Analyzing the role of media in shaping the outcome of election in India

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Abstract **Media or the mass communication plays an important role in various activities of public interest. Be it print, electronic or other mass medium, they aim to impart information from various resources to the general public. Media not only enables public engagement during elections, but also keeps them informed of various election campaigns (both through advertisements and news), polls, agendas, party performances, election results and ongoing debates among the parties. Media becomes an essential watchdog during the elections, which not only adds to the accountability and transparencies but also as a medium in setting agendas and shaping public opinions. The mass media acts both as a recipient and a conveyor of information and functions as a unique critic which makes it a very coercive and influential tool of communication. This paper studies role of media in elections and outlines their political outreach during the elections. For this, exit poll data of different agencies have been compared with actual results which shows some of the exit poll matches with an actual result while a good number were far from actual result.**

Keywords — Media, mass communication, democracy, elections, polls, news channel

I. INTRODUCTION

Mass communication involves a one-way-medium, through which the media communicates with the general public. Mass media is a standard name given to the medium through which people communicate. People from around the world connect via this medium and share various information among themselves. Different mass media technologies aim to have a large audience outreach by the means of different communicating methods. Two main modes of transmission commonly employed are Electronic media and Print media. Electronic media transmits information through electronic means such as music, radio, television, etc., while print media uses books, newspaper, pamphlets, etc. for information distribution.

Moreover, it is helping to get people connected and draw moral support or sometimes cast their opinions. Mass media is an essential part of a democratic country and plays an important role during elections. It is not just free and fair elections or casting of votes, but the public should also know the leaders or various parties' they are going to select. A democratic country without freedom of media is not credible. The voters should have rights to gain accurate information of the elected candidates. Media platforms and social media tools have made democracy more vibrant, in recent years. Media not only enables public participation during elections, but it also keeps them involved and informed of the election campaigns, party performances,

election results, polls, agendas and ongoing debates among the parties [1].

Politics and media are laced together [2]. The idea of global village has turned into a reality. Media is talking and is being heard. People themselves are breaking news and dispersing data through social media and other means.

Janowitz defined the Mass communication as follow "Mass communications comprise the institutions and techniques by which, specialized groups employ technological devices to disseminate symbolic content to large heterogeneous and widely dispersed audiences". India cannot be entitled as the world's largest republic without the co-existence of an unrestricted media and without free and impartial elections in the country. It is not just the duty of Election Commission of India to ensure fair elections but also duty of other democratic institutions to maintain its integrity. Mass media often reflects the diversity of a country during the time of general elections. The effect of media in recent years is such that it has helped in reclassifying the world's economic order, changed numerous parts of social life and aided in spreading data and enhanced learning in an adequate way. Large parts of Asia and Africa, those, once under colonial rule or communist alliance, can now have free elections in those countries.

Political mobilization of Information before the modern electronic era used to take place through the two mechanisms, print media and direct personal contacts.

Although, then newspaper popularity was much higher than its today [3]. Direct personal communication overruled newspaper reading in those times, simply due to poverty or illiteracy. Public political meetings, door-to-door campaigns held by the candidates or parties itself, leaflets or posters were main forms of communication during that time. Even today political gathering and personal contact is of importance, still media plays a major role in exchange of political information among voters, especially in the rural communities [4]. Figure 1 displays electoral cycle in connection with media.

Elections are a major part of any democratic country. In Indian democracy, a voter's decision usually depends on religion, caste, color, family, candidate, party, etc [5]. Mass media has raised itself as a crucial means of communication between the politicians and large masses. Today Political leaders and political parties are drawing themselves nearer to the media and social media platforms, transforming it into a mass media.
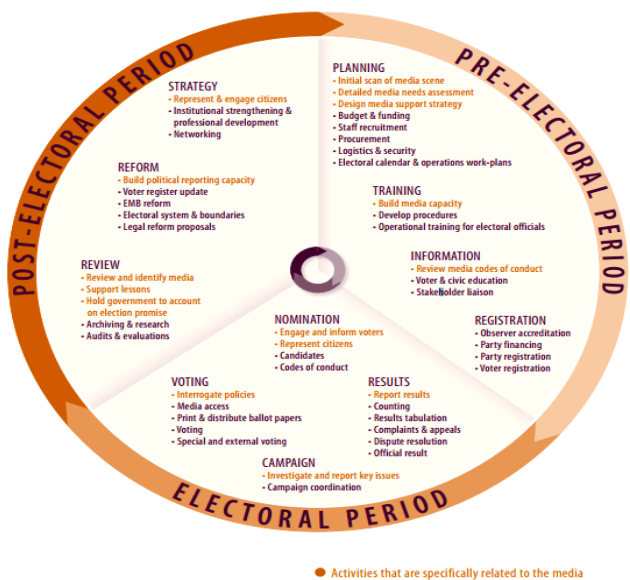

Figure 1: Electoral Cycle In Connection To Media

Should media be restricted only to imparting information and educating the society, or should it elaborate on larger issues, or outline various other plans? Accept it or not, media for sure is an essential part of various events (social or political), occurring in the country. Present study analyses the role and influence of mass media during the election campaigns after the Indian independence. With the advent of new forms of communication in last few years, it is evident to know and realize the impact of various threats pertaining to media and democracy [6]. The study also tries to answer a few questions such as, what are opinion poll surveys, how effective they have been in recent years?

II.   REVIEW LITERATURE

Researchers across globe have recognized that political and civic activities are happening in the cyber world. Of course, this is still-emerging relationship in India, which calls for in-depth continuous studies. Castells [7]; McQuail [8]; Moores [9]; Gunther [10]; Carey [11]; Naik [12], studied a range of different aspects of media and its impact. These studies however were focused mainly on the cultural effects of the media. It was drawn that the social, cultural and economic liberalization of today's India is an outcome of the communication among India and the world Castells [7] McQuail[8]; Carey,[11], studied the influence and cultural tendencies of Indian television on South Asia and India as well. There was very little research on political media, voting behavior of people, or participation of media in other political activities.

III.   RISE OF NEWS CHANNEL AND ELECTIONS

The influence of news channels on economic liberalization of India was first seen in early 1990s. News channels reached urban areas then from there to semi-urban and later to rural areas. Electronic media as a whole was inspired by the post liberalization, as rise of 24 hrs news channels brought more information to the people. In India and other post-colonial countries television often becomes the "compelling medium for influencing a normative national consciousness of language, image and sound, television reproduces a vision of the world for its audiences. These productions link television with the political economy of nation building. The medium can work to socialize people, foment material desires, and normalize consumer relations" [13]. The broadcast media under state monopoly helped to tentatively bridge the gap between a literate elite and the mass audience, to which print media, had formerly catered. The emergence of the cable satellite television helped to narrow the gap between literate elite and others, even further as it brought " market forces and the power of television together by 1992".

Satellite news networks expanded profoundly in India. Within a period of 10 years (1998-2006), India grew into a news giant with more than 50 twenty-four hours satellite news channels. Since early 1990, India was a target to more than 300 satellite channels across the world. The rise in satellite television and satellite news networks produced a transformational change in the Indian expressions of nationhood and political views. The India's "newspaper revolution", 1970s and the "cassette culture" in 1980s, the procurement of satellite televisions gave people significant means to discover new aspects of life and actively gain knowledge of various events or, participate in political culture, which was unthinkable earlier [14].

IV.   ANALYSIS OF EXIT POLLS AND ACTUAL RESULTS OF DIFFERENT ELECTIONS

To know the success and failures of exit polls in India, the analysis of election exit polls results have been done. It is noticeable that last 15 years are also the era of emergence

and rapid growth of television news channels in India. To understand the success and failure of exit polls in India researcher selected all the elections for which exit polls have done during 2018. Among these 4 elections exit polls, all are of state legislative assembly elections. It will help to understand the trends of the exit polls in predicting the election outcome in recent years. The results of exit polls were compared with actual results the election.

A. Tripura

Through the comparison of exit polls to the actual results (shown in table 1), it was derived that JanKiBaat (NewsX) and AxisMyIndia had a closest prediction of results for all the parties, for the Tripura Legislative Elections held in 2018. However, two other polling agencies viz. CVoter and Dinraat were not able to predict results as close to the final results. Therefore, it can be said that 50% of the polling agencies had a near closer accuracy to the actual results of the election.

Table 1: Tripura Legislative Assembly election 2018, exit polls and actual results

Polling firm	BJP+	CPI(M)+	INC	Others
JanKiBaat-NewsX	35-45	14-23	-	-
CVoter	24-32	26-34	0-2	-
AxisMyIndia	44-50	9-15	-	0-3
Dinraat	10-19	40-49		
Actual	44	16	0	0

Source: Wikipedia, NDTV

B. Nagaland

Table 2: Nagaland Legislative Assembly election 2018, exit polls and actual results

Polling firm	NDPP+	NPF	INC	Others
JanKiBaat-NewsX	27-32	20-25	0-2	7-3
CVoter	25-31	19-25	0-4	10-6
Actual	18	26	0	1

Source: Wikipedia, NDTV

On comparison of exit poll results in table 2, predicted by various polling firms to the final election results, it was observed that NewsX had a closer prediction for nearly all the parties. CVoter on the other hand, had somewhat similar results. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participating polling firms had a closer opinion to the final results.

C. Meghalaya

The elections resulted in a hung assembly with no single party or alliance getting the requisite majority of 31 seats in the Vidhan Sabha. Conrad Sangma, leader of the NPP, announced that he would form a government with the support of the UDP, BJP and other regional parties. He was sworn in as the Chief Minister, along with eleven other ministers. From the analysis of table 3 it can be clearly seen that CVoter had some luck and had a prediction result closer to the final results of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly elections of 2018 as compared to NewsX. Hence, it can be concluded that the polling agencies did not show much accuracy on predicting the final election results for MLA elections held in 2018.

Table 3: Meghalaya Legislative Assembly election 2018, exit polls and actual results

Polling firm	NPP	INC	BJP	Others
JanKiBaat-NewsX	23-27	13-17	12-8	6-02
CVoter	17-23	13-19	8-4	13-21
Actual	19	21	2	4

Source: Wikipedia, NDTV

D. Karnataka

The high-stakes Karnataka Assembly elections saw a 70 percent voter turnout on Saturday, the Election Commission said in New Delhi. ABP News exit poll predicts BJP likely to reach magic figure of 113 seats. NDTV's updated 'Poll of exit polls' calculations predict 101 seats for BJP. The News Nation exit poll predicts 105-109 seats for BJP, 71-75 seats for Congress, 36-40 seats for JD(S) and 3-5 seats for others (see table 4).

The election led to a hung assembly, with the BJP emerging as the largest party, with 104 seats, but failing to win a majority. The popular vote was won by the Congress. Taking table 4 into account it can be observed that majority of the polling agencies had their predicted results touching the accuracy more comparatively than a few others in the Karnataka state Legislative Assembly results for 2018. Thus, we can conclude that almost all of the participating polling firms were very close in predicting the final results of the election.

Table 4: Karnataka Legislative Assembly election 2018, exit polls and actual results

Polling firm	Congress	BJP	JD(S) +	Others
Times Now VMR	90-103	80-93	31-39	4-2

India Today Axis My India	106-118	79-92	22-30	4-1
Republic TV	73-82	95-114	32-43	4-3
Dighvijay News	76-80	103-107	31-35	8-4
NewsX-CNX	72-78	102-110	35-39	5-3
News Nation	71-75	105-109	36-40	5-3
ABP News CVoter	87-99	97-109	21-30	8-1
Today's Chanakya	73	120	26	3
Poll of exit Polls NDTV	89	98	31	4
Actual	80	104	37	0

Source: Wikipedia, NDTV

V. CONCLUSION

Media has further pushed the potentials of a democratic society by expanding and materialising roles in information exchange during various processes. Positively, influencing and increasing the potentials for information outreach and creating political transparency and reliability among the citizens. Media has gained maximized public interests, allowing to connect, enabling digital platforms for open sharing of opinions. Not only this, it has created new boulevards of public communication and engagement for the political information exchange to and from the government. Analysis of poll results from various polling firms indicated that there is a certain accuracy among the results but this is not enough to influence the opinions of the voters.

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