Social Media Modi-Fication:
Narendra Modi's use of Social Media in Indian Elections 2014

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Abstract
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Research objectives: In an unprecedented rise to power Right Wing Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate, Naredra Modi, now Prime Minister of India, used social media strategies to advance his campaign to the masses. From using 3D holograms at political rallies to caller tunes and SMSs' Modi and his Media team used social media platforms to keep the buzz alive as he shunted through the country on a whirlwind tour conducting 477 rallies as part of his election campaign. Modi and his men undertook direct interaction with 814 million of the total electorate with close contender Rahul Gandhi clocking only 133 million in comparison. The 3D hologram rallies alone reached 14 million people and SMS WhatsApp and other social media platforms were used to contact 130 million people. At the end of the day with 3.9 million followers on Twitter, 13 million Facebook likes and the same number of YouTube downloads, Social Media drove the Modi campaign to success giving him a clear majority over other rivals in the General Elections 2014.

Methodology: Primary: Interviews with media and resource persons involved in the campaign and its coverage. Secondary: Data collection and analysis of Social Media Activity of Narendra Modi

Conclusion: Through data analysis, interactions with media covering him and with party media heads, the paper will seek to determine the role of Social Media in Modi's success and assess its potential as a game changer

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New media is the buzzword, shorthand for a volatile cultural and technology industry that includes multimedia, entertainment and e-commerce. However in social research the term has a long history, having been used since the 1960s and 1970s by investigators studying the form, uses and implications of information and communication technologies. (ICTs) [1]

Social Media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals.

Impact of Social Media in India

India has more than 160 million Internet users, of which 86 million accesses Internet using their mobile devices. In the last 3-4 years, the number of users who access the Internet through a 3G connection has grown to round 22 million, to put things in perspective, compare this with the 15 million fixed line broadband connections accrued over the last 17 years.

- There are over 36 million smartphone users as against 60 million PC users.
- 9% of overall Internet page views in India come from mobile devices.
- Over 40% of searches on Google originate from mobile device.
- 30% of Facebook users in India are mobile-only Internet users and 30% of new registrations are coming through mobile
- LinkedIn ranks India among its top 4 growth markets for mobile usage

While e-commerce and digital advertising are acknowledged to have attained a certain critical mass in India, mobile Internet is yet to break into public consciousness. Mobile Internet based businesses have not scaled to levels where belief in the ability to monetize through the channel is established. Several models are still in the trial stage, but there are enough leading indicators to prove we may be on the cusp of a very exciting phenomenon. [2]

Thanks to the Indian mobile manufacturers, the multimedia sets are now cheaper than ever allowing people from all economic strata to access the internet. The sudden surge of social media literacy has now spread all across the country. Thus, mobile apps provide not only ease of access to the users but it also allows users from the mid and low impact zones to access social media. It is observed that although a large chunk of these users may not be proactive but they do act as listeners. Listeners who when required, act.

As recently as the first week of January, an editorial in the New York Times, made Indian development economists sit up and take note. For it read: Social media is playing an important new role in Indian democracy. A social media campaign by the Electoral Commission drew record levels of voter registration and turnout in elections held in four Indian states, including the capital, New Delhi, in November and December.

Background to Indian Election 2014
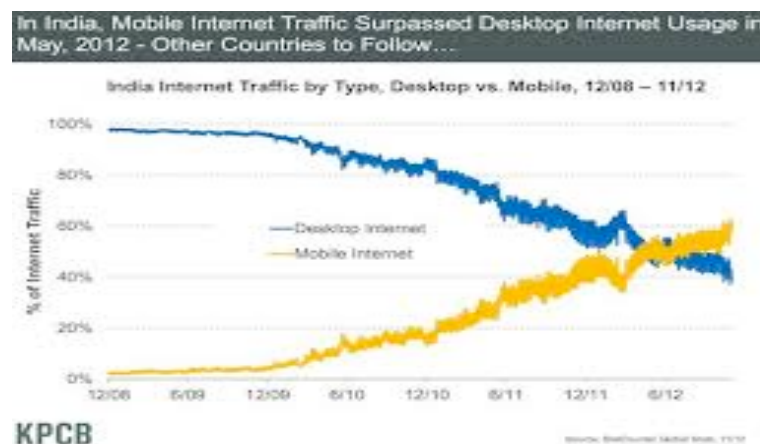
A report released by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and IRIS Knowledge Foundation in late 2013 revealed that of India's 543 constituencies,160 can be termed as 'high impact' — that is, they will most likely be influenced by social media. As the report explains, high impact constituencies are those where the numbers of Facebook users are more than the margin of victory of the winner in the last Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) election, or where Facebook users account for over 10% of the voting population. The study goes onto declare 67 constituencies as medium-impact, 60 as low-impact and 256 as no-impact constituencies. In 67 other 'medium-impact constituencies', Facebook users comprise over 5 per cent of voters. Politicians here, the study says, 'cannot afford to ignore social media.'[2]
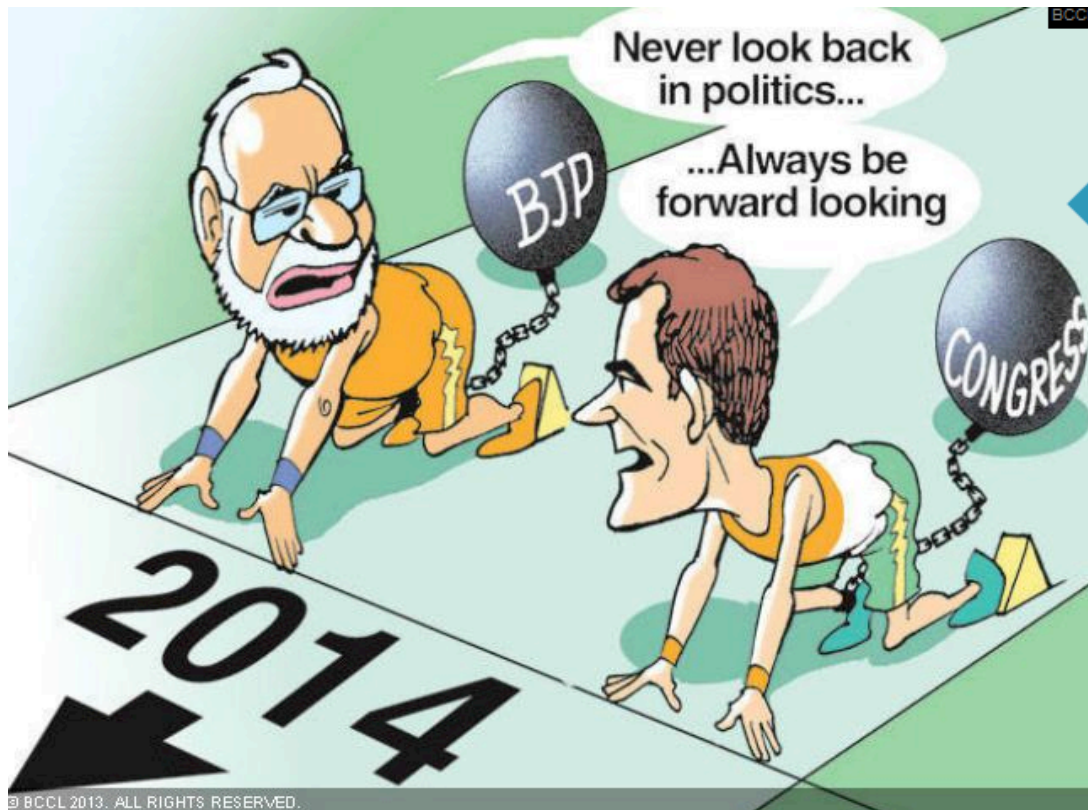
Not surprisingly the largest online community is of youngsters and the urban middle class in the age group of 18-35. To ascertain the impact of new media tools and social media in use during the run up to the 2014 elections one may kindly refer the infographic above. One can see there has been a 51.7 per cent increase in Social Media users in India over 2012-13. With the increased sale in Smartphones, Mobile Internet Traffic has surpassed Desktop Internet Usage in India in an exponential growth graph. [3]

The study certainly seems to echo the general euphoria over social networking as a political tool. However, the number of Facebook users might not translate into any change in voting patterns -– Though high in numbers, 7.8 crore Facebookians and 2 crore Twitteratis make up only 8.5 % of the total Indian population. Ratnakar Kumar speaking on this vast divide between the internet haves and the have not says, "As you know the number of people active on social networking sites is small when compared to a vast majority of non-internet Indian electorates. However, a socially committed and politically aware 98 million in itself is a huge force to reckon with, especially when the voting turn-out in Indian politics is not always high, 98 million can play a major role."

Mobile Internet: A powerful tool

According to the IAMAI report a total 77 percent of the users use mobile for social media in India. Email, social media, search, app store and chat / IM are used every day by those accessing internet through mobile.

Contrary to the notion that mobile internet penetration is unhealthy, a recent report by Nielsen Informate Mobile Insights suggests that 93% Indian smartphone users use their handsets to access social media. Facebook, of course tops the list with 5 times more hits than its rival Google+ and Twitter falls into the third place.
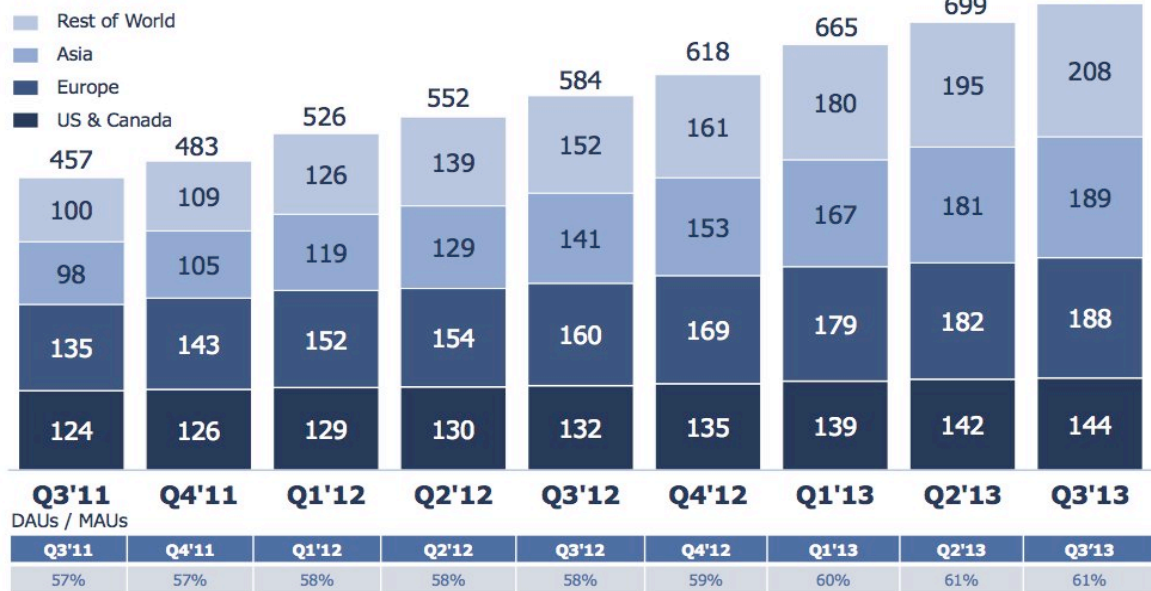
Some facts on Social Media in India

- Facebook is most popular social media marketing platform in India. In Social Bakers India is on #3 in the list of the countries which is using Facebook
- Facebook's penetration of population in India is 5.24% compared to the country's penetration of the online population
- Most of Indian Facebook users age is 18 to 24 total of 29 415 660 users followed by users in the age of 25 to 34 (75% male and 25% female users).

(Source: Digital Insights)

Daily Active Users (DAUs)

In Millions

Legend:
- Rest of World
- Asia
- Europe
- US & Canada

	Q3'11	Q4'11	Q1'12	Q2'12	Q3'12	Q4'12	Q1'13	Q2'13	Q3'13
Total	457	483	526	552	584	618	665	699	728
Rest of World	100	109	126	139	152	161	180	195	208
Asia	98	105	119	129	141	153	167	181	189
Europe	135	143	152	154	160	169	179	182	188
US & Canada	124	126	129	130	132	135	139	142	144

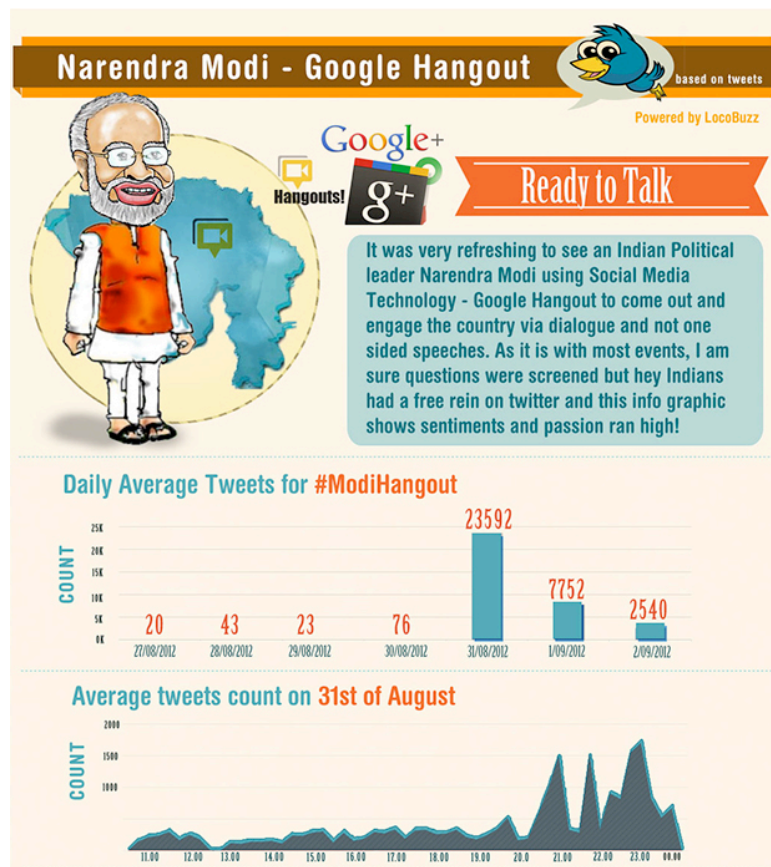| DAUs / MAUs	Q3'11	Q4'11	Q1'12	Q2'12	Q3'12	Q4'12	Q1'13	Q2'13	Q3'13
	57%	57%	58%	58%	58%	59%	60%	61%	61%

There were about 800 million eligible voters for Elections 2014 and a major chunk of this population was 25 years or younger. Earlier in 2014 a report from IRIS research group put forward the role that social media, particularly Facebook would play in the 2014 elections. According to this study, out of the 534 constituencies, 160 were identified as High impact zones, 67 were identified as Medium impact zones while rest were classified as Low impact zones. They were categorized on the basis of internet and Facebook users in that particular constituency. On basis of data collected from past year and equating it with current stats, it concluded that the high impact zones will be the major game changer in 2014 elections. Most analysts dejected the implications of this report saying that the numbers were insignificant. But the scenario seems to have changed.

Thanks to the Indian mobile manufacturers, the multimedia sets are now cheaper than ever allowing people from all economic strata to access the internet. The sudden surge of social media literacy has now spread all across the country. Thus, mobile apps provide not only ease of access to the users but it also allows users from the mid and low impact zones to access social media

Early in 2014 itself, PM candidate Narendra Modi realised the potential of social media, across the nation and used it as a tool to impact users decided to make it a key point in his campaign. Everyone talks only about the Internet but its mobile phones that have been the game changer in the Modi campaign," says Arvind Gupta, Modi's IT Cell Head.

Through March and April, just before the Elections, a fleet of GPS fitted vans called digital raths (Chariots) drove to village squares across Uttar Pradesh from where Modi was contesting general elections playing clips of Modi's speeches on 55" LED screens.

EVERYWHERE MAN

From 3D holograms to caller tunes, SMSs to 477 rallies, The Modi campaign was organised to shock and awe

Distance covered by Modi
300,000 KM
Rahul **118,000** KM

Events attended
5,187

YouTube video downloads
13 MILLION

Caller tunes downloaded
100,000

Total volunteer base
10 MILLION
Active
2.5 MILLION

Facebook likes
13 MILLION

Twitter followers
3.9 MILLION

Total electorate in 2014 elections
814 MILLION

Total direct interactions*
234 MILLION PEOPLE
Rahul **13.3** million

38 mega rallies attended by
11 MILLION PEOPLE

Chai pe Charcha in 4,000 locations reaching
5 MILLION PEOPLE

55 Assembly poll rallies in 4 states attended by
5 MILLION PEOPLE

3D hologram rallies in 1,350 locations reaching
14 MILLION PEOPLE

196 Bharat Vijay rallies attended by
15 MILLION PEOPLE

SMS, WhatsApp texts sent and voice calls made to
130 MILLION PEOPLE

*Since September 2013. Figures don't include TV, radio or print media campaigns.

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Social Media played an important role in making Modi accessible to all. From 13 million people accessing Modi speeches on YouTube and 12.4 million friends and 3.9 million liking him on Facebook, with 4.2 million Twitter followers Narendra Modi is the most followed Indian politician, and he has used Twitter as a political weapon to maximise his impact. Modi planned his political campaign to win over Delhi in a methodical and planned manner using a high level team of publicists who ensured his presence was felt everywhere, especially in CyberSpace, most accessed by young voters that formed a very large percentage on Indian electorate in Election 2014.

On his victory in the General Election, senior journalist Kaveree Bamzai writes "The Politics of Possibility has triumphed over the Peddling of paranoia and Povertarianism. Destiny has won over Dynasty. ..In Narendra Modi India has found the perfect embodiment of its collective aspiration. Of redeeming its place on the global political high table and restoring its status as one of the world's most-wanted economies. A stunning proportion of 814 million voters, one-fifth of them voting for the first time, have vested their faith in the life-long pracharak (server) and former railway station tea vendor. She goes on to add that General Election 2014 was a clash between two ideas of India, one that celebrates secularism (Congress) and the other of a divided India that worships uniformity (Modi's party BJP) in her article Man of Destiny [4]

A slew of books on the new Indian Prime Minister dissect the various facets of his life, political and personal and ideology. Among these Ramesh Menon in his book *Modi Demystified*,[5] quotes Modi from a 2008 interview, as saying that there is a fundamental thinking behind his ideology. "Until and unless you understand that, you will not understand what I am doing." According to Modi the reason why the freedom

struggle became a mass movement was that Mahatma Gandhi converted the individual urge of individuals into a mass movement. My thinking is that development must be a movement." Modi has upheld that his model of governance is a perfect amalgam of government's leadership with people's involvement. "Government is all and sole, that I do not believe. My motto is minimum government maximum governance."[6]

Establishing connect with his public was paramount on Modi's agenda. "Modi is the first politician in modern India who seems to be have been manufactured in a factory with everything designed from Day One. Everything is meticulously planned as to how he is to be marketed, how he would dress up, display specific body language, choose at which forum he would talk, what he would say there, how he would woo voters or increase his brand positioning. You will hardly ever see rough edges with what he does. He is different from his peers in that sense.

The institutionalization of Modi's image building may be a more recent phenomenon, but he had been fascinated with the power of the Internet to increase his popularity for a long time. As early as 2001 Modi was freely granting interview to internet sites with his PRO following public reactions to the same says Ramesh Menon who interviewed him for rediff.com in 2001.

Of late, the Internet, in this context more specifically meant Social media which has formed an integral part of all of Modi's PR strategies. Says Harshit Gupta, key campaigner of Modi's PR team, "Modi had started using social media from 2009 onwards. I remember having conversations with rival politicians at that time. They laughed and commented, 'Are elections won on Facebook? I wonder what they will say now."[7]

Modi's election strategy too has not been restricted to traditional methods of canvassing and campaigning. Sources say he has learnt a lot from following the political strategies adopted by other world leaders, specifically US President Barrack Obama. Modi was among the first chief ministers in India who understood the power impact and outreach of social and new media.[8] His PR agents stepped up support and public mobilisation for him through the use of these tools through popular platforms such as Facebook and twitter. Apart from the multitudes of videos tom-tomming Modi and his persona on YouTube, he also set up his own website; www.naredndramodi.in where all his speeches and activities were documented by a battery of PR agents.

Blogworks, an agency which monitors social networking index of Indian politicians puts Modi way ahead of others on its list. His competitors grudgingly admit that no other leader has managed to do with PR, social media and technology what Modi has accomplished.

Time and again Modi had stressed in internal party meetings that social media would play a crucial role as a game changer in 2014 elections. In a special *India Today* edition to mark the 67th Independence Day of the nation, Modi wrote: "Social media is an egalitarian medium that has created a level playing field. It is now possible for a common man to talk to, question and challenge any public figure if they disagree with

him or her. On social media we are all netizens first and everything later! Social media has emerged as a great tool for empowerment."

He was about to be proved absolutely right. He calculated there would be about14 crore mobile Internet users by the time the nation went to polls again. It was not just propaganda he was looking at.; he wanted to build a new-base among first-time voters. Who formed 20%of the electorate in 2014. To bring this new , young, urban voter into the BJP fold., his managers came up with a volunteer mobilization programme called India 272+, complete with a mobile phone app, the catchphrase reminding the voter that India needed a party in power with a full majority so that in government too there would be the easy rhyme of his four-word campaign slogan— Abki Baar, Modi Sarkar (This time- Modi government)

Modi's social media campaign was not the work of one man alone but an entire team. There was a brigade of back-room officials constantly working on him and marketing him to the country. These included a principal secretary, two additional principal secretaries, two officers on special duty, one of them to exclusively manage IT and the other to manage meetings. He had four personal assistants, one public relations officer and an additional public relations officer in his office. Regular feedback was provided to him on what people were talking about, audience reaction to his speeches and what BJP workers were saying about him.

Piyush Gupta (49) Rajya Sabha MP (Member of the Upper House of Indian Parliament) headed the BJP's Information and Communication campaign sub-committee that oversaw all outreach efforts via the web, mobile phones and social media. The sub-committee in turn helped the party's IT cell with an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology BHU (Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi) Arvind Gupta as convenor and a communication cell headed by Anupam Trivedi an MBA degree holder from the Indian Institute of foreign Trade.

The IT drive included a third arm outside the party for which Modi handpicked two of the company's sharpest IT minds, Rajesh Jain (post graduate from Columbia University in the US and an Internet revolutionary who is credited with revolutionizing Internet use in India through IndiaWorld web portal—a collection of India centric websites. The second man on this team was tech-entrepreneur B.G. Mahesh (post graduate from Alabama University and founder of Greynium Information technologies private Ltd, the owners of OneIndia, one of India's finest regional language news portals. Apart from Goyal, Jain and Mahesh, the fourth prominent backroom strategists for Modi was K. Kailashanathan, known as K.K a 1979 batch retired bureaucrat and a close confidante of Modi. Last but in no0 way the least was Modi's controversial former minister of state for home, Amit Shah, who had to step down in face of charges of ordering fake encounter killings in Gujarat. He has been the brain behind the BJP's Social Media campaign.

Modi has appointed Rajesh Jain and BG Mahesh to orchestrate and drive his social media campaigns. The Indian internet industry is aware of the success stories of the two, who are often recalled as "The Original Dotcom poster boys." Rajesh is well known for selling IndiaWorld to Sify for Rs. 499 crore and Mahesh has been successful in founding companies like IndiaInfo and OneIndia. The successful duo are now making sure that BJP comes into power in next elections and for that they are

putting together a 100-member content and technology team in Bangalore to drive Modi's internet campaign. Modi has also held "virtual rallies" such as the one on November 18 wherein he addressed rallies simultaneously from four separate stages across Gujarat—Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot at a whopping cost of Rs 40 crore. As per a December 20 online poll 17:15 IST, as of 88% of 39491 surfers had hit LIKE on Narendra Modi. Whether it is with creating a presence on social networks or conducting the most successful Hangout by any Indian politician, Modi has done it successfully. Recently he was again in the news for a statement he made while interacting with the BJP Maharashtra cell – "Get me 48 lakh social media id's from the 48 Lok Sabha seats in the state." Both Rajesh Jain and BG Mahesh have declined to comment on the story but it is clear that with the coming elections, political fights will not happen only in offline spaces but social media too. [9]

Together this crack team of IT professionals promoted Modi's vision and his developmental model and a blitzkrieg dedicated to portraying how India needed Modi to stem corruption and bring positive change in an era that would choose development over dynasty.

His campaigners ensured SMS Whatsapp texts and voice mails were made to over 130 million people. In the last phase 3D rallies were organized, beginning from April 10, one month before the last day of campaigning. Modi's experiment with 3D hologram rallies earlier in 2012 Gujarat Assembly elections had bagged him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for delivering a speech to 53 locations simultaneously. The hi-tech campaign had touched 14 million people through such virtual rallies.

As Lok Sabha Elections 2014 wound down to a historic close, the BJP-led NDA claimed a landslide victory, making huge gains across the country. As results for all 543 Lok Sabha seats were announced, the NDA looked set to win 336 seats, not only far ahead of the half-way mark but also relishing a victory whose scale they had not themselves anticipated. For, incredibly, the BJP crossed the 272 mark comfortably on its own, without allies, winning 282 seats, a gain of 166.

In the more recent Chhatisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir polls too, BJP made a clean sweep of the former and delivered an impactful surge in the latter. It is also all set to sweep away the fight for Delhi where earlier the anti-incumbency wave had brought dark horse Arvind Kejriwal to power.

Conclusion:

This is the biggest victory since the 1984 election that Rajiv Gandhi won with 414 LS seats. It is also the first time ever in the 67-year history of independent India that a non-Congress party has won a simple majority on its own. Modi has made history— and social media has undoubtedly played a vital role in ringing in the victory at the Elections 2014.

The Digital Media market is estimated at a total of 227 billion rupees in India with 127 users with PCs and laptops and another 100 odd million accessing internet through mobiles tablets and other devices.[10] With the Prime Minster himself

encouraging adoption of this new technology, it is sure that the face of communication in India is set for a sea change post 2014.

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