

## MANUFACTURING THE PUBLIC OPINION, TWITTER AS POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Social media has altered the channels of communication throughout the world, and as the world has modernized, communication standards have evolved as well. There are many social networking sites that are widely used by the public among which twitter is the fastest growing social networking service. Twitter has made it easy for individuals all across the world to interact and learn about events happening far away. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the extent to which the Twitter application is used by the general population for political purposes. This study also demonstrated the importance of twitter in constructing public perception and also demonstrated the use of Twitter by many political parties and leaders, which was vital in raising public awareness.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Communication, Twitter, Political Parties, Political Leaders, Public Relations, Trolling

### INTRODUCTION

#### MEDIA

The means of communication via which individuals give or receive information and keep it for a long period is called media. Media is a global platform for information and news that anybody may utilize from anywhere in the world (Martin Lister et al, 2009). Media is a method or instrument that uses information to raise social awareness among users. Media is a broad category of product that includes everything from mobile phones to television sets in people's homes. (Market Business News, 2020). The media is known to be the global village of information because it covers news from all over the world. Media is also a platform that also influences the political condition, and it must be borne

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in mind that no government controls the media by which problem can also be created (Nazir Hussain, 2012).

### **SOCIAL MEDIA:**

Now that everyone is using social media, it has become a dominant role in the dissemination of news and information, since every individual is compelled to mobilize themselves on social media platforms. (Keitzman et al, 2011). The present generation and social media are inextricably linked to one another through a strong bond that has an impact on the youth. Like anything else in this world, social media is a platform that has some beneficial outcomes, but it also has some negative outcomes. (Hitesh Bhasin, 2019). The material posted on social media is highly useful for those audiences that use the social media platform to collect around diverse information and knowledge about different subjects in life (Cohen, 2009).

### **TWITTER**

A social networking site, known as Twitter, is regarded to be a significant component of today's society. Twitter with a large number of active users, has played a dominant role in the evolution of the internet. (Brockmann et al, 2012). Twitter is a platform where users can engage with each other on a personal basis or connect with their friends using the various features of Twitter. (Miller, 2008). The contrast between 2007 and 2009 highlighted the audience's liking for twitter as its user ratio grew dramatically (Nielsen Wire, 2009). The bulk of Twitter users use their phones to access the site, while only a small percentage utilize other devices (Statista, 2015). In the case of Twitter, the information and news that tends to circulate has an impact on the perception of those who are watching the feed (Twiplomacy, 2018).

### **TWITTER AND POLITICS:**

Twitter played a key impact in politics as most people had transformed into social personalities and utilised the Twitter programme to communicate. As a result of this, several political parties tend to post their agendas on Twitter, allowing users to choose which party to follow. (Trump, 2017).

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS:**

Public relations is described as the connecting of an institution with its public in order to maintain a favorable relationship. An organization's or institution's success is based on its interaction with the public. A lack of bonding or a weak relationship with the public results in a lack of public support, which directly impacts an organization's image, resulting in failure. (Ferguson, 1984). The social media is trusted by its users, therefore the image built up by the social media of a given organization or political party is trusted and followed by the audience, which can have positive or negative effects. (Kent et al, 1998).

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Propaganda is used to manipulate public opinion, resulting in false information being used to alter public perception. Increasing propaganda makes it difficult for the public to choose a good political system or political governance. Propaganda causes tensions between public relations and politics, posing issues for policy formulation and implementation. The absence of policies tends to make it difficult for the country of Pakistan to progress forward in terms of development, as it serves as a barrier between the country's development and other countries. As social media is an important source for collecting political information, media use Twitter for their own agendas.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is significant because it reveals the powerful role and propagandas designed to influence public perception or opinion on a larger scale. Study will assist the people to choose the right candidate or political party. Political understanding is essential for a country's evolving society and international relations, and the function of choosing an appropriate candidate to represent thoughts of the general people in order to minimize these difficulties is necessary. For such an important duty, the general public should believe rationally rather than believing what politicians and influencers say on social media. Thus it is critical to educate the public about social media applications like Twitter. This study will also identify the impediment to Pakistan's progress and the influence of twitter in changing public attitude.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To inquire about the usage of Twitter application by politician.
- To evaluate about the usage of Twitter application by political parties for political purpose.
- To identify the consumption pattern of Twitter application among the general public of Pakistan.
- To determine the role of Twitter application in manufacturing public opinion.
- To understand the major reason of consumption of Twitter and major conflicts caused by it.
- To analyze that either political figures use Twitter for manufacturing political opinion among the public.
- To identify that the political parties use Twitter for manufacturing of political opinion among the public.
- To analyze the public opinion regarding trolling on Twitter by political opposition.
- To analyze the authenticity of information spread on Twitter in perception of the people.
- To examine the influence of trolling on public opinion and political behavior of people.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The phrase political disinformation is used to describe a wide spectrum of online political material, including fake news, outbursts, and blurred information (Tucker et al, 2018). Politicians and their public image have been transformed by social media. Reputation is their priority, not social media (Shami et al, 2019). Dead politics on social media is a fun approach to spread the ideology of various political parties. The network of politicians and their followers should be known in order to make better predictions about political parties' future (Khan et al, 2020). Political elites, journalists, and the general public have increased their usage of social media, particularly Twitter, in recent years in response to political developments (McGregor et al, 2017). Initiative technology is more likely to generate strong support for politicians' electoral gains. (Nguyen, 2018). Microblogging sites are vital for mining opinion and sentiment analysis. (Pak & Paroubek, 2010). Twitter is a political medium that allows everyone to express their views (Sander et al, 2007).

Politicians can utilise Twitter and other social media platforms to help them campaign for elections (Jackson and Lillekar, 2011). Twitter usage did not increase the number of voters or the number of data points. (Veergeer, 2015). The bigger number of followers does not indicate how well the politicians will perform in the elections (Jurgens et al, 2012). Digital media, especially social media, are critical in conveying the message to supporters in any political campaign (Putri et al, 2020). The media are defined as any platforms that have a significant impact on people's lives in any environment (Justin Stoltzfus, 2020). Media is a location where people may easily access all kinds of information and knowledge. The viewers tend to obtain information and stuff that they like (Cuneyt et al, 2014). The media covers news from places that are inaccessible to individuals, yet they gain access through the media's function (Gaurav Singh et al, 2017). Social media as the most essential medium for propagating beliefs and engaging potential voters and supporters. It facilitates communication between voters and potential political candidates (Kasmani et al, 2014). People can interact with celebrities, politicians, policymakers, actors, athletes, and other public figures via social media (Foster, 2017). People who frequently commented on public profiles appeared to be close friends and were more active in politics than those who did not (Sweetser and Lariscy, 2008)

**HYPOTHESIS**

- H1: Majority of the politicians are using twitter application.
- H2: Political parties use twitter application for political agenda's in regards to their party
- H3: Politician use twitter application to counter political misinformation and propaganda's against their political party.

- H4: People consider twitter as an authentic social media application in comparison to other applications.
- H5: The major conflict on twitter is about political leaders and trends according to situation.
- H6: Twitter is used to manufacture political opinion among the people.
- H7: The largely create their opinion about political leaders based on their political thoughts shared on twitter application.
- H8: Twitter is used by political parties to create good will among people in regards to their political parties.
- H9: Political trolling has more retention of political information and largely impacts political behavior.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Jeffres, Atkin, Lee, and Neuendorf (2011), the cultivation theory is the most often used communication theory to evaluate the impact of persistent media messages on people's perspective. Twitter exposure and public opinion of a political party or leader may be explained by cultivation theory. Users' impressions and attitudes toward political parties and leaders may be shaped by Twitter accounts that provide textual content and photos, respectively.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Most politicians use Twitter to promote their image, relationships, and political views and inclinations. Twitter has enabled personalized communication and self-commodification for politicians. The study is based on quantitative methodology and deals with data acquisition. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Survey used 600 respondents to gauge popular opinion on Twitter as a political tool. Search was limited to Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar, which are the provincial and federal capitals. 125 responders were from Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta. 100 responses were from Islamabad. This data was collected from 450 males and 150 females between the ages of 18 and 25.

## RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

**H1:** Majority of the politicians are using twitter application:

### Twitter

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	459	77	77
No	49	8	85
To some extant	92	15	100.0
Total	600	100.0	

### INTERPRETATION:

According to the above table and hypothesis, most politicians use Twitter. Findings shows that 77 percent agreed, 8% disagreed, and 15% were neutral. The results of the table reveal that the hypothesis “Most politicians use Twitter” is accepted.

**H2:** Political parties use twitter application for political agenda’s in regards to their party:

### TWITTER USAGE FOR POLITICAL AGENDA

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	472	79	79
No	39	6	85
To some extant	89	15	100.0
Total	600	100.0	

### INTERPRETATION:

According to the above data and the hypothesis that political parties utilize Twitter for political agendas, 79 percent agreed, 6 percent disagreed, and 15% were neutral. The hypothesis “Political parties use Twitter application for political agenda's in regards to their party” is approved based on the results of the table received from participants and the graph provided.

**H3:** Politician use twitter application to counter political misinformation and propaganda’s against their political party

**TWITTER USAGE TO COUNTER PROPAGANDA**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
I	429	71	71
No	52	9	80
To some extant	119	20	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**INTERPRETATION:**

The above table and the hypothesis is about the Politicians that use Twitter to refute misinformation and propaganda against their party and hypothesis are about politicians who utilize Twitter to battle political misinformation and propaganda. According to the findings, 71% agreed, 9% disagreed, and 20% were neutral. The results of the table reveal that the hypothesis “Politicians utilize Twitter to counter political misinformation and propaganda against their political party” is accepted.

**H4:** Twitter is used to manufacture political opinion among the people:

**POLITICAL OPINION**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	459	77	77
No	49	8	85
To some extant	92	15	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**INTERPRETATION:**

According to the above data and the hypothesis that twitter is used to manufacture political opinion among the people, 25% believe less than 40, 34% believe 40-60, 28% believe 80-120, and 13% believe more than 120. Because the results of the table and the graph clearly reveal that the hypothesis “Twitter is used to produce political opinion among people” is unfounded, it is suitable to reject the hypothesis.

**H5:** People consider twitter as an authentic social media application in comparison to other applications:

**A CHI SQUARED TEST IS USED TO EXAMINE THE INDEPENDENCE OF TWO VARIABLES.**

**TWITTER USAGE \* AUTHENTIC MEDIA  
COUNT**

		Twitter usage			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Authentic Media	Strongly agree	132	48	30	210
	Agree	112	36	32	180
	Neutral	36	16	18	70
	Disagree	26	18	6	50
	Strongly Disagree	54	22	14	90
Total		360	140	50	600

**RESULTS:**

**A CHI SQUARED TEST CALCULATES 5.60 AND A P-VALUE OF 0.692.**

This indicates that, in compared to other social media applications, users regard twitter as a real social media platform. Hence, there is insufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis, the hypothesis is accepted.

***H6:** The major conflict on twitter is about political leaders and trends according to situation:*

**CHI-SQUARE TESTS**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.600	8	.692
Likelihood Ratio	5.213	8	.735
Linear-by-Linear Association	.401	1	.526
N of Valid Cases	600		

A chi squared test is used to examine the independence of two variables.

		Twitter usage			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Authentic Media	Strongly agree	199	32	10	241
	Agree	102	31	28	162
	Neutral	11	17	10	38
	Disagree	60	18	6	84
	Strongly Disagree	40	22	14	76
Total		412	120	68	600

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	439.600	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	519.213	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.401	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	600		

**RESULT:**

A chi squared test calculates 439.600 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the primary source of contention on Twitter is over political leaders and current events. Hence, there is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis, the hypothesis is rejected.

**H7:** The largely create their opinion about political leaders based on their political thoughts shared on twitter application:

**Twitter usage \* Opinion about leaders****Count**

		Twitter usage			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Opinion about leaders	Strongly agree	40	18	26	84
	Agree	62	31	68	162
	Neutral	11	17	10	38
	Disagree	169	62	10	241
	Strongly Disagree	22	40	14	76
Total		334	148	128	600

**CALCULATIONS:**

Chi-Squared value = 22.335

Degree of Freedom = 6

P-value = 0.001

Result:

The Pearson Chi-squared test indicates that respondents are satisfied with the effectiveness of Twitter in raising awareness about political parties, and they are mostly

forming their opinions on political leaders based on their political thoughts published on Twitter. As the test's p-value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

**H8:** Twitter is used by political parties to create good will among people in regards to their political parties:

**Twitter usage \* Good will among people  
Count**

		Twitter usage			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
<b>Good will among people</b>	Strongly agree	69	92	80	241
	Agree	60	30	68	159
	Neutral	13	18	10	41
	Disagree	40	18	26	84
	Strongly Disagree	22	14	40	76
<b>Total</b>		<b>234</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>600</b>

**CALCULATIONS:**

Chi-Squared value = 33.235

Degree of Freedom = 6

P-value = 0.235

**RESULT:**

The Pearson Chi-squared test indicates that respondents are satisfied with the performance of Twitter in raising awareness about political parties, and political parties use Twitter to foster good will toward their political parties. Because the p-value of the test is greater than or equal to 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted.

**H9:** Political trolling has more retention of political information and largely impacts political behavior:

**Twitter usage \* Trolling impact on political behavior  
Count**

		Twitter usage			Total
		Yes	No	Sometimes	
Trolling impact on political behavior	Strongly agree	105	60	10	175
	Agree	45	31	74	150
	Neutral	90	19	10	119

	Disagree	10	18	26	54
	Strongly Disagree	50	22	14	86
	Total	300	150	150	600

**CALCULATIONS:**

Chi-Squared value = 40.707

Degree of Freedom = 6

P-value = 0.000

**RESULT:**

The Pearson Chi-squared test indicates that respondents' happiness with Twitter's performance and their attitude about political trolling contribute to greater absorption of political information and have a significant impact on political conduct. As the test's p-value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected.

**CONCLUSION:**

Politics has become more accessible to the public thanks to the use of social media. With the advent of social media, such as Twitter, young people are becoming more conscious of the political process. Twitter is a platform where political leaders may express their views and facts directly to twitter users. The study proposed 9 Hypothesis. Cultivation theory was applied to the study which explain the relationship between exposure to Twitter and people's perception of a political party or leader. The researcher used the correct methodology to meet the study's goals and answer all research questions. The inquiry produced a mixed bag of outcomes, with some hypothesis being accepted and others being rejected. The study found that most people, including politicians, political groups, and the general public, used Twitter to collect information. It is well established that politicians use Twitter to oppose misinformation and propaganda. However, it is also obvious that Twitter is not involved in public opinion formation but Twitter is seen to be an authentic information source.

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