1. Aim

We investigated how Indian political parties used Twitter during the 2014 General Elections.

2. Research Questions

During the campaign period,
- Which political parties were using Twitter?
- How were political parties using Twitter?
- Who were political parties interacting with?
- Why were political parties posting tweets?

3. The Data

- 98,396 tweets by ten most popular official political party accounts*
- Tweets were collected from 7th March 2014 (voting schedule announced) to 12th May 2014 (last day of General Elections)
- A 30% sample of cleaned tweets was analyzed

4. Research Framework [3]

Identifying
I. Types of tweets
II. Types of recipients of replies
III. Types of information functions of normal tweets

5. Results – Level 1

- Types of tweets (%) posted by the top 5 political party accounts
- BJP (63%), AAP (61%) and YSR (42%) primarily used Twitter for re-tweeting information
- AITC mostly posted new information (89%)
- BJP (17%) was only about half as likely to mention party leaders as compared to INC (30%)
- AAP (20%) and YSR (20%) used Twitter as a two-way interaction tool for replying to other users.

6. Results – Level 2

- Reply-tweets (%) posted by the top 5 political party accounts
- AAP (53%) interacted the most with the general public, followed by BJP (44%)
- AITC (51%) was the most interactive with other political accounts
- AAP (13%) interacted the least with other political accounts
- BJP (20%) and AITC (5%) tended to ignore media on Twitter

Conclusion

- BJP and AAP redefined voter engagement with their high individual interactions to millions of followers
- Only the AITC almost exclusively posted new information in normal posts
- BJP and AITC mobilized participation by posting links to other social and official portals, rally and official press releases
- AAP was able to subvert traditional media biases on Twitter, its priority was to mobilize support by highlighting prevalent issues, and to exhort people to vote
- BJP and INC primarily used Twitter to criticize their opponents, but BJP also heavily focused on interacting with users

Selected References


Background

- India is the world’s largest democracy.
- In the 2014 General Elections, India’s had 815 million eligible voters. The critical segment was the youth - the 500 million aged between 18-40 [1].
- Indian National Congress (INC) was the majority party in the ruling coalition and unpopular after a decade of rule.
- The main challengers were Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the social activist movement-turned-political party, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Other parties with significant Twitter presence were All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and YSR Congress Party (YSR).