about politicians and political parties. The formation of these narratives is so powerful that common voters slightly ignore his potential problems and start believing in these newly formed contexts. This is a common trend in mass media in India. (Roy, 2019) Media has become an attractive destination for both political parties and political leaders. The political parties now have set up their 'war rooms'<sup>2</sup>, 'garages' and 'factories' to manufacture contents so that they could abreast their respective voters regarding their issues and agendas. The social media, in particular has facilitated them to access their targeted audience with more aggressive and accuracy. (Manzar, 2019)

The effect of mass media is so prevalent that media now ignites new narratives or amends the existing ones. There are new phrases which are generated by the mass media and soon they become an essential figure of political discourse in mass media. Samajwadi Party's image as the party of goons has been repeatedly published in the newspapers and also occupied time in the electronic media. This stereotyping and negative connotation has played such an important role that even the other political parties try to mobilize the voters away from Samajwadi Party. The so -called term goondaraj was used time and again in both the public and mass media sphere during discourse even after the Samajwadi Party came to power after the 2012 Assembly elections. The opposition parties also try to use this term to mobilize the voters in their favor. (Moinuddin, 2017).

The political developments have been debated and discussed in the mediated way both at the regional and national levels. Media is interested in the politics of Uttar Pradesh not because

it's the most important state politically due to having the largest number of seats in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. It is because the mass media have evolved significantly in the state in such a way as to impact the both the public and politics both. Media has always an opportunity to mobilize the people on the basis of its own perspective throughout be it cultural, economic and business issues. Before and during the electoral campaigns, the mass media give impetus to the political discourse. This discourse addresses primarily the wide areas of subjects like development, caste, religion etc. almost on regular basis. This is how the mass media in Uttar Pradesh has done an incredible attempt not only to ignite the debate and discussions on various issues but also has also brought these issues on the public forum for further discourse. In fact, the public sphere is significantly affected towards the media line on various contemporary issues. Different media have different perspectives on these issues. Both the print and electronic media present the issue in their own way. The subjects which are on the prime agenda of both print and electronic media are 'multi -dimensional' and try to project the actual political image of the state. These discourses also try to project the issues of state so broadly as to cater to the national requirements. (Moinuddin, 2017).

The Congress party in Uttar Pradesh girded up her loins a year before the Assembly elections 2017 to launch its campaign on social media. The contents to criticize the three other political rivals BJP, SP and BSP were posted on social media to attract the voters in the Assembly elections 2017. " 27 saal UP behal" trended as one of the topmost posts in both Twitter and Facebook- the poplar social media sites in the state. Most of the contents on social media are emotionally appealing and aim to mobilize the youth in particularly towards the agenda of this oldest political party of India. The ruling Samajwadi Party at that time is criticized for making false promises like " jhoothe the inke irade and khooni hain inke irade." The Congress has also posted some cartoons to assault the rival Akhilesh Yadav Government. "Ummeedon ka Pradesh" phrase of SP has been criticized in one of the cartoons by saying

that on one side the Akhilesh Yadav Government spreading false hopes while on the other, the farmers are committing suicide in the state due to the poor and unfriendly policies of the Government towards the farmers. The BSP Supremo Mayawati has been targeted with a satirical cartoon which depicts her holding a purse while beside her the statue of Dr Ambedkar is holding a book. In this way the Congress has attacked the BSP for involving the corrupt practices. Shiv Pandey who leads the social media team of the party for the 2017 Assembly elections made his commitment that the party would use social media massively to tell the voters about the importance of his party and also to expose the malpractices in the ruling political party and other rival political parties. The other political parties like BJP and Samajwadi Party started the social media campaign for the purpose of mobilizing the voters towards them. The media cell of this party prepared basic planning to target the rival political parties with a purpose to expose them as well as to impact the opinion of the voters. The BJP which was the forerunner of using social media for the purpose of political and electoral campaign also used the old contents to target the other political parties. The slogans like “10 Saal UP Behaal”, “Lakshya265+” and “@UPBJP\_265” are some of the popular contents that were posted by the BJP on social media specially on the Facebook and Twitter. The social media emerged as a prominent media for both the political and electoral campaign in the state. (Seth, 2016).

Uttar Pradesh is so important socially and politically that the Facebook Inc with National Commission for Women and Cyber Peace Foundation started the ‘ We Think Digital’ programme to train the women of so that the digital gender gap can be reduced significantly. The gender imbalance has been a concern for various stakeholders in the country. This digital strength would facilitate the political and social empowerment of women, specially the youth. Other IT giants like Microsoft and Google have invested in the digital awareness in the rural

areas of Uttar Pradesh. Internet Sathi campaign was started for the purpose of training the rural people in almost 2.9 lacs villages. (Majumdar, 2020)

#### **4.2 Political Discourse, Social Media and Youth –**

There has been widespread debate and discussions on the participation of youth in the political discourse at different types of platforms in the world specially in democracies. There are examples of youth participation ranging from civic engagement to political empowerment. These issues have emerged amidst the socio- political changes and major economic transformations in the world due to liberalization and globalization and subsequently the emergence of new age information and communication revolution. In the said backdrop are born new concerns of the youth like own identity in the changed socio-political environment. (Tsekoura, 2016). The politicians have been raising the issue of youth participation in the political discourse which has now coming true since the involvement of youth in the political participation has increased. Youth's participation has covered both the edges of an issue- problem to solution. The now wish to be heard as a solution to various issues. In the USA youths actively participated in the discourse of banning the weapons to be accessible so easily as well as to put pressure on the law makers for the same. Henry Jenkins, the professor of Southern California University and an author of 'By Any Means Necessary: The New Youth Activism', finds the youth not confined merely as the recipients of the messages but actively participating in the discourse. (Swoyer, Dinnen, 2018).

Youth has found social media as an ideal platform to share thoughts and views on various issues. It is also found that the youth who are having knowledge in different areas help the new commers in using the social media platforms for different purposes. These youth accommodate themselves significantly in the spectrum of participatory culture. Youth found two such activities interesting as facilitate their friendship and interest- based activities on

this online platform. The emergence of youth on social media is for the purpose of making and maintaining relationship within and outside their family. They find the social media suitable for the cultivating their relationships. The youth find social networking sites helpful in sharing his different types of contents like pictures, videos, thoughts, views etc. This is the main reason behind their engagement on social media platforms (Jenkins,2009). On the other side, the youth find social media very appropriate for expressing their inner feelings. These platforms are compatible for expressing their views on politics that subsequently become a contributing factor in the direction of their political engagement. It has been seen that the affordability of social media is a key element that facilitates the youth's involvement in this digital infosphere. There are some activities which essentially are not the part of political engagement offline but in fact they become precursor in the political engagement of the youth in the long run. (Dalton, 2008). Hooghe (2014) however, considers that youth online is involved with such activities which may be called multidimensional. Primarily, they don't appear to be of political participation but they, if thought, can be the base of the political engagement of youth both online as well offline. This has been established conceptually that for most of such youths as use social networking sites for their socialization purpose, their main intention is to use these digital media for their hobby or interest-based activities which subsequently may lead them to their political engagement. (Ekström & Östman, 2015; Ito et al., 2009).

India is a country whose largest demography is shared by the youth population making the country the youngest in the world. The National Youth Policy of 2014<sup>3</sup> consider the population of 15 to 29 as youth. The 2011 census establishes that there are 28 per cent of youth among the demography of India. They actually contribute over all 34 per cent of the total GDP of India. There have been several efforts to empower the youth in the country so that their optimum participation ranging from economy to politics can be achieved. Uttar

Pradesh along with other states is having a huge population of youth unlike the peninsular India. They are not only impacting the local economy but the political spectrum as well. (Sanghi, 2017). Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state India. According to the latest census of 2011, the youth comprise of 40.6 million in the total population in the state. In terms of the decade growth population of Uttar Pradesh has recorded the highest decadal growth rate of youth in the country. The state added 11.2 million youth population in the last decade in its demography. Uttar Pradesh recorded highest growth rate of youth population in both the census 2001 and 2011 consecutively (UNFPA Report, 2014). According to the study, the age group between 12 to 21 is more inclined to social media. There some important research studies which were carried out on the role of social media in motivating the youth to engage politically, the outcome was that the youth however is not influenced by the social media contents directly but they are likely to be mobilized by the social media contents in the process of their involvement in the digital infosphere towards the political spectrum. (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). The political engagement of youth does not occur immediately after their using of social media. They get initial exposure and motivation to develop themselves for public exposure through civic activities. It is clear that such activities develop the skills that are equally important for the political engagement. Social media helps the youth in developing their primary skills like expressions on various issues that is basically a prerequisite of political engagement as well. (Verba et al., 1995) According to Hargittai and Shaw (2013), the information technology skills are essential to access the internet. The user based social media is filled with different contents which are not necessarily political. But these help the users to develop their skills necessary for their political participation online as well as offline.

The social media has emerged at the global level as an ideal platform to ignite and circulate new narratives. These are the core area of strategic communication for political purposes. The

narratives are new arms and ammunition in the field of political communication. The substantial power of social media is to engage the individuals on various issues. Narratives get ample of fuel in this regard. Unlike the conventional mass media, the social media has the power to shape and reshape the opinion due to its power of frequency, access etc. The social media also has the power to let the people interact among themselves irrespective of geographical or political landscapes. The users have an opportunity to push the message in the global infosphere from the local spectrum with accuracy and immediacy. Because of these reasons, the social media are now pivotal in the mobilization the people towards a particular objective or an issue. The non -state actors like ISIS have found the social media as a propellant that multiples their strength of persuasion. (Rickli, Kaspersen, 2016)

The young voters are another key factor in the state of Uttar Pradesh that has changed various political aspects. The data of National Elections study which keep the age bar between eighteen to twenty -five, has stayed away from participating in the electoral politics. The mobilization of youth from 1999 to 2009 has been quite disappointing. It has been between three to six percent as an average voter's turn out. While this turn out progressed in the 2014 General Elections significantly. The youths were an important aspect of the landslide victory of BJP in 2014. (Vaishnav, Hinston, 2019) The youth who were born in the shadow of the evolution of Web 2.0 has been affected significantly by the social media wave in the world. Their aims, aspirations as well as their social and political behavior has been immensely affected by this wave. This infosphere is not only confined to the socialization but also is playing an important role in the political engagement of the youth. Now these digital platforms are at the center of political campaigning irrespective of geographical and political boundaries. The contents are designed to impact the youth in particular as their perceptions and political behavior are impacted decisively through the social media. This is the common trend in politics to mobilize the youth for the political reasons. (Kahne, Bowyer, 2018).

### **4.3-Penetration of Social Media in Uttar Pradesh-**

By 2016 the internet users in India have gone up to 34.8 per cent of the total population. This is likely to be 829 million by 2021 as estimated by the Visual Networking Index. According to IAMAI, there were 200 million net users in the country which were estimated to cross the mark of 314 million in 2017. The rural areas are also making significant growth and development in using the internet. With the penetration of mobile telephony in these areas the number of internet users is increasing exceptionally. In 2014, the Active Internet Users<sup>4</sup> (AIU) was 6.7 per cent of all the rural population in the country. Those accessing the internet in the rural areas of India was only 0.4 per cent which reached 4.4 per cent in 2014. (IAMAI, Abbas, Singh, 2015). Despite the sluggish economic growth, protectionism and political uncertainties in different parts of the world, the Indian media and entertainment industry is expected to continue to grow at the speed of 11.6 per cent per annum. The credit goes to the digitization and internet penetration in India specially in the rural areas which are expected to play an important role in the growth and development in the years to come. (FICCI Report, 2017)

The Delhi National Capital Region has witnessed the highest penetration of internet in the country. Other states of India according to the use of internet are Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Himanchal Pradesh and Punjab where the number of internet users has risen significantly. The internet and social media penetration in the states of North East region is comparatively low. But Assam is an exception in this regard where the internet and social media users have grown in the recent past in comparison to other states of the north east region of the country. As far as the internet and social media penetration in urban areas is concerned, Mumbai is at the top whereas Delhi stands next. The users of internet and social media are lesser in the states which are backward. There are many gender aspects of internet users in the country as well. The sex ratio of internet users is 60:40 in the whereas the metro cities

have more female internet users as compared to the semi urban and rural areas of India (IAMAI,2020).

The number of internet users in the country has increased at the high speed. As a result, India is second after China which is active in the virtual world of social media. In 2018, Indian downloaded 12.3 billion different apps. This has facilitated the users to access various social media platform easily. Subsequently, the number of social media users in India has risen significantly. It is now estimated that the pace is likely to continue in the years to come. By 2021, the number of social media users is likely to go up to 448 million. Social media is very popular among various sections of the classes in the country. Youth between the age group of 18-24 years, in particularly more active in this virtual platform. Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the country. By 2019 the number of Facebook users in the country has gone more than 270 million. This makes Indian as the largest community in the world to use this popular social networking site. (SANNAM,2020)

The largest number of populations in Uttar Pradesh live in rural areas. The use of internet largely depends on the penetration of mobile telephony in the state. With low density of 57.27 per cent, the state of Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of mobile users in the country. The 90 per cent of the mobile phone users in the state are between the age group of 15to 59 years. The government in the state has been promoting the growth and development of mobile telephony industry in the state to promote e governance and enhance the people's ability to access the developmental schemes in the state. The government aims to empower the masses digitally that is why the prime focus is the improve the mobile and net facilities in the state. Nivesh Mitra is an e- based online single window system to facilitate the formation of business -friendly environment in the state. (Abbas, Singh, 2015). Uttar Pradesh ranks at the top in India as far as the number of mobile subscribers in the country is concerned. This number is currently 121 million in the state. There are approximately 42 per cent women

mobile users as well. There has been significant rise of mobile and internet users in the rural areas of India. Since most of the population of state live in the rural areas, the state becomes destination for both mobile handset and internet business. As a result, the social media users have also increased. Uttar Pradesh is also among top five states of India where 29.54 million social media users are found. This has given boost to the social media users specially the Facebook and its messenger in the state. (Nikita, 2019). There has been stupendous growth in the field of internet in the low -income states like Uttar Pradesh. This is one of the states where the internet penetration has been the fastest between 2014 to 2018. There were record 36 million subscribers added new to the internet users in the state. The net has empowered the people to access various schemes aim to develop themselves both economically and politically. (McKinsey,2019)

The findings of the Pew Research indicate that there has been a remarkable increase in the number people who use internet for the different purposes. Social media has also emerged as a new and effective media for the political engagement worldwide. (Nowak, 2016). The political content on these websites is not only produced but also distributed as well while interacting with other similar users. The use of these websites for the political discourse has become an important trend in the political communication process all over the world. The constant use and reuse of these contents have motivated the users to participate in the communication process. The users therefore have become active participant in the entire communication process in this newly emerged digital infosphere. The users are now having the choice to like, share or comment on the posts. They do have the choice to stay away from them completely by letting their cursor to pass the contents without even seeing them. The voting behavior is now impacted significantly due to these contents. (Brunello 2012, Chandler, 2008, Heiskanen, 2017,)

Uttar Pradesh is the most important state politically in India. There are approximately 141.2 million registered voters in the state. There are 403 seats in the Legislative Assembly of the state. In these circumstances, the social media has emerged powerfully to connect the aspirants with the voters specially the youth who are apt in information technologies. These voters are important in the electoral process and subsequently no candidate wants to ignore them. Social media is the most suitable media to access these voters. With the advancement of communication technologies, the social media specially the Facebook and Twitter have emerged as an accessible media to maintain connectivity with voters. The penetration of mobile based internet and the availability and affordability of cheaper data has introduced social media in the rural areas where largest portion of the population of the state live. The media professionals who are engaged with the mainstream mass media are not left as the only stakeholders in the communication process between the voters and politicians. Social media has enabled the voters to communicate their leaders directly without any mediation. The social media has broken the media monopoly in the formation of public opinion. As a result, the contents of social media influence the public opinion decisively. The trend of using social media for political campaign was initiated in the 2014 general Elections when NDA led by the BJP used this digital media to mobilize the voters towards the party. But in the Assembly elections of 2017, the BJP also used the potential of social media in the electoral campaign. The war rooms were the places from where the campaigns were designed and communicated to the masses in the state. The BJP is the party that believes on social media to attract the voters whereas the BSP at the other end does believe on the conventional patterns of approaching the voters directly instead of wasting time on social media. Sagheer Usmani who is the coordinator of BSP says that the 2014 elections were the eye opener in respect of using social media in the electoral campaign in Uttar Pradesh. (Kalra, 2017)

#### **4.4- Use of Social Media by Political Parties-**

The BJP has been quick to use social media for the campaigning whereas other political parties were indifferent in this regard initially. The Indian National Congress showed low interest in this digital platform and would believe on the traditional methods of campaigning. Most of the leaders of this national political party were either absent from the social media or they were least concerned about this digital platform. (Goyal, 2014). But the political parties like BJP and Aam Admi Party have understood the potential of social media for the purpose of political communication. This is the media which not only facilitates to disseminate desired information to the targeted audience but also collect their feedback which helps to rebuild the communication strategies. The BJP through its contents try to encourage and engage whereas the congress is negative in its approach. The party uses the contents to defend and defame. The BJP originates the messages which run downwards till the bottom and comes back with feedback. This bottom – up approach has made significant impacts on the voters even in the far -flung areas. The BJP also manipulates the images of Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal through its contents. The social media at the beginning remained confined within the elite in the Congress and sometimes it's use was restrained within the promotion of its selective leaders. Whereas the BJP focused on Narendra Modi, as a leader committed to development. BJP's narrative has been effective. (Khosla, 2018). The four “C” s are considered as the base of using digital media for political campaign. These are contents, color, clarity and coordination. These four elements are at the center of political campaign on social media run by all political parties. The BJP and Congress are careful in designing and disseminating their campaign based on these elements. The BJP uses saffron color whereas the Congress uses a group of different colors. Parties experiment with colors as could easily establish their respective political ideologies. The Congress which started to post the contents in English very soon started to use Hindi as well to attract the voters in state like Uttar

Pradesh where Hindi is spoken by most of the population. Hindi has multiplied the reach of Congress in different parts of Uttar Pradesh. The parties are not confined within mainstream social media. Since the outbreak of smartphone revolution, the political parties are using WhatsApp messenger to access the voters. There are 1.14 billion smartphones in the country whereas approximately 200 million people are connected with WhatsApp. Mobile phone has facilitated the BJP to spread its social media influence in the state whereas the WhatsApp is an important platform through which the party is accessing the voters. WhatsApp has diverse reach in the rural areas while the other digital media are predominantly urban oriented. In WhatsApp the BJP is far ahead than the Congress which has yet to penetrate in this media. Digital platforms have attracted the political parties and politicians in the country. Narendra Modi has been leading the social media presence whereas a significant change took place after the 2017 Assembly Election of Uttar Pradesh. The Congress party started to review its digital media strategy and Rahul Gandhi led this initiative in the party. As far as the contents on social media is concerned, Modi was far ahead from Rahul Gandhi in respect of likes, comments, shares etc. Rahul Gandhi has made significant presence in social media. Both Modi and Rahul Gandhi used these digital platforms for their campaigning at the state and national level. Cumulatively, Narendra Modi was in better position on Twitter yet Rahul Gandhi was ahead of Modi in respect of average tweets and retweets. On Facebook both Modi and Gandhi made remarkable presence between these two years. From January 2018 to 2019, there were 44.02 million likes and 135.76 interactions whereas Rahul Gandhi claimed 2.83 million page likes and 33.8 million times interactions. But at the level of average interaction after each post Rahul Gandhi stood better than Modi. (Mehta, 2019)

In Uttar Pradesh, various political parties are present on social media platform with a motive to mobilize the voters in favor of these respective political parties. The contents of some of the political parties are found sensational whereas the Oxford University has found that the

contents of SP and BSP is comparatively lesser sensational. It is clear that most of the political parties use the social media during electoral campaigns but, beyond that also they are present in this platform. The fake contents are the major concern on these digital media platforms. The research study was conducted by the Oxford University between 14<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. The researcher analyzed the WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook posts of the said period and concluded with the findings that a third of the images uploaded by the BJP and one fourth of the same belonging to the Congress Party were in the category of 'divisive and conspiratorial.' The other major political parties the BSP and the SP shared only one tenth of such fake contents in the same category. The above study also concludes that the proportion of polarizing the political contents in India was more than that of any other country in the world baring the 2016. Presidential elections in the United States, that the researcher did not include in their studies. (The New Indian Express, 2019)

The advent of internet has attracted towards how the political parties would benefit from this form of mass media in the world. The political parties are using the internet to grab the opportunities while the internet still is learnt as the one way of communication in the communication process where the citizens are merely recipients of the messages. The scholars have also questioned the quality of the contents present in this cyber infosphere. The internet has outstanding ability to mobilize the voters towards a particular issue yet this is to be established. (Patrut, 2014:3-4) The political parties in India have been using social media platforms to woo the voters. The last few years have been experimental for the political parties to use the digital media for the political campaigns. The 2014 General Elections witnessed the extensive use of the new media in the country. Various political parties have opted for social media to connect the voters. Few years ago, the political parties were relying on conventional mass media for political campaigns but the emergence of online digital platforms have altered the entire media landscape. The political parties have deployed the

trained IT professionals in data analytics in the war rooms to prepare the desired contents and then to disseminate them to the desired publics. The political leaders are of the opinion that they could establish the link with the voters and also can feel their pulse to prepare the campaign strategies for the elections on social media. This is not possible in other form of mass communication. These efforts are not confined to the Facebook and Twitter but also finding other ways to reach the voters (Mahayan, 2018). India is a potential market for the social media giant Facebook and Twitter. Social media has become an important aspect of electoral politics in the world after the 2016 Presidential elections in the United States. Russian encroachments and Cambridge Analytica have been the issues discussed worldwide. WhatsApp has more than 200 million users in the country. Gilles Vernier, a professor of Political Science in the Ashoka University considers social media as a constant megaphone for the political parties which amplify the messages. Narendra Modi has 46 million whereas Rahul Gandhi after joining this platform in 2015 has 9 million twitter followers. (Iyengar, 2019).

This is known to all political parties aiming to form the Government at the Centre that the better performance in the state of Uttar Pradesh matters a lot. The parties now also realize that mere use of offline connectivity with the voter is not enough, they need to maintain their cyber presence as well as the connectivity with their voters. The India against Corruption Movement in proved the power of social media to mobilize the masses towards the set goals. Having been inspired form this big social right movement, the political parties are inspired to use the social media with the purpose of mobilization of masses. The political parties aiming to access the political realm of Uttar Pradesh, are using social media for connectivity and mobilization of voters. A Facebook fan page, Congress for UP was started by the party for this purpose. The BJP is also a having a huge number of tech savvy followers and considers the social media as an effective media to connect the voters in the state. The BJP stated the

Youth TV and various mobile apps to access the young voters in the state. Experts opine that these efforts were made by the party to counter the similar visual presence of Congress as well. The Samajwadi Party is all determined to use the potential of social media for the purpose of participation and mobilization of voters (Naidu, 2012). The BJP leader Narendra Modi dominate the social media in the state as well. He is also retweeted by the other political leaders in Uttar Pradesh. Thus, BJP dominates the digital infosphere in the state. Mayawati of BSP and Akhilesh Yadav from SP are also present significantly in the social media platform after the BJP leaders. Their tweets dominate both the Twitter and are also retweeted by the leaders and followers of their respective political parties. (Pal, Panda, 2019).

#### **4.4.1- Bhartiya Janata Party-**

The 2014 General Elections of India were unprecedented in many ways. The Narendra Modi led Bhartiya Janata Party defeated the Indian National Congress and many other regional parties in a land slide vote margin. There were widespread debates and discussions on this major victory of BJP as a single largest political party after decades. The remarkable communication strategies made and implemented enabled the party to establish the chain of dialogues between the party and potential voters. Having been inspired from the Obama experiment in the United States, the Modi brand was established. The massive use of social media redefined the political arena and electoral campaign in the country while social media being at the epicenter of this entire practice. (Kapoor, Dwivedi, 2015). This is for the first time after 1984 that a single party claimed the largest number of seats in the popular house due to its own individual capacity with more than 272 seats. (Gupta, 2014). In these elections the social media established its strength over other traditional patters of electoral communication. The cyber media defined its substantial mass communication potential for the first time in an organized way in the country. These elections are also termed as the very first attempt to reach the voters through social media decisively. Since the BJP was

innovating the political campaign through social media, the party stood at the top. (Ali, 2014). Since social media facilitated the BJP to maintain the connectivity with voters directly, there was an opportunity in the hands of the leadership of the BJP to persuade the voters to their agenda which subsequently resulted into the comprehensive mobilization of voters in favor of the BJP. (Mishra, 2014). According to Ali (2014), the BJP has made exceptional presence in the social media platform to project its leader Narendra Modi as a charisma. That is why Narendra Modi is the sixth most followed leader in the world on Twitter. The BJP used the potential of social media as tool before and during the electoral campaign in such a way that it remained engaged the voters through this cyber communication. All types of social media ranging from Twitter, Facebook to You Tube etc. were used extensively for the purpose of mobilizing the voters specially the netizens<sup>5</sup> who are primarily the youth. (Chilkoti, 2014). The BJP appointed an electronic engineer to prepare and manage the social media campaigning for Narendra Modi and party. A Ph.D. Hiren Joshi designed and led the IT department and kept on updating social media for the purpose of electoral campaigning. (DNA, 2014). The BJP (Kapoor, Dwivedi, 2015) got essential weightage in the 2014 General Elections as social media influenced the 30-40 percent of seats in overall constituencies of India. The BJP has been forerunner on the social media both at the national and state level. The party has approximately 3.4 million followers on the Facebook whereas the number of followers has crossed one million mark at its Twitter handle in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, the party is also active on the popular messenger WhatsApp. There are more than 25,000 WhatsApp group in the state. They facilitate the instant and permanent connectivity on the digital platform on which the party keeps sending the contents to mobilize the people towards its agendas. Such a strong presence of party on social media in the state of Uttar Pradesh has been a helping hand to claim outstanding performances in both the General and Assembly elections. The BJP also planned to increase the presence on the cyber sphere

with at least doubling the number of WhatsApp group with a motive to make its both electoral and political campaign in the state as well as to respond the rival political parties. The top leadership of BJP focusses on to increase the cyber warriors<sup>6</sup> in the length and width of the state. The party aims to carry on its cyber expansion in the state as there has been significant penetration of cyber media specially with the emergence of mobile internet at the cheap rate. The party has more than 6000 thousand cyber warriors in the state which are aimed to be increased to remain active in all the 167000 booths in Uttar Pradesh. The party leadership at the state level is committed to the widespread use of social media in different parts of the state to make people aware about the party's top agendas which would subsequently facilitate the formation of public opinion in the favor of the party. The BJP is enthusiastic to use the substantial communication potential of social media as after Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh stands second in the category of internet subscribers. The current number of internet subscribers in the state is more than 22.90 subscribers. The BJP considered this number as a potential enough to facilitate the victory of the party in the elections as other parties are also active on social media in the Uttar Pradesh. The top leadership of party in the state is also cautious to use the standard language to counter the other political parties on this digital platform. (Pandey, 2019). The BJP also tried to access the ground level through the social media in the country. The 927,533 booths were the target of the party to maintain the access through the social media. "Mera Booth Sabse Mazboot" was the drive where the party tried to recruit the volunteers from the grassroot levels. This concept of accessing the grassroot level was included for the 2019 electoral campaign. The mobile phone pramukh is the chief volunteer deployed in each of the aforementioned booths of India. (Mahapatra, Plagmann, 2019).

**4.4.2- Modi, the Dominant Narrative-** Narendra Modi has been the dominant narrative ever since the BJP chose to focus its electoral campaigning on him both at the regional and

national level (Mehta, 2019). The BJP portrayed Modi as the development man and also made his image through various means like digital campaigns. Modi himself carried out aggressive campaigning supported by his digital warriors played an important role in the decisive victory of BJP in the 2019 General elections. The youth in particular was impressed by the idea of Modi as a liberator from all complexities though there were a number of issues that the party did not address like employment etc. during these electoral campaigns in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The marketing management and the effective use of social media facilitated the BJP to win these elections decisively (Pai, 2019). The BJP before the 2014 General Elections used the social media platforms to transform the image of Narendra Modi into an image that is inclined to the holistic development of India. This was the time when mainstream media, both electronic and print was not giving the positive space to Narendra Modi both at the national and international levels. Modi and his Gujrat Model of development were the prime themes at this time on which the campaign agenda was designed and disseminated through the social networking sites. (Ullekh, 2015) The party promoted the positive image of Narendra Modi as the architect of development. This narrative has been the soul of BJP's communication strategy ever since Narendra Modi has emerged in the national political spectrum in the country. Besides, the party also focusses on development and related issues on the social networking platforms. The NaMao App<sup>7</sup> is another important digital tool to engage the voters online. (Mahapatra, Plagmann, 2019). In the Indian infosphere, the most visible and discussed political leader is Narendra Modi. He has more than three million followers on the social networking site Twitter whereas he is also present comprehensively on Facebook. Besides, he also manages a blog and websites which remain updated for everything. He ventured into the social media sphere at a time when he was leading Gujrat and wanted the new media technology to be used for the political participation and mobilization of the youth in his state. His presence in the social media spectrum was much

earlier before he became the Prime Minister of India in 2014 after his party made outstanding performance in the General Elections. The emergence of social media has occurred at a time when Indian society is passing through tremendous changes. The online engagement is one of the recent developments where the youth is present. Narendra Modi accessed the youth on this platform through social media. In 2013, Narendra Modi the then Chief Minister of Gujrat left many celebrities behind on the Facebook where he left behind Sachin Tendulkar, Raghuram Rajan and India's ambitious mission to the Mars. The cheap data and smart phones have played an important role in the outbreak of Modi- Wave in the social media. By the end of 2013, the local and international versions of smartphones were sold in the potential consumer market of India at the rate of 12.8 million in the third quarter of this year There has been an outstanding rise of 229 percent of smartphone market in the recent past. Facebook is the first choice of the consumers on smartphones. Narendra Modi is passionate about this significant digital consumption and sees Indian to be at their best in this area in 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Chopra, 2014). Facebook has helped Narendra Modi rising in this digital media world significantly. According to an analysis "The World Leaders on Facebook" conducted by Burson and Cohn and Wolfe in 2018, the Indian leader Narendra Modi had 43.2 million followers. The US President Donald Trump stood second with 23.1 million followers in the list. In the 2014 General Elections, there were 75 million interactions made by some 13 million users on social media related to Narendra Modi. (Sam and Thakurta,2019). Narendra Modi emerged in the social media platform as the center of political discourse. This trend dwarfed the ideology and the identity of the party against the image of Prime Ministerial candidate Modi. Most of the contents of social media were produced and reproduced Modi as the charismatic leader who would settle down all complexities of India. This political discourse set the trend in various electoral campaigns as the individual centric. The trend was common on both General and Assembly elections. (Kaur, 2015). Narendra Modi was

portrayed as a very common man who emerged from the extreme adverse circumstances in the political arena of India. His self – made image was drawn in the social media contents to create the sympathy in the hearts and minds of the voters. This particular approach of portraying him as an earthy man appealed the voters emotionally in different parts of India. His various photographs were displayed in different moods and temperament in the social media. The social media facilitated the portraying of his image as a strong leader in different elections and beyond. (Gulati, 2016, Sen 2017).

#### **4.4.3- BJP's War Room-**

The War Rooms of BJP are the information processing and disseminating centers in every state capital of India. Prior to 2019 General Elections, the BJP was active through its war rooms also called the contact centers. The aim of these nationwide centers is to feed the data to the center which subsequently process these data and prepares the communication strategies accordingly. The idea behind these war room is to feel the pulse of local issues and then to keep track on the electoral campaigning. (Uttatm, 2018). The war room of BJP is quite active round the clock and even on Sundays. This is considered the most active war room among all other political parties. The aim of this war room is to promote the policies of party in different parts of Uttar Pradesh. Sanjai Rai who heads the IT cell of BJP claims that the war rooms prepare contents for the social media and then disseminates the same to different social media platforms particularly Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. (Rai, 2017). The BJP's war rooms are actually the control rooms from where the highly trained IT professionals both at the national and regional levels are active round the clock for the management of social media. Besides, there are 1.2 million volunteers who contribute immensely in the digital communication process through the social media to mobilize the voters. (Ullekh 2015, Shah, 2018). The BJP War Room in Lucknow is divided into ten broad divisions. These are occupied by the trained IT professionals and led by politicians. Some of

them belong to even from the prestigious institutions like IIT. This war room in the state capital is equipped with all essential infrastructure required to create and disseminate the messages to millions of voters in different parts of the state. This War Room also played an important role in managing Modi's rallies at different places in Uttar Pradesh in the previous Assembly elections held in 2017. Besides mainstream social media like Facebook and Twitter, the WhatsApp messenger has also been a potential platform to communicate to more than 4.5 crore people. The single touch of a push button can disseminate the messages to more than 1.2 million people at a time. There is a call center in the war room. This is 112-seater set up from where each of the operators made some 250 calls daily to communicate with the heads of booth committees scattered at different places in the state. These callers collect the feedback to create and recreate the fresh communication strategies. There are more than 1.4 lacs booths in the state which are considered to be very relevant to get in touch with the grassroot people. Besides, the War Room also has a research division that keep on monitoring both print and electronic media contents and facilitates the creation of contents based on the requirements. (Sharma, 2017)

#### **4.4.4-Bahujan Samaj Party-**

At a time when most of the political parties are striving for social media, the BSP believes in maintaining distance from social media. The party head Mayawati, time and again denies any presence in this platform. The party did not endorse a website and the BSP Youth kind of pages which was launched by Devashish Jararia are an unauthorized attempt to fool the people. The party claimed to maintain a distance from social media. (Verma, 2018). Mayawati, the head of BSP stayed away from social media for two important reasons one that she considered this cyber infosphere as an anti- Dalit set up and as a need of the urban people. Second, she felt that she might lose the direct control on political communication from her to the core voters. But she realized that Modi led BJP keeps on polishing the party's

image by portraying the achievements on this media. She felt the need of the hour to encounter this and other political rivals. This would have been possible only by having joined the social media platform. Mayawati did not stay away long from the miracles of social media. She finally ventures into this digital domain where she has been continuously denying the presence of her political party. This was made clear that the BSP still believes on the traditional patterns of communication with the voters in the state but the party now felt to maintain the compatibility with the changing political communication scenario in the state. Mayawati realized the importance of social media that is why she is finally on the Twitter. The basic motive, she claims to wider her reach beyond the traditional voters as well as to access the young and English-speaking voters in other parts of the country. Her Twitter account @ShushriMayawati says that she is on that platform to address the people on various political issues. (Srivastava, 2019)

The Bahujan Samaj Party is new in the use of social media platforms connect the voters in the state. Because of this particular reason, the party does not have the similar kind of infrastructure as is possessed by other rival political parties in the states. The party also does not have a specific war room kind of concept for digital campaigning. Instead, the party's policies are promoted by different volunteers who are predominantly the young students from different universities. They keep on injecting the contents on social media on the party line from different places of Uttar Pradesh unofficially. (Rai, 2017)

The Bahujan Samaj Party having understood the importance of social media started to use this platform to launch electoral and political campaign. The party started to emphasize on designing its campaign keeping youth of state at the center. The youth centric political campaign is understood as a significant attempt to mobilize them towards the issues and policies of BSP. The party took such steps as to appear on social media platform having been wiped out in the electoral battle against the BJP in the 2014 General Elections. The party

aims to launch the comprehensive social media campaign by giving new shape to the electoral management in Uttar Pradesh. The party divided the state into two broad categories at the level of booths focusing specially on the youth. The activists of Bahujan Volunteer Force were given the responsibility to activate such contents in the digital media platform as could promote the party and its Bahujan agenda in Uttar Pradesh. The BAMSEF<sup>8</sup> also facilitated the use of social media platform to propagate the ideology of BSP in different parts of the state especially among the urban youth. These all efforts were made to strengthen the party before and during the 2019 General Elections. Mayawati restructured the organization of the party giving 50 per cent posts to only youth as well as she also inducted social media platform to be used for electoral campaigns in the state. Mayawati changed herself to the changing political circumstances in the state and considered that the formidable rival BJP could not be overcome without the party uses all new practices for the purpose of persuasion and mobilization of the voters in the state. Because of this approach, the party increased its presence in the social media sphere. The party might not be having the youth wing unlike other parties like the BJP and SP but the BVF is a strong base of party. The BVF is made up of youth from different parts of the country. They are fully committed to the party and its policies. The party has structured the huge and organized network of BVF<sup>9</sup> activists till the level of booth in the state. The youth of BVF were given the responsibility to enhance the social media capability. (Dainik Jagran, 2019). The BSP having exploited the use of social engineering, went to explore the social media for making the political base of the party in the state. Generally, before the 2019 General Elections, the party stayed away from this virtual world. But the party changed its approach before the 2019 General Elections. The party revived its political communication strategy and accessed the voters till the booth level through social media. The party gave priority to make WhatsApp group to such youth who are very active in the social media till the booth level. The party made two- pronged strategy

for the social media- internal and external. Internally the party made cyber connectivity with the party activists and responsible officials within the party and externally the party tried to connect with the voters at different levels like rural and urban. The main agenda of the party is also to retaliate the propaganda raised by the political opponents as well to initiate the befitting reply. The responsibility to respond was given to the party activists who were also asked to report to the higher officials of the party if something big is propagated against the party or the BSP leader Mayawati. (Sharma, 2019).

There has been continuous pressure on the Bahujan Samaj Party leadership from the activists to venture into the social media domain. The youth, in particular has been demanding the party to be in social media platform. Mayawati also realized the importance of social media in the domain of political communication. Considering the important role of social media in the mobilization and persuasion of the youth in particular, she appeared on Twitter before the General Elections. Because of outstanding performance of the BJP in the General Election 2014, there was common understanding in the BSP leadership to emerge in the social media platform with all the its agenda and policies. Besides, the party has also acknowledged the role of youth in the politics. Subsequently, the party filled almost half of the posts with the youth leaders. The committees comprising 23 youth were constituted at the booth level in Uttar Pradesh. The youth who are active in the social media platform were promoted to have a role in the social media domain. This combination of youth and social media is a new trend in the electoral management of the BSP which was specially designed for the 2019 General Elections. (Kumar, Virender, 2017)

#### **4.4.5- Indian National Congress-**

The social media platform has attracted the Indian National Congress. Earlier, the party was indifferent on the use of social media for the purpose of participation and mobilization both at

the national and regional levels. But having seen the successful use of social media platform by the BJP, the Congress changed its policies and started to invest heavily on the new media to access the voters. But the party did not venture into social media platform suddenly instead with all preparedness. The party organized workshops to train the party activists associated with the social media wing of the party. In this workshop, the activists were trained how to use various social media like Facebook, Twitter and others effectively and for the purpose of reaching even at the grassroot level through this media at the national level and Uttar Pradesh. These workshops started at a time when the UPA Government led by the Congress was ruling the country. Such workshops were emphasized due to the controversial tweets and remarks by the party leaders who created an embarrassing situation for the party. Shashi Tharoor used the “Cattle class” phrase and subsequently he had to quit the post of Minister of State in the Government. Party spokesperson Shakeel Ahmed tweeted that the Indian Mujaheddin was formed after the Gujrat riots. The party think tank was of the opinion that such contents provided the BJP an opportunity to smash the party online with the support of same approach of mainstream media. The party leadership was of the opinion that the training was prerequisite for both the party leaders and the professional before giving them the space in the communication wing of different states. (Naidu, 2013). The Congress was slow in using social media and in Uttar Pradesh the party is struggling to provide basic infrastructure needed to run the social media centers for the dissemination of information to the voters in the state against the BJP which on the other hand is more organized and also having enough infrastructure for the social media campaigning. In many districts like Gorakhpur, the party did not have even basic amenities to function. In the absence of these facilities, the social media activists of the party manage the campaign on the daily basis. (TNN, 2019). Ahead of 2017 Assembly elections, the Congress party girded its loins to use social media in a more organized and effective way to access and mobilize the voters. The

phrase “27 saal UP behal” was one of the most circulated contents on social media. Besides, the party also raised the concern about the party not being in power and subsequently the state facing tough time (Seth, 2016).

#### **4.4.6-Samajwadi Party-**

The social media wing of Samajwadi party is taken care of by a team of 40 members coming from different professional backdrop. The center is situated in the state capital Lucknow and is functional round the clock. This team is active in preparing the digital contents to be circulated through social media. This is one of the four divisions of the party’s war room. Aftab Ahmad Naqvi an entrepreneur in the digital media contents heads this team. The team analyses the ongoing social media contents and prepares the contents to respond the rival political parties as well as to initiate the discourse in this cyber infosphere. The team tries to maintain the compatibility and pump the contents accordingly into the social media stream. The team claims to run the positive campaign in response to the BJP’s negative war in the social media spectrum. “Kam bolta hai” was launched on the social media platform. The phrase became a popular one among the political activists even at the grass root levels. The activists participated in the communication process positively and uploaded various contents in which the pictures, videos and texts were telling the success story of the SP Government led by Akhilesh Yadav. This team also approaches to more than 2.5 million WhatsApp users in the state and keep of updating the dedicated activists with the ongoing and futures activities of party. These contents are further injected to the virgin domain and the process go on. This is how social media has become the ideal platform to mobilize the masses in the state. Besides, the team also keeps on showing the live public rallies of the party leadership through the live streaming process of Facebook platform. The contents of social media are Akhilesh Yadav centric. The young leader of the party is visible in most the contents. Besides, the social media sell also takes care of the using the developmental narratives as the

mainstay of the entire campaign. (Agrawal, 2017). Samajwadi Party considered youth as the potential voters in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The party's youth wing uses all substantial communication systems to approach the youth. This wing also used social media to maintain connectivity with the young voters in the state. The party reaches the youth through social media and persuade them with the ideology of Samajwadi Party. The party is also engaged in the running special programs for the youth in state who are studying in the college and universities through social media. (PTI, 2013)

Before the 2012 Assembly Elections, in social media, the Samajwadi Party appeared with an advertisement that appealed the people specially the party activists to suggest the Akhilesh Yadav led campaign on the issues and areas the party should concentrate upon in response to the campaign of the ruling BSP party in the state. The Samajwadi Party has appeared decoratively on the Facebook page online. The page was arranged to attract the voters with all essential apps which could make the viewers acquainted with all essential of political and electoral campaign. The contents displayed on the cover page carry the information in Hindi and also is informative about the ideology of Samajwadi Party. The party has also uploaded some relevant audio-visual contents on You Tube targeting the youth in particular. These contents are also available on other social media platform like Facebook. Thus, the party has applied the convergence of media and contents. (Naidu, 2012)

Samajwadi Party war room headed by Ashish Yadav in Lucknow focusses on the developmental contents. Work itself speaks or "kam bolta hai" has been the dominant theme. On this theme, the messages are prepared and pumped into the social media platform to reach the voters in the state. The War Room of Samajwadi Party is divided into four sections- media monitoring cell, research cell, digital media contents cell and the call center cell. There are approximately two thousand phone calls made to the booth level activists each day. Besides, the feedback is welcomed and analyzed minutely. (Rai, 2017)

#### **4.5- Use of Digital Resources for Political Campaigning by the Parties**

According to the Open Election Data Initiative, political campaigns are organized efforts to influence the opinion of target publics in favor of an ideology, party or an issue. The political parties use various types of methods to deliver their agenda to the people in the area concerned. They use both traditional and new media for the purpose of dissemination of information to the target audience. In democracies where various political parties compete in different platforms to persuade the voters towards their agenda. There have been significant changes in the political campaigning in the world. The new horizons have been born in this important aspect of political spectrum. Politics in the large part of the world has been polarized. Though the cost of this polarization, sometimes becomes exceptionally negative even though the parties are investing in this direction. The ongoing trends in the many countries which are very established institutionally are experiencing these changes due to many reasons. The voters have also become volatile subsequently it is important that political parties keep on exploring new voters in different areas. In the age of reality television shows, the voters tend to forget the flaws of their leaders. Instead ,they even vote such leaders as have not been very positive initially. The digital media has become a catalyst in the political campaigning. In the age of online infosphere when a huge number of voters are online, political parties strive to access them through the social media. The social media has become a cyclone of issues that ignite debate and discussion at the highest possible speed. Even mainstream media is not away from the influence of social media in the world specially in the democracies. Besides, the days of negative campaigning are over. The voters in the United States are least interested to receive the contents and messages which are having negative nature. In Europe as well the voters have become inclined towards the positive campaigning. (Perron, 2018).

The digital resources are the most recent origin in the world. As happens with every innovation, they were also elite centric at the very time of their inception in the world because they were consumed mostly by the elites. Digital discourse subsequently was argued on the basis of digital divide. The perception was also significant in the digital political spectrum in India as well. In India, the digital accessibility was centralized at the time of digital advent into the Indian cyberspace whereas the mass theatre of discourse was staying away from these developments initially. But in the meantime, the mobile internet penetration in India has facilitated the decentralization of digital resources and subsequently the issue of digital divide became less relevant in the communication scenario in the country. The major developments took place towards the decentralization of digital resources and the mass accessibility to the internet in the latter half of the ongoing decade. The number of internet users in the country went up to 581.51 million in 2019 from only 65.3 million in 2014. This stupendous growth in the digital consumption provided the access to the internet by rapid stages. (TRAI, 2014, 2019). The wide digital divide shortened quickly due to the availability of affordable internet data for the common masses in India. By the 2019 General Elections in the country, almost half the voting population could access the digital resources for different purposes. (Election Commission of India, 2019).

“India Shining” and the “Feel Good Factor” are some of the narratives which were used by the NDA in the 2004 General Elections to address the city dwellers. The BJP led NDA wanted to push the growth and development into the domain of electoral campaigning. The main motive behind this was to reach the urban middle class. There have been significant changes in the political campaigning due to the emergence of various factors like the birth of newly rich middle class in the urban areas, skilled youth and the advancement of information and communication technologies. The number of voters approaching the polling stations has also increased. Besides, there has also been an increase in the number of political parties.

There is now the upliftment in the political conscious. The people have been more inclined to political activities. In the subsequent General Elections of 2009, the Congress led UPA also used the narrative of Bharat Nirman with a motive to impress the rural voters. The 2014 General Elections witnessed several changes in the use of both traditional and newly emerged digital resources for the purpose of electoral campaigning. The communication strategist public relations experts and professionals were hired to design the campaign for the Modi led NDA as compared to the Congress led UPA which still believed on the traditional resources of electoral campaigning. The mass mobilization in the India Against Corruption movement in 2011 and afterwards had created a hotbed for the ruling UPA and the use of modern communication technologies like digital media had added more advantage in favor of the NDA. The connectivity of Modi with the youth through the social media and other modern mechanism popularized Narendra Modi and the promises made by the NDA among the youth through modern mass media. (Katju, 2019). The political campaign through the online media paved the way for Narendra Modi to establish his brand image as a man of development who always strives to change the fate of the millions of the people of India. This was an unprecedented trend when the collective efforts were made to use the professional mechanism for the purpose of public relations and political communication (Pande, 2014). The use of social media professionally by the BJP facilitated the party to approach the youth and exposed them with the messages of optimism like that of “Vibrant Gujarat.” Such kind of political communication through the social media connected the masses with the top leadership and that subsequently was a major reason of mobilization of youth towards the BJP. The party was successful in telling the people about the dream the golden future with the use of social media (Narayan, 2014: 12-14). According to the PTI (2015) the use of information and communication technologies was one the most vibrant factors in the electoral as well as political campaigning. The BJP was ahead among all major political parties in this

process. The Modi led campaign incorporated the latest digital resources for the purpose. The three- dimensional holograms screens were used by the party at such places where the star advertiser Narendra Modi could not visit himself for the purpose. The receivers of these political messages through the holograms were witnessing the miracles according to them. They were surprised to experience this digital media for the political campaigning. Amidst, these circumstance the information and communication technologies played the role of catalyst in transforming the public opinion in favor of the BJP led NDA. The use of social media changed the narratives in the domain of political discourse. The easily accessibility of social media and related digital platform caused the downfall in the contents as well as the language in the political campaign process. (Katju, 2019)

#### **4.6- Impact of Social Media on the Political Discourse in Uttar Pradesh-**

The 2017 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh are considered when the use of social media was at its most possible strength and by most of the political parties. The BJP, Congress, Smajwadi Party were the leading users of social media whereas the BSP was an exception in this regard as the party Supremo Mayawati considered social media as anti- Dalit and urban centric newly rich urban people and certainly not addressing the common masses. Despite this, the other political parties used the social media platform in these elections to organize the resources for electoral campaigning as well as to mobilize the voters during the electoral campaign and beyond (Nanjappa 2017; Kaushal 2017; Jain 2017). The social media is dynamic in nature and affect the political communication comprehensively. This media has transformed the political communication in the world significantly by engaging the citizen in the communication process. This cyber media which is novel in nature has evolved in the past three decades. The emergence of social media has impacted both the traditional media as well as the political institutions everywhere but particularly in the democracies. The social media does not have any scope for the gatekeeping mechanism which is very common practice in

the traditional media. On the other hand, political communication has become participatory in nature by engaging the citizens to actively participate in the communication process. They are not left merely as the passive recipients of messages unlike the other mass communication systems. (Stroud, 2011)

The social media has become a bridge between the political leaders and the young voters in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The state has made significant progress in the field of digital communication technology. The state has adopted digital technology in different areas like e - governance, education, social welfare schemes etc. Uttar Pradesh was at the tenth place in the digital ranking of all the states and Union territories of India. The digitization has been a milestone in the empowerment of the common masses in the state- socially and politically. The broadband connectivity in the rural areas has brought the rural people into the mainstream digital discourse in the state. (Singh, 2018) Ever since the BJP led NDA has made landslide victory, the social media platforms have got momentum in the state of Uttar Pradesh. There are digital war rooms in the state capital established by the BJP, SP and Congress to access the people in the state. The trained professionals are hired by these political parties to prepare and inject the contents on the social media for the purpose of political mobilization through Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp messenger. The trend of using social media has become a popular practice among political parties specially after the General Elections of 2014. Various political parties in the state aim to access the young voters through these social media platforms in the state. (Rai, 2017)

After the General Elections of 2014, both the BJP and the Congress have been involved in the social media heavily to attract the voters both at the regional and national levels. These platforms have become an effective media to engage with the voters directly and to mobilize them towards the policies, agendas and ideology. The digital media unlike the traditional media is capable to enhance the reach of the political parties as well as to multiply the

strength of messages communicated to the target audience irrespective of geographical areas and any other kinds of barriers to communication process in the state. The social media has also proved its ability to strengthen the political party both at the micro and macro level by engaging the masses in the communication process. This is also twofold sword in the hands of both common masses and the leadership. If used properly for the constructive purposes. The participatory democracy has been strengthened successfully with the emergence of social media which is a cyclical communication process but on the other side there are certain lacunas if used for the negative and destructive purposes. In the contemporary scenario, the political campaign is not complete during or before the elections if the social media is not the part of media mix strategy in the communication process. (Mahapatra, Plagmann, 2019).

Technology has affected both the individual and public infosphere where the youth use these technologies to express themselves appropriately with an objective to communicate in different ways (Bimber, 2005). The revolution in communication technologies has enabled the youth to express through the audio -visual capacities of modern mass communication tools and techniques. In fact, the digitization has enabled the youth to actively participate in the political processes effectively (Ludes, 2005). Youth find the digital technologies compatible to themselves as the monopoly on mass media is held by an established system. The digital technologies have created digital platforms which are accessible and affordable for the youth for the purpose of communication in different manners. These trends have challenged the established practices in both journalistic and governmental scenario (Benett, 2004). Computer mediated mass communication technologies are facilitating the youth for the political participation and civic engagement. This tendency has become a common practice in many social and political developments in the world (Auskalniene, 2012). The social media is a digital platform which the youth find compatible to its needs and desires. Amidst all these circumstances, the tendency of youth has been to express through social

media on various issues of national and international importance. This has also been the tendency to find the youth participating politically and also showing its inclination towards the civic engagement. Another major reason for the youth to adopt these media is that it is not under the monitoring or supervision of authoritarian control and also allowing them to be expressive without any censorship. (Bennett, 2004). Besides, these platforms are not confined within the steel frame boundaries instead they have a flexible circumvent which allows them to fabricate their profiles, bloggings, customization and personalization. (Nayar, 2010, 04). The audio- visuals, and images have the substantial potential to be more informative than the traditional contents of mass media. These contents facilitate the users to describe the political spectrum of a country with minimum efforts effectively and affordably. The democratization of both information and communication technologies have made possible even the common youth and others to access the internet without any gatekeeping frames. The nature of these information and communication technologies is free and thus the government has either partial control or no control to curb the expressions directly or indirectly. This is very applicable in the authoritarian regimes. The social media is diverse in nature that is why it gives the users unlimited opportunity to upload the images, audio- visuals and text in an unlimited way and can also interact the other users on the basis of these contents simultaneously. Besides, these media also invite reactions from others on the contents posted on these social networking sites (Thakrey, 2010). The political interest of youths can also be identified by the contents posted on his wall. This helps the researcher to easily understand the youth and his social and political priorities. (Dijck,2013). The concept of globalization would not have been come true had there not been the advancement and modification of information and communication technologies. These developments have resulted into the birth of an age which has been termed by Marshal McLuhan as global village. In this global village the people from different walks of life in different countries exchange their views.

This global communication helps the spread of various political ideas like democracy and human rights even in the remote areas which are staying away from major political developments. There is always an opportunity for the marginalized communities to rise their voices in support of democratic reforms. The social media in the past has invited and ignited the political discourse and has subsequently facilitated the mobilization of the people towards political reforms in many countries. The Arab spring and the demand for democratic reforms in Hong Kong are the most suitable examples in this regard. Youth in the said movements have been very active and social media played an important role in the mobilization of the masses (Warf and Grimes, 1997).

The social media along with broadcast media has given birth to such narratives as are inflaming the youth of Uttar Pradesh. The contents of social media are radicalizing the youth in the state. The discourse on social media contains devastative elements that has very adverse impacts on the youth. In fact, the social media has fanned the flame of extremes on different issues ranging from religion to caste and many more. The political discourse on these issues on social media is least logical and raise the emotional hype of the youth in the state. A couple of youth from western Uttar Pradesh followed the extreme path in Delhi against the protestors of CAA. These youth were radicalized by the contents on social media. The political parties also manipulate the social and political development in such a way as could disseminate on social media to instigate the youth and also to involve them in the discourse in the state. The cheaper internet facility and affordable mobile phones amplify these messages to millions of people through WhatsApp and Facebook. These contents have diverse reach even at the grass root level in rural and far -flung areas of Uttar Pradesh (Saikia, 2019).

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- 1- The BSP and the SP were backing up the UPA Government at the center. However, they were against each other in Uttar Pradesh.
  - 2- Generally, the term “War Room” is used to refer a place where war strategies are designed. But here war room refers to an IT Cell which is equipped with digital infrastructure for the media campaigning.
  - 3- The National Youth Policy 2014 aims to empower the youth between the age group of 18-29 years in India.
  - 4- AIU refers to the total number of actual internet users in a country.
  - 5- An internet user can also be termed as a netizen.
  - 6- Cyber warriors are the trained IT professionals who are engaged in the digital campaigning.
  - 7- NaMo App was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide updates and maintain connectivity with the followers.
  - 8- BAMCEF stands for Backward and Minority Employees Federation and was established in 1978 to empower the marginalized communities in India.
  - 9- BVF or Bahujan Volunteer Force is basically a youth wing of Bahujan Samaj Party. This was established.

**Chapter-5**  
**Social Media and the**  
**Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh:**  
**An Empirical Analysis**

## **CHAPTER-5**

### **Social Media and the Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh: An Empirical Analysis**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The chapter contains analysis, interpretations and presentation of data collected during the course of study. These findings of study have been analyzed and discussed in relation to the objectives described in the first chapter of the research study. The main aim of present research study is to find out the impact of social media on the participation of youth in the largest state of India demographically, Uttar Pradesh. The emergence of social media as a digital platform for mass communication is a pivotal development in the field of media and communication across the globe. Every walk of life is affected by these developments. These platforms are not only the place to facilitate connectivity among the like-minded people but also a medium to ignite various discourses. Millions of people worldwide are connected through these media for the variety of purposes. The compatibility of social media and their accessibility make it user friendly worldwide. The people of different physical and cultural landscapes can use it easily and share their thoughts and ideas with others surpassing all obstructions in the communication process. The users of social media belong to all age groups specially the youth who find these media systems to facilitate their friendship with the likeminded people. They also find these media systems to be useful for their academic purposes as well. The data analysis of the political discourse in social media and its impact on the participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh is presented below in three parts. In the first part the researcher has analyzed the data collected from survey to feel the pulse of the youth and their social media using habits. Then there is an analysis the opinion of experts whereas lastly, a content analysis of the data of official Facebook and Twitter pages has been made to meet the research goals.

#### **5.2 Analysis of Survey-**

A survey was conducted to know the political discourse in social media and its impact on the participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh. The primary data was collected through the convenience sampling. The respondents were provided the URL to access and response accordingly. There were 300 youth participants between the age from 18 to 30 years who participated in the survey in Lucknow, the Capital of Uttar Pradesh. Following is the analysis of survey-

**Table 5.1 Total Respondents**

Characteristics		Number	Percentage (%)	
Gender	M	149	49.66	
	F	151	50.33	
Age	18-22	M	56	50
		F	56	50
	22-26	M	55	18.33
		F	71	23.33
	26-30	M	34	11.00
		F	28	09.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Figure 5.1. Age of Respondents**

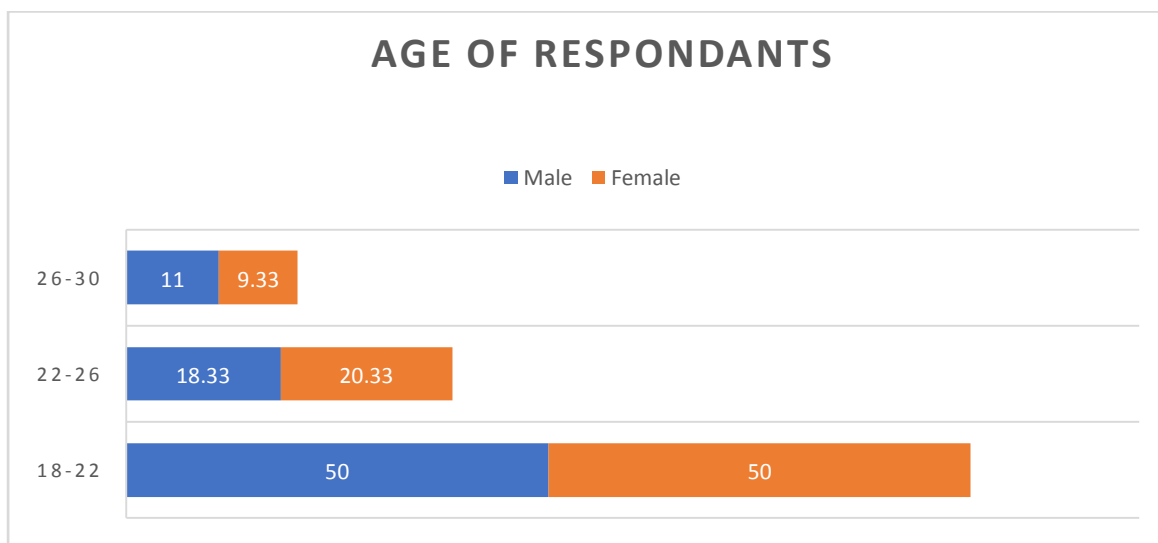
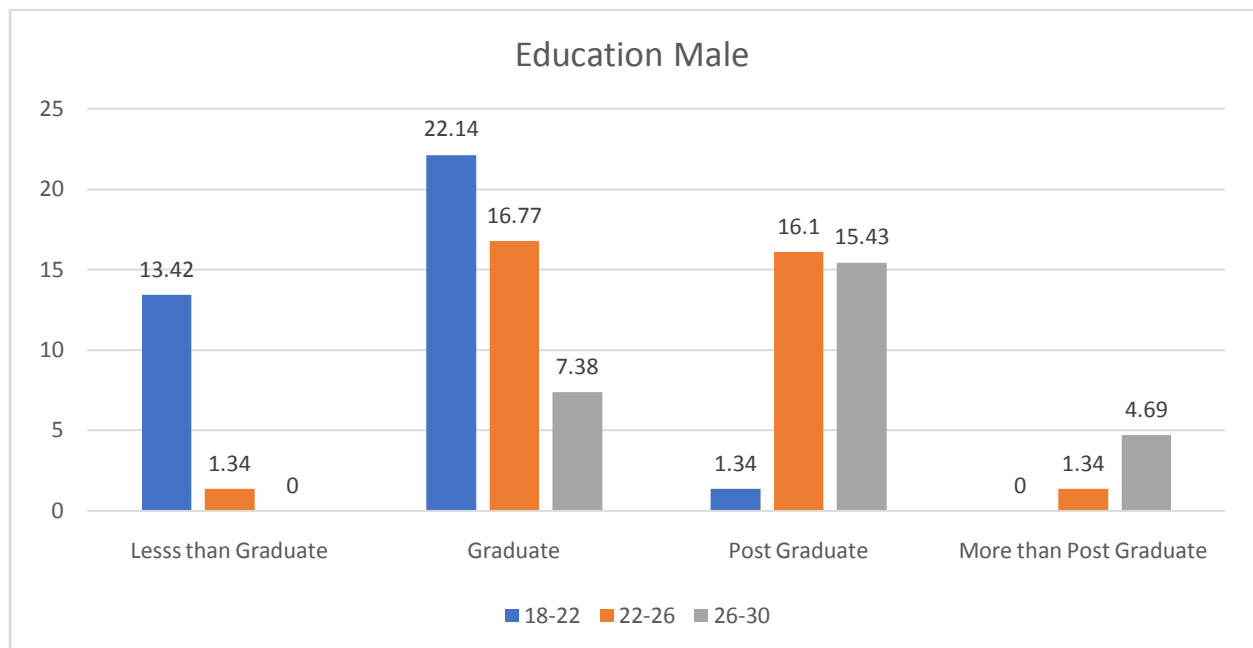


Table 5.1 presents the data about the two important demographical variables- gender and age. The number of male and female respondents is almost equal. Females shares 50.33 per cent whereas males are 49.66 per cent in total number of respondents. As long as the age is concerned, the majority of the respondents belong to the 18-22 years age group. Both male and female respondents are equal in numbers in this category of age. The least represented age group is between 26-30 years of the age. Both male and female respondents share 11.00 and 9.33 per cent respectively.

**Table 5.2 Education**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than Graduate	18-22 N=39	M	20	13.42
		F	19	12.58
	22-26 N=05	M	02	1.34
		F	03	1.98
	26-30 N=00	M	00	00
		F	00	00
Graduate	18-22 N=71	M	33	22.14
		F	38	25.16
	22-26 N=48	M	25	16.77
		F	23	15.23
	26-30 N=13	M	11	7.38
		F	02	1.3
Post Graduate	18-22 N=04	M	02	1.34
		F	02	1.3
	22-26 N=68	M	24	16.10
		F	44	29.13
	26-30 N=38	M	23	15.43
		F	15	9.93
More than Post Graduate	18-22 N= 00	M	00	00
		F	00	00
	22-26 N= 03	M	02	1.34
		F	01	00
	26-30 N =11	M	07	4.69
		F	04	2.64
<b>Total</b>	N= 300	M	149	49.66
		F	151	50.33

**Figure 5.2 Education Male**



**Figure 5.3 Education Female**

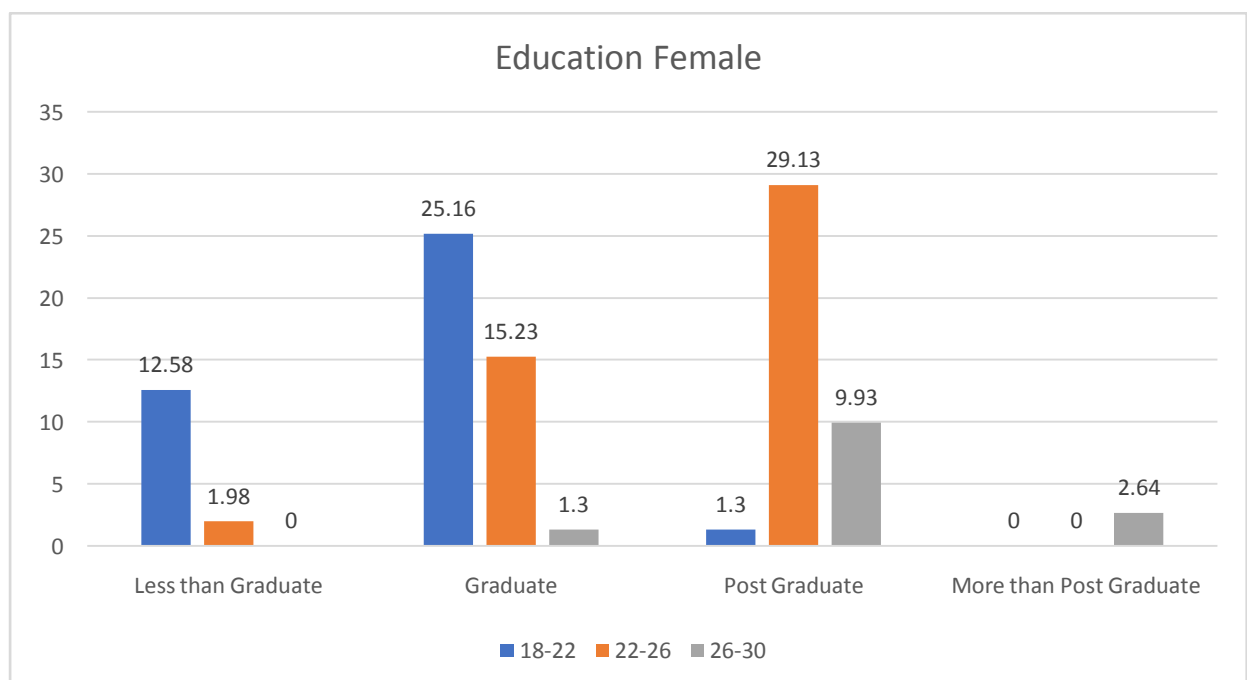


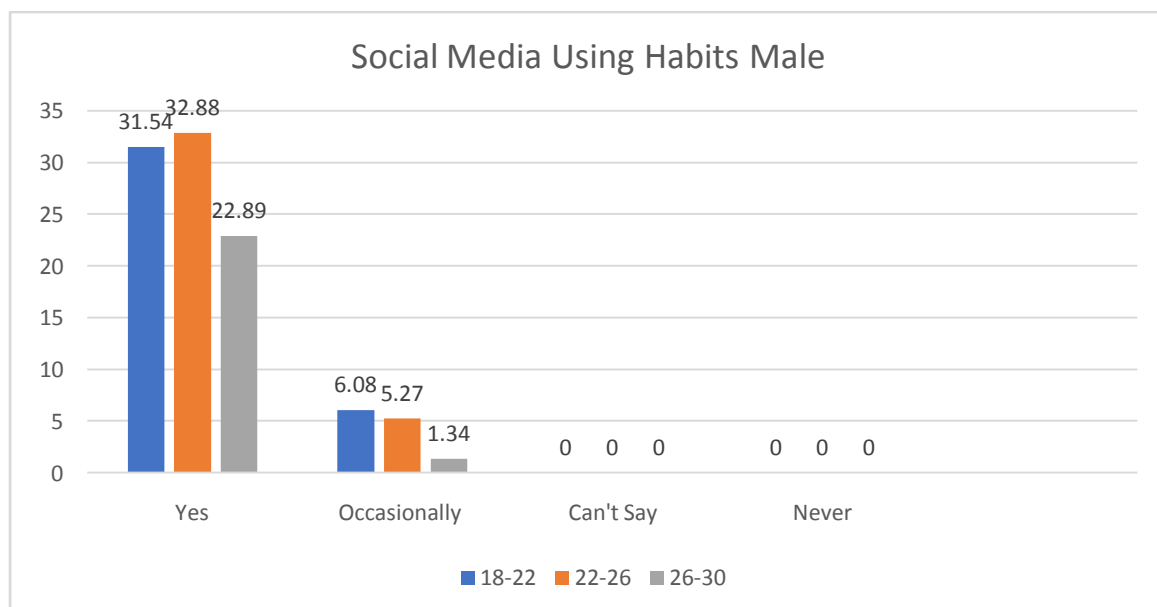
Table 5.2 presents an important variable, education. The researcher compiled the information about the education of respondents. The respondents were asked to provide their educational background in four categories- less than graduate, graduate, post graduate and more than post graduate. Since the age of respondents was ranging from 18 to 30 years, the participants were qualified differently. In the male, the largest number of respondents were graduate which is

22.14 percent in the 18 to 22 years age group. However, in the female category the largest number of respondents were post graduate which is 29. 13 percent in the age group of 26 to 30 years. In more than Post Graduate qualification category, the respondents were least in number. However, in this category, male respondents are more than female respondents. In the first category that is less than graduates there is a little difference between male and female respondents. The respondents of this category were pursuing their graduation.

**Table 5.3 Social Media Using Habits**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total
	18-22 Years (%)	22-26 Years (%)	26-30 Years (%)		18-22 Years (%)	22-26 Years (%)	26-30 Years (%)		
<b>Yes</b>	31.54	32.88	22.89	87.31	34.43	40.39	13.90	88.72	88.15
<b>Occasionally</b>	6.08	5.27	1.34	12.69	1.98	3.97	5.33	11.28	11.98
<b>Can't Say</b>	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
<b>Never</b>	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00

**Figure 5.4 Social Media Using Habits Male**



**Figure 5.5 Social Media Using Habits Female**

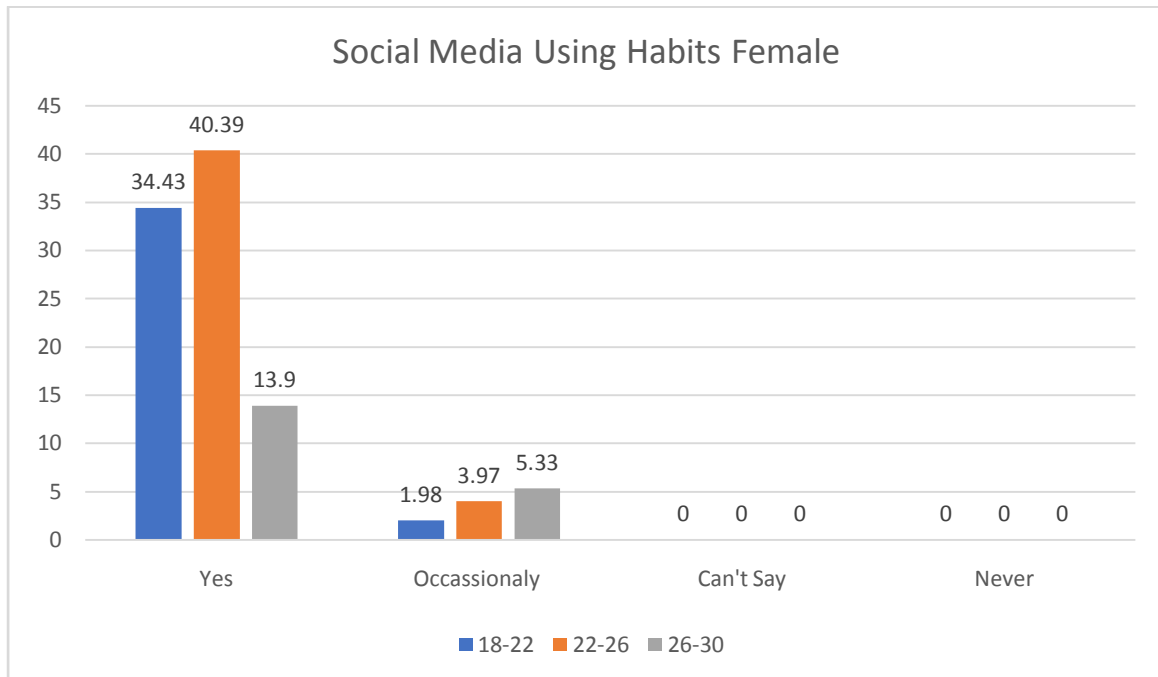
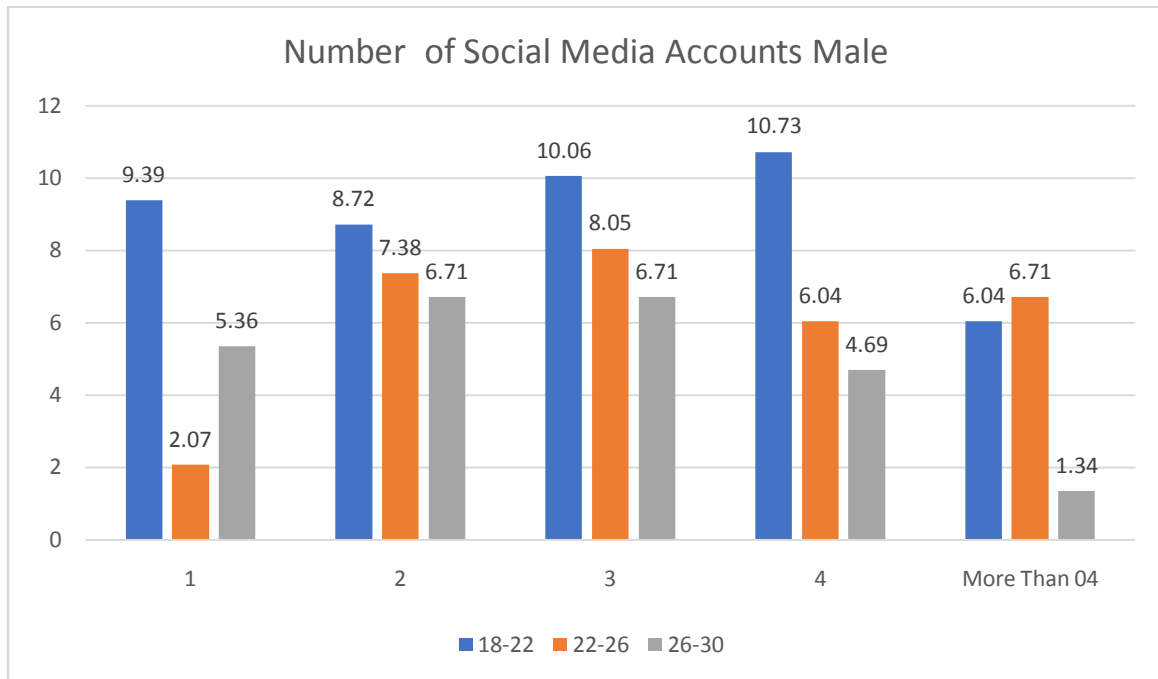


Table 5.3 presents the social media using habits of the respondents. The largest number of respondents use social media platform regularly. The 88.15 percent respondents use social media platform regularly. However, only 11.98 percent respondents say that they use social media occasionally. There is no big difference between male and female users in the context of using social media. The data clearly proves that social media is a popular platform of communication among youth.

**Table 5.4 Number of Social Media Accounts**

Number of Social Media Accounts	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years (%)	22-26 Years (%)	26-30 Years (%)		18-22 (%)	22-26 (%)	26-30 (%)		
01	9.39	2.07	5.36	16.82	4.63	6.62	2.64	13.89	15.35
02	8.72	7.38	6.71	22.81	13.90	9.93	5.96	29.79	26.3
03	10.06	8.05	6.71	24.82	7.94	15.23	3.31	26.48	25.65
04	10.73	6.04	4.69	21.46	4.63	11.25	2.05	17.93	19.96
More than 04	6.04	6.71	1.34	14.09	4.63	5.96	1.32	11.91	13.0

**Figure 5.6 Number of Social Media Accounts Male**



**Figure 5.7 Number of Social Media Accounts Female**

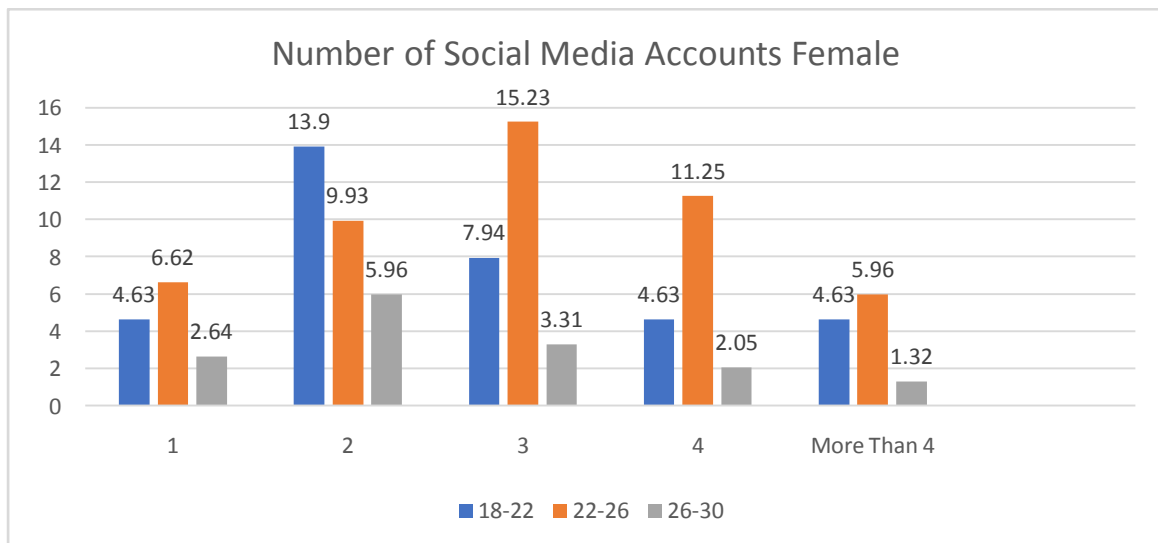
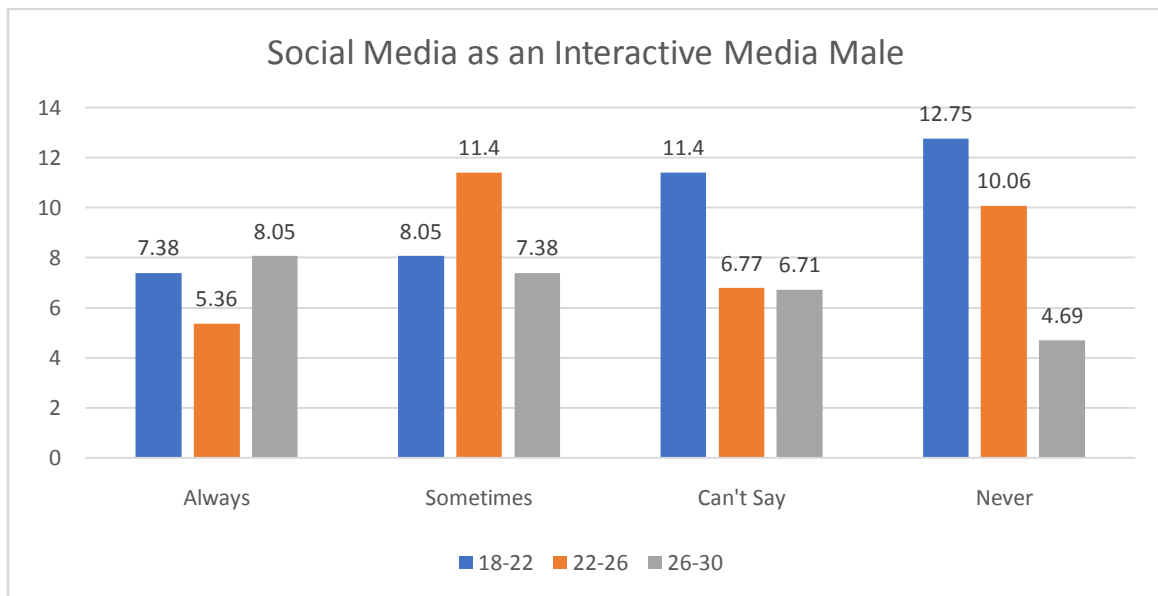


Table 5.4 is about the number of social media accounts; the users access regularly. The majority of respondents both in the category of male and female are having multiple social media accounts. The 15.35 percent respondents are having single social media accounts whereas 13 percent respondents have more than four social media accounts. The largest number of social media account holders have two and three social media accounts. The data proves that the youth have multiple social media accounts.

**Table 5.5 Social Media as an Interactive Media**

Time to get Response while Reacting	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Always	7.38	5.36	8.05	20.79	3.97	0.66	0.66	5.29	13.04
Sometimes	8.05	11.40	7.38	26.83	10.59	13.90	6.6	31.09	28.96
Can't Say	11.40	6.77	6.71	24.88	11.92	15.23	10.65	37.80	31.34
Never	12.75	10.06	4.69	27.50	12.58	12.58	0.66	25.82	26.66

**Figure 5.8 Social Media as an Interactive Media Male**



**Figure 5.9 Social Media as an Interactive Media Female**

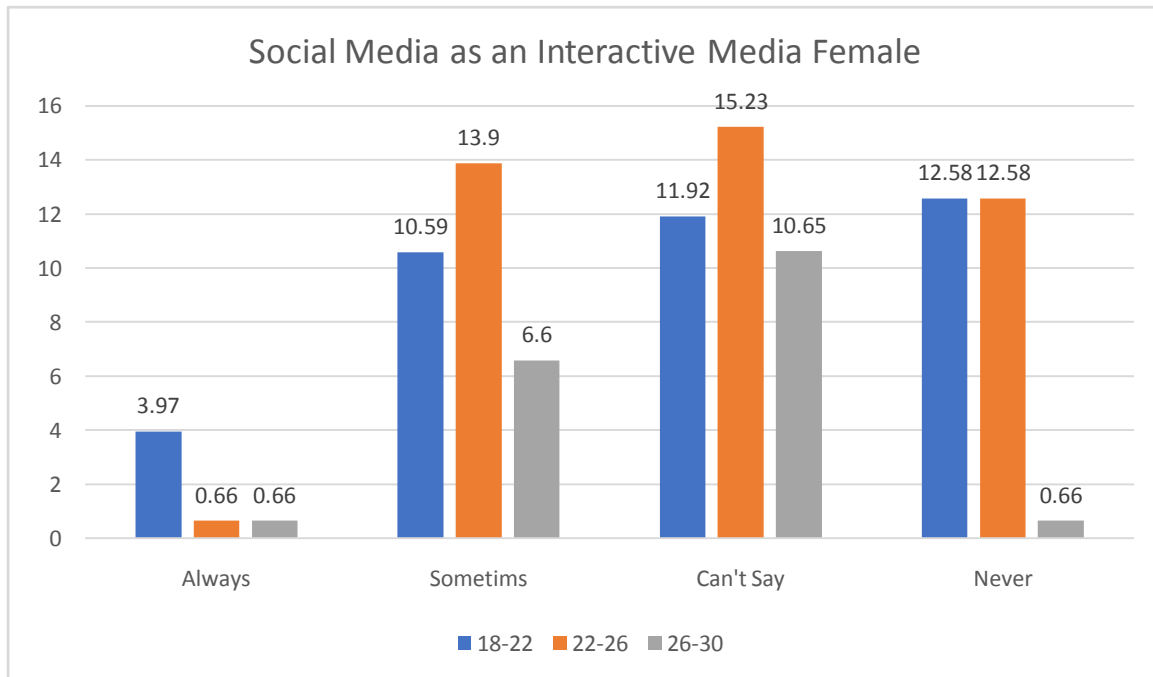
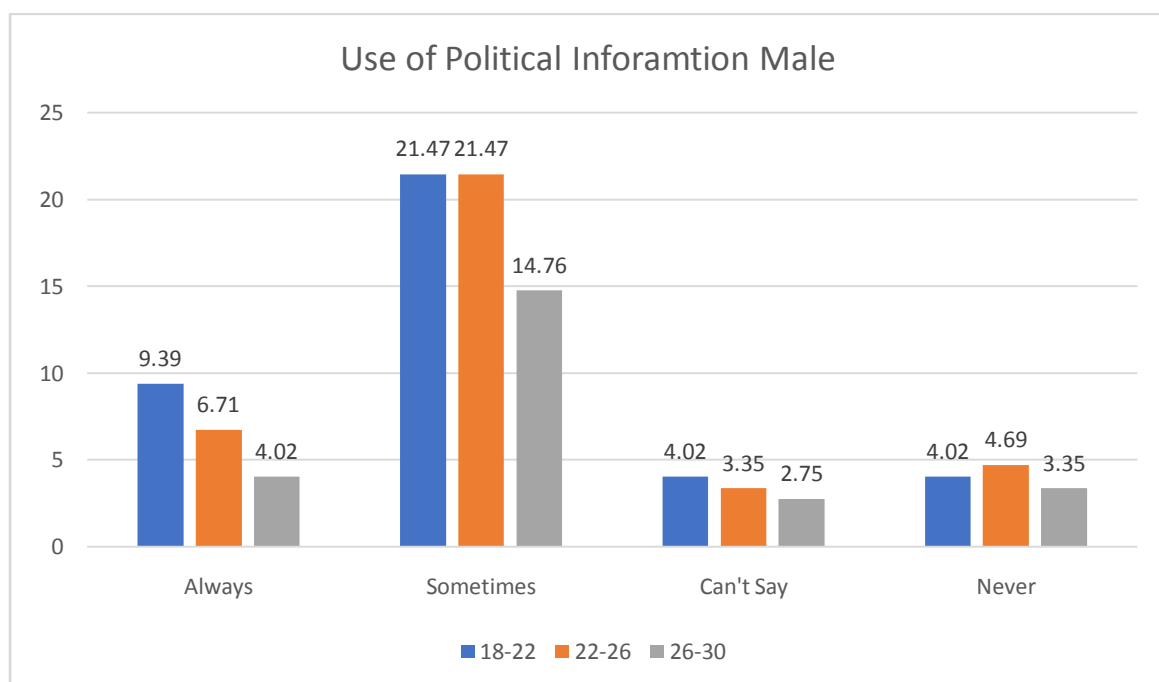


Table 5.5 presents the data regarding the social media platform as a participatory media platform. The respondents were asked whether they involve with their respective political parties or candidates actively when they make comments etc. The highest number of respondents which is 31.34 percent in male and female category accepted that they are not sure whether they would get response on their action in social media. Only 28.96 percent respondents say that they sometimes get response. Only 13.04 percent respondents say that they always get a response in social media. However, 26.66 percent respondents say that they never get a response when they react on the contents in social media. This makes it clear that social media engages the youth but is not participatory media platform. The data proves that the interactive feature of social media is not driving the social media discourse. The users are the passive recipients of the messages.

**Table 5.6 Use of Political Information on Social Media**

Utilization of Information by the Users	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Always	9.39	6.71	4.02	20.12	6.62	9.93	2.04	18.59	19.35
Sometimes	21.47	21.47	14.76	57.70	21.85	20.52	10.59	52.96	55.33
Can't Say	4.02	3.35	2.75	10.12	6.62	6.62	1.32	14.56	12.34
Never	4.02	4.69	3.35	12.06	2.64	9.93	1.32	13.89	12.97

**Figure 5.10 Use of Political Information Male**



**Figure 5.11 Use of Political Information Female**

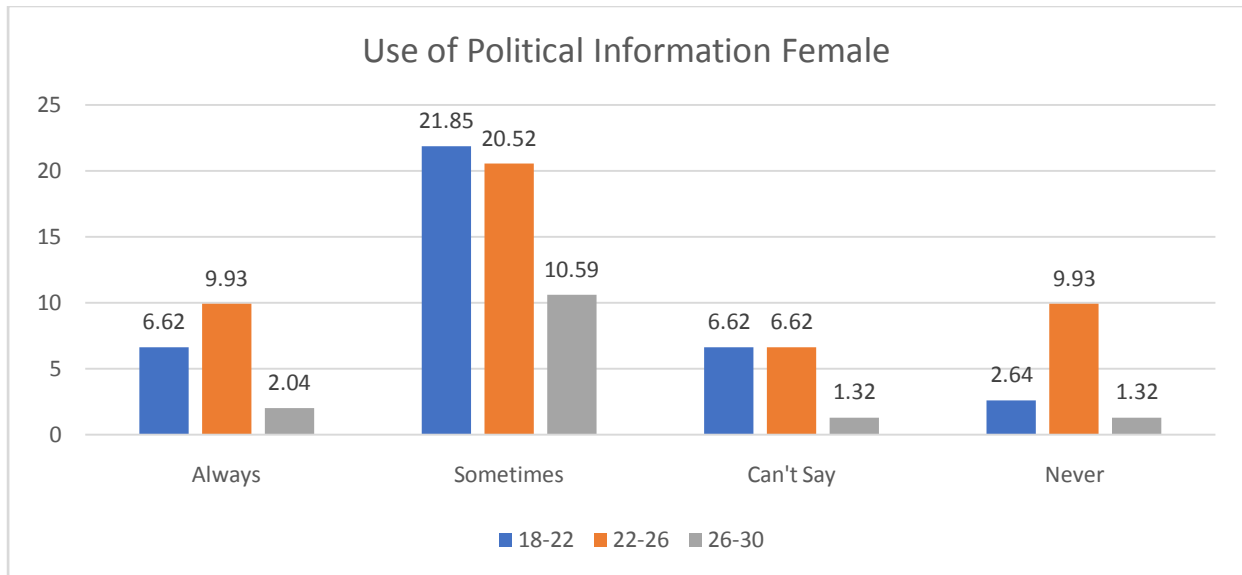
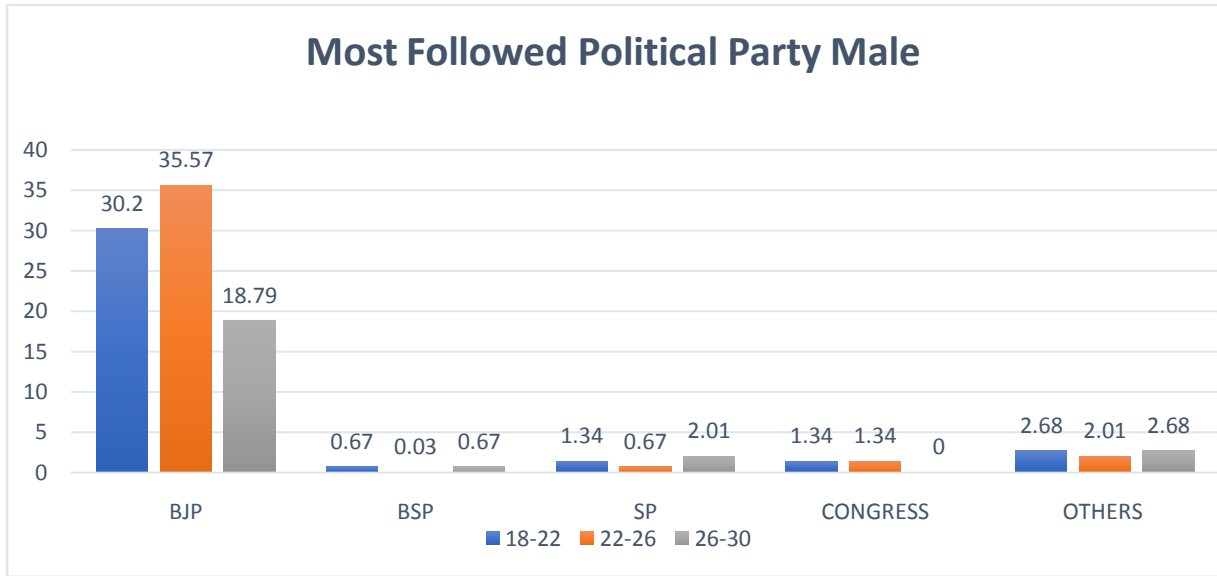


Table 5.6 presents the data regarding the utility of political information on social media platform. When the respondents were asked how much information they found suitable for them, 55.33 percent said that these pieces of information are sometimes useful. Only 19.35 percent respondent said that they always find the political information on the social media platform useful. However, 12.97 percent respondents say that they never find the social media information worthy to be utilized. This data proves that the credibility of contents in social media is weak.

**Table 5.7 The Most Followed Political Party on Social Media**

Political Party	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
<b>BJP</b>	<b>30.20</b>	<b>35.57</b>	<b>18.79</b>	<b>84.56</b>	<b>33.11</b>	<b>39.07</b>	<b>16.55</b>	<b>88.73</b>	<b>86.64</b>
<b>BSP</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>0.68</b>
<b>SP</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>4.62</b>	<b>4.32</b>
<b>Congress</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>3.34</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>7.37</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>5.05</b>

**Figure 5.12 Most Followed Political Party Male**



**Figure 5.13 Most Followed Political Party Female**

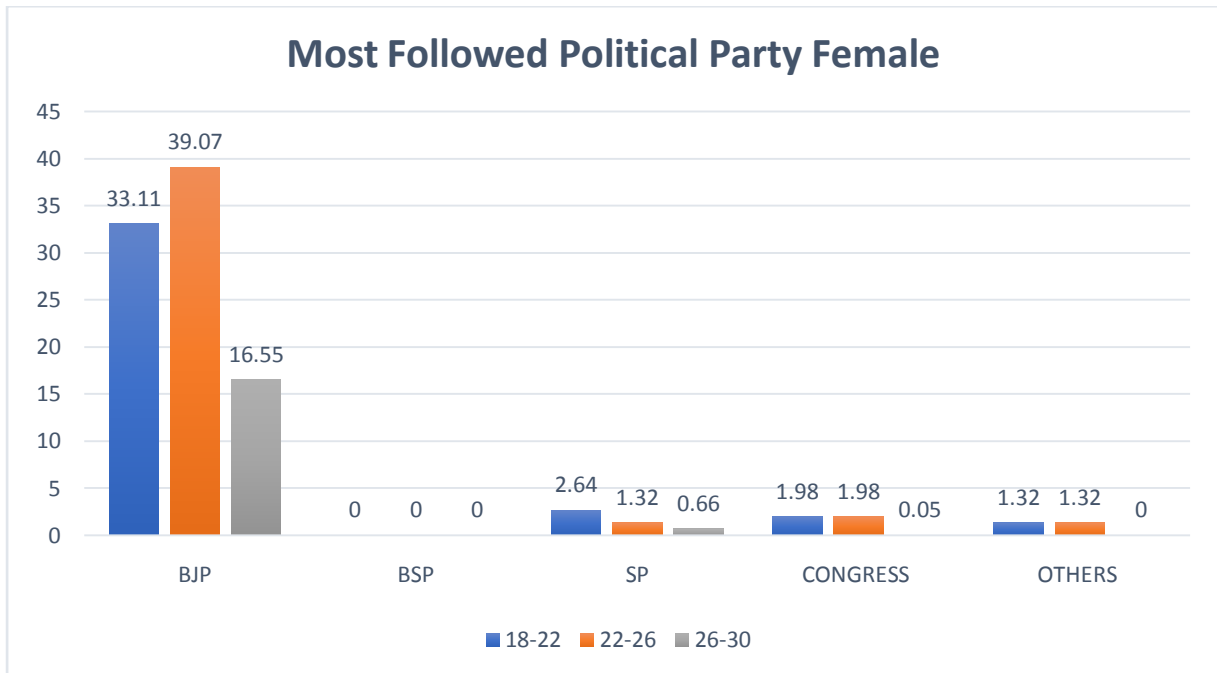
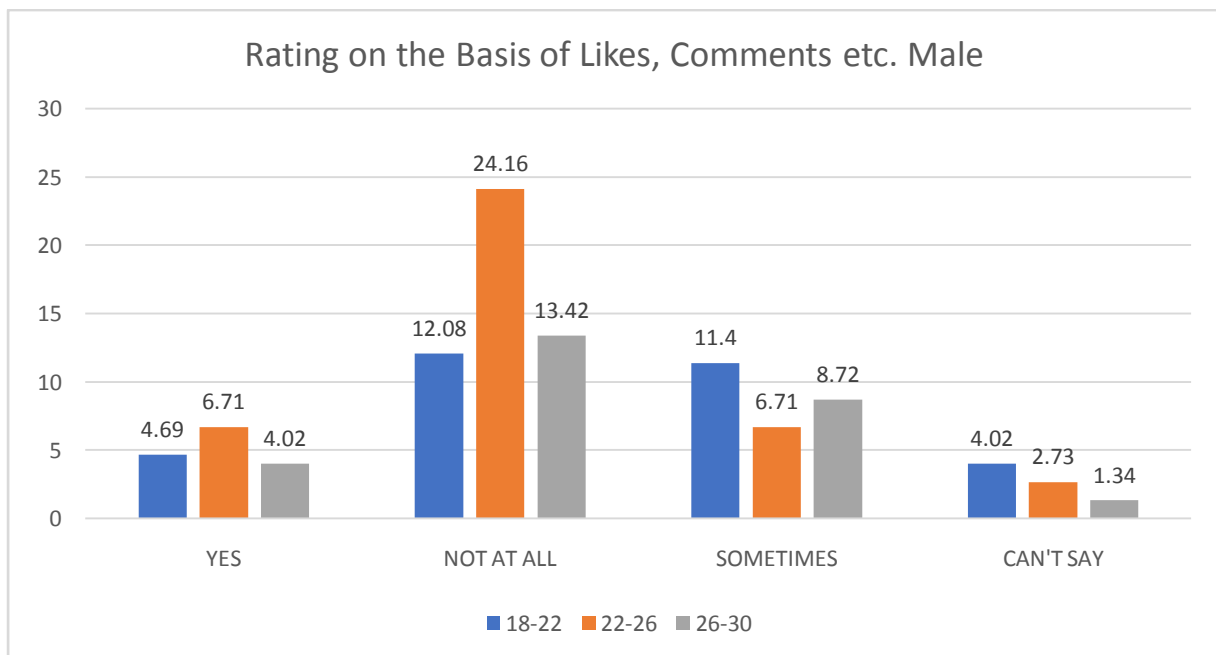


Table 5.7 is about the most followed political party on the social media platform. According to the findings, the respondents of all age groups both in the male and female category found the BJP as the most active political party in the network media. The 88.64 percent respondents say that they follow the BJP on the social media platform. On the other side, the BSP is the least followed political party at this platform. Only 0.68 percent respondents follow the BSP on the social media platform. Both the Samajwadi Party and the Congress is followed by 4.32 and 3.34 respondents respectively.

**Table 5.8 Rating of Contents on the Basis of Likes etc.**

Rating	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Yes	4.69	6.71	4.02	15.42	5.29	5.29	3.97	14.55	14.98
Not at all	12.08	24.16	13.42	49.66	22.51	22.51	5.96	50.98	50.32
Sometimes	11.40	6.71	8.72	26.83	7.94	13.24	4.63	25.81	26.32
Can't say	4.02	2.73	1.34	8.09	1.36	3.31	3.99	8.66	8.37

**Figure 5.14 Rating of Contents on the Basis of Likes etc. Male**



**Figure 5.15 Ratings of Contents on the Basis of Likes etc. Female**

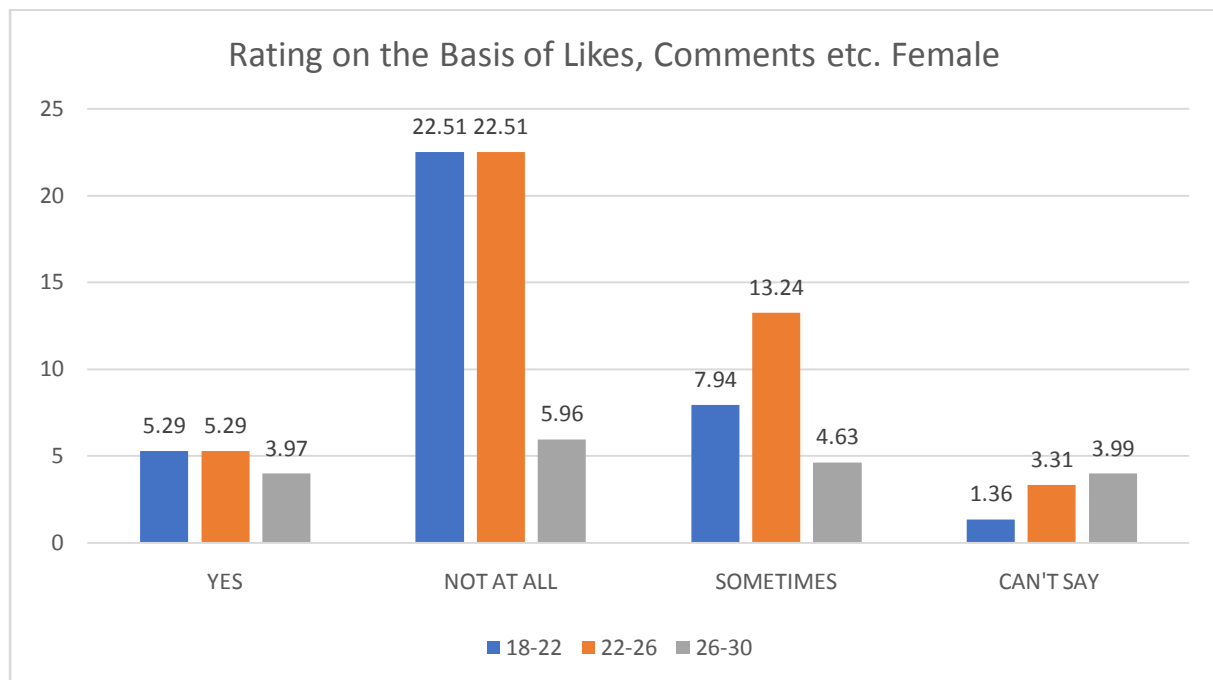
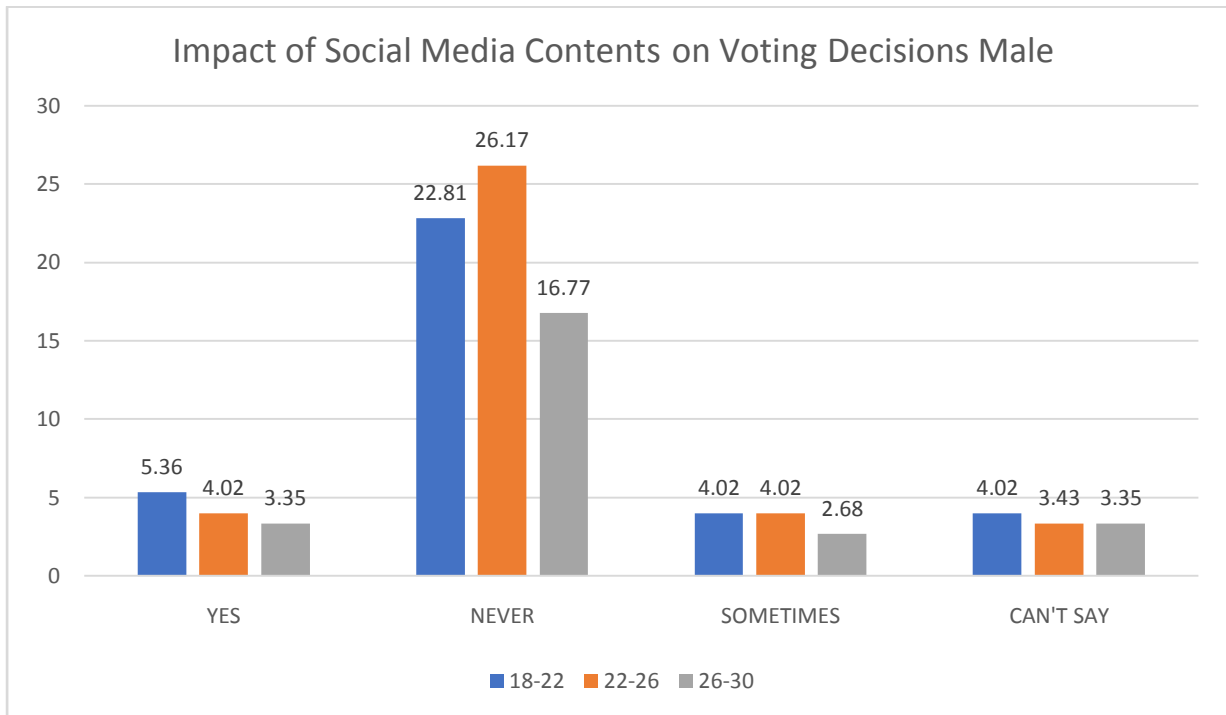


Table 5.8 presents the data of rating of social media contents. The unique feature of social media platform is its instant feedback in comparison to other mass media. The TRP and circulation are the two parameters of strength of television and print media whereas the strength of social media contents is measured on the basis of likes, shares and comments. When this question was put before the respondents, 50.32 percent of them denied that they rate the social media contents on the basis of likes, shares and comments. 26.32 percent of respondents say that they sometimes measure the quality of contents on this basis. Only 14.98 percent respondents say that they rate on this basis. This result proves that the social media contents rating on the basis of likes etc. is not trustworthy.

**Table 5.9 Voting Decision on the Basis of Contents in Social Media**

Items	Males (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Females (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Yes	5.36	4.02	3.35	12.73	1.98	3.31	0.66	5.95	9.34
Never	22.81	26.17	16.77	65.75	23.84	25.82	9.98	59.64	62.69
Sometimes	4.02	4.02	2.68	10.72	8.60	12.58	3.97	25.15	17.93
Can't Say	4.02	3.43	3.35	10.8	2.64	3.31	3.31	9.26	10.03

**Figure 5.16 Impact of Social Media Contents on Voting Decision, Male**



**Figure 5.17 Impact of Social Media Contents on Voting Decision, Female**

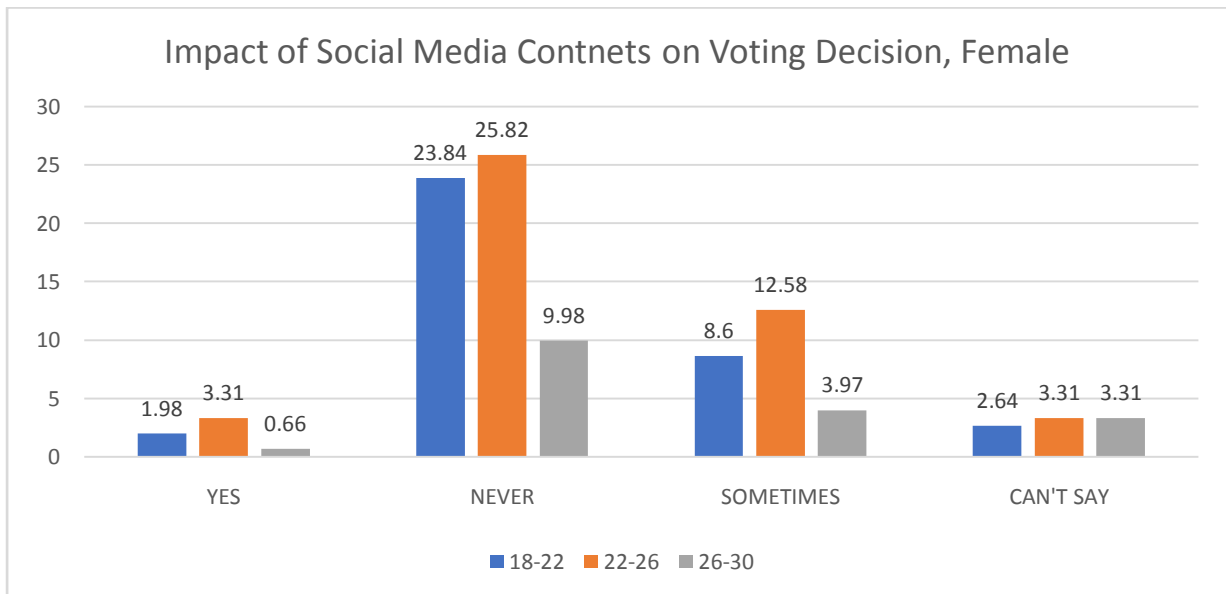
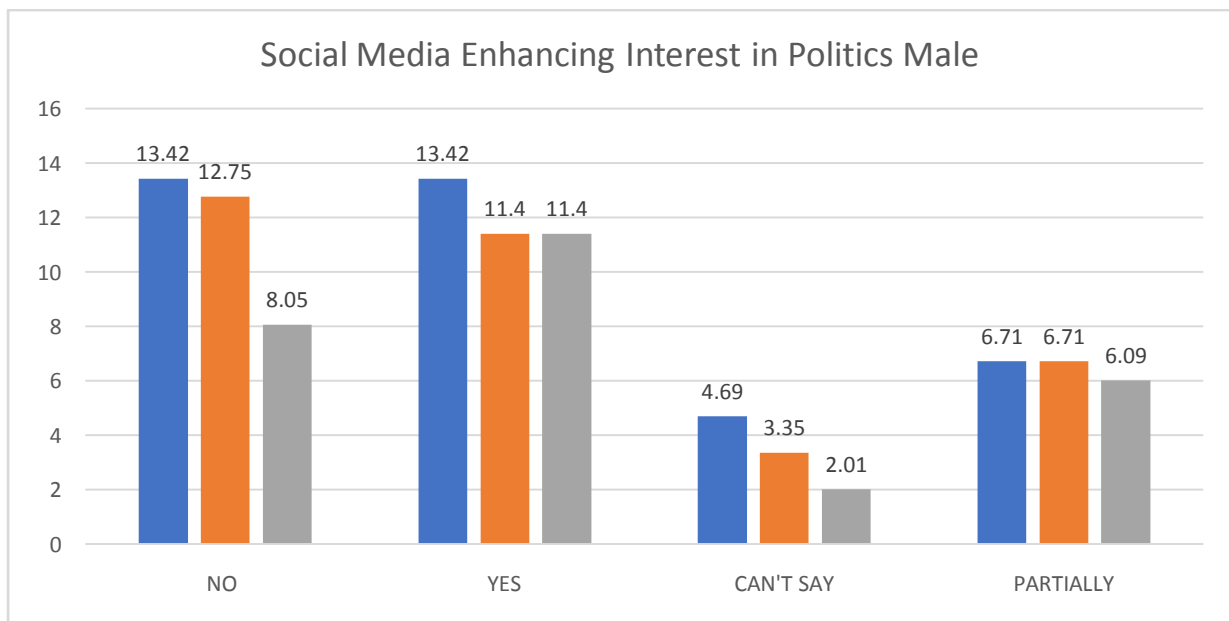


Table 5.9 presents the data on the on the impact of social media contents on the voting decision. The 62.69 percent respondents say that the social media contents never make an impact on their voting decisions. Only 9.34 percent accept that the social media contents impact their voting decision. Only 17.93 percent respondents say that their voting decisions are sometimes affected by the social media contents.

**Table 5.10- Role of Social Media in Enhancing the Interest in Politics**

Items	Male(N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female(N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
No	13.42	12.75	8.05	34.22	10.59	8.6	3.9	23.09	28.65
Yes	13.42	11.40	11.40	36.22	14.56	18.54	11.25	44.35	40.28
Can't Say	4.69	3.35	2.01	10.05	0.66	2.64	0.14	3.44	6.74
Partially	6.71	6.71	6.09	19.51	10.59	13.90	4.63	29.12	24.31

**Figure 5.18, Social Media Enhancing Interest in Politics Male**



**Figure 5.19 Social Media Enhancing Interest in Politics Female**

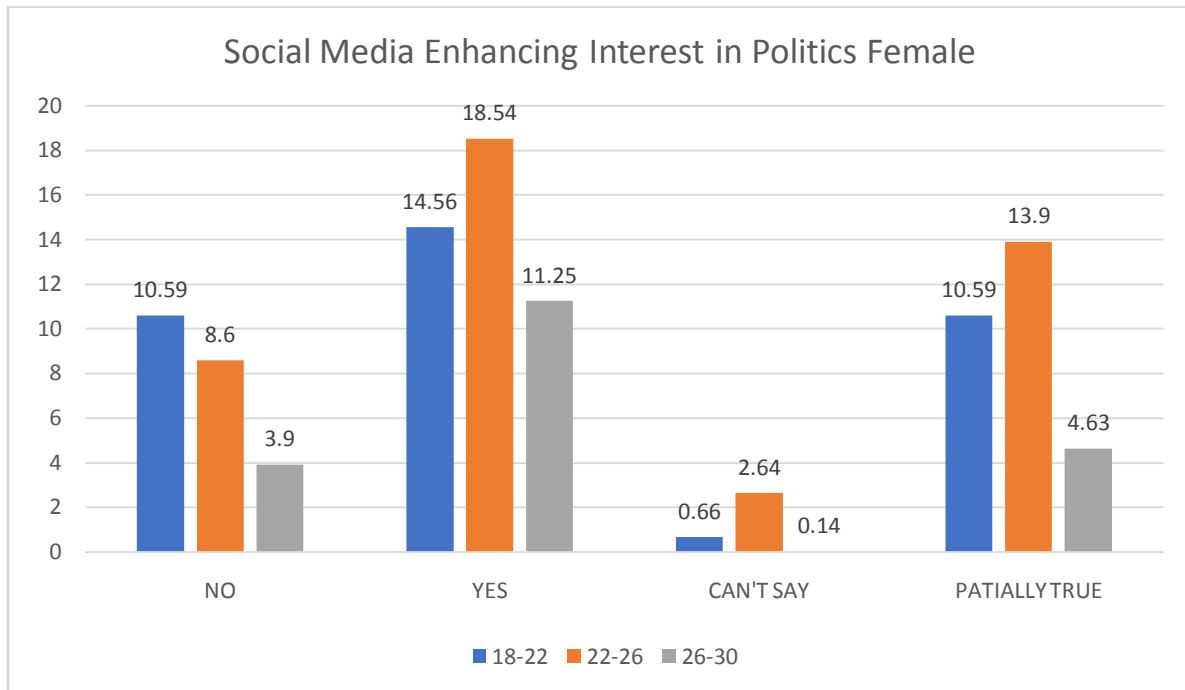
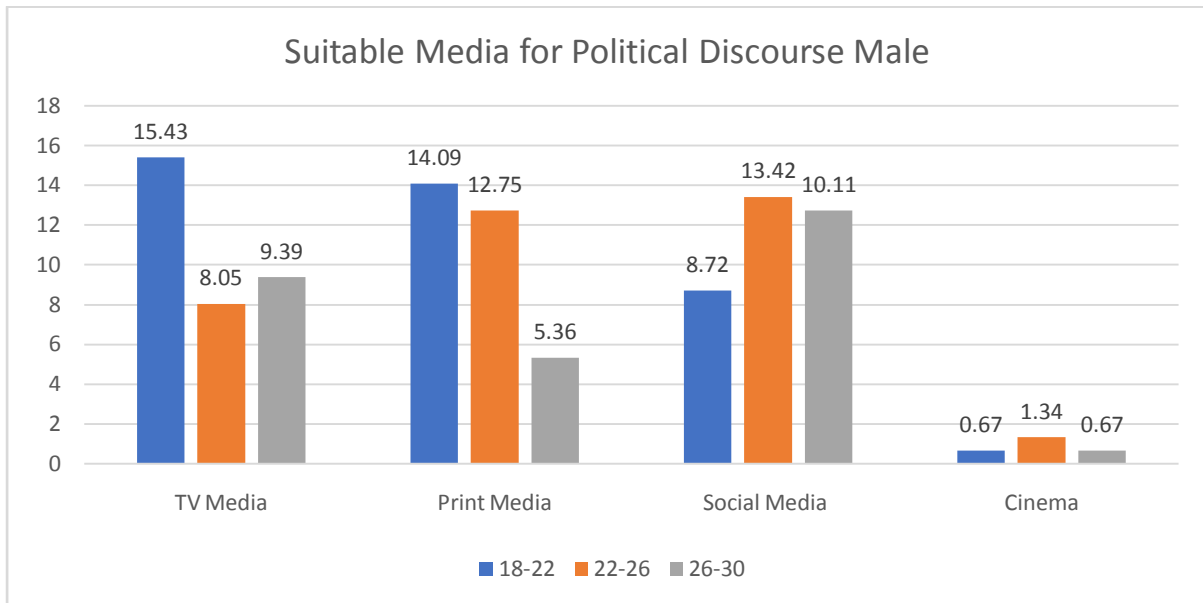


Table 5.10 presents the data regarding the role of social media contents on enhancing the interest of youth in politics. The 40.28 percent respondents say that their interest in politics has been enhanced by the social media contents. However, 28.65 percent respondents say that social media plays no role in generating the interest in politics. The 6.74 percent respondents say that they are not sure about the impact of social media to play such a role.

**Table 5.11 Suitability of Media for Political News-**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
<b>T V Media</b>	15.43	8.05	9.39	32.87	12.58	13.24	3.97	29.79	31.33
<b>Print Media</b>	14.09	12.75	5.36	32.20	10.59	5.96	2.64	19.19	25.69
<b>Social Media</b>	8.72	13.42	10.11	32.25	23.17	17.88	8.60	49.65	40.95
<b>Cinema</b>	0.67	1.34	0.67	2.68	1.32	0.05	00	1.37	2.02

**Figure 5.20 Suitable Media for Political News Male**



**Figure 5.21 Suitable Media for Political News Female**

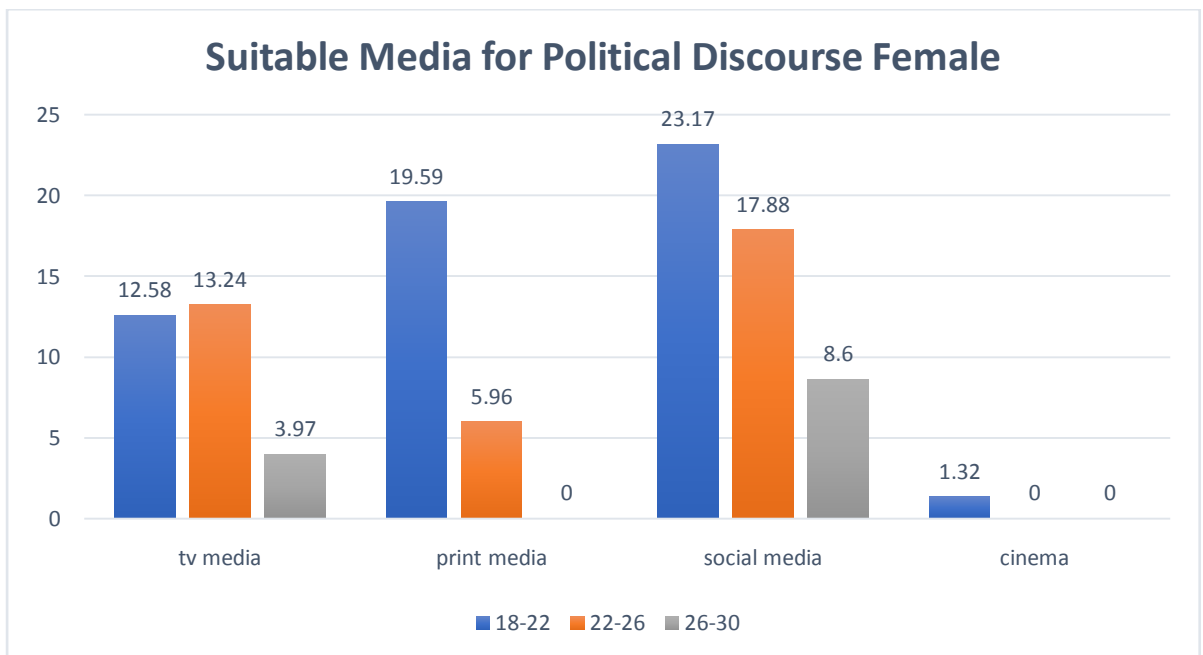
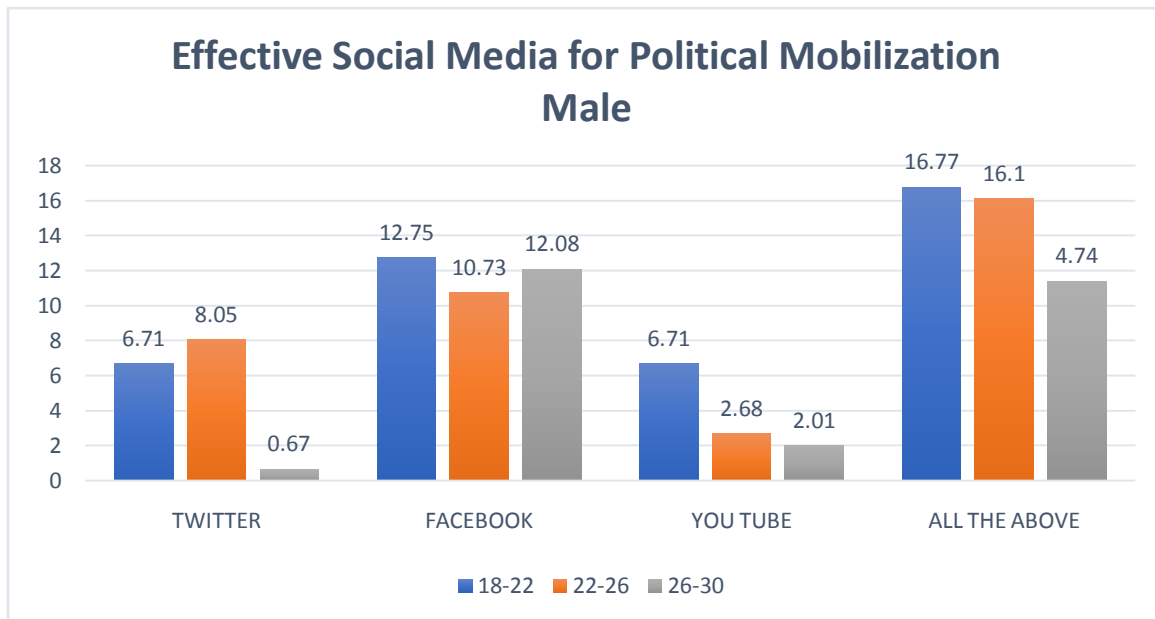


Table 5.11 presents the data in the context of suitability of social media for political news. The majority of respondents say that they consider social media as the suitable mass media for political news. The 31.33 percent of respondents say that television media is suitable for the political news. However, 25.69 percent of respondents find print media more suitable for the same.

**Table 5.12 Effective Social Media in Political Mobilization**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Twitter	6.71	8.05	0.67	15.43	14.56	13.24	1.32	29.12	22.27
Facebook	12.75	10.73	12.08	35.56	2.64	5.29	3.31	11.24	23.40
You tube	6.71	2.68	2.01	11.40	3.97	2.04	1.32	7.33	9.36
All the Above	16.77	16.10	4.74	37.61	16.55	26.49	9.27	52.31	44.96

**Figure 5.22, Effective Social Media for Political Mobilization Male**



**Figure 5.23 Effective Social Media for Political Mobilization Female**

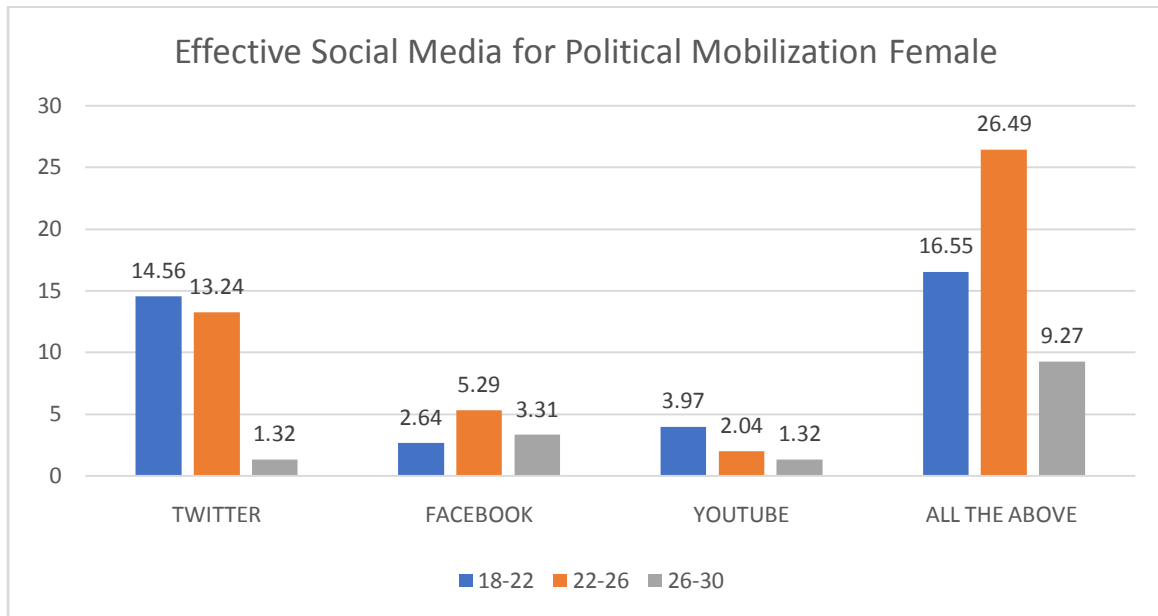
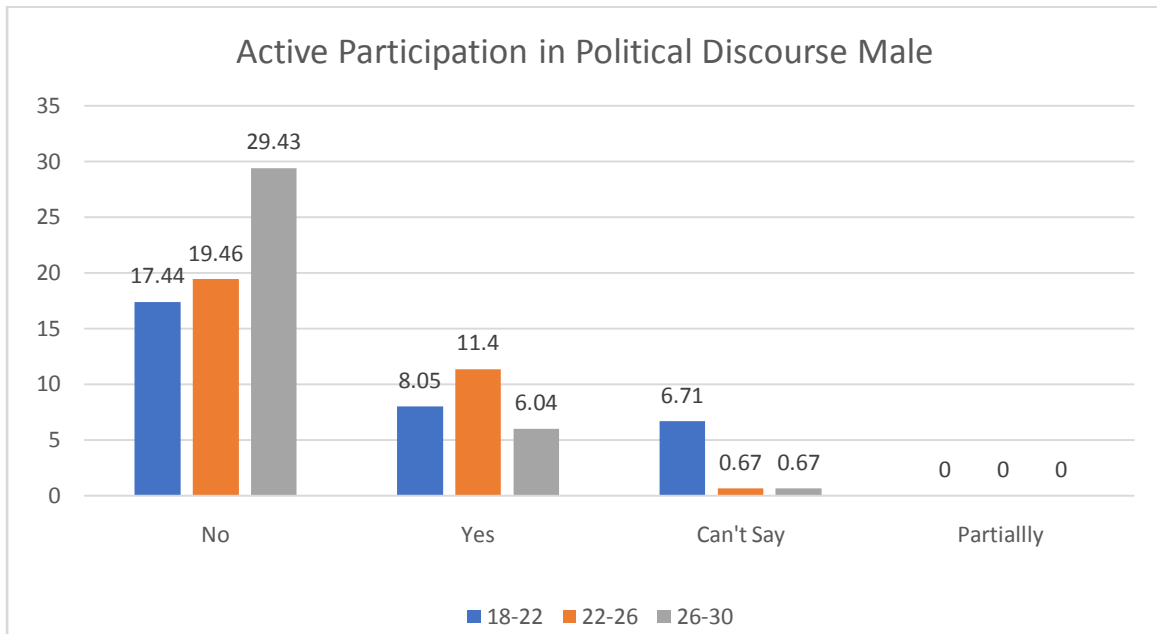


Table 5.12 presents the data regarding the effective social media for political mobilization. Majority of respondents that is 44.96 percent, find all social media effective in the political mobilization. The Facebook and Twitter which are the selected social media by the researcher to study are found effective for mobilization 23.40 percent and 22.27 percent respectively. The 9.36 percent respondents consider You Tube as a capable media for the political mobilization.

**Table 5.13 Active Participation in Political Discourse**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
No	17.44	19.46	29.43	66.33	21.19	27.15	8.60	56.94	61.63
Yes	8.05	11.40	6.04	25.49	7.94	7.28	6.66	21.88	23.68
Can't Say	6.71	0.67	0.80	8.18	7.94	9.27	3.97	21.18	14.68
Partially	0	0	0	00	0	0	0	00	00

**Figure 5.24 Active Participation in Political Discourse Male**



**Figure 5.25 Active Participation in Political Discourse Female**

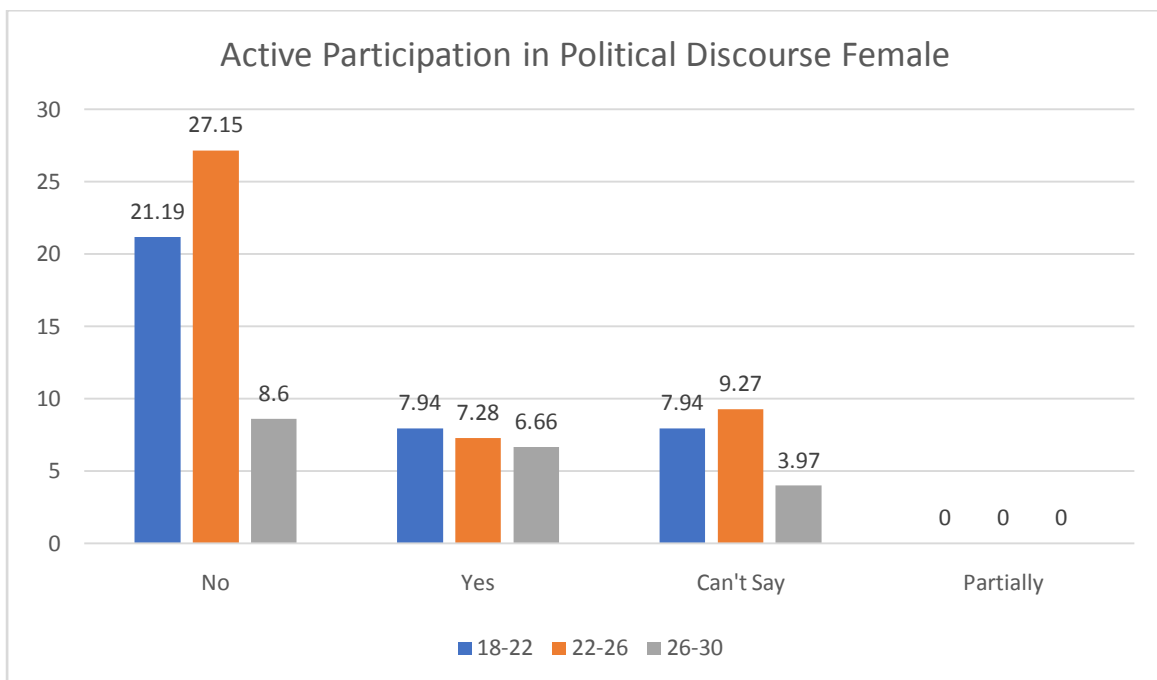
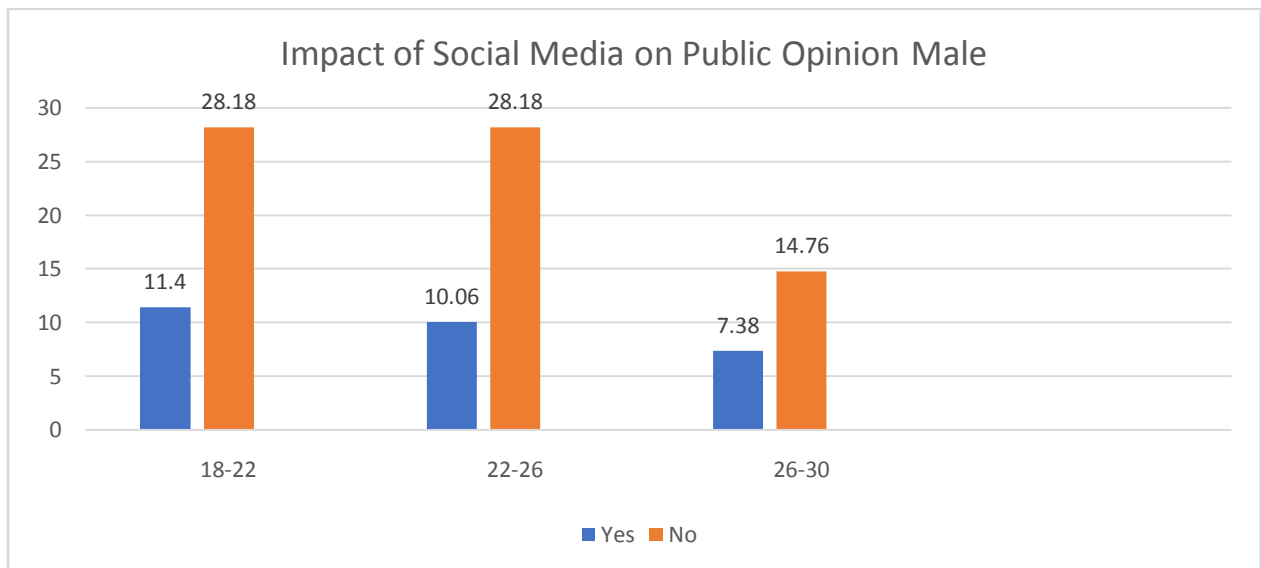


Table 5.13 presents the data regarding the active participation in the political discourse in social media platform. Social media is considered to be a vital media because it allows the recipients of the message to react and the communication process is cyclical. Table 5.1.14 exhibits the data in the context of participation in the political discourse in social media. The 61.63 percent respondents consider that the social media does not allow the active participation in the political discourse. However, 23.68 percent respondents say that social media is suitable for participatory political discourse. None of the respondents answered that the social media provides partial scope for political discourse.

**Table 5.14 Impact of Social Media on Public Opinion**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female (N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Yes	11.40	10.80	7.38	29.58	9.93	9.27	5.98	25.18	27.38
No	28.18	28.18	14.76	70.42	27.15	34.43	13.24	74.82	72.62

**Figure 5.26 Impact of Social Media on Public Opinion Male**



**Figure 5.27 Impact of Social Media on Public Opinion Female**

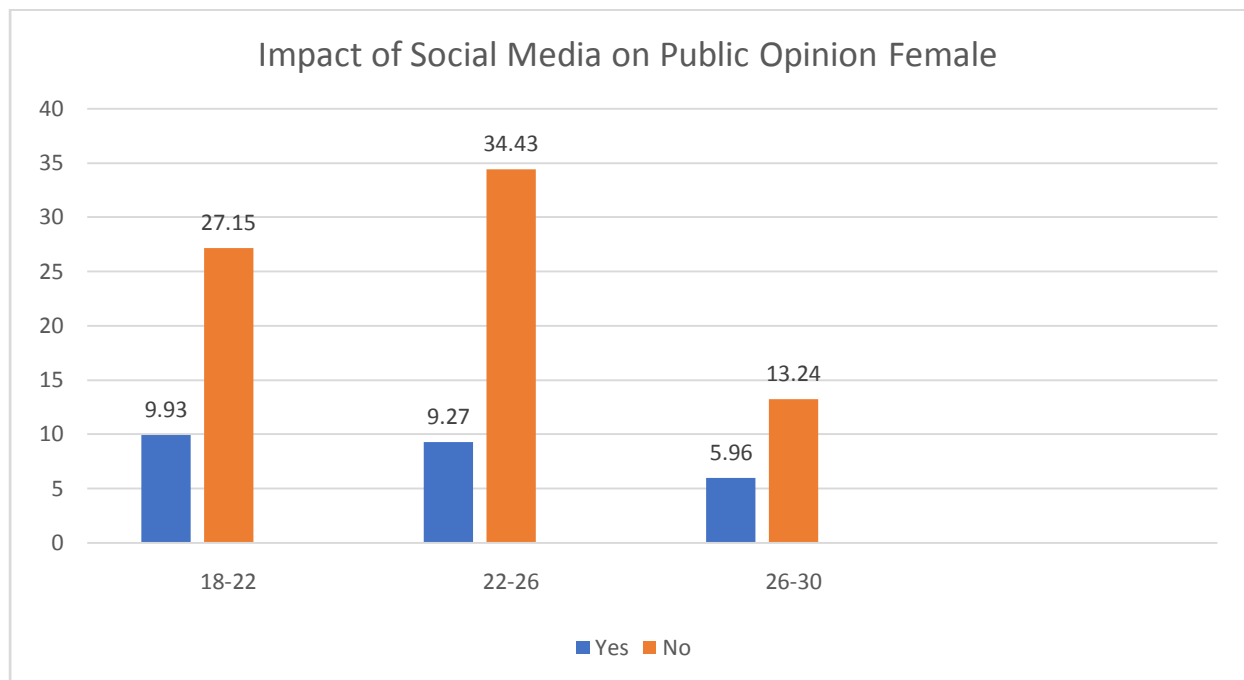
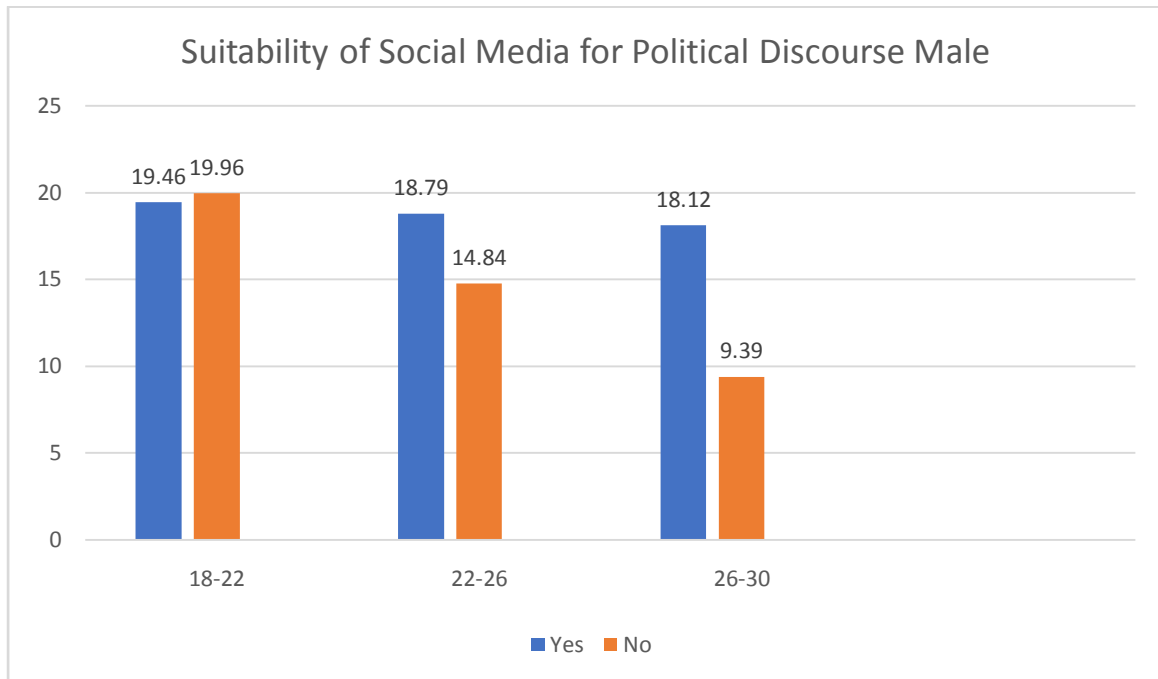


Table 5.14 presents the data regarding the role of social media in the formation of public opinion. In this context, the majority of respondents in both categories say that social media don't play a positive role in the formation of public opinion. The 72.62 percent of respondents say that social media don't play any significant role in the formation of public opinion. However, 27.38 percent respondents say that the social media facilitates the formation of public opinion.

**Table 5.15 Suitability of Social Media for Political Discourse**

Items	Male (N=149)			Total Male (%)	Female(N=151)			Total Female (%)	Grand Total (%)
	18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		18-22 Years	22-26 Years	26-30 Years		
Yes	19.46	18.79	18.12	56.37	19.86	23.17	11.92	54.95	55.66
No	19.46	14.84	9.39	43.63	16.55	20.52	7.98	45.05	44.34

**Figure 5.28 Suitability of Social Media for Political Discourse Male**



**Figure 5.29 Suitability of Social Media for Political Discourse Female**

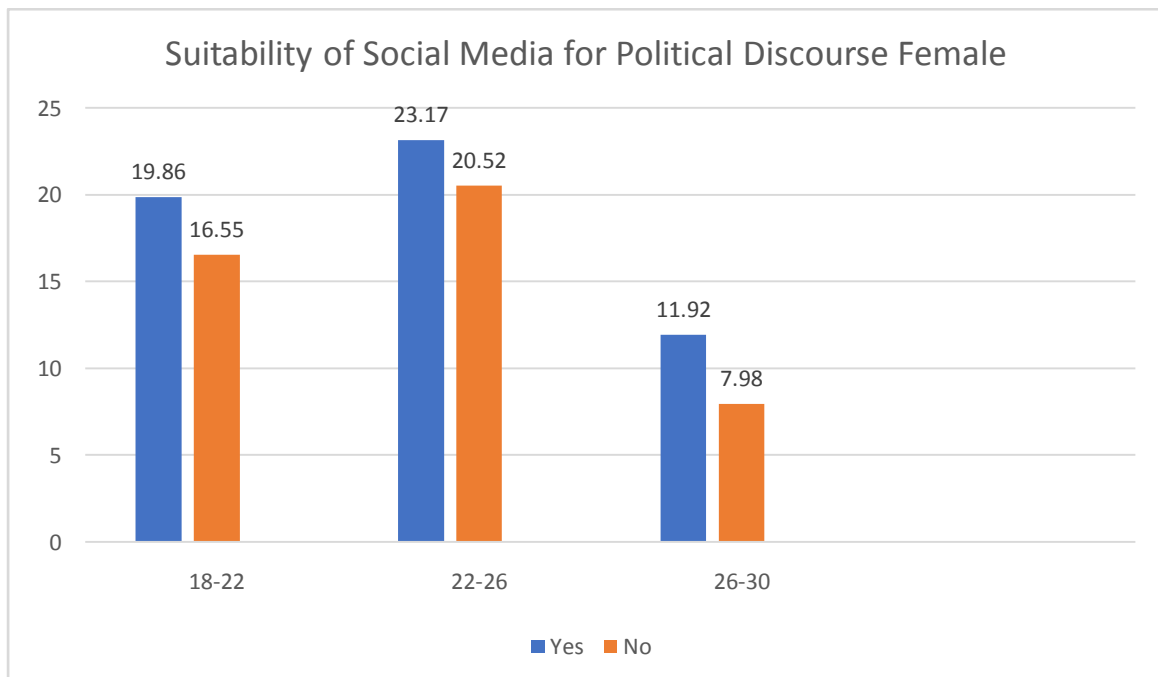


Table 5.15 depicts the data on the suitability of social media for political discourse. The 55.66 percent respondents say that social media is an ideal platform for the political discourse. However, 44.34 percent of respondents say that the networked media is not a suitable platform for political discourse. It is clear from this data the youth does not find the social networking sites as a compatible mass media for political discourse.

### **5.3 In- depth Interview-**

To achieve the objective of this research, thirteen experts from related field were interviewed. Because of corona pandemic outbreak, this was not possible to access the experts physically that is why all of the experts were interviewed telephonically. Few of them were contacted through WhatsApp and Facebook also because they were easily approachable through social media. These interviewees were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. The researcher uses this sampling for the purpose of collecting the information from those persons who have extensive experience in the field of media and political communication. All the interviewee permitted the researcher to record their interviews. All interviews were recorded in English, Urdu and Hindi languages. Each of the interviews was recorded from 45 minutes to an hour. The researcher conducted the interview to explore the impact of social media on the political discourse of the youth and how this media is impacting their political participation.

#### **5.3.1 Characteristics of Interviewee-**

Considering the objectives of research, the researcher interviewed thirteen experts from different fields within the ambit of field of study. For the purpose, the experts were contacted. The telephonic interview was thought to be most suitable because of the corona pandemic. In this backdrop, all the interviews were conducted telephonically. Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra lives in Hamburg, Germany and is an associate at the GIGA. She has done extensive work on social media and politics especially on the Middle East, South Asia etc. The researcher interviewed her on skype. Dr Vijay Rana is based in London and he has prolonged experience in the field of media, politics and youth. He was interviewed on WhatsApp. Ram Dutt Tripathi has been the correspondent of BBC Hindi Service in Lucknow Uttar Pradesh. He holds prominence in the field of media and politics. He was interviewed on phone. Dr AK Singh is an Asst Professor in the Deptt. of Journalism and Mass Communication BBAU, Lucknow. He has vast experience of media, youth and active journalism. He was interviewed on phone. Rest of other experts were also interviewed on phone.

**Table 5.16 Category of Interviewee**

<b>Category of Experts</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
Social Media Researcher & Media Academician	1-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra	Associate, GIGA, Hamburg, Germany	Social Media and Politics
	2-Dr AK Singh	Asst Professor, Dept. of Journalism & Mass Comm, BBAU Lucknow.	Media, Youth and Culture
Social Activist	1-Dr A Q Hashmi	General Secretary, Maulana Azad Memorial Academy Lucknow.	Media, Youth Culture & Education.
Journalists	1-Dr Vijay Rana	Former Correspondent BBC, London, UK	Media, Youth & Culture.
	2-Ram Dutt Tripathi	Former Correspondent BBC, Lucknow, UP	Media & Politics
	3-Sameeratmaj Mishra	Journalist, BBC, Lucknow	Media & Politics
	4- Haidar Naqvi	Journalist, Hindustan Times, Kanpur	Media & Politics
	5-Pramod Joshi	Senior Journalist, Noida, Uttar Pradesh	Media & Politics
	6- Naval Kant Sinha	Senior Journalist, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh.	Media & Politics
	7-Naveen Joshi	Resident Editor, Hindustan, Lucknow	Media, Culture and Politics
IT Expert	1-Rajesh Jain	Founder & Managing Director of Netcore Solutions, Mumbai	IT Expert
Leader, BJP	1-Dr Manoj Mishra	Spokesperson, BJP Uttar Pradesh	Media, Youth and Politics
Leader, SP	1-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi	Leader, SP Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow	Media, Youth and Politics.
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>		

### **5.3.2 Coding and Content Analysis of Interviews-**

The researcher transcribed the interviews in such a logical manner as to facilitate more insights and analysis of the contents. The variables have been defined with the purpose of coding the agenda. Coding rules have been structured with a motive to differentiate various categories. Having finished the aforementioned essential beginning, the researcher, thereafter read the transcribed contents carefully so that the relevant contents could be identified. After this, the categories of contents were also decided and fixed for further action according to their relevance of the research. The researcher paraphrased interview contents and used his own words. The statements and opinions were selected carefully. Once the coding is done, the researcher went ahead to analyze and interpret the contents of interview. Furthermore, the need of research study was kept as the frame of mind before finalizing the contents for the data analysis.

### **5.3.3 Analysis of Data**

After having conducted the interview, the researcher transcribed the contents systematically for the purpose of further analysis. The researcher found the qualitative method to be suitable enough to reach the desired conclusion. The qualitative content analysis was adopted for the purpose of the study. The aim of analyzing the data is to find out the relevant inputs from the experts according to the need of the research objectives.

**5.3.4 Qualitative Content Analysis-** In this method the contents are analyzed systematically. In the first step, the material is required to be defined and then the base of selection of the interviewee was determined that on what ground the interviewee was selected and the sample was decided.

### **5.3.5 Social Media and Political Discourse**

Social media is used widely by the people for different purposes today. Political discourse is also a major activity within the ambit of social media platforms. These discourses are popular in both developed and developing countries. Following is the opinion of experts on the political discourse in social media platforms by the youth-

“Maximum youth use social media for entertainment than for political discourse. But it has also been found that the youth who inclined politically uses the social media platform for the

purpose of political discourse as well. They find it more convenient and interactive medium.”

**-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Social media has decentralized the political discourse in the world. Earlier the mass media platforms were controlled by a handful people. In this way, the social media has empowered the youth. However, there is other side of the coin as well. The social media discourse actually facilitates the stereotype political communication”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi**

“Social Media has enhanced the scope of youth to exhibit their interest in politics. Now they can also be the active participant in the political discourse.”

**-Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“Youth has been the main target of social media companies to attract them for different purposes. But his interest in politics is comparatively less. This affects his participation in the political discourse negatively.”

**-Dr. A.K. Singh**

“The Samajwadi Party always wants the youth to participate in the political discourse actively. Therefore, we promote such contents as to attract the youth in Uttar Pradesh.”

**-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi**

“Youth recently was participating actively in the political discourse in social media. Youth was protesting against the CAA and other such steps of the government.”

**-Dr. A.Q.Hashmi**

“The youth find social media as an ideal platform for political discourse due to its being interactive and affordable any time.”

**- Dr. Manoj Mishra**

“Social media has become a place where any kind of discourse can be initiated. As far as the participation of youth in the political discourse is concerned, this is not very reconcilable and mature”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“The emergence of social media is an opportunity for the youth to participate in the political discourse.”

**-Naveen Joshi**

“Social media has facilitated the political discourse by youth. But at the same time, the quality discourse is missing.”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“The main motive of political discourse in social media by youth is not very logical instead its politically manipulated and amplified.”

**-Rajesh Jain**

“Social media has decentralized the political discourse. Youth from all section of society is finding this platform as very compatible.”

**-Pramod Joshi**

“Social media has become an ideal platform for the youth to participate in the political discourse due to its affordability and convenience.”

**-Vijay Rana**

## **Discussion**

Social media is a new age platform for the debates and discussions. Youth has found social media more compatible for political discourse as compared to other mass media. Social media is a decentralized media as long as the participation is concerned. This is accepted by most of the experts. Youth uses social media for personal discourse more than the political discourse in particular. This has also come out from the experts that only those youth who are politically inclined uses social media for political discourse. Youth's discourses are also not very quality oriented. Instead, they play the role of contents carrier for further messaging. In other words, youth acts as an amplifier of messages in the communication process. Besides, youth is also the prime target of social media companies. They find youth as the substantial users. Political parties get the youth as a large collective base on a single platform. That is why the political parties try to exploit this opportunity. They can get their messages amplified on this platform conveniently in comparison to other media platforms. Overall, social media

platforms are attractive platforms for discourse but they lack the substantial and meaningful contents in these discourses.

### **5.3.6 Relevance of Social Media for Political Discourse-**

“Social media can amplify the messages. Actually, message matters more than medium. It cannot be useful unless and until everybody is connected. The disinformation and misinformation are filled in this spectrum. Besides, according to the Reuters credibility of social media is doubtful. Youth in India has been political. Social media has given such youth a platform as are inclined politically.

**-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Social media is relevant in the entire media spectrum because this facility helps both the business and political interests’ groups to access the desired publics. This is not the case with other media set ups. The political parties can access the youth and so the youth can also access the political parties as well.”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi**

“Social media has become the voice of the common people including youth today.”

**- Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“Social media is relevant for the youth to discuss their issues like unemployment etc. But unfortunately, youth is more inclined to personal issues.

**-Dr A.K. Singh**

“Youth has found social media relevant for discourse but most of the times their discussions are on personal issues.”

**-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi**

“Social media is basically an ideal platform for youth to discuss their issues. But most of such issues are politically manipulated.”

**- Dr A.Q. Hashmi**

“Social media can be more relevant for the political discourse for the youth if they are more aware about political affairs in the country.”

**-Dr Manoj Mishra**

“Youth is only a facility for political discourse in social media. He is a passive participant in the communication process.”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“Social media is not very relevant for good political discourse by youth because the contents are distorted and biased.”

**-Naveen Joshi**

“Social media has failed to produce any significant political discourse by youth.”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“Social media can make the access of political parties to the youth.”

**-Rajesh Jain**

“Youth find social media as a compatible media according to their needs and desires.”

**-Pramod Joshi**

“The onus is now on the political parties to make the social media relevant and effective for the political discourse by the youth.”

**- Vijay Rana**

### **Discussion-**

Social media has emerged as a platform for political discourse in such a manner that this is not only influencing the people but the other media platforms. Some experts call this platform as the decentralized media because this gives immense scope to the common people for political discourse. The discourse is meaningful or not, that depends on several other factors like education, social status etc. The experts also consider social media contents which are generated by or for the youth are heavily biased and manipulated. That is why the political discourse in social media is unscientific. They are also of the opinion that social media cannot be useful or relevant until it reaches all through the gatekeeper. Since the digital divide is the big obstruction to prove the relevance of social media, it is important to fill this gap before we conclude the usefulness of social media platform for political discourse. The social media has become an ideal platform for the common masses in the backdrop of manipulative and propagandist mainstream media. There have been several occasions when the social media initiated the discourse significantly. The Delhi Rape Case of 2012 can be taken as an example when social media was used by the youth mostly to amplify the voice of a common man. The

social media platform is not being used by the youth for the purposeful discourse. This is significant reason why the political parties can manipulate the strength of social media to ignite a biased political discourse which is actually a convenient matter for them to mobilize the youth towards their prejudiced opinions. The use of social media can be more effective provided the youth who are the prime users are well educated and have quality awareness about the political situation of the country. It is clear that the use of social media can't be made fruitful unless the political parties behave themselves responsibly. Instead, these platforms are used and manipulated for both business and political interests by a handful people who are in corporate houses and in the specialized IT Cells.

### **5.3.7 Enhancement of Interest of Youth in Politics -**

“Social media is playing a big role among the literate and semi- literate youth. This is most likely to continue to increase in the days to come. It's important but let's not hype it. Besides, the youth showed their substantial interest in politics and political discourse during the India against Corruption Movement.”

**-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Social media has the potential of being an addiction. This media has been designed in such a manner to addict the users specially the youth.”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi**

“The social media is designed to attract the youth all around the world. Its features attract the young users significantly.

**-Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“Social media generates interest of youth in personal affairs. But this is not found in political spectrum.”

**-Dr A. K. Singh**

“Superficially, social media has enhanced the interest of youth but on the other hand this media has failed to produce any substantial contents as compared to other media.

**-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi**

“Youth has found social media as a platform where he can voice his issues.”

**-Dr. A.Q. Hashmi**

“My Party has always found social media as a suitable facility to access the youth. Youth are always interested to know more through this media.”

**-Dr Manoj Mishra**

“The youth is not very serious in social media. That is why his interest is confined within his private life.”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“Youth finds other fields more interesting as compared to political discourse. I don't think social media has enhanced his interest in politics.”

**-Naveen Joshi**

“Social media pushes the hype. This affects the interest of youth positively”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“Political parties target the youth through social media. This has increased the interest of youth in politics.”

**-Rajesh Jain**

“Some political parties target youth through social media. Youth also respond to them, But, this is an agenda setting concept and certainly not the interest in politics as whole.”

**-Pramod Joshi**

“After the trend of hiring of PR agencies by the political parties, the interest of youth is managed.”

**-Vijay Rana**

### **Discussion-**

Whether the social media has increased the interest of youth in politics or not, is an area where the experts are clearly divided. Some find that the semi- literate and literate youth have been affected by the social media upsurge in India. The contents are designed in such a manner as the youth find them within their proximity. This notion bases that social media is actually an addiction among the youth who use this platform for their individual reasons and not very much for any political discourse. They instead are made the part of political discourse by some political parties. The social media companies have designed the social

media platforms that they attract the youth all over the world. But as far as their enhancement in the interest in politics is concerned, they largely depend on other factors. Superficially, social media has enhanced the interest of youth but on the other hand this media has failed to produce any substantial contents as compared to other media. It is also clear that social media has facilitated the youth to voice their issues. The social media have become an ideal source to access the youth. Political parties strive to avail this to make extra benefit. This proves that youth is being impacted through this media.

### **5.3.8 Formation of Public Opinion-**

“This is called effective polarization. Social media has become important mass media in the entire media spectrum. Even broadcast and print get influenced by this new media. Social media provides a cut and dried platform for political parties. As far as opinion formation is concerned, it can solidify the existing opinion. Social media is a tool that is also used to distort the opinion as well.”

**-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Social media has become an ideal platform of manipulating the public opinion. The opinion can be manipulated for the purpose of profits. Social media has the power to distort the opinion and does not allow the users to look into the other side of it.”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi.**

“Social media is used by the political parties to shift the attention of youth. Most of the time, the information is incomplete and not authentic.

**-Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“Social media radicalize decisively instead of making public opinion based on logic.”

**-Dr. A.K. Singh**

“My party believes that the use of social media should be for the constructive purposes.”

**-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi.**

“Yes, social media has become vital in making the public opinion of youth.”

**-Dr A.Q. Hashmi**

“It has been seen that social media influences the opinion of youth.”

**-Dr Manoj Mishra**

“Social media impacts the opinion of youth but partially. Other factors like their understanding of political issues matter more.”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“Social media impacts the impacted opinion of youth only.”

**-Naveen Joshi**

“Since youth is least bothered about the politics, social media hardly matters.”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“The record voting in the 2014 General Elections proves that the opinion of youth was affected decisively towards the BJP.”

**-Rajesh Jain**

“IAC movement is the best example to prove when youth was persuaded in large number to stand for the cause.”

**-Pramod Joshi**

Social media does not make a particular public opinion. Instead, it hardens the existing opinion. The youth is more vulnerable to this ”

**-Vijay Rana**

### **Discussion-**

Social media has become an ideal podium to debate and discuss various issues. Before the advent of social media, the mainstream media was playing an important role in the formation of public opinion in democracies. Social media provides a cut and dried situation for the political parties for influencing the opinion of youth towards their particular agenda. This actually facilitates the “effective polarization.” Social media actually does not create new public opinion instead helps a lot for hardening the existing opinion. However, social media also plays an important role in the distortion of opinion. The social media does not innovate opinion instead it strengthens the functional opinion. This media is used extensively for the purpose of gains- both political and economic. The social media discourse deviates the youth from the contemporary and relevant issues. This media has proved its substantial force in the radicalization of the youth’s opinion which ranges from politics to religion. The social media plays a partial role in the formation of public opinion whereas other factors such as the

knowledge of politics etc. is more important and fundamental in the formation of public opinion. Experts also consider that the social media contents impact the opinion of impacted youth and does not play decisively in the part of independent opinion formation.

### **5.3.9 Political Participation-**

“In social media, multiple level communication is possible as compare to other mass media. This is enhancing the virtual political participation. The social media allowed the youth to share or comment directly on political parties without any gatekeeping. But I have doubt whether this result into the offline political participation. -

**Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Social Media has facilitated the political participation of youth in the country. Earlier the Election Commission was reaching the masses with traditional sources but now ECI is using social media to enhance youth’s participation.”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi.**

“Social media has been successful in generating the passion towards political participation of youth. But this is virtual more and less real”

**-Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“The political participation depends on many factors. Social media alone is not enough to generate political participation of youth.”

**-Dr A.K. Singh**

“Social media is a virtual world. This deviates the youth from realities. Political participation is one of them.”

**-Abdul Hafiz Gandhi**

“The youth is confused in our country. Social media has further added to this confusion. This media does not enhance the participation of youth ”

**-Dr. A.Q.Hashmi**

“Youth is engaged in social media and found social media to be very own. This has affected his political choices significantly. But social media fails to generate any positive participation.”

**-Dr. Manoj Mishra**

“Social media has increased the participation of youth. He is actively involved in the political discourse. But this all process is manipulated. That is why I don’t think social media results into any significant increase in the political participation of youth.”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“The political discourse in social media has impacted the thinking of youth politically. But he fails to draw conclusions when he makes analysis on the basis of social media contents.”

**- Naveen Joshi**

“Social media facilitates the communication process within and outside of the political spectrum. Youth is more affected in this process.”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“The percentage of youth has increased in different political events of country. Social media has been able to ignite an interest about politics in them. But this is not an outcome as political participation.”

**- Rajesh Jain**

“Social media is an interactive media which suits the nature of youth. But the disinformation, misinformation etc. don’t let the youth to draw positive conclusions and then to participate in the political process.”

**- Pramod Joshi**

“Youth has always been the top priority of political parties. This has helped them to participate in different political events.

**-Vijay Rana**

### **Discussion-**

The opinion of experts matches the responses in the survey. The experts find the engagement of youth in social media. But they don’t think that the online engagement would result into political participation of youth as well. They believe that social media discourse has the potential to increase the virtual involvement but not enough to transform the same into real participation. However, some of the experts differ on this stand in the context of political participation of youth. They say that social media is used by the established institution like the Election Commission of India to persuade the young voters. In this way majority of

experts believe that social media discourse does not impact the political participation. Whenever the increase in political participation was understood, other factors were more important than only the political discourse in social media.

#### **5.3.10 Political Mobilization-**

“This is true about the use of social media by the youth that they are the substantial users of social networking sites. In spite of this the mobilization of youth is not the outcome of any discourse including political. Youth are playing a big role in the digital media platform but it does not mean that they are also laying the foundation for any social and political mobilization.”

**-Dr Sangeeta Mahapatra**

“Youth is also suffering from many problems like unemployment but his direction is different from that of political mobilization. This is also the global trend that youth is deviated from political mobilization. Instead, he is carried away by disinformation, manipulation and propaganda.”

**-Ram Dutt Tripathi**

“This is too early to say that social media does mobilize the youth politically. There are two aspects of this questions- First is that social media has facilitated the mobilization of the youth at various occasions like the Jasmine Revolution in the Arabian Countries. But on the other hand, the social media has created a hype in India on different occasions. This media platform is filled with many misinformation and of course disinformation. In India, this fake content- based infosphere has become a threat to the all, including youth.”

**-Sameeratmaj Mishra**

“Social Media has lot of potential for mobilization. Mobilization is taking place through identification. Social media facilitates socialization and subsequently political mobilization. Other mass media ignites individual mobilization whereas social media enhances mass mobilization.”

**-Dr A. K. Singh**

“Youth has always been inclined to political issues in the country like in the 60s and 70s when the youth played a pivotal role in the movements like Naxalism. The ringfencing of voters did happen in the 2014 General Elections where the social media platforms like

Facebook was used to access the voters through various contents. But there is other side of the coin as well that the data scrapping also happened in the 2014 General Elections as well.”

**- Abdul Hafiz Gandhi**

“Social media is playing an important role in society today. This is so quick to influence that it does not allow the youth even to understand the pros and cons of the contents. In the India against Corruption Movement, social media was vital but one should not ignore the fact that social media is also functioning as a tool in the hands of power.”

**-DrA.Q. Hashmi**

“The social media like Facebook recently have been accused of manipulating the situation being motivated with the idea of economic gains. This proves that the social media owners can manipulate anything according to their monetary goals. Thus, the motivation behind the mobilization of youth through social media can also be manipulated.

**-Dr Manoj Mishra**

“Social media has emerged as a platform for the youth both at the level of leadership and activists for both social and political cause. You have can see recently, that the youth moved out of their homes against the NRC and CAA. Social media played a big role in the formation of mass opinion in the country. Thus, we can say that social media mobilize the youth.”

**-Haidar Naqvi**

“Youth is the non- committed voters and they share a large portion. Social media facilitates the political candidates to access these voters. In this backdrop, the youth is influenced by the political candidates towards a particular opinion. In fact, social media mobilizes the youth towards a particular opinion though they may not have the option to look at the other side of the same opinion.

**-Naveen Joshi**

“Social media has mobilized youth in different parts of the world. India is not an exception in this regard.”

**-Naval Kant Sinha**

“The recent events specially the protests against the CAA have shown that social media discourse is mobilizing the youth

**-Rajesh Jain**

“India is such a vast country that merely social media discourse can’t set the pace of political discourse and the subsequent in the country. There are other factors as well.”

**-Pramod Joshi**

“Political discourse in social media is highly fabricated and manipulated. The social media may amplify the existing belief but it cannot mobilize the masses including youth.”

**-Vijay Rana**

### **Discussion-**

In the context of political mobilization some experts are positive regarding the role of political discourse in social media and the youth in the entire digital spectrum. This is true about the use of social media by the youth that they are the substantial users of social networking sites. In spite of that the mobilization of youth is not the outcome of any discourse including political. Youth are playing a big role in the digital media platform but it does not mean that they are also laying the foundation for any social and political mobilization. The political discourse of social media aims to attract the youth towards a fixed agenda of political parties. This does not mean that they are mobilized independently. Other factors play big role wherever the political mobilization has taken place like in the Arab Spring. The social media intensifies the process of political mobilization of youth but it is alone not enough to mobilize. The social media is the victim of manipulation of information, disinformation, propaganda etc. on these platforms. Its therefore clear that if the political mobilization is based on this false information. The outcomes are never concrete. The social media has become notorious for creating hype. This hype should not be called political mobilization. However, some experts are firm that the social media plays a big role in the political mobilization of youth. Social Media has lot of potential for mobilization. Mobilization is taking place through identification. Social media facilitates socialization and subsequently political mobilization. Other mass media ignites individual mobilization whereas social media enhances mass mobilization. The youth has always been at the center of political mobilization after Independence. But today social media dose not mobilize them positively. Youth is the non- committed voters and they share a large portion. Social media

facilitates the political candidates to access these voters. In this backdrop, the youth is influenced by the political candidates towards a particular opinion. In fact, social media mobilizes the youth towards a particular opinion though they may not have the option to look at the other side of the same opinion. Thus, it can be concluded that political discourse in social media does not mobilize the youth constructively and specifically.

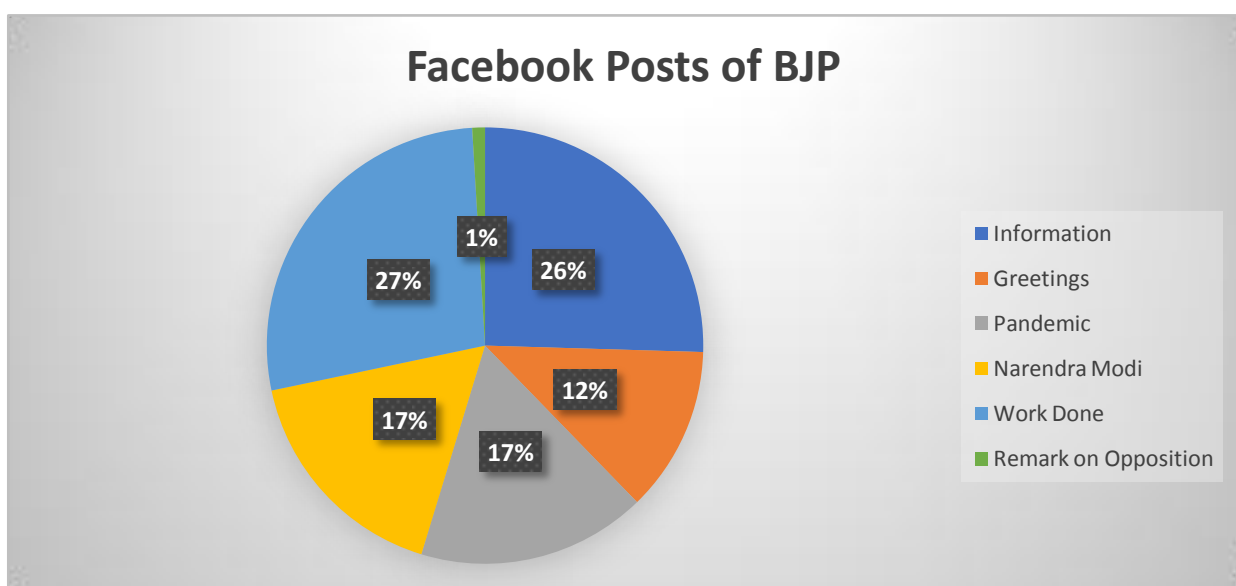
#### **5.4 Content Analysis of Facebook and Twitter Accounts of BJP and SP -**

The content analysis of the official Facebook and Twitter pages of the BJP and SP was conducted by the researcher. The pages were accessed from the official website of the SP and the BJP Uttar Pradesh. Thereafter, the posts from March to August 2020 were collected and categorized. Every post/tweet was categorised into a suitable group. The coding scheme was developed by the researcher by using clustering approach, creating a new category when needed. The posts were categorised as follows:

##### **5.4.1 Content Analysis of Uttar Pradesh State Facebook Account of BJP-**

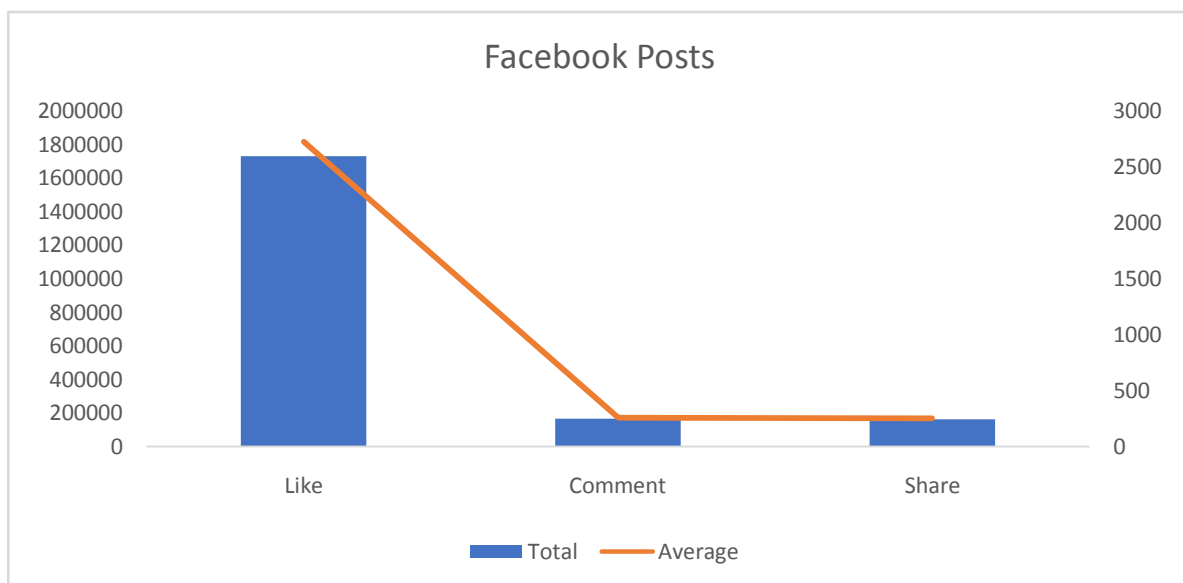
All the 283 Facebook posts were categorised into various categories. After categorisation the number of likes, comments and shares for each was noted down. Since the number of likes was quite high, an average of the likes, comments and shares was calculated separately. Average was calculated by adding the total number of likes divided by the number of posts for each category. A similar procedure was followed for comments and shares.

**Figure 5.30 Facebook Posts of BJP**



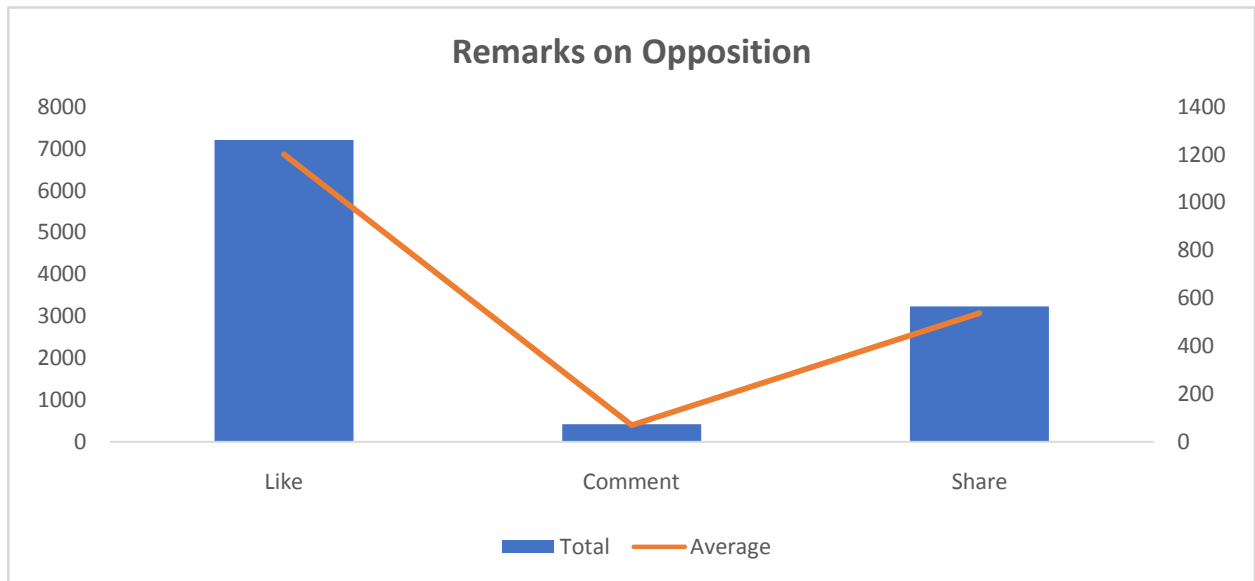
The figure 5.30 narrates various types of posts, the BJP posted on its official Facebook page for the state of Uttar Pradesh. The party posted most of the contents on information, work done, and Narendra Modi. The party aims to brad its image and also to convert the same into substantial voters. The main aim of these posts is to engage the users of aal age groups to engage in a political discourse with a motive to change the same into the strong public opinion on the favor of the party.

**Figure 5.31 Total and Average Facebook Posts of BJP**



The figure 5.31 states that in span of six months, the BJP posted 636 posts on Facebook. This is around 4 posts per day. The focus of BJP was more on the work done for the betterment of country and also highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's achievements on its official page. Most of the posts of BJP were on the positive aspects. Some posts were the information to narrate the upcoming events. The BJP was also talking about the pandemic and different ways to protect from Corona virus. The BJP made extensive use of photos and videos in its post because photos and videos are more impactful than only text. On few occasions, the BJP criticized the opposition parties in the Central Government. The BJP also made use of # Hashtag to increase the reach of its posts. Among all posts, 17% of the posts were related to Narendra Modi, 17% to pandemic, 27% to work done, 12% to greetings, 25% to information and only 1% of were the comments on opposition. With the average likes of 2723, the posts of BJP were considerable popular when compared to others. There are 256 comments on average and 251 unique shares. In the span of six months, the BJP had 1731684 likes, 163122 comments and 159408 shares.

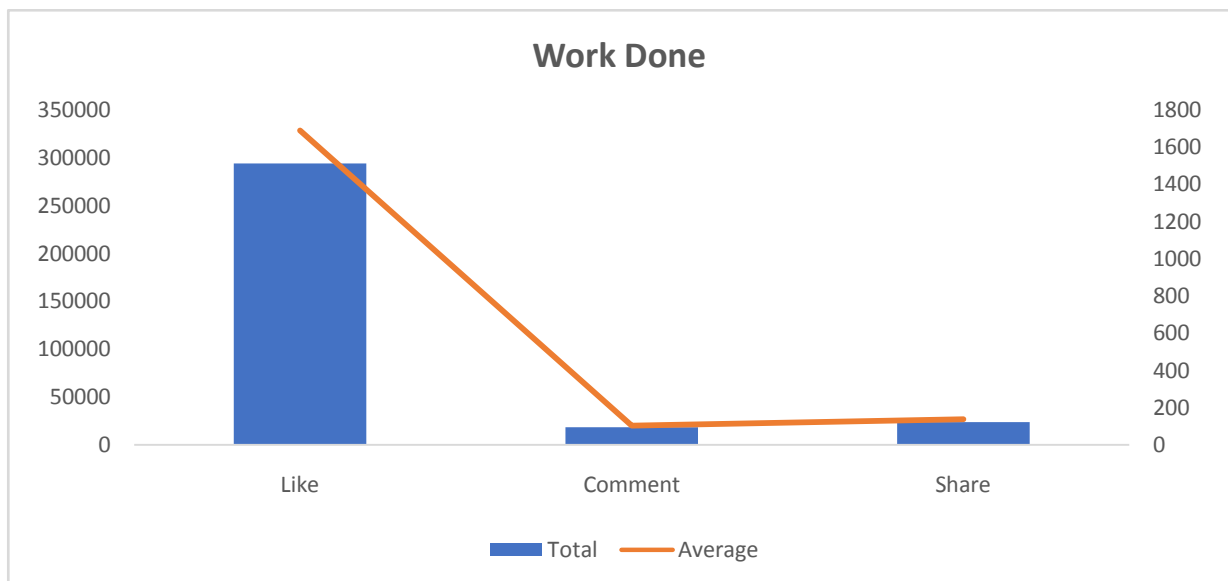
**Figure 5.32 Category: Remarks on Opposition**



The figure 5.32 states that the BJP posted 6 posts in which it criticized the congress specially for misguiding people on the CAA. In the category of remarks on opposition, 1200 is average likes per post reported on the remarks on opposition out of 7200 likes. While there are 68 comments out of 408. There are 537 shares on an average out of 3222 shares that were considered under the study. The opposition played major role and the remarks signifies the importance of the opposition and the role of social media in putting up a counter argument.

Example: “BJP questioning Sonia Gandhi on provoking people against CAA”

**Figure 5.33 Category: Work Done**

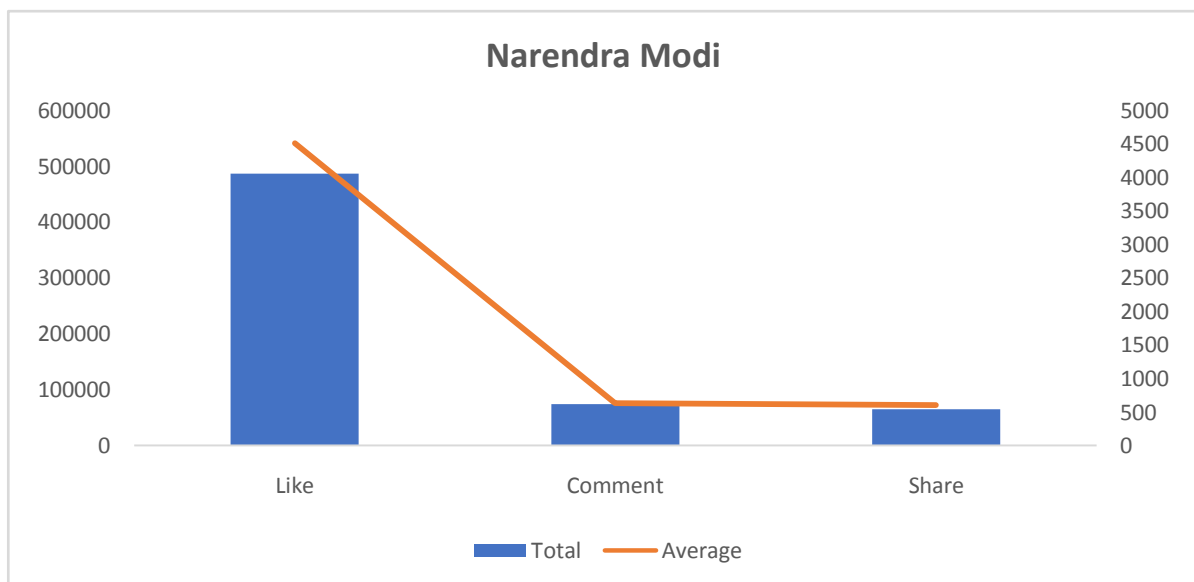


The figure 5.33 exhibits the data of the BJP which posted 174 posts under the category of work done. Most of the posts were related to the work which BJP activists were doing during the national lockdown. One of the reasons for the huge number of posts related to the work done during the lockdown might be to make people aware about the concerns of BJP for the citizen of this country. The posts can also be seen as an answer to the questions put up by the opposition parties regarding the unplanned lockdown in the country. The BJP was posting about the relief packages which were being provided by the Prime Minister.

Under the category of work done, 1688 is average likes per day reported out of 293778 likes. While there are 102 comments out of 17736. There are 135 shares on an average out of 23424 shares that were considered under the study. The political parties which come to power assure several promises and the same to certain extent remains unfulfilled. The data above shows the percentage of likes, comments and shares on the work that was carried out by the government.

Example: “Post on distribution of essential commodities in different districts by BJP workers #FeedTheNeedy”

**Figure 5.34**Category: Narendra Modi

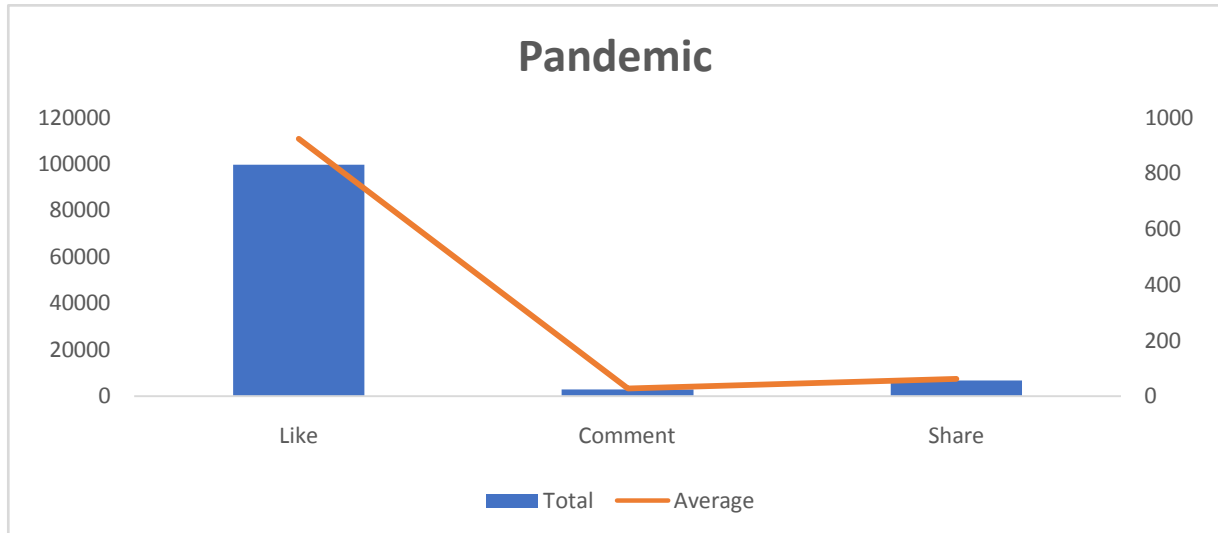


The figure 5.34 states that the BJP posted 108 posts in which the party was talking or sharing the information related to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The prime minister Narendra Modi being envisaged as one of the charismatic leaders showed his magical techniques in the Bihar assembly elections. One of the most popular politicians of the age was successful in

garnering the attention. Under the category Narendra Modi, there is an average 4506 likes per day reported out of 486600 likes. While there are 623 comments out of 73734. There are 598 shares on an average out of 64596 shares that were considered under the study.

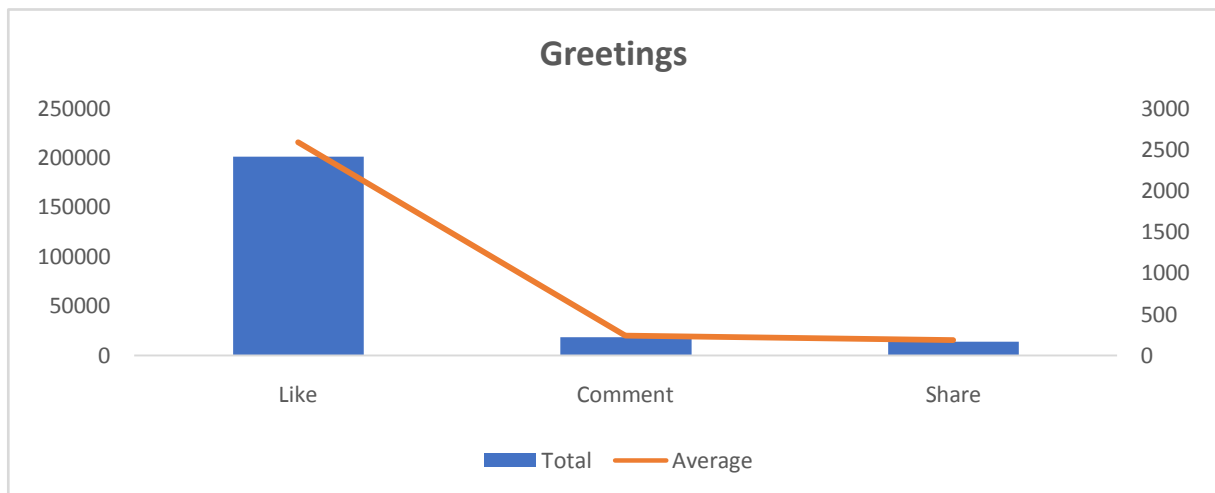
Example: “Post on PM’s Mann ki Baat #IndiaFightsCorona”

**Figure 5.35 Category: Pandemic**



The figure 5.35 exhibits the data of BJP on COVID 19 pandemic. The year 2020 marked the worst period ever in the recent past to humankind as the pandemic COVID 19 proved to be disastrous not only in India but across the world. The news on COVID-19 is important in the backdrop of its impact on socio-economic and political scenario. Being the party in power at both Centre and State level it was the primary duty of BJP to post information and news related to ongoing pandemic. The BJP posted 108 posts related to pandemic. The posts were related to appreciate the frontline workers with the appeal to stay at homes during lock down. On pandemic, there is on an average 922, 26 comments and 61 shares. In the six months span, the BJP got 99624 likes, 2832 comments and 6564 shares. Example: “Appreciation post for Frontline Covid Fighters #UPKeCoronaYodhha”

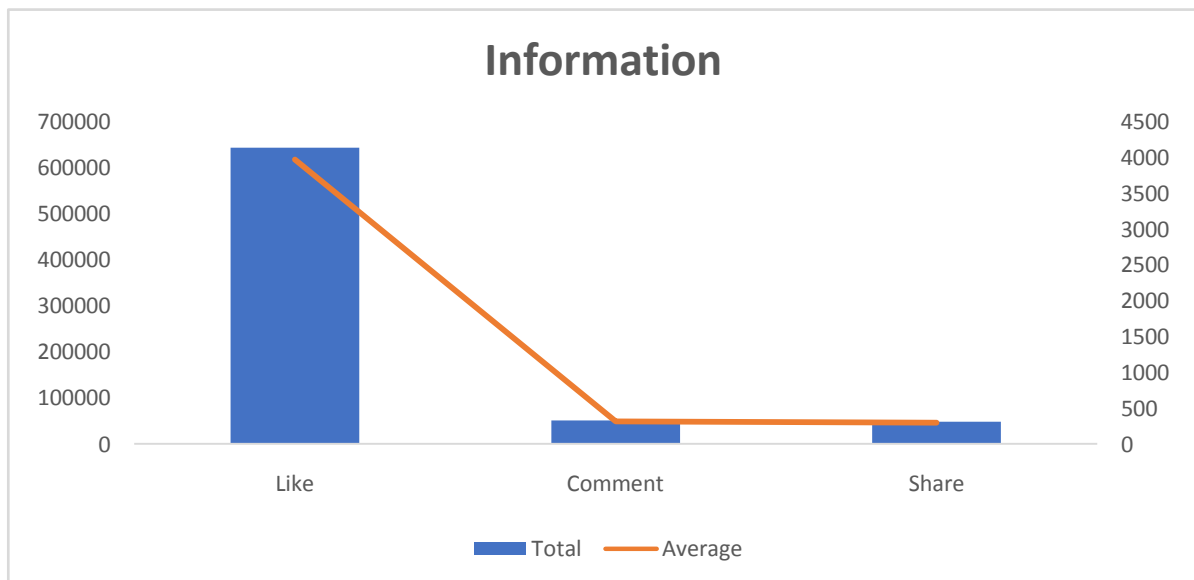
**Figure 5.36 Category: Greetings**



The Figure 5.36 states that the BJP posted 78 posts related to greetings. The party not only greeted the people on festive seasons but also paid tributes to great leaders on their anniversary. On greetings, there is on an average 2585, 242 comments 184 shares. The total number of likes, comment and shares were 201600, 18888 and 14370 respectively.

**Example:** “Greetings for Holi”

**Figure 5.37 Category: Information**



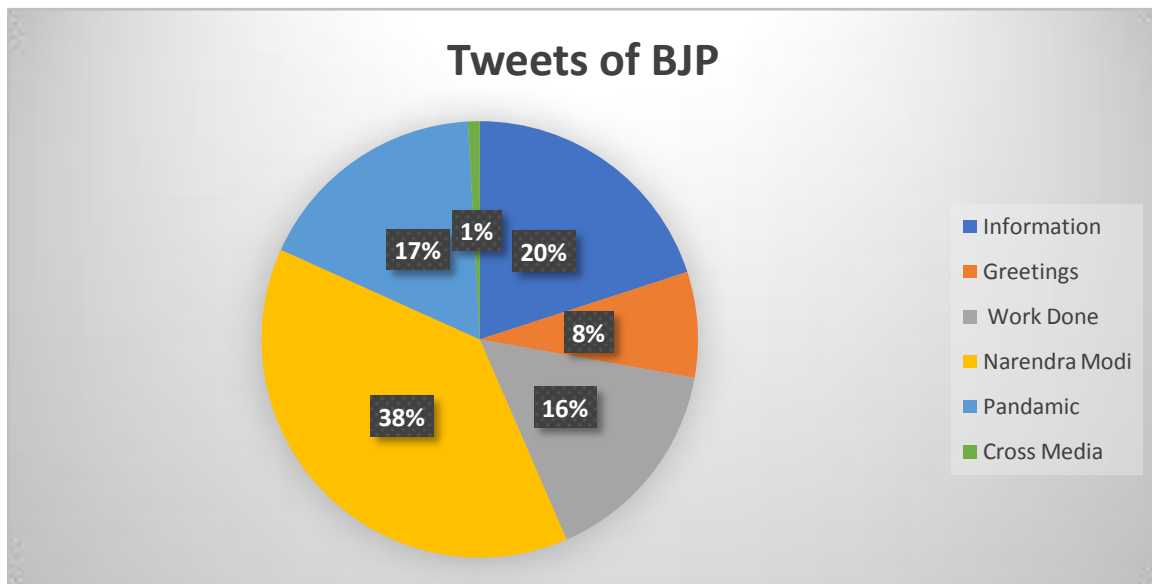
The figure 5.37 displays the data of BJP on the category of information. The information is about the political party and the candidates who played crucial role in the voting and decision-making behaviors of the public. Apart from this, the party also shared information about the upcoming events and rallies. In the category of information, there is on an average

of 3968 likes, 306 comments and 292 shares. In the span of six months, the BJP posted 162 posts related to information which gathered 642882 likes, 49524 comments and 47232 shares. Example: “Information on Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana”

#### **5.4.2 Content Analysis of Twitter Page of BJP Uttar Pradesh State-**

The researcher made the content analysis of the official Twitter page of BJP Uttar Pradesh state. The analysis is given below-

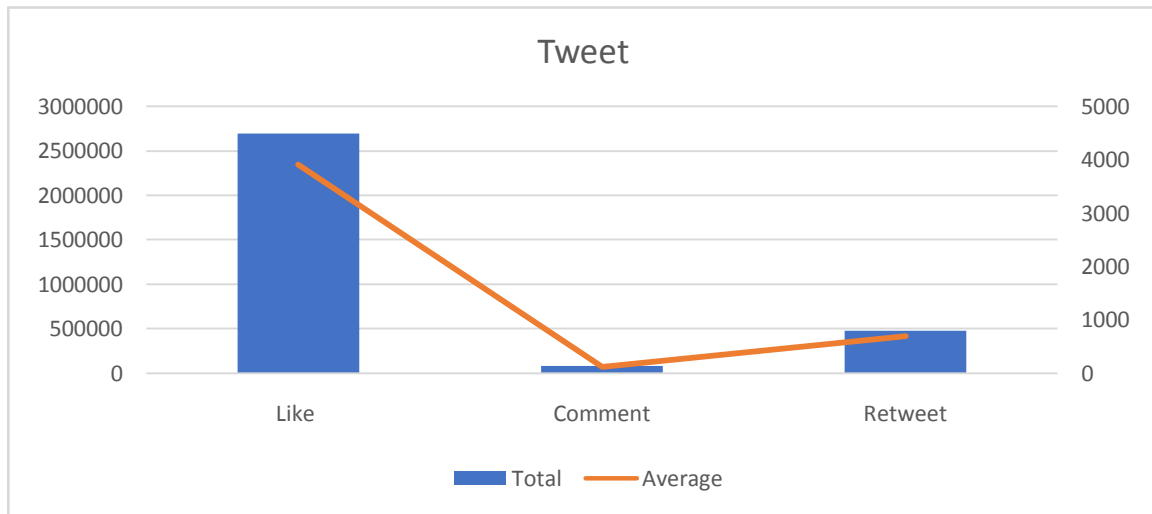
**Figure 5.38 Content Analysis of Twitter Account of BJP**



The figure 5.38 depicts the data about the number and variety of tweets posted on the official Twitter page of BJP in Uttar Pradesh. The figure explicitly mentions that the largest number of tweets posted by the BJP belong to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, other posts are belonging to pandemic and information about party’s policies.

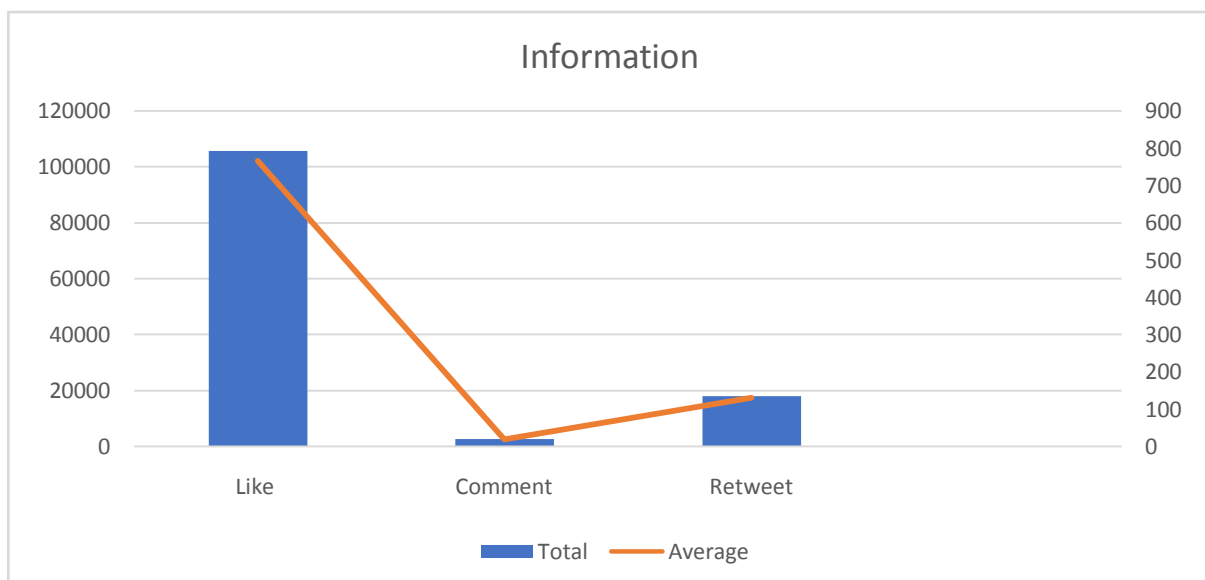
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**Figure 5.39 Total and Average Tweets of BJP**



The figure 5.39 depicts the data about all the tweets in the span of six months. The BJP posted 690 tweets i.e. 4 posts on an average per day. The overall tone of BJP’s tweets was positive. The tweets of BJP are bifurcated in six categories. The tweets highlighted Narendra Modi (264) and the work done by the BJP. Only on one occasion, the official handle of BJP criticised the main opposition party Congress leader Sonia Gandhi. 38% of the tweets were related to Narendra Modi, 17% to Pandemic, 16% to work done, 8% to greetings, 20% to information and 1% of tweets were related to cross media promotion. The BJP got 2694345 likes which equal to 3905 average like per tweets, 485394 retweet and 84978 comments.

**Figure 5.40 Category: Information**

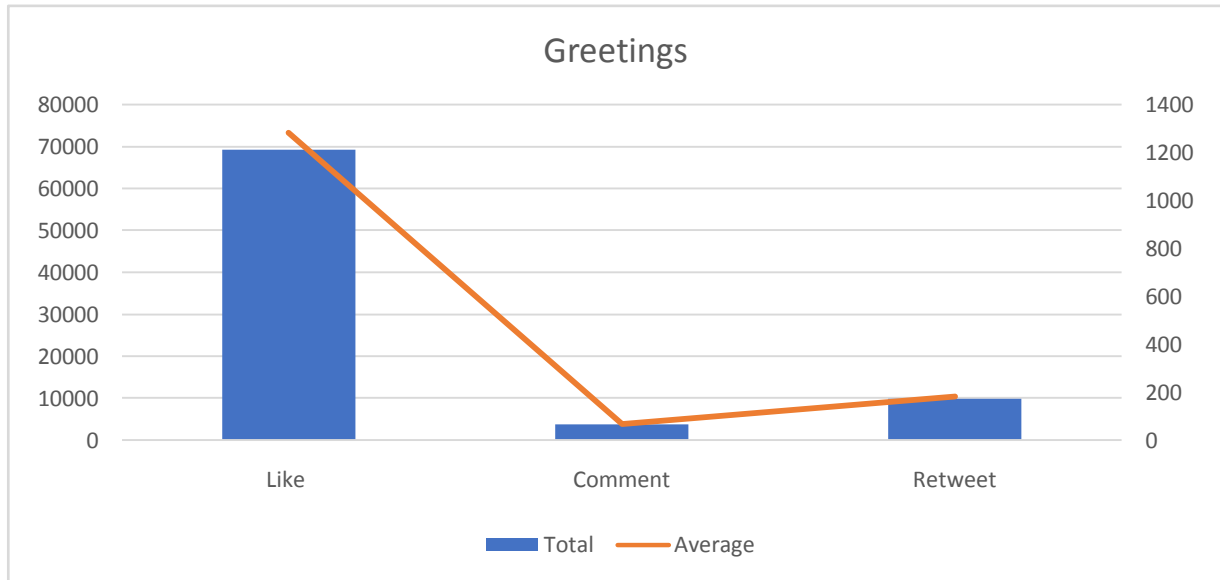


The figure 5.40 exhibits the data regarding the various information. In the information category, the BJP posted 138 tweets, which resulted in 105765 likes, 17988 retweets and 2613 comments. On an average it got 766 likes, 19 comments and 130 retweets. In this

category, the party was informing the citizen on different issues ranging from the interaction with PM and the information related to different speeches and programme of party leaders.

Example: “जनपद कानपुर दक्षिण में आयोजित बजट गोष्ठी कार्यक्रम को प्रदेश आईटी संयोजक (प्रवक्ता) श्री संजय राय ने संबोधित किया।“

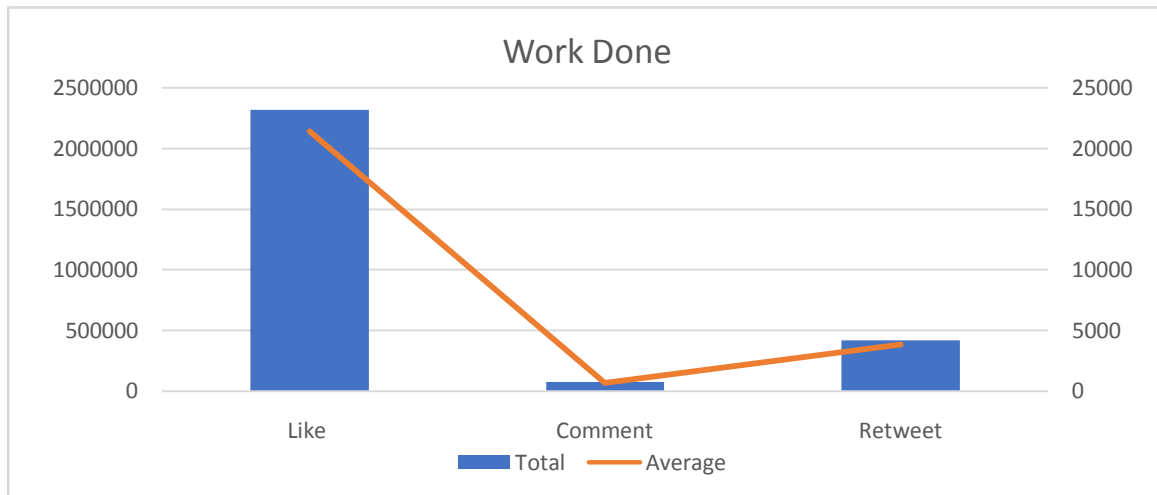
**Figure 5.41 Category: Greetings**



The figure 5.41 is about greetings. In the greeting category, the BJP posted 54 tweets. In its tweets, the party wished fellow citizen on the occasion of different festivals and also on the anniversary of great leaders. The tweets got 69246 likes, 3639 comments and 9801 retweets. The average like, comment and retweets of tweets were 1282, 67 and 181 respectively.

Example: “समस्त प्रदेशवासियों को हनुमान जयंती की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं।“

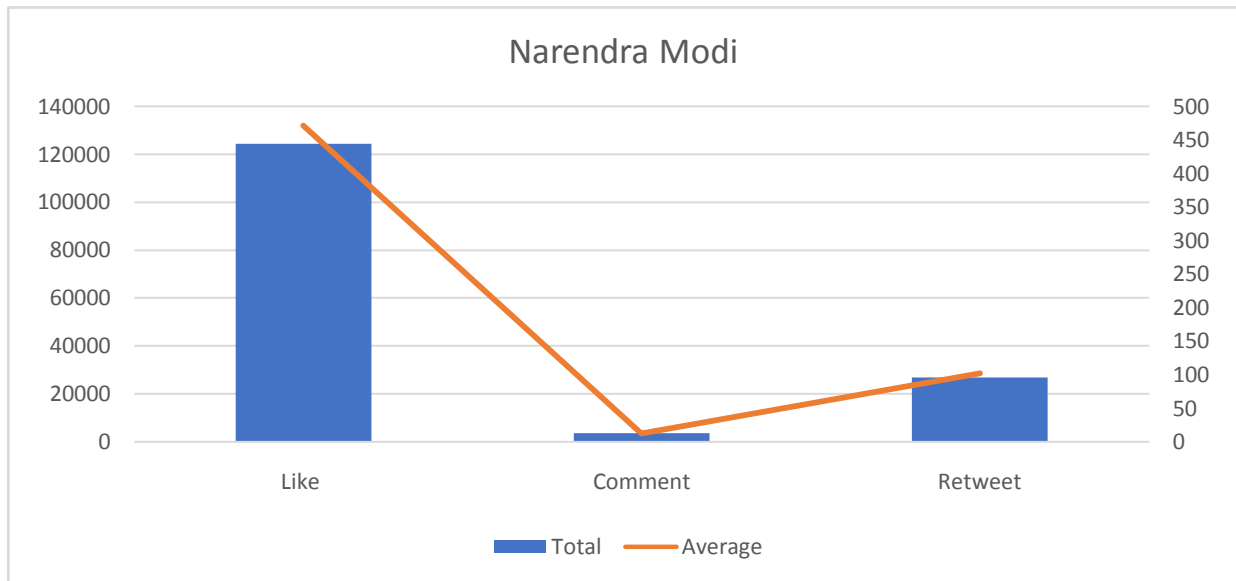
**Figure 5.42 Category: Work Done**



The figure 5.42 is about the work done category. The BJP posted 108 tweets in this category. Majority of their tweets were related to the public welfare work done by the BJP party members during National Lockdown. The tweets were related to how the party members were providing foods and sanitizers to the common public. The party also highlighted the work carried out by the Yogi government. The tweets got 2313900 likes, 73008 comments and 415368 retweets. The average like, comment and retweets of tweets were 21425, 676 and 3846 respectively.

Example: “भाजपा कार्यकर्ता प्रदेश के विभिन्न जनपदों में कोरोना महामारी के समय में जरूरतमन्दों तक राशन पहुंचा रहे हैं।”

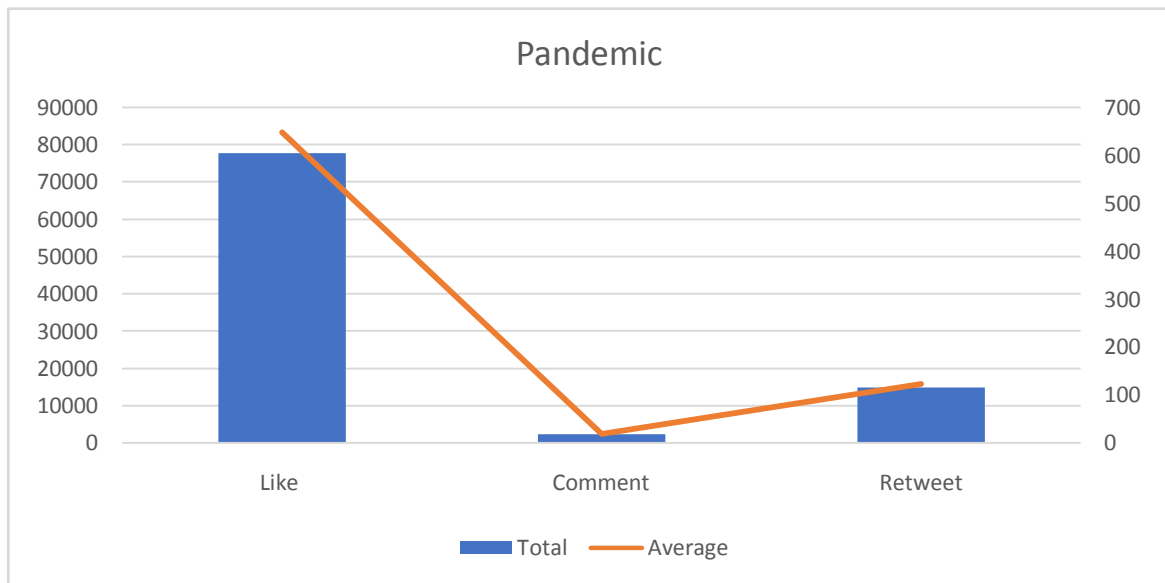
Figure 5.43 Category: Narendra Modi



The figure 5.43 tells the data about the tweets related to the category of Narendra Modi. The BJP posted 264 tweets. Narendra Modi is the face and strength of BJP. Whether it is general election or state election, the BJP fights all the elections in name of Narendra Modi. The same trend can be seen on tweeter also. The tweets got 124401 likes, 3402 comments and 26844 retweets. The average likes, comments and retweets of tweets were 471, 12 and 102 respectively.

Example: “ मैं चाहता हूँ कि 22 मार्च रविवार के दिन हम ऐसे सभी लोगों को धन्यवाद अर्पित करें। रविवार को ठीक 5 बजे हम अपने घर के दरवाजे पर खड़े होकर, बाल्कनी में, खिड़कियों के सामने खड़े होकर 5 मिनट तक ऐसे लोगों का आभार व्यक्त करें: पीएम मोदी “

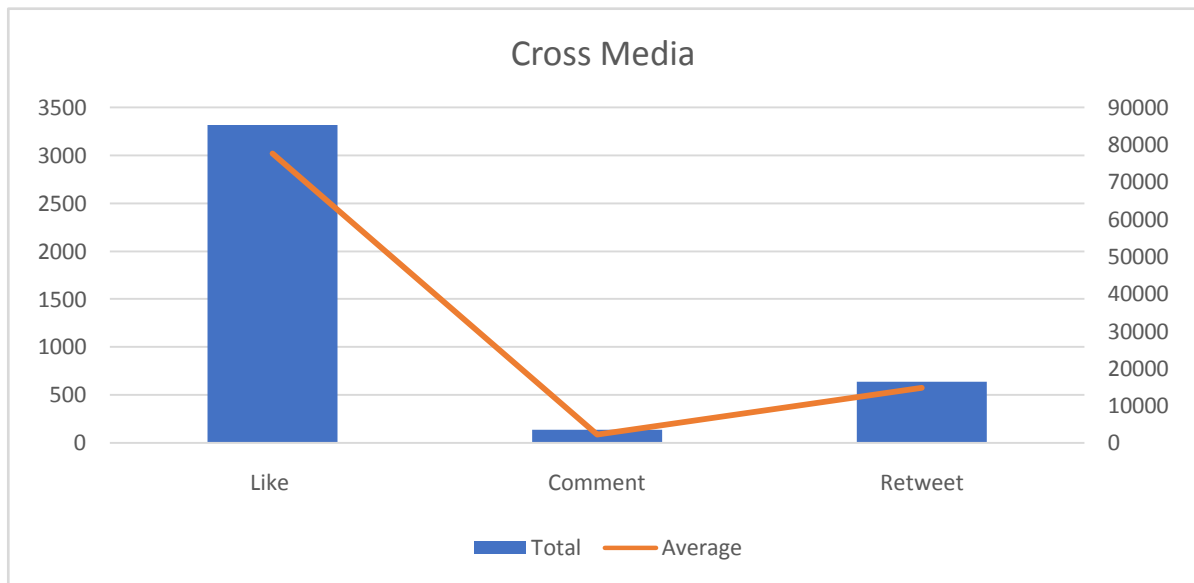
Figure 5.44 Category: Pandemic



The figure 5.44 depicts the data about the pandemic. In the category of Pandemic, the BJP posted 120 tweets. All the tweets related to pandemic were positive. The party praised the frontline workers and informed people on how to tackle the problem of pandemic. The tweets got 77712 likes, 2184 comments and 14757 retweets. The average likes, comments and retweets of tweets were 648, 18 and 123 respectively.

Example: “खांसते या छींकते समय अपने मुंह को रुमाल या टिशू से ढकें, इस्तेमाल किए टिशू को कूड़ेदान में ही फेंकें। कोई भी व्यक्ति जिसे बुखार, खांसी, सांस लेने में परेशानी हो डॉक्टर से सम्पर्क करें।“

**Figure 5.45 Category: Cross Media**



The figure 5.45 depicts the data about the cross-media contents. In the category of Cross Media, the BJP posted 6 tweets. The tweets informed people about the events happening on other media platforms. The tweets got 3321 likes, 132 comments and 636 retweets.

The average likes, comments and retweets of tweets were 554, 22 and 106 respectively.

Example: “मुख्यमंत्री श्री योगी आदित्यनाथ व भाजपा प्रदेश अध्यक्ष श्री स्वतंत्र देव सिंह उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार के 3 वर्ष पूरा होने के उपलक्ष्य में प्रेस वार्ता करते हुए... लाइव यहां देखें”

### **5.4.3 Content Analysis of Facebook Page of Samajwadi Party**

Every post/tweet was categorised into a suitable group. The coding scheme was developed by the researcher by using clustering approach, creating a new category when needed. The posts were categorised as follows: All the 283 Facebook posts were put into various categories. After categorisation the number of likes, comments and shares for each was noted down. Since the number of likes was quite high, an average of the likes, comments and shares was calculated separately. Average was calculated by adding the total number of likes divided by the number of posts for each category. A similar procedure was followed for comments and shares.

**Figure 5.46 Various Post of Samajwadi Party on Facebook page of Uttar Pradesh State.**

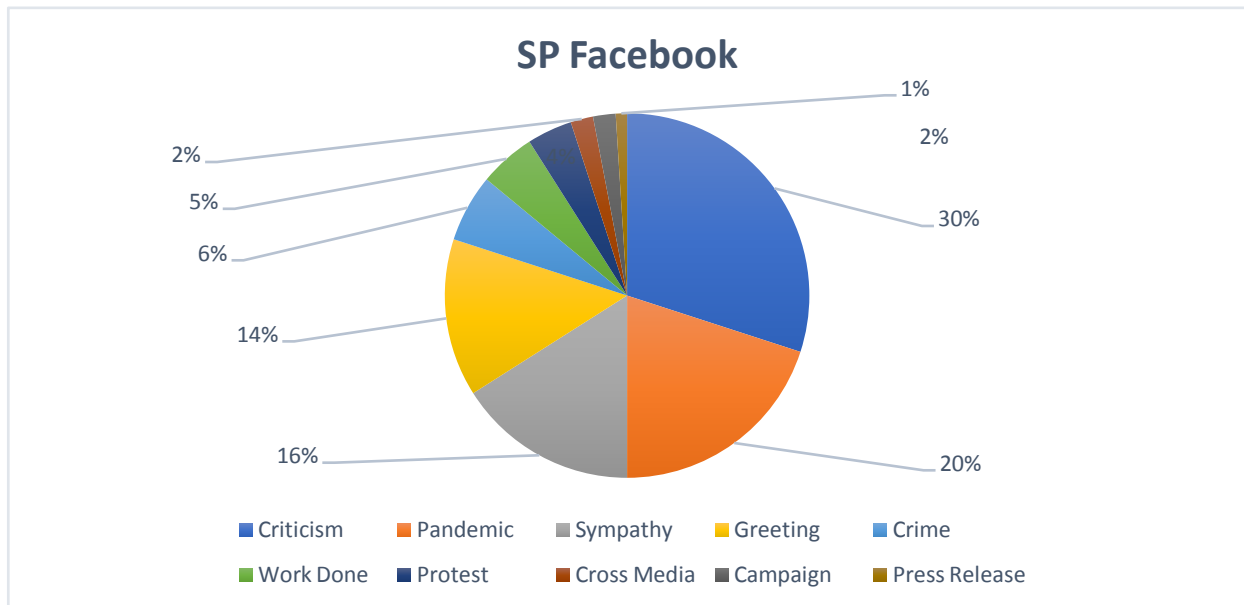


Figure 5.46 depicts the data regarding different types of posts by Samajwadi Party on its official Facebook page. From the above figure it can be concluded that, out of the total 283 posts by Samajwadi Party 30% were related to Criticism of the government, 20% of posts were related to pandemic, 16% of the post were in sympathy category, 14% of the post fell in greetings category, 6% of post were related to the crime, 5% of posts were about the work carried out by the Samajwadi Party, 2% of posts were related to campaign and protest whereas 1% of the post were press release.

**Figure:5.47 Total Number of Like, Comment and Share**

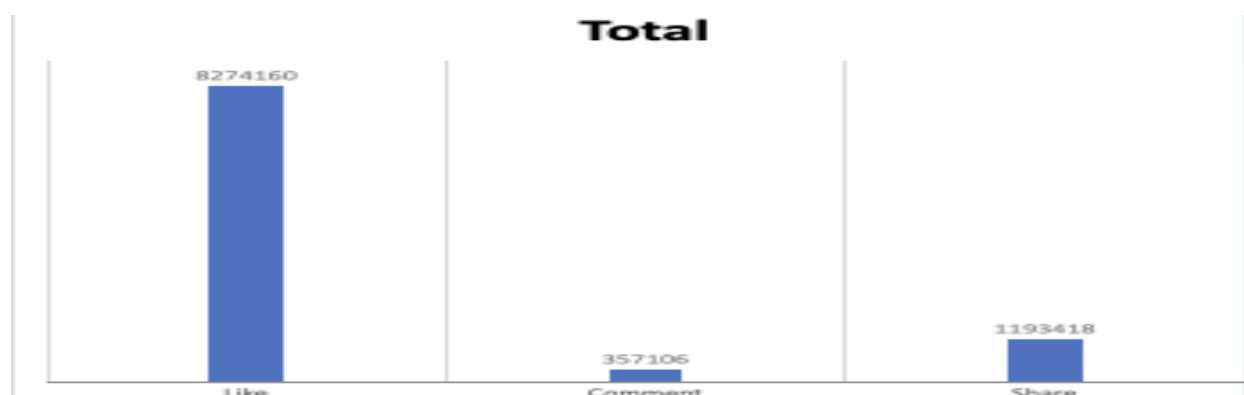
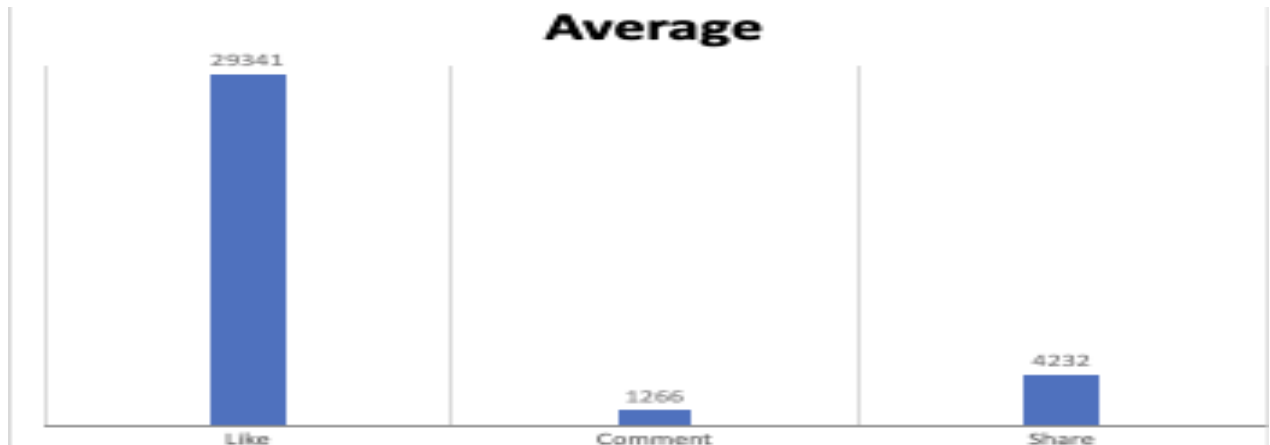


Figure 5.47 is about the number of likes etc on the posts of Samajwadi Party. From the above figure, we can conclude that the total number of likes, comments and shares on the Facebook page of Samajwadi Party, are 8274160, 357106 and 1193418 respectively. The Samajwadi Party used text, photograph, videos and links of external media on their official page.

**Figure 5.48 Average Number of Like, Comment and Shares**



The figure 5.48 depicts the data about the average number of posts. From figure 5.3.19, one can say that the average number of likes, comments and shares received on the posts of Samajwadi Party are 29341, 1266, and 4232 respectively. It can be concluded that the interaction on the official page is not good however the engagement is good as the average post shares is found 4000.

**Figure 5.49 Cross Media:**

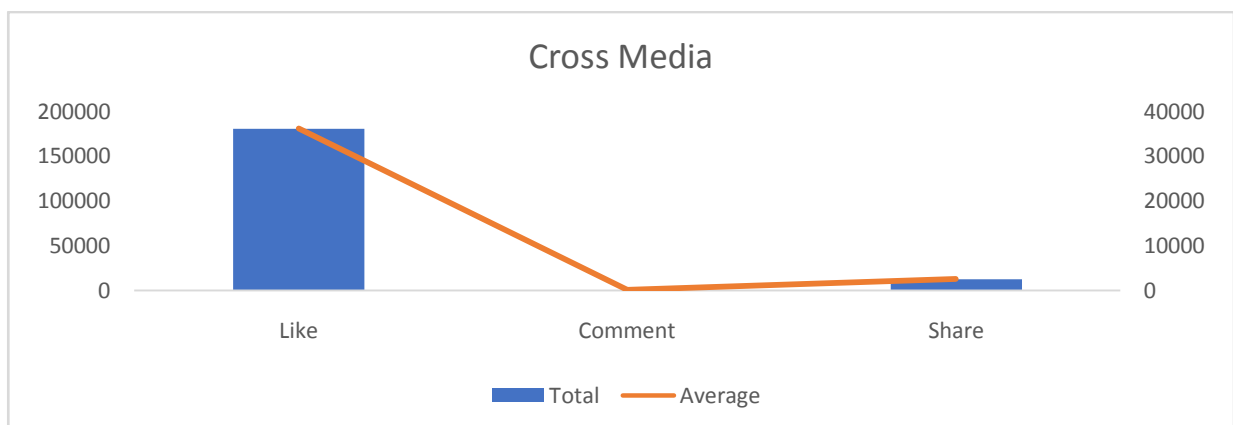


Figure 5.49 concludes that the Samajwadi party posted four posts in the category of Cross Media Promotion. The total number of likes, comments and shares received on the above

category was 181000, 962 and 13148 respectively. The Samajwadi Party shared link of YouTube and other media outline link. Example of cross media post:

लॉकडाउन में उत्तर प्रदेश के अंदर गरीब के घर भुखमरी का अड्डा बन चुके है। जिनमें ना खाने को अनाज है ना मास्क ना सैनिटाइजर।लखीमपुर खीरी में अपने परिजनों के लिए अनाज लेने गए युवक की पुलिस पिटाई के बाद आत्महत्या अत्यंत दुखद ! <https://aajtak.intoday.in/.../corona-virus-labour-suicide...>

From the above figure, one can infer that the average number of likes on cross media was 35200, whereas the average number of comments and shares were 192 and 2630 respectively.

**Figure 5.50 Category Crime:**

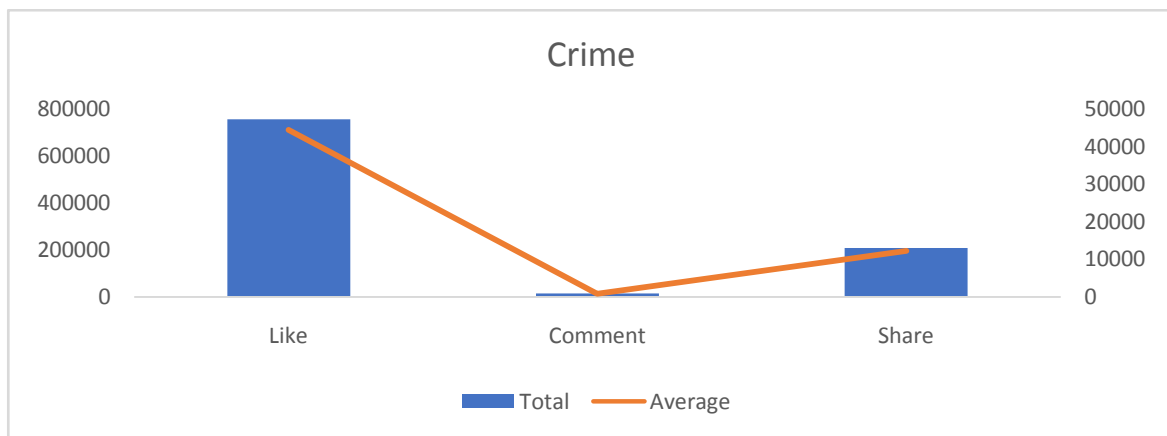


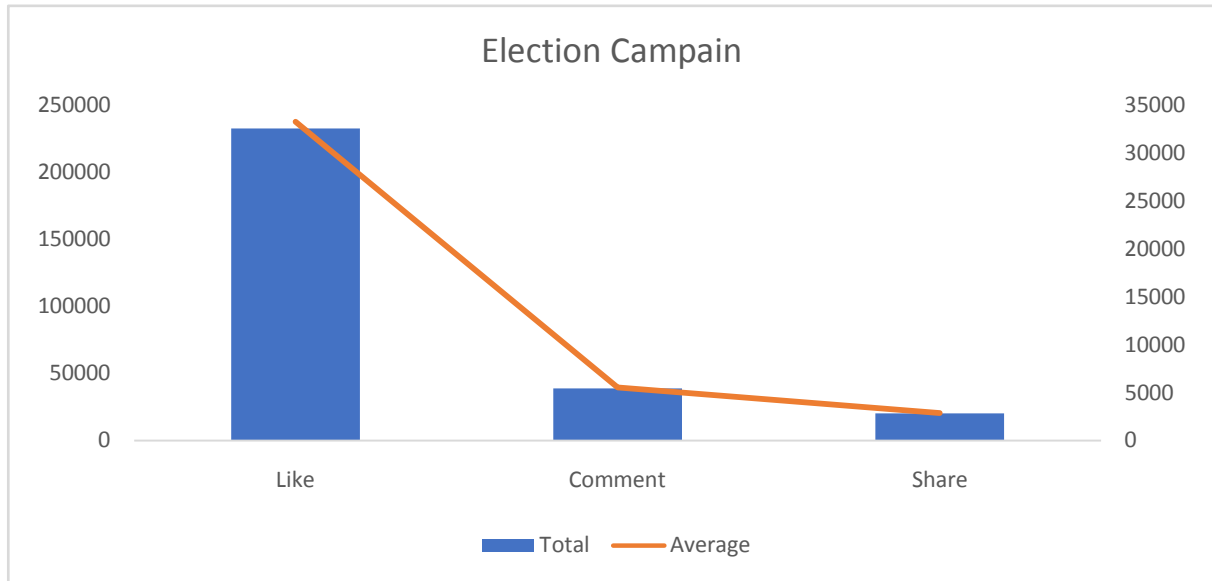
Figure 5.50 depicts that the Samajwadi Party posted 17 posts related to crime on Facebook page. The official handler of Samajwadi Party criticised not only the poor law and order situation in the state but also highlighted the problem in policing system. The post focuses on issues related to women and Dalit in the state. The total number of likes, comments and shares received on post related to crime were 758000, 12990 and 207329 respectively.

**Example of crime post:**

मुख्यमंत्री के वीवीआईपी गृह जनपद क्षेत्र गोरखपुर के पिपराइच से पान विक्रेता के बेटे का अपहरण प्रदेश में अपराधियों के बुलंद हौसलों को पुनः सत्यापित करता है। झूठे दावों के बीच अपनी वारदातों को अंजाम देने से बाज़ नहीं आ रहे अपहरणकर्ता । टीम गठित कर बच्चे को सकुशल वापस लाए सरकार।

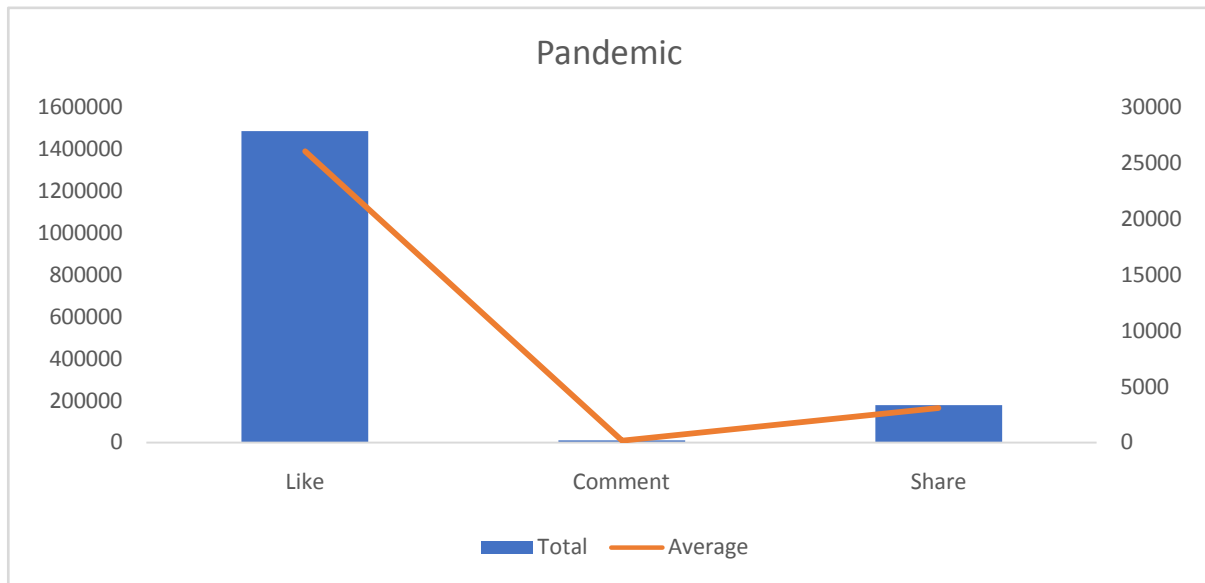
The average number of likes, comment and share received on post related to crime was 44588, 764 and 12196 respectively.

**Figure 5.51 Campaign**



The figure 5.51 exhibits that there were 7 posts related to election campaign. The posts contain simple slogan to such as “baies me bicycle” to “बीजेपी के लोगों की बदजुबानी पर ध्यान न देकर समाजवादी श्रमिकों, बेहाल गरीब की आवाज को आवाज देने से ना डिगेंगे ना भटकेंगे। सभी समाजवादी पार्टी कार्यकर्ता एवं नेता सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करते हुए लोगों की मदद करना जारी रखते हुए मिशन 2022 की तैयारियों में पूरी मुस्तैदी से जुट जाएं।”. The total number of likes, comments and shares received to posts related to election campaign were 233000, 38838 and 20053 respectively The average number of like on post related to election campaign were 33286, whereas the post got 5548 comment and 2865 shares

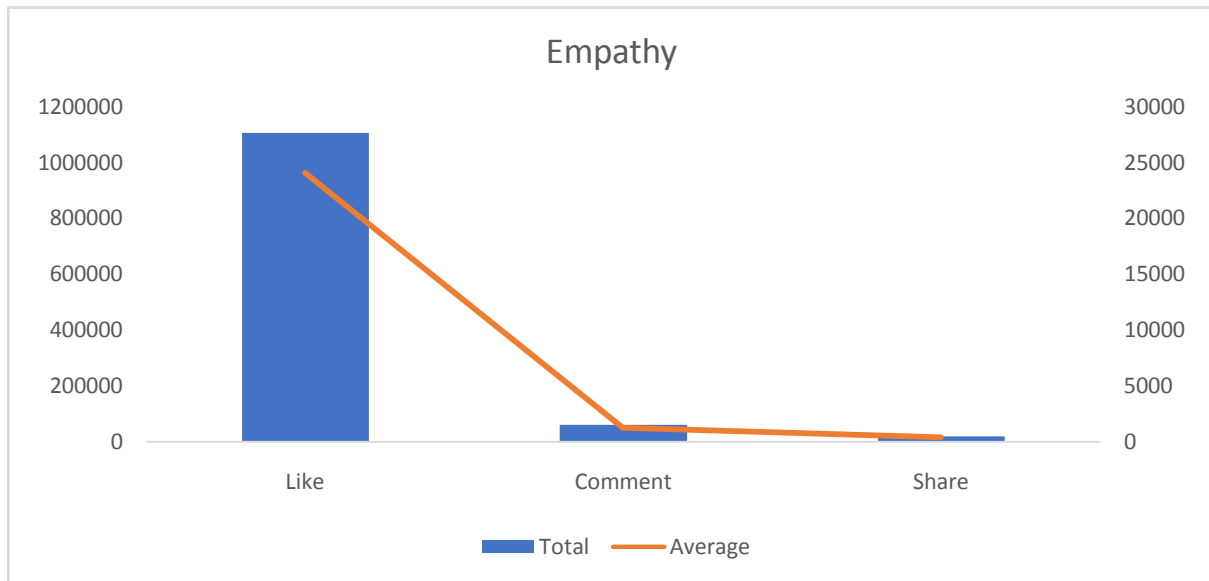
**Figure 5.52 Category Pandemic:**



The figure 5.51 depicts the data about the pandemic. The Samajwadi party posted 56 posts related to pandemic. The posts highlighted the problem faced by the citizens during the national lockdown and plight of labour from metropolitan cities. It also criticised the centre and state government for poor handling the situation. The posts also used hashtag to reach the maximum audience. The total likes received to pandemic post were 1485945, 9781 comments and 177340 shares. Example of pandemic post:

“कोरोना लॉकडाउन के कारण कज़ाकिस्तान के अस्ताना में 2 महीने से फंसे मैनपुरी समेत UP के रहने वाले 100 से अधिक भारतीय छात्र वतन वापसी हेतु भारत सरकार एवं UP सरकार से मदद की आस लगाए बैठे हैं।” From the above figure, one can conclude that the average number of likes received on the posts related to pandemic was 26069, whereas there were 172 comments and 3111 shares on an average on the post related to pandemic.

### 5.53 Empathy



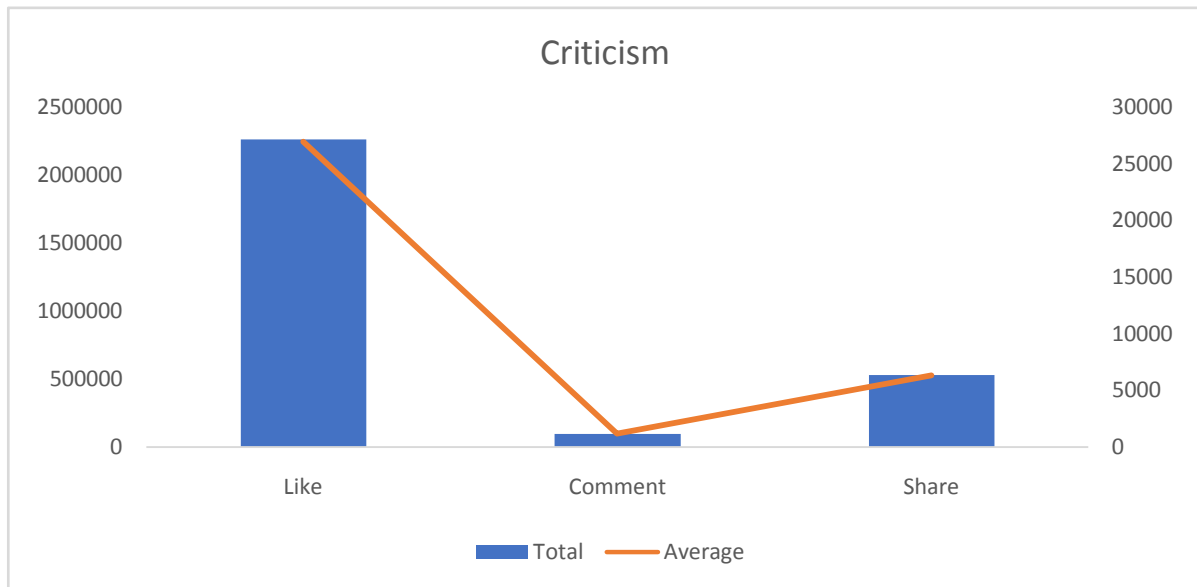
The figure 5.53 exhibits the data regarding the empathy. One of the major themes on which Samajwadi Party posted regularly was sympathy. The party regularly expressed its grief whenever a party member or relative of party member met with some tragedy such as death in family. This showed the humane side of the party. One of the major reasons for this type of posts may be the ideology of the party where they want to show that the party is always with the workers of Samajwadi Party. On a total 47 posts were related to sympathy. The total number of likes on the post related to sympathy were 1106912. There was a total of 59179 comments and 19182 shares.

#### Sample of post

“अत्यंत दुखद! समाजवादी पार्टी नेता श्री रमन जौहरी जी की आकस्मिक मृत्यु हृदय घाती घटना! शोक संतप्त परिवार के प्रति सांत्वना एवं दिवंगत आत्मा की शांति की प्रार्थना। भावभीनी श्रद्धांजलि! “ or “लखनऊ में आमने-सामने से दो बसों की भिड़ंत से हुए दर्दनाक सड़क हादसे में मृत 5 लोगों की आत्मा को शांति दे भगवान। 10 से 12 यात्रियों के घायल होने की खबर, सभी को हर संभव उपचार सेवा मुहैया कराए सरकार। शोकाकुल परिजनों के प्रति संवेदना! मृतकों के परिजनों को 10 लाख □ मुआवजा दे सरकार।”

The average number of likes, comments and shares received on post related to sympathy was 24063, 1287 and 417 respectively.

Figure 5.54 **Criticism**



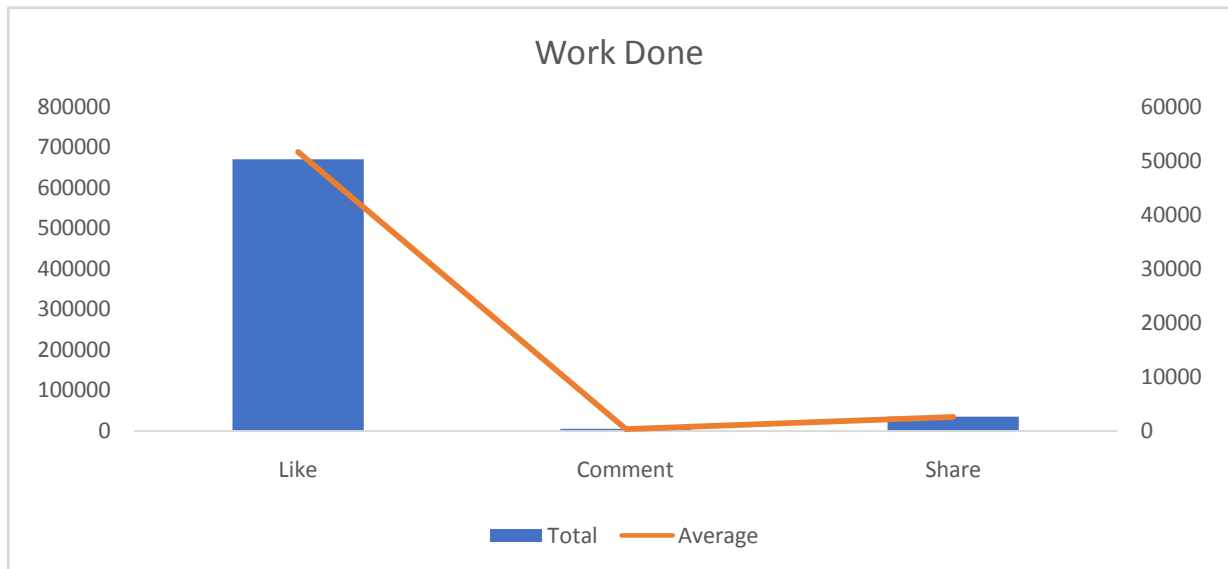
The figure 5.54 is about the criticism. One of the roles of opposition is to question the government and to hold them accountable for their deeds. This also helps to fix the mistakes of the ruling party. The Opposition is equally responsible in upholding the best interests of the people of the country. With this philosophy Samajwadi party posted 84 posts where it criticised the government. The post criticised not only the state government but also questioned the centre government on its anti people policy specially the problem faced by the citizen during lockdown. The total number of likes received on the posts related to criticism were 2264382, whereas it got a total of 100835 comments and 532154 shares.

Example of criticism post:

“बीजेपी राज का जंगलराज बना बेटियों का काल! नोएडा के बोर्डिंग स्कूल में नाबालिग बेटी से रेप के बाद शव को लटकाया, परिवार को बिना बताए किया अंतिम संस्कार। प्रयागराज में दारोगा के 2 बेटों ने दोस्तों संग मिलकर किया किशोरी से दुष्कर्म! दोषियों के खिलाफ कड़ी कार्रवाई कर न्याय दे सरकार।”  
 Or :संविधान के आर्टिकल 15 की धज्जियां उड़ा दी आईजी साहब ने! जाति देखकर थानेदारी बांट दिए हैं। सरकार फौरन इस अधिकारी पर वैधानिक कार्रवाई करे।”

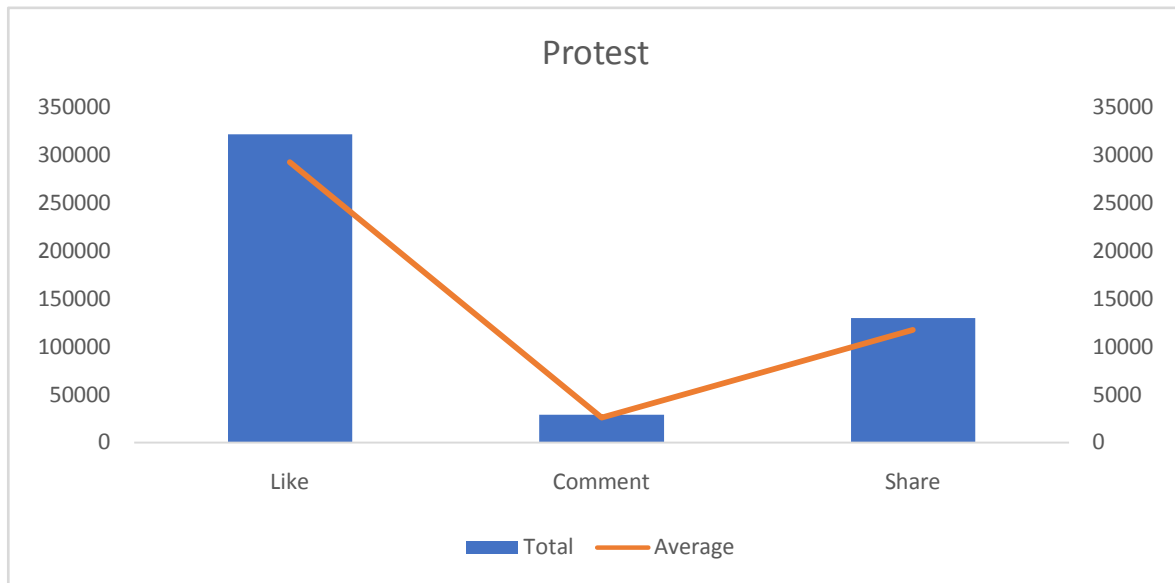
The average number of likes, comments and shares received on post related to criticism was 26957, 1200 and 6335 respectively.

**Figure 5.55 Work Done**



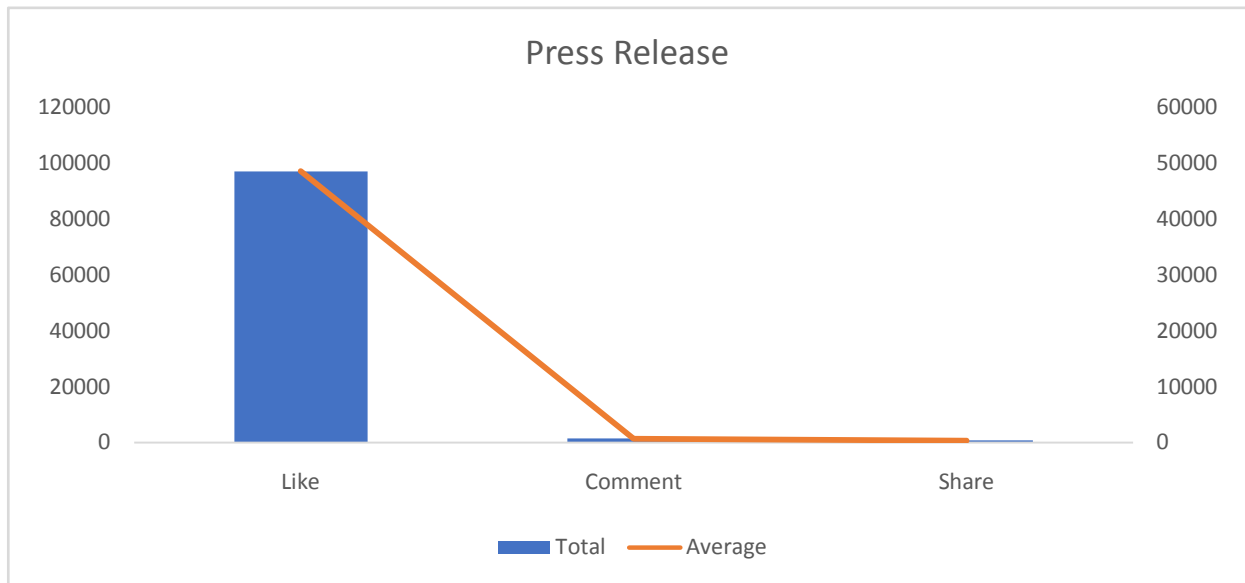
The figure 5.55 is about the work done by the party. The Samajwadi Party shared 13 posts related to their work. It showcased how the party was still working for the poor/needful even if it's not in power. It discusses about the economic help provided to needy during crisis. One of such examples is “समाजवादी पार्टी उत्तर प्रदेश में सड़क हादसों में जान गवाने वाले सभी मजदूरों के परिवारों को 1-1 लाख ₹ की आर्थिक मदद प्रदान करेगी।” Or the step the party had taken for development such as “कुशीनगर एयरपोर्ट को केंद्रीय कैबिनेट की तरफ से एयरपोर्ट की मंजूरी मिलने के बाद सपा के पूर्व मंत्री श्री राधे श्याम सिंह जी ने कहा इसका पूरा श्रेय राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री अखिलेश यादव जी को जाता है। सपा का काम जनता के नाम ।”. There were 672000 likes, 4390 comments and 34268 shares on the post related to work done by Samajwadi Party. The average number of likes, comment and share received on post related to crime was 51692, 338 and 2636 respectively.

**Figure 5.56 Protest**



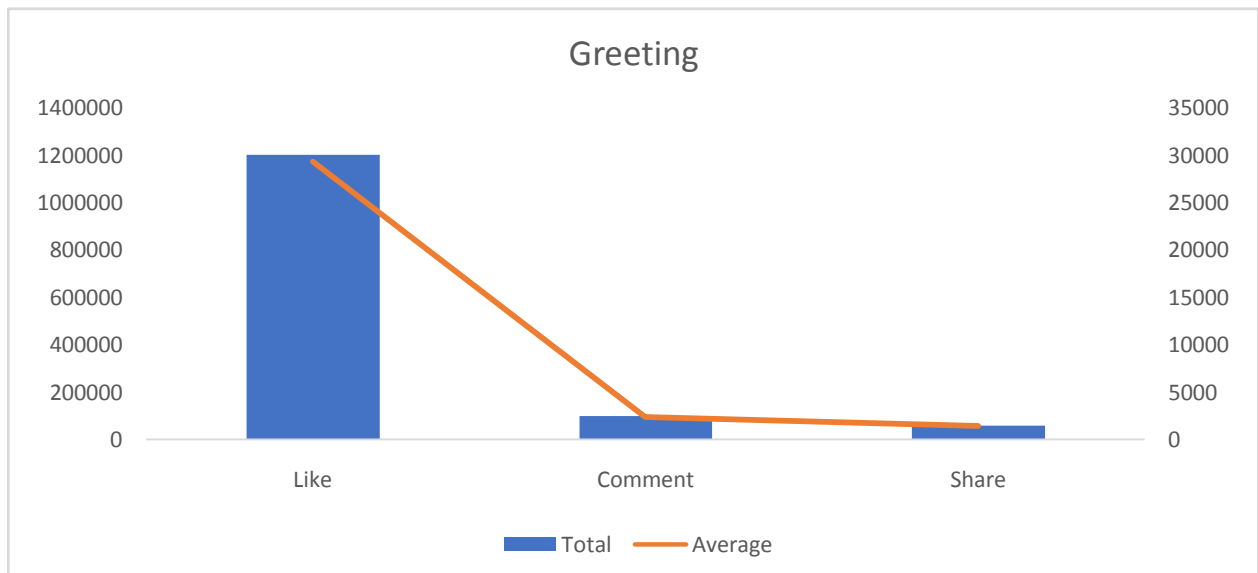
The figure 5.56 is about the protests carried out by the party. The category of protest deals with the offline protests carried out by the Samajwadi Party. The party posted 11 posts related to the protest. The issues raised were like rise in petrol prices “डीजल और पेट्रोल के मूल्य वृद्धि को लेकर समाजवादी पार्टी कार्यकर्ताओं ने चंदौली जिले में किया प्रदर्शन ।” and Iso to supports students in protest “लखनऊ के राज भवन पर नीट, जेईई परीक्षा, यूनिवर्सिटी में फीस माफी समेत अन्य मांगों को लेकर शांतिपूर्ण प्रदर्शन करने निकले समाजवादी छात्र सभा के कार्यकर्ताओं पर बर्बर लाठीचार्ज कर उन्हें लहूलुहान करना मुख्यमंत्री के आदेश पर हुआ अत्याचार है! इस वीभत्सता की शाब्दिक निंदा मुमकिन नहीं! डरेंगे नहीं, डटे रहेंगे समाजवादी। जनता देगी जवाब।” The average number of likes, comments and shares received on posts related to protest were 29273, 2628 and 11797 respectively.

**Figure 5.57 Press Release**



The figure 5.57 depicts the data regarding press releases. There were two posts where the Samajwadi Party shared the press release. The press release was in the form of photos. The total likes received on press release were 97000, whereas it received 1331 comments and 757 shares. The average number of likes, comments and shares received on press release were 48500, 666 and 379 respectively.

**Figure 5.58 Greeting**



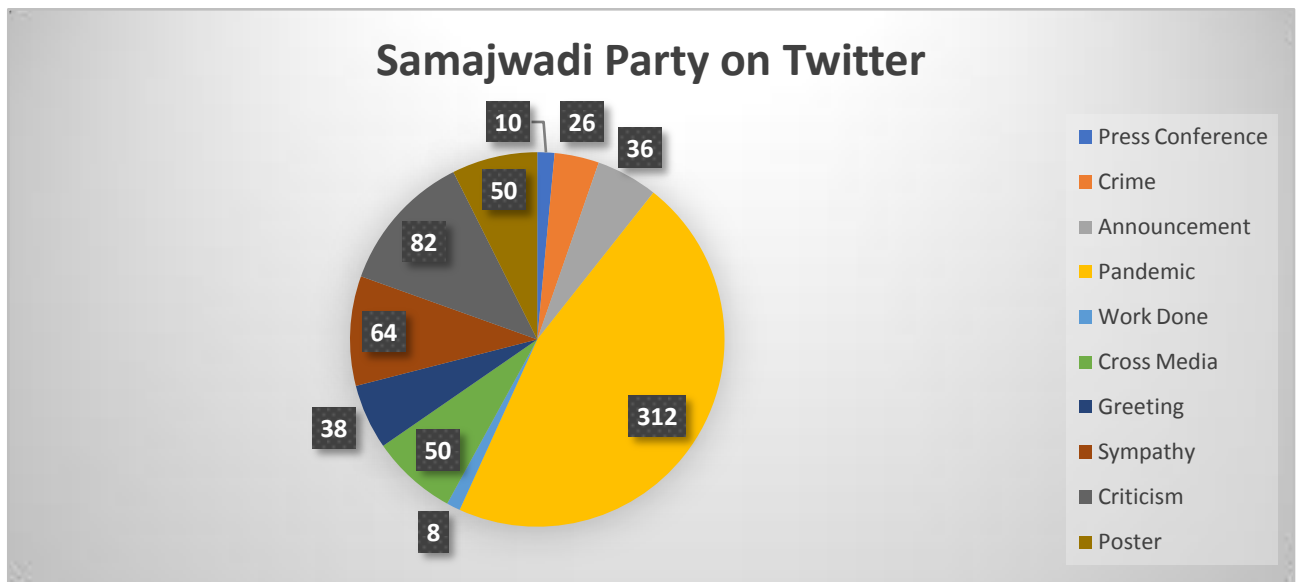
The figure 5.58 is about the greetings. There were 41 posts where the party greeted the fellow citizens on different occasion such as 'श्री गणेश चतुर्थी' की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ!. The party also shared its homage on the birth and death anniversary of great leaders of India. Such as, भारत

की महान वीरांगना, नारी शक्ति का प्रतीक, कुशल व लोकप्रिय प्रशासिका 'महारानी अहिल्याबाई होल्कर' जी की पुण्यतिथि पर सादर नमन एवं भावपूर्ण श्रद्धांजलि! The total likes received on the posts are related to greetings were 1202921, whereas there were 100081 comments and 60048 shares. The average number of likes, comments and shares received on press release were 29340, 2441 and 1465 respectively.

#### 5.4.4 Content Analysis of Twitter Account of Samajwadi Party

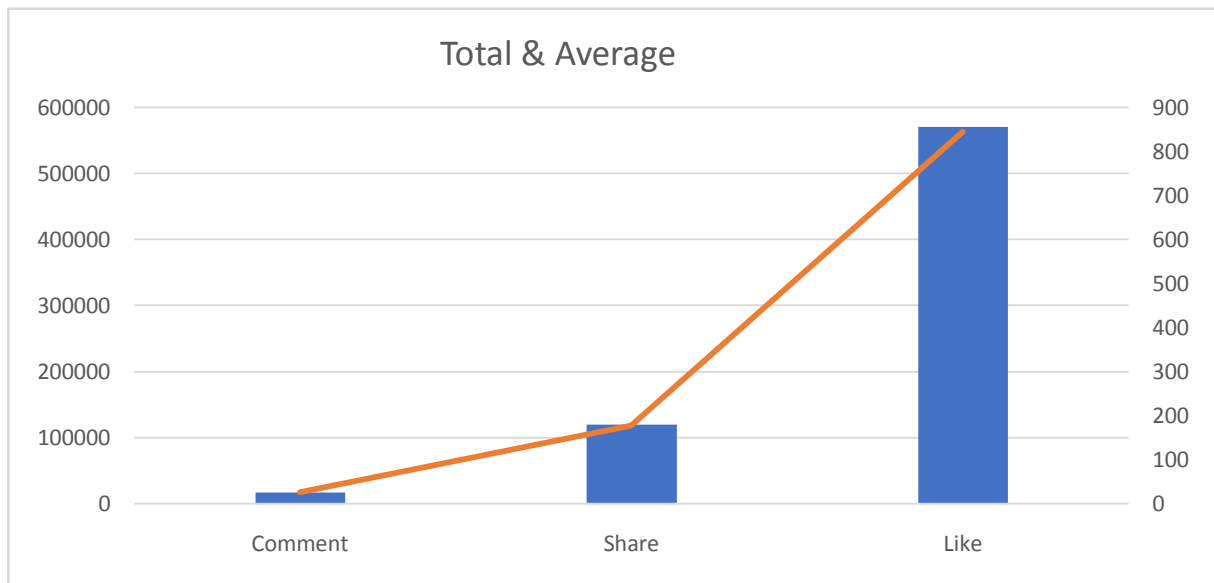
The researcher made content analysis of the official Twitter account page of Samajwadi Party in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The analysis is given below-

**Figure 5.59 Total Tweets of Samajwadi Party-**



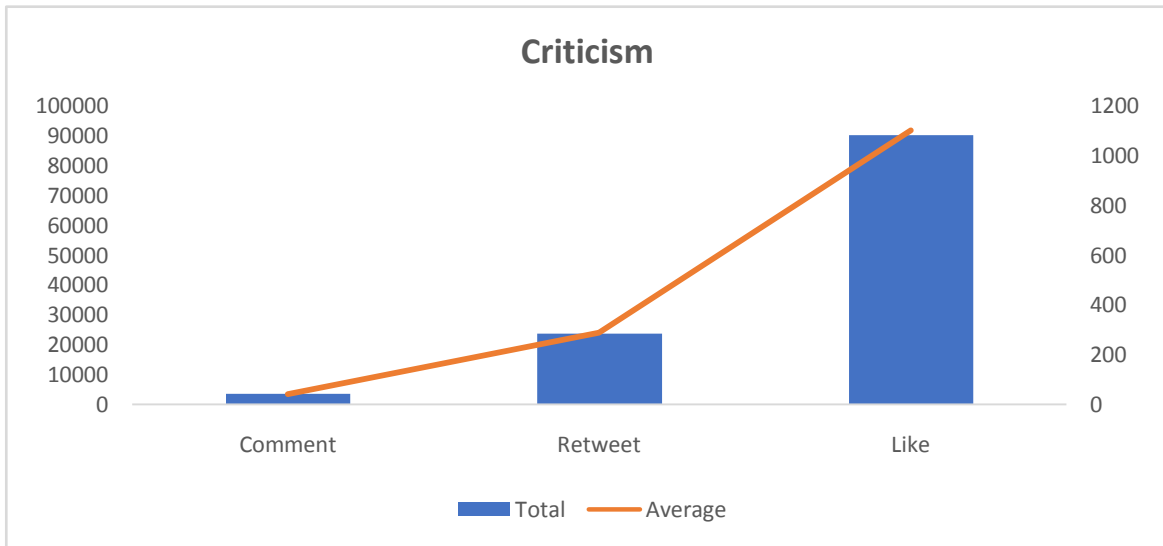
The figure 5.59 depicts the total tweets made by the Samajwadi party on its Twitter page. The data depicts that majority of the posts of Samajwadi Party were related to the pandemic. However, party also tweeted on different subjects like sympathy criticism etc.

**Figure 5.60 Total and Average Tweets**



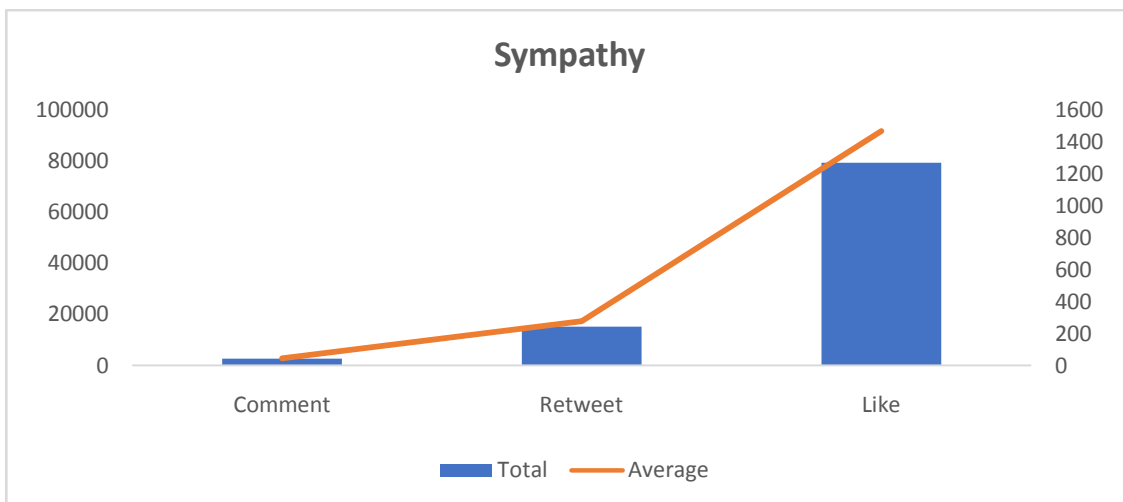
The figure 5.60 depicts the data regarding the total and average posts of the party. In the time span of six-months, Samajwadi Party posted 676 tweets on twitter. On an average the party was tweeting 4 tweets per day. The main purpose of tweets was to disseminate the information. One of the striking features of tweets by Samajwadi Party was the use of poster in their tweets. The posters talk about different topics such as women safety, pandemic etc. Each poster had a signature of Akhilesh Yadav. The use of signature in the post might be to show the personal connect with the subject. All together the tweets were classified in ten different categories. 46% of their tweet fell in pandemic category, 5% were in announcement, 4% in crime, 2% in press conference, 7% in posters, 12% in criticism, 10% in sympathy, 6% in greetings, 7% in cross media, and 1% in work done. Another striking feature of tweeter page of Samajwadi Party was to divert traffic on other media platform. Most of the tweets were related to pandemic and the problems faced by the citizens of country specially the marginalized sections of the society, followed by the criticism of both state and Centre Government. In six-month time, the Samajwadi Party gathered 571014 likes, 17614 comments and 120236 retweets. On an average their posts received 845 likes, 26 comments and 178 shares.

**Figure 5.61 Category: Criticism**



The figure 5.61 is about criticism. The Samajwadi Party targeted the government on issues related to the governance, crime and pandemic. In span of six month the party tweeted 82 tweets related to criticism. The average likes on tweets related to criticism were 1099, whereas it got 290 retweets and 43 comments on the tweets. Sample of tweet: “ खुले मौत के मेन होल में डूबती जिंदगी। गड्डों में जा चुकी सड़कों में चोट खाती जिंदगी। ‘रोगीराज’ में आम जनमानस का जीना हुआ मुहाल। ऐसी कोई गांव मोहल्ले शहर की सड़क नहीं ऐसा कोई राजमार्ग नहीं जो ना हो बदहाल।“

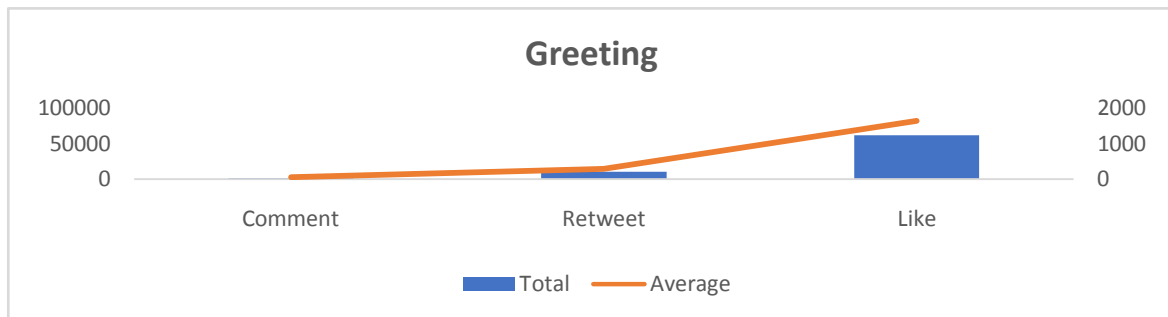
**Figure 5.62 Category: Sympathy**



The figure 5.62 is about the sympathy. One of the most astonishing features of tweets by Samajwadi party was the sympathy posts regarding the death of party worker or relative of party worker. It aims to make a direct connect with the citizen. The average likes, comments and retweets on sympathy tweet are 1466, 277 and 45 respectively. Whereas total number of likes, comments and retweets was 79162, 2454 and 14944 respectively

Example: “ समाजवादी पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष एवं पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री श्री अखिलेश यादव ने जनपद मऊ के प्रथम पूर्व जिलाध्यक्ष श्री सुरेन्द्र प्रताप सिंह और जनपद फिरोजाबाद के पूर्व प्रधान तथा पार्टी के संघर्षशील नेता चौधरी समर सिंह के निधन पर गहरा शोक जताते हुए ...”

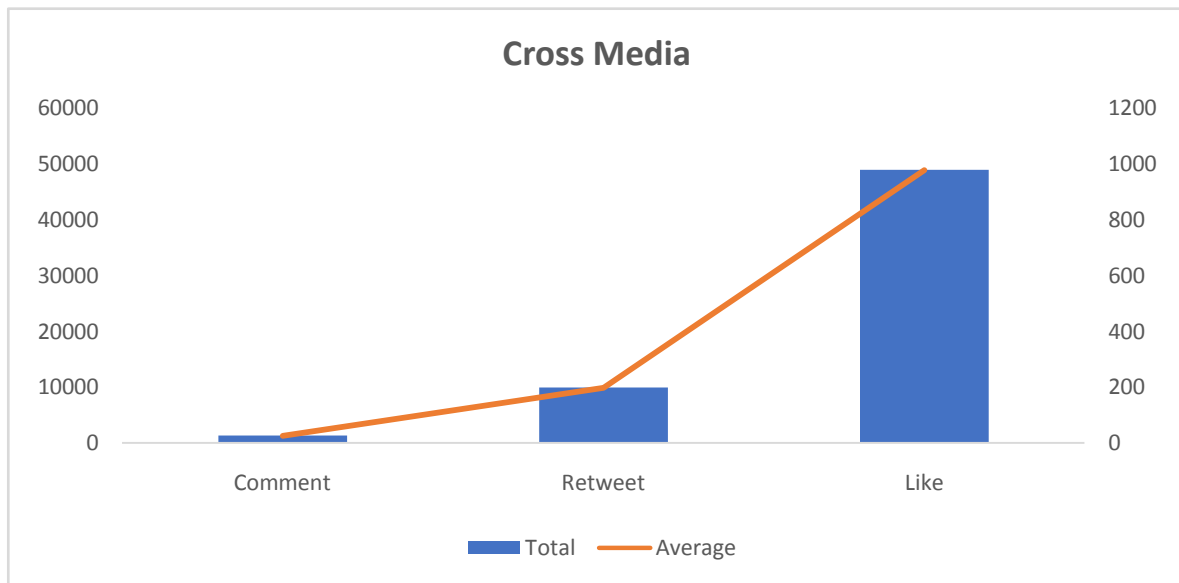
**Figure 5.63 Category: Greeting**



The figure 5.63 is about the greeting category. Samajwadi Party never failed to wish the fellow citizen on the occasion of festivals or when remembering great leaders/ personality of country. In span of six months, the party tweeted 38 tweets during festival/ anniversary. In these tweets the party got 1624 likes, 54 comments and 287 retweets on an average.

Example: “स्वतंत्रता संग्राम सेनानी तथा उत्तर प्रदेश के प्रथम मुख्यमंत्री भारत रत्न स्व० गोविंद बल्लभ पंत जी की पुण्यतिथि पर शत शत नमन एवं भावभीनी श्रद्धांजलि!”

Figure 5.64 Category: Cross Media

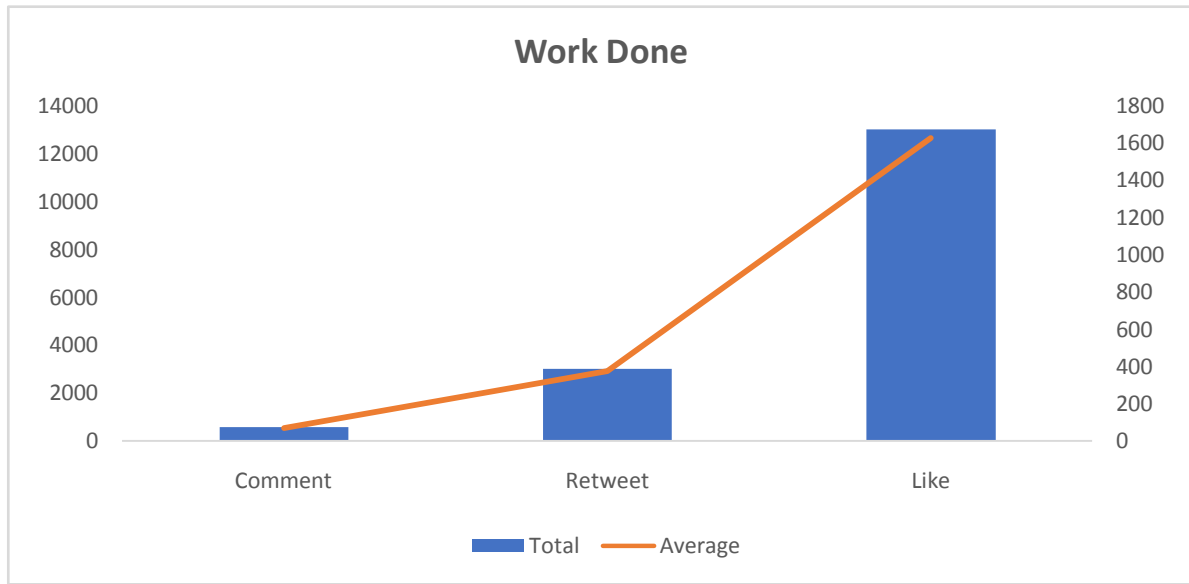


The figure 5.64 is related to Cross Media. The Samajwadi Party used tweeter to use a platform to amplify its reach. It was sharing the information and was trying to increase traffic on other social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. In the span of six months the party tweeted 50 tweets where it was promoting other social media pages/ events of Samajwadi Party. On an average, the tweet got 976 likes, 26 comments and 197 retweets.

Example: “समाजवादी पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष एवं पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री श्री अखिलेश यादव ने आज अंसल एपीआई, लखनऊ के क्षेत्र में गांवों का भ्रमण किया।

<https://facebook.com/156501561036983/posts/3011342982219479/>”

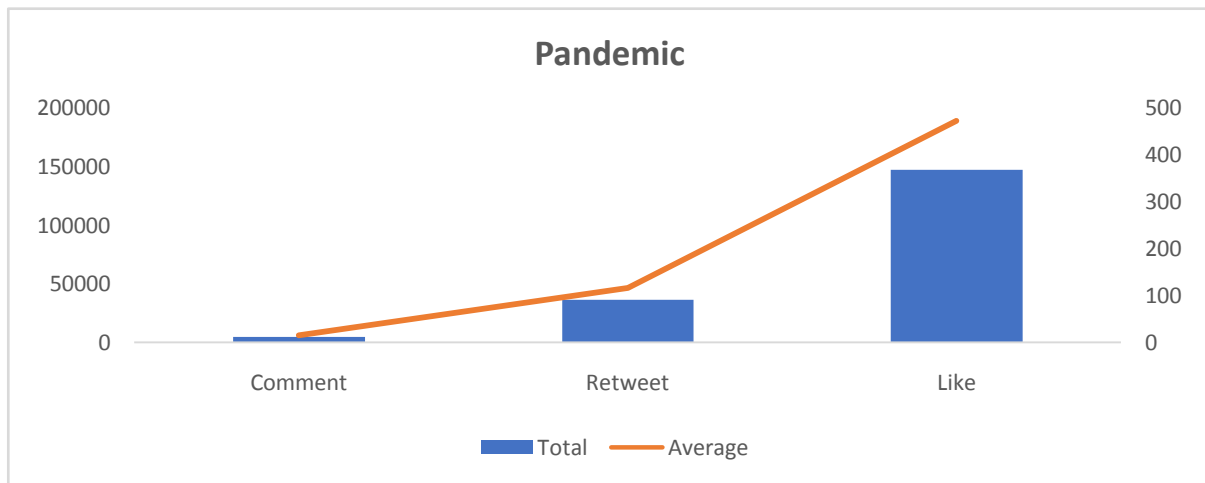
Figure 5.65 Category: Work Done



The figure 5.65 is about the category of work done. Since the party is in opposition, so this was not tweeting much about the work carried out by the party. In the time period of six months, the Samajwadi Party tweeted 8 tweets related to work done on which it got 13000 likes, 3002 retweets and 560 comments which on average was 1625 likes per tweets, 70 comments and 375 retweets per tweet.

Example: “समाजवादियों के काम के नाम पर आज फिर एक बार CM ने फीता काटा। नोएडा सेक्टर 38A में मल्टी लेवल पार्किंग, सेक्टर 39 में जिला हॉस्पिटल, सेक्टर 62 व 63 में अंडरपास और जेवर में अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डे निर्माण के लिए भूमि का चयन आदि। आज भी प्रदेश में सपा का काम बोल रहा है।“

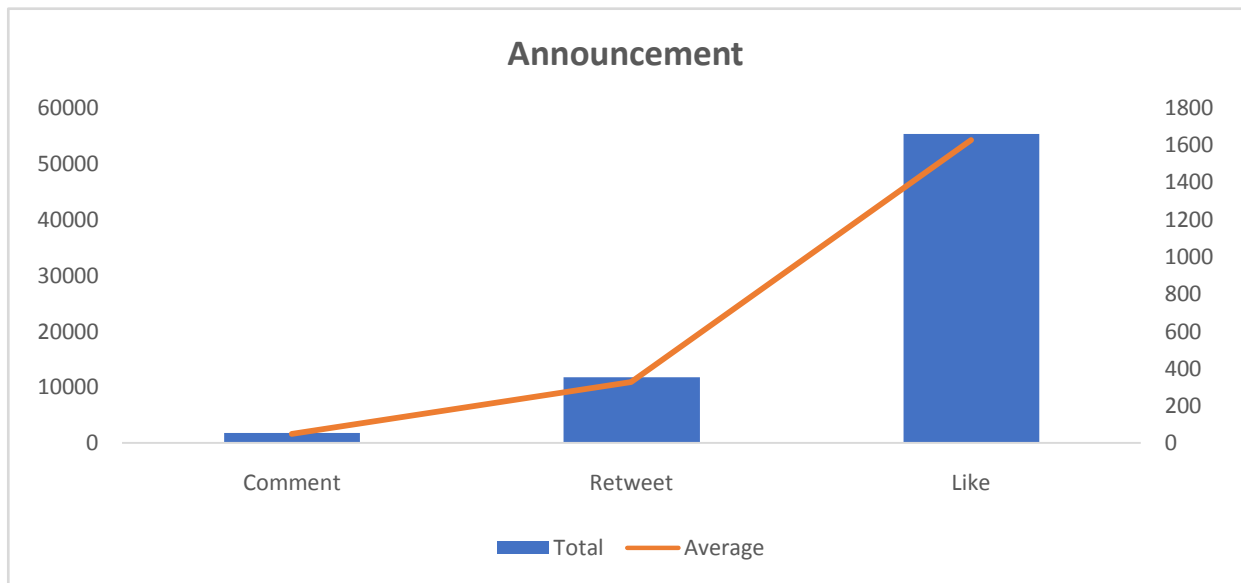
**Figure 5.66 Category: Pandemic**



The figure 5.66 belongs to the pandemic category. Pandemic gave an opportunity to Samajwadi Party to criticize the government. In tweets related to pandemic, the party highlighted the loopholes in government's implementation of national lockdown. It also talked about the problem faced by common citizens specially the marginalized communities of society. It also tweeted about the work done by the Samajwadi Party during the lockdown such as supplying food and mask to the people. The party tweeted 312 tweets related to pandemic. However, the responses to these tweets were not as encouraging as compared to other categories of tweets. The average number of likes, comments and retweets were very low. The average likes on each post was just 471, while the number of comments was limited to 16 and on an average, there were 117 retweets.

Example: "देशव्यापी लॉकडाउन में भूखे, प्यासे, गरीबों, असहायों की लगातार मदद कर रहे हैं समाजवादी। इस कठिन समय में एक दूसरे का सहयोग करें।"

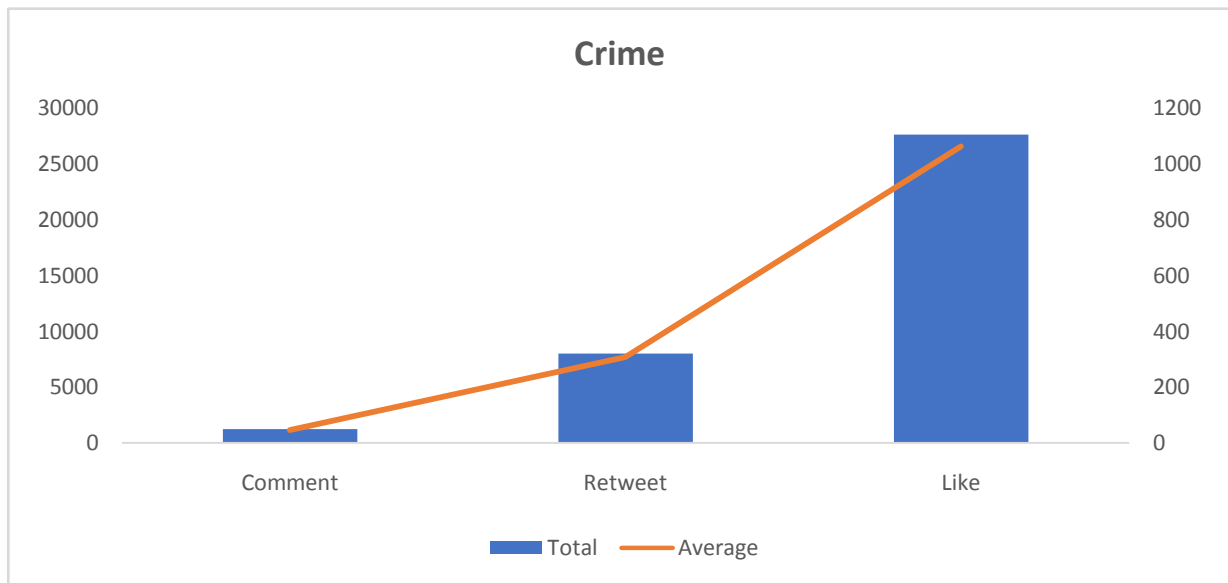
Figure 5.67 Category: Announcement



The figure 5.67 is about the announcement. All together the party tweeted 36 tweets related to the category of announcement. In these tweets, the party informed citizens about the upcoming events and press conferences. The average likes, comments and retweets were 1626, 49 and 326 respectively.

Example:” राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री अखिलेश यादव जी ने आज प्रेसवार्ता में कहा कि कोरोना वायरस के चलते समाजवादी पार्टी के आगामी सभी राजनीतिक कार्यक्रम अगले आदेश तक रद्द किए जाते हैं। प्रदेश एवं देशवासियों से अपील भ्रामक खबरों से बचें, डरे नहीं! सजग और सुरक्षित रहें।“

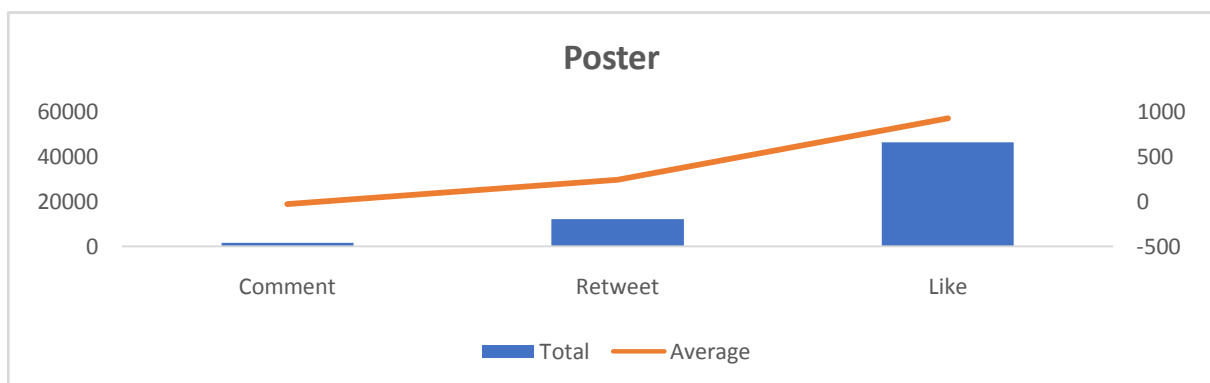
**Figure 5.68 Category: Crime**



The figure 5.68 is regarding the crime. With the tweets about the bad law and order situation in the state, the Samajwadi Party tried to highlight the failure of government. The tweets not only criticised the situation as well as the way, the police is being used by the government. In span of six months, the party tweeted 26 tweets related to poor law and order situation in the state. On an average the tweets got 7994 likes, 45 comments and 307 retweets.

Example: “गोंडा के ग्राम पंचायत उर्दी में सत्ता संरक्षित दबंगो द्वारा घर में घुसकर गरीब परिवार व उनकी 2 वर्षीय बच्ची की पिटाई करने की घटना दुखद! सपा कार्यकर्ताओं ने पीड़ित परिवार के घर जाकर हर संभव मदद प्रदान की। सरकार दोषियों पर कार्रवाई कर पीड़ित परिवार की आर्थिक सहायता करे।“

**Figure 5.69 Category: Poster**

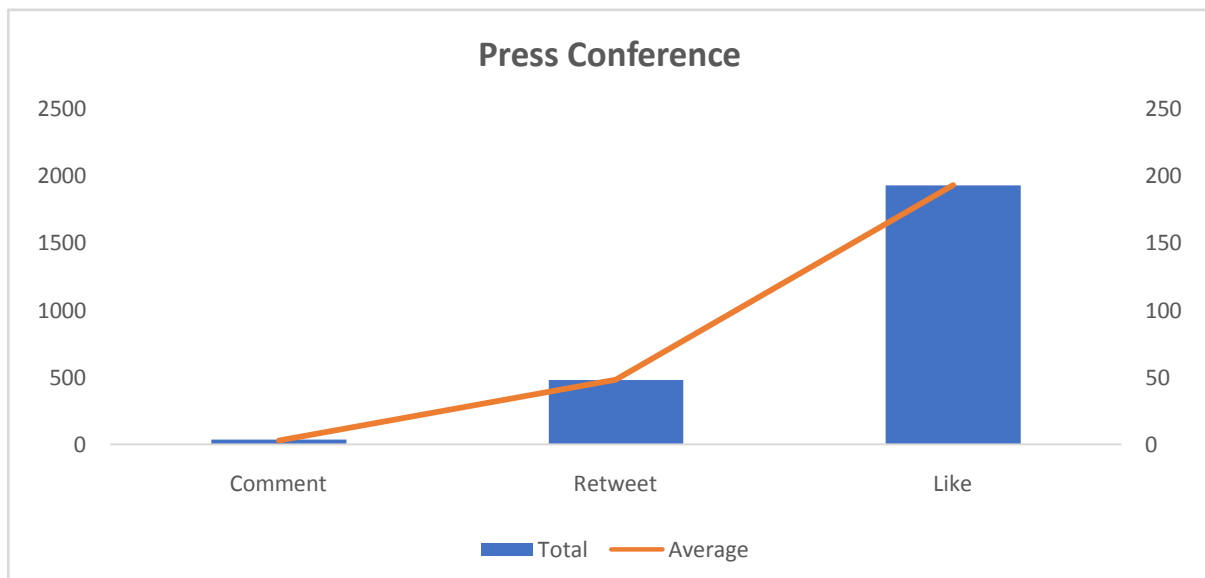


The figure 5.69 is about the poster. The Samajwadi Party tweeted 50 posters with personalized signature of Akhilesh Yadav. The posters were related to diverse topics such as women safety to pandemic and the help which was being provided by the Samajwadi party to the citizen. There was a total of 46274 likes, 1556 comments and 11992 retweets to 50 tweets, which on average was 925 likes, 31 comments and 240 retweets on each tweet.

Example:



**Figure 5.70 Category: Press Conference**



The figure 5.70 exhibits the data regarding the press conferences of the party. Press Conferences are one of the many ways by which party amplifies its ideology/ views to larger group of people. The tweeter provided a perfect medium to maximize its reach. In span of six months, the party tweeted 10 tweets which were about the press conferences, on which it got

1930 likes, 34 comments and 480 retweets. On an average tweet related to Samajwadi Party got 193 likes, 3 comments and 48 retweets. Example: “Press Conference of Shri Akhilesh Yadav (National President, Samajwadi Party and Former Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh) at 12:30 noon, tomorrow (19-03-2020) at Samajwadi Party office (19, Vikramaditya Marg, Lucknow).”

**Chapter-6**  
**Conclusion and**  
**Recommendations**

## CHAPTER-6

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Introduction-

Modern political communication believes more on participation in place of persuasion. With the expansion of mass media and specially the emergence of digital infosphere, the participation of common masses has increased significantly. This has resulted into the participation and mobilization of common people in the political processes all over the world. This trend has not only caught momentum in the democratic world but also in the dictatorship regimes as well. In the Jasmine Revolution or the Arab Spring, the political discourse mobilized the masses to uproot the decades old dictatorships. This happened in Egypt and Libya and in many other countries of the Middle East where the participatory political discourse played immense role in the mobilization and participation of the masses towards a certain goal of achieving democratic rights. Interestingly, this all has happened in the backdrop of putting severe restrictions on the mainstream mass media. The political discourse in social media, as an alternative media played a pivotal role in the participation of the people specially the youth as they are more exposed to the new information and communication technologies. In India as well, the outstanding growth and development of digital infosphere has facilitated the rise of internet and subsequently the development of social media as a popular media of mass communication. The 2008 Mumbai terror strike was debated and discussed then in an infant platform of social media. Thereafter, the 2011 mobilization of youth in the India Against Corruption Movement made a remarkable impact on the mobilization and participation. There was another big incident in New Delhi, India's national capital, that a young student was raped and brutally murdered. The social media by now has emerged as a big platform to be the voice of the common masses. The people and again the youth in particularly were mobilized through the discourse being carried out the social media platform. By now India has understood the significance of discourse in social media, that is why from micro level events to major political developments all were discoursed on this modern digital media platform.

#### 6.2 Verification of Hypothesis

On the basis of the study, the first hypothesis, **the penetration of social media has strengthened the political discourse among the youth and the political parties are using this platform to persuade them** is validated. In the last decade, social media has grown

exceptionally. This growth is not confined within a country but this is termed as the global phenomenon. The youth use social media for various purposes. He generally uses this platform for personal purpose and also have multiple accounts. His engagement with social media confirms that the youth is exposed to this new age communication system. The 88.15 percent respondents in the survey say that they access the social media regularly and have multiple accounts as well. However, the youth generally use social media for personal reasons but soon after he is accessing this platform, he can't remain isolated within the set goals. His entry into the virtual world facilitates him with an opportunity to share his thoughts in various forms with others. This is the process of his entering into different discourses including political. It is clear from the study that youth access the social media for various information including political. They follow the political party or ideology on the basis of their interest and inclination. They consider social media platform as an important window to access the political information. However, it is also clear that their use of social media does not impact their political outlook decisively. The study proves that the youth is well accessible through social media. The social media can be termed as the gateway to the youth. Following this the political parties also try to access the young population through social media. They want to engage the youth within the ambit of their political ideology and agenda. It is clear that after the emergence of social media, the political parties use this platform for the objective of persuasion. In survey, almost all respondents agreed that they use social media for political discourse as well. In both male and female categories, the respondents use various social media and subsequently also engage in political discourse. However, on this basis females are more on social media. The youth also found this new media platform according to their temperament. However, both categories of respondents are of the opinion that this mass media lack strength as one of the decisive determinants in engaging the youth for political discourse. Only social media is not a sole determinant of their engagement. However, this engagement is also on individual issues discourse in comparison to political because youth is more involved in other activities on the social media platform like making new friends, chatting etc. This has also come out that both political parties find social media as a suitable platform to access the youth substantially. Political parties tend to design the social media contents in such a manner as to attract the youth who subsequently engage in this new media platform. The social media has demoralized the concentration of media ownership worldwide. There are no checkpoints to obstruct the free flow of information. Compatibility and freedom to use this platform conveniently are two major reasons to attract the youth towards the social media platform. The social media has increased the role of youth

in the political discourse worldwide. Uttar Pradesh being the significant state politically matters more in the context of youth engagement in the political discourse in the social media platform. The youth is important stakeholder in the social media business also. Its therefore essential for all the social media companies not to ignore the youth who are substantial users. Many leaders and political parties also target the youth through social media. Youth has always been as the forerunner in major political changes in the world. India is the largest democracy as well having the largest young population. These two features are significant contributors behind the engagement of youth in the social media spectrum. Social media has added new dimension to his engagement in the political discourse. In India as well as in Uttar Pradesh, the penetration of social media has facilitated the engagement of youth in the political discourse. The youth has been on the prime focus in social media. In the India against Corruption Movement, the organizers specially designed such contents as to attract more youth against the corrupt practices of the then UPA Government. However, the role of social media to engage the youth for quality political discourse has not been very encouraging. This actually aims to amplify the messages and create the hype among youth regarding a particular objective.

Political parties know the presence of youth in the social media platform. They have a clear idea that they could reach a significant number of young voters through this digital platform. They pump a large number of political messages with least efforts. They reach millions of people with simple clicks. The penetration of mobile telephony and the availability of affordable data are two significant factors which have introduced social media in the vast areas of villages in Uttar Pradesh. Political parties are serious about this. They know the implication of internet penetration and its consequences. The content analysis of the official web pages of two largest political parties of Uttar Pradesh also indicate that the social media penetration has increased the engagement of youth in the political discourse in social media. Both political parties BJP and SP have significance presence on the social media platform. The Facebook and Twitter pages are updated almost daily basis. The BJP updates the contents regularly without fail and the contents on the social media are posted within the party's agenda. Welfare schemes including those of youth empowerment like Kaushal Vikas and Digital India get prominence in both social media accounts of the party. On the other side, the Samajwadi Party posts prove that the party considers the popularity of social media in all age groups including youths. However, this is clear that the official web pages of both the parties are not youth specific only. They address all the masses including youth through

their contents uploaded on social media. This proves that the youth is engaged in the social media platform and the political parties access the youth through this platform.

The hypothesis that **the social media has facilitated the political mobilization in Uttar Pradesh is tested negative**. There have been negative responses from both the categories of respondents in this regard. According to the respondents, they engage in the social media discourse but their political decisions are least influenced by the social media contents. Political discourse in social media is not a significant determinant of political mobilization. Majority of the respondents doubt the social media contents. They don't consider them credible enough to rely on solely. Using social media platform for different purposes and believing on them consequently are two different elements. However, majority of respondents find all social media suitable for political mobilization yet the information in the realm of social media is doubted by the majority of the respondents. Most of them agree that they don't rate political contents on the basis of likes, shares, comments etc. However, 86.64 percent of respondents say that they follow BJP on the social media platform. This proves their online social media engagement for political discourse. But on the other side the issues like poor credibility of contents and lack of participatory political discourse in the social media platform, these engagements don't transform into political mobilization.

The experts opine the same that political engagement of youth is not enough for their actual mobilization. The social media may create hype by amplifying the messages but this may not result into political mobilization of youth. The content analysis of the data reveals the same as above that social media is not playing a role specifically to mobilize the youth in Uttar Pradesh. However, in the category of information, the people are informed about various events and campaigns of political parties. People, including youth are persuaded to participate in the same. These posts are shared, liked and commented by hundreds and thousands of users. This development proves that the social media organize and mobilize the people virtually. But this is not clear whether the same process facilitates the political mobilization of youth. On the basis of content analysis of the official social media pages of the BJP and SP, it can be concluded that the interaction on the official page is not significant however the engagement is good as the average post share is found 4000. The content analysis of the political parties' official social media pages proves that there are contents to engage the youth as well as to persuade them to favour their respective ideology and party line. But these contents are not youth specific particularly for the political mobilization. In spite of the engagement of youth in social media, the political mobilization of youth is not the outcome of

any discourse including political. Youth are playing a big role in the digital media platform but it does not mean that they are also laying the foundation for any social and political mobilization. The political discourse of social media aims to attract the youth towards a fixed agenda of political parties. This does not mean that they are mobilized independently. Other factors played big role wherever the political mobilization has taken place like in the Arab Spring. Social media is the victim of manipulation of information, disinformation, propaganda etc. on these platforms. The respondents' approach towards the social media discourse is doubtful as it is clear from their responses.

The hypothesis that **social media increases the political participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh is disproved**. The survey reveals that though youth remain engaged in social media yet his political participation is least impacted by the political discourse in social media. Majority of respondents say that their voting decisions are not influenced by the social media discourse. The 62.69 percent of respondents say that their voting decisions are not impacted by the political discourse in social media. Only 17.93 percent of respondents say that their voting decisions are impacted by the political discourse in social media. Besides this, majority of the respondents never rate the social media contents on the basis of likes, shares, comments etc. Majority of respondents also say that they never get response from the political leader or party when they make a comment on their social media pages. The 72.78 percent of respondents say that social media discourse does not play any constructive role in the formation of public opinion.

It is clear that youth engage in political discourse virtually but that does not prove that their number increases in the political participation process in the reality. However, their online participation on the basis of likes, comments and shares is proved. On the basis of the survey, it can be said that most of the youth is having social media accounts and they also maintain regular access. Therefore, in the realm of online participation, they are present. But it does not mean that they actively participate politically in proportion to their presence in the online sphere. Both the BJP and the SP are active on their social media pages active regularly. They also update various contents on the basis of their party line. But their contents are not designed specifically to the youth of Uttar Pradesh. They basically cater to the needs of all in the state.

**Table 6.1 Testing of Hypothesis**

S.N.	Hypothesis	Result
1	The penetration of social media has strengthened the political discourse among the youth and the political parties are using this platform to persuade them	Positive
2	Social media has facilitated the political mobilization in Uttar Pradesh	Negative
3	Social media increases the political participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh	Negative

### **6.3 Main Findings**

- Social media is a popular mass media. Youth have multiple accounts and they access the social media regularly.
- Majority of youth follow the Bhartiya Janata Party on the social media platform.
- The credibility of social media contents is a big concern. Even the regular users of social media don't believe the contents blindly.
- Social media amplifies the transmission of messages by leaps and bounds in comparison to other mass media channels.
- Social media ignites the debates and discussion and transport the contents in high speed but is not the sole determinant in the formation of public opinion and subsequent political participation.
- Social media increases the engagement of youth in political discourse but that does not result into substantial political participation and mobilization.

### **6.4 Limitations of the Study**

- The main limitation of this study is that it is only concentrating the two social media platforms- Facebook and Twitter.
- The second limitation of study is that it is restricted only a certain period of time. The opinion and contents may be affected in the changing circumstances.

- The third limitation is that it is confined only in the urban area that is the capital city of state. The ground reality in rural and backward areas may be significantly affected due to poor connectivity and low income. The socio- economic factors impact the social media significantly.
- The fourth limitation is that the study is confined within social media spectrum. However, the other mass media are also reaching the masses vastly and effectively. Political discourse in mainstream mass media may result differently.

### **6.5 Suggestions-**

This is an age of information revolution. Over the past many decades, the advancement in the field of information and communication technologies has changed the world as long as communication is concerned. Mass Communication is rage of the day. The field of communication has, subsequently been affected significantly. Social media is an outcome of these developments. All forms of media including the social media are considered as a prerequisite of a healthy democracy. The social media is now talk of the day. Right from common masses to elites, all are accessing these networking sites regularly. Earlier, the concentration of media ownership was considered as serious concern because the mainstream media was in few hands. In India also the mass media landscape was also similar. Few hands were controlling the entire media spectrum. The state-owned broadcasters, Doordarshan and Akshawani were criticized to have biased and prejudiced approach. The liberalisation, privatization and globalization changed this scenario. The decentralization of ownership both at the level of state and private, scattered mass media ownership. Social media is particularly known for its public approach. This media is entirely based on user generated contents. These particular aspects of social media make it the media by the people and for the people. Social media is an outcome of democratization of information. Anybody can access the media anywhere irrespective of caste, creed, region, race, gender etc. This aspect of social media equips the platform with immense value. On the basis of the intensive studies, there are following suggestions-

#### **6.5.1 The Gatekeeping is Essential-**

Social Media is a substantial platform of mass media. This is so large that impacts different walks of life significantly- ranging from social to political spectrum. Therefore, it cannot be ignored. The most significant power of social media is its being free of gatekeeper. This provides an opportunity for all without any discrimination. The penetration of internet and

mobile telephone as well the availability of cheaper and affordable data facility and mobile handsets, this media has outstanding reach. Its free and equal to all. This in true sense is the democratization of information and mass media. The mainstream media has been criticized for being biased having concentrated in few hands. Social media is on the other hands, the people's media. This is the power associated with the social media system and distinguishes it from the mainstream mass media. But at the same time, its being without gatekeeping has negative side as well. Since, there is no or least regulations, this also facilitates the negative and destructive contents to float on in this digital infosphere. Subsequently, this has become an ideal platform for misinformation, disinformation and hate contents to ignite social, political and economic disturbances. This is dangerous in every aspect. Unregulated social media is more destructive and less constructive. It is therefore suggested that there should be substantial regulation to discipline this mass media both at the national and international levels.

#### **6.5.2 Need and Importance of Media Literary-**

This has been understood in many forums both at the national and international that the media literacy is the need of hour. The mass media has made stupendous growth but at the same time media literacy has not been growing in the same proportions. Subsequently, mass media has also become the centre of destructive elements. This is very true in respect of social media that the destructive elements take advantage of the innocence of the users. These elements use social media platform for propagandist and manipulative role. During the study, it is revealed that in the absence of basic understanding of mass media specially the social media, the healthy public opinion is difficult to formulated. This subsequently impacts the electoral outcomes and political communication significantly. In fact, the social media platform has been vital to enlarge the mobocracy in place of democracy. Many experts in the in-depth interview were deeply concerned at this situation. They were positive enough on being asked about the role of social media in the participation and mobilization but their apprehensions were quite substantial in the context of manipulative role played by the negative elements through the social media platforms. They suggested that the media literacy won't allow the wrong use of this people's media. In content analysis, it is clear instead of logics sentiments are preferred to be inculcated by the designers of social media contents. That is why the political discourse ins social media is also manipulated and propagandist.

**6.5.3 Strengthening Credibility of Contents-** The research study reveals the credibility crisis of social media as well. In the survey of youth, it was found that though they are the regular users of social media and having multiple accounts to access the same. But at the same time, their trust on social media is lesser as comparison to the other aspects. The experts were also of the opinion that the social media lacks the attribute of credibility significantly. It is a fact, that any media system which comes into existence takes long time to become trusted brand for political and other types of communication. When we look into the history of media, television also struggled to establish credibility. In today's mass media perspective, the credibility of print media is more than that of any other media forms. Being the latest media system, the social media would take a long time to settle. The contents in social media have been haphazard mushrooming without any discipline. Anybody can post anything from any place without verification and cross verification. Subsequently, the users are not sure about the credibility of the contents they are accessing to. Since, the contents lack credibility at the serious level, they impact the political participation, formation of public opinion etc. Either their impact is fractured or they hardly reach the constructive conclusions. Mass media is considered a tonic for democracy at the same time the poor contents loaded social media facilitates mobocracy. This can collect crowd but fails to propel them the right direction. Only the fool proof contents can ensure the media credibility. It is therefore essential to maintain quality level honest contents.

**6.5.4 Social Media- An Alternative and People's Media-**

Social media has emerged as an alternative media and in true sense it has become the people's media. This media system has lot of potential to facilitate the people's voice. It is true sense; the social media has democratised the information. The availability of cheaper data and affordable android phones have made the roads for the social media in the extreme areas as well. The digital divide is declining and the participation of all irrespective of caste, creed, region, religion, language etc. is increasing. There are many examples when the voice of common man was heard through social media and the government took the prompt actions subsequently. Now this is the high time, that this media should be cleaned from unwanted discrepancies. There is also a need to realise the positive role of social media. Keeping this in the backdrop, this media system can be utilized for the empowerment of common masses especially the marginalised people provided its is cleaned from unwanted contents.

**6.5.5 Code of Conduct for Political Parties-** The political parties can play a vital role in the use of social media for the healthy political discourse and can strengthen the democracy. The contents which are injected into the social media spectrum by the political parties are taken seriously. They impact youth significantly. If these are disinformation, misinformation or propaganda, they won't be setting up right public opinion. Social media is a reality. Its strength is proved. In these circumstances, the political parties should form their code of conduct for social media because self- regulation is the most appropriate measure to check and balance between freedom of expression and accountability.

**6.5.6 Studying Impact of Phrases and Hashtags –** During the study, the researcher came across various hashtags and phrases created by different political parties. This is one of the most popular trends in the political discourse in social media. Unlike print and electronic media, the social media is an ideal carrier of short or very short messages. The short and simple messages catch the attention of the users. All political parties innovate phrases and inject them into the social media spectrum. They may appear short and simple but they take significant level of efforts to come into existence. Right from their inception to their impacts, there is a need of studying them separately.

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## Appendix I

## Questionnaire

## Political Discourse in Social Media and Its Impact on the Participation of Youth in Uttar Pradesh

## Part I

1- Name-----

2- Gender-

Male Female Other 

3- Caste-

General OBC SC ST 

4- Religion-

Hindu Muslim Christian Others 

5-Age-

18-22 22-26 26-30 

6-Education-

Less than Graduate Graduate Post Graduate More than Post Graduate 

7-Parental Income-

Less than Five Lakhs Five Lakhs Between Five to Ten Lakhs Between Ten to Fifteen Lakhs 

8-Native Place-

Urban Semi Urban Rural 

## Part II

9- Do you use social media?

Yes Occasionally Never Can't Say 

10-How many social media accounts do you have?

1 2 3 4 More than 4 

11-Please tick/ click the party that you follow in social media-

BJP Congress SP BSP Others 

12- How many times do you get response from the party when you react on a post?

Always Sometimes Can't Say Never

13- How many times do you utilize the political information that you get on social media?

Always  Sometimes  Can't Say  Never

14- Do you rate the contents on social media on the basis of likes, comments etc.

Yes  Not at all  Sometimes  Can't Say

15- According to your preference which political party/parties you follow on social media. Please rank between 1-3 where 1 is most and 3 is least followed-

Party	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
BJP	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
SP	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
BSP	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Congress	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

16- Do you make your voting decision on the basis of contents on social media?

Yes  Never   
 Sometimes  Can't Say

17- Do you think that social media has enhanced your interest in politics?

No  Yes   
 Can't Say  Partially

18- How do you rate the contents of social media?

True  Partially true   
 Fabricated  False

19- Which media has enhanced your interest in politics?

Television Media  Print Media   
 Social Media  Cinema

20- What contents of politics interests you the most?

Elections  Global Issues   
 Local Movements  Debates on Politics

21- Which media do you find most suitable that feeds your appetite for political news?

Television Media  Print Media   
 Social Media  Folk Media

22- Which social media do you use the most?

Facebook  Twitter   
 You Tube  Instagram

23- Please rank the social media (1-5) as per the time you spend on them. Where 1 is the least and 5 is the most

Facebook	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
You Tube	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

24- . Which is the most important feature of social media that differentiates it from other media?

Concise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participatory	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	User Friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>

25- Has social media affected your point of view towards politics?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partially True	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can't Say	<input type="checkbox"/>

26- Which social media, according to you is most effective to mobilize the youth?

Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
You Tube	<input type="checkbox"/>	All the Above	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Part III

27- Do you actively participate in the political discourse in social media?

Yes,	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can't Say	<input type="checkbox"/>
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28- Which digital media do you use to keep the track of political developments in India?

Online news contents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>

29- Are your decisions influenced by social media?

Yes, I tend to take reviews and opinions expressed online seriously

No, I base my decisions on my own research or opinion.

30- Do you follow the digital campaigns of political parties online in social media?

Yes, regularly

Sometimes

Not, at all

31 Please rate the political parties on a scale of 1 to 5 on the level of digital interaction on social media.

BJP	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Congress	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
SP	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
BSP	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

32- Do you remember the political contents last that you saw on social media? Please specify

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**Appendix II**  
**In-depth Interview**

- 1- What is your opinion about the role of social media in the entire media spectrum?
- 2- What is the role of social media in the politics of India and Uttar Pradesh?
- 3- Is social media empowering the common man in the Uttar Pradesh?
- 4- Has social media been mobilizing the youth politically?
- 5- What according to you is the role of social media in the political discourse in India and in Uttar Pradesh particularly.
- 6- Is social media strengthened the political participation of youth in Uttar Pradesh.
- 7- What is your opinion on the impact of social media on other mass media?
- 8- Has social media increased the interest of the youth in politics?
- 9- Up to what extent, the social media influences the formation of public opinion of youth.
- 10- Has social media democratized the information and functioning as the people's media?