Reputation Management on Social Media: Analysis of Audience Feedback on Posts and Tweets of Pakistani MNAs

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Abstract

These days, the political leaders have started relying on digital media more than traditional media to reach their audience therefore making social media a very important tool in political communication. The interactive landscape of digital media makes it essentially handy for the political leaders to approach their voters, strengthen or create their goodwill and image, as well as manage their repute. For the said purpose, the political leaders focus more on how to change the methods through which they can reach and connect with the public.

Many experts also believe that reputation is very crucial in political scenario in comparison to any other industry. It is significant to state that good repute does not mean, more visibility on social media but one has to be more trustworthy and credible among all others. The primary objective of this study is to find out that what kind of repute MNAs of Pakistan have among the public on Facebook and Twitter, this research is also focused to explore that how credible MNAs are considered by the audience and what type of response public is giving on their posts and tweets? The scholarship is also premeditated to examine that which medium either Facebook or Twitter gets more supportive comments from the audience for the political leaders.

Keywords: Political Communication, Social Media, Reputation Management, MNAs

Introduction

These days, the political leaders have started relying on digital media more than traditional media to reach their audience therefore making social media a very important tool in political communication. It can be said that digital media will overshadow the traditional media as far as political public relation and political communication is concerned. It is important to discuss the role of digital public relation practice in comparison to the traditional media. The interactive landscape of digital media makes it essentially handy for the political leaders to approach their voters, strengthen or create their goodwill and image, as well as manage their repute. For the said purpose, the political leaders focus more on how to change the methods through which they can reach and connect with the public. Social media has now become the vital part of their communication strategy, in a very short time, the politicians in contemporary democratic societies have begun to use Twitter and Facebook to approach and connect with their specific audience (Gulati & Williams, 2010). All around the world, the politically influenced people have started to use new media because they realise the importance of digital media and are fascinated by the successful communication (Posetti, 2010; Westling, 2007) and positive reputation

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building. The political leaders utilize the new media methods very often (Tenscher, Mykkanen, & Moring 2012) to communicate and interact efficiently with the voters with specific agendas (Stromback, 2008). Other authors, Froehlich and Rudiger (2006) correctly explored that main aim of political public relation is to use media space to bring forward specific political ideas, explanations, movements of matters and to increase audience approval for the political strategies and policies. Hence, the political actors make use of digital channels of communication to engage one on one with the public and to carryout political campaigns efficiently. Furthermore, political leaders try to make well reputed and positive image among the audience, and they put in maximum efforts to achieve their specially designed political agendas and to create as well as lead public opinion in certain specific direction to attain personal political benefits. With the awareness about the importance of social media, the political actors have created their official pages on the social media to create direct impact on their public. The political actors distribute their information and receive instant response/feedback; hence they can easily evaluate their own reputation and position among the people. Similarly, social media is called as the picture-perfect medium for public because of its nature where people communicate and tell their ideas and opinions about the politics and political leaders. Not only politicians, even the people, common public take maximum advantage of social media like Facebook, Twittter, Linked Inn, etc to disseminate the problems and create awareness about their issues, the importance of these platform for sharing opinions, activities, performances and mindsets (Steiglitz, Brockmann, & Xuan 2012) and also to follow their favorite political actors. Consequently, it is a perfect medium where the public opinion about political leaders and the sitting government strategies can be evaluated (Steiglitz, Brockmann, & Xuan 2012). Williams (2016), stated in a study that 44% of US citizens believed in social media for the political communication about the applicants in Presidential elections of 2016. It was stated that Trump had around 10 million followers on Twitter while there were around 7 million followers of Hillary Clinton. In case of Facebook, Trump had around nine millions followers which were nearly double the followers of Hillary's followers. On the contrary, it is also true that getting approval on social media is not as easy as it shows, the foremost objective here is to increase likeness and following, which is only possible if the politicians create content according to the audience thinking so that more audience involvement and more reassuring comments can be gained. To use social media for political engagement is not very simple, it's a technical game, especially to create impactful message and valuable communication for the public which can have desired influence.

The equivalent participation of a common man in the whole development has devolved the communiqué procedure in this contemporary digital era. The rising supremacy of social media has specified a chance for political actors to slog on long-term constructive image and sturdy repute. Many experts also believe that reputation

is very crucial in political scenario in comparison to any other industry. It is significant to state that good repute does not mean, more visibility on social media but one has to be more trustworthy and credible among all others. Political public relations is destined for construction of stable associations, standing and influences among a political leader or political party and its audience. An image of a political actors and his repute is of greatest standing, as according to The UK's Chartered Institute of Public Relations 'PR is concerning repute – the consequence of what one says, does, and what others say about one.' Rein, Kotler and Stoller (1987) claimed that politics is a zone in which image constructing and makeover really control and politics can be explained as "image-intensive sector" in which public depend on specific party and political actor on whom they rely and think of them as credible. Many times, audience is not even concerned to know the philosophy of any party. They usually select the people of their individual liking who have satisfactory political image according to them. Occasionally, if the representatives squander their good repute they are contemplated out of political pitch and it may take eras to reconstitute the repute. Keeping this whole scenario in view, this study is focused to explore that are the politicians managing their reputation well on social media and what type of instant feedback they are getting from their audience in form of comments. This research would help the politicians to get information about the feedback on general public and they will be able to analyse their content. The findings would give them an opportunity to revisit their strategy if needed and create more audience-oriented messages.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

Since the significance of the good and positive reputation of politicians among the public is already established, the primary objective of this study is to findout that what kind of repute the political actors have among the public on Facebook and Twitter, this study is also focused to explore that how credible the politicians are considered by the audience and what type of response public is giving on their posts and tweets? The scholarship is also premeditated to examine that which medium gets more supportive comments for the political leaders. Therefore, this scholarship is planned to examine the credibility of the members of National Assembly (MNAs) of Pakistan by studying the comments given by the public on the tweets and posts of MNAs. To achieve the aim of the scholarship, following research questions have been designed:

R.Q.1. Is the behaviour of audience on Facebook and Twitter supportive or discouraging for the MNAs?

R.Q.2. Which platform either Facebook or Twitter gets more supportive comments for MNAs?

Reputation Management Theory: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is acquired from Reputation Management Theory as this study is intended to explore the reputation management of MNAs on digital sphere and how much credible they are considered by the audience. The said theory is occupied from the conventional business context and have been pertained on strategic political communication and political public relations. The idea of reputation can be functional to political actors, parties, counrties, and so forth (Scammell, 1999) and a snowballing form of information has established this political function of reputation (Donsbach & Brade, 2011). An already prevailing body of writing on the images of the political actors has also expressed the significance of reputation in political public relations and strategic political communication. The experts examined how the representation of politicial actors in candidate interactions, news media communications, and public belief can intently communicate to each other. Among the most common attributes of the candidate (Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu & Seltzer., 2006) images studied were credibility (does the candidate seem believable?), morality (do the candidate's actions reflect well on his or her ethics or integrity?), intelligence(is this reflected in his or her knowledge or skills?), leadership (is he or she charismatic or inspiring?), ideology and issue positions (what are his or her policies?), and biographical information (details of his or her hometown or family) (Weaver, Graber, McCombs & Eyal, 1981).   The creation of social media technologies can be combined with these abilities to analyse in what ways the reputation can be constructed and managed in this modern age through social media. The public relations have conventionally determined on the association of strategic communication between the association and its shareholders. However, the arrival of relationship management as the noticeable standard in public relations has endorsed this discipline to focus on relationship construction, organization and preservation (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Like how the common public nurture relations and produce social hub which benefits them shape vocations and companies, it similarly offers them a chance to advance reputational hub which funds them in construction of healthy and sturdy relations to grow their establishments.

The very acute early stage in repute management of political actors is the building and refinement of relationships with noticeable electorates. The increasing model of relationship management is a novel feature to inspect various strategies that political actors can practice to claim relationship development with the shareholders in substantial framework. (Ki & Hon, 2009). From the five indicators of reputation management, credibility is being gauged in this scholarship, considering the fact that credibility plays a very important role in constructing positive reputation of the politicians among the masses. Therefore, this study would be focused on measuring the credibility of MNAs of Pakistan, if MNAs are getting more supporting comments,

they would be considered more credible and if they are getting more discouraging comments on their posts and tweets they would be considered less credible. It would also be interesting to explore that on which platform MNAs enjoy more credibility, either Facebook or Twitter.

Methodology

The quantitative content analysis technique is used to achieve the desired objectives of this study, Twitter accounts and Facebook pages of 34 Members of National Assembly of Pakistan serving in preceding democratic government i.e. 2013-2018. These MNAs are chosen on the basis of their day-to-day usage of Twitter and Facebook, the facebook pages and Twitter accounts of the political actors were studied initially and the MNAs who were posting consistently were chosen for the study. The information about the official accounts was gathered from the office of Speaker National Assembly in order to be sure not to take any fake account in the study. To evaluate the behaviour of the public, the comments on each post and tweet posted by selected MNAs during November, 2016 are studied. The identity of participant MNAs is not revealed in this study, because MNAs allowed to analyse their pages and accounts on the basis of anonymity, that is why the collective results are produced here in this paper.

To understand the behaviour of audience, the comments are chosen through systematic random sampling technique as there is large amount of comments on posts and tweets. Consequently, if entire amount of comments is lesser than 50, every 5th comment is chosen, if the entire amount of comments surpasses 50 then every 10th comment has been taken as a part of scholarship and if the entire amount of comments is over 100 then every 50th comment is appropriated and in case of total number of comments exceeds 1000 then every 100th comment is explored subject to the readiness of the comment. By consuming this methodical sampling technique, total 10722 comments are chosen for the stud and are chosen and explored manually. Considering the total numbers of comments under investigation, two coders were chosen for the analysis. The inter coder reliability was also restrained statistically subsequently leading pilot scholarship and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.9, which is more than 0.7.

The public behavior is additional distributed into three sub-categories:

Abusive: If the comment comprises of obscene language or abusive texts, then it is deliberated abusive

Supportive: If the language of somewhat comment incites the MNA or is in support of that person or his political party and anti his adversary is measured supportive.

Discouraging: If the linguistic of the comment is anti MNA or his political party and display any type of condemnation is deliberated as discouraging in the scholarship.

Results of the Study

To achieve the goals of the scholarship, the semantic of comments by the public on the posts and tweets of selected MNAs is studied quantitatively. Agreeing to the results exhibited in Figure 1, majority of MNAs acquire supportive comments on their posts and tweets. It has been shown that 50.6 % of the total number of comments contains language in support of MNAs whereas 40.9 % of the comments seem to be discouraging for MNAs while only 8.4 % of the audience comments are abusing which means contain unbearable remarks.
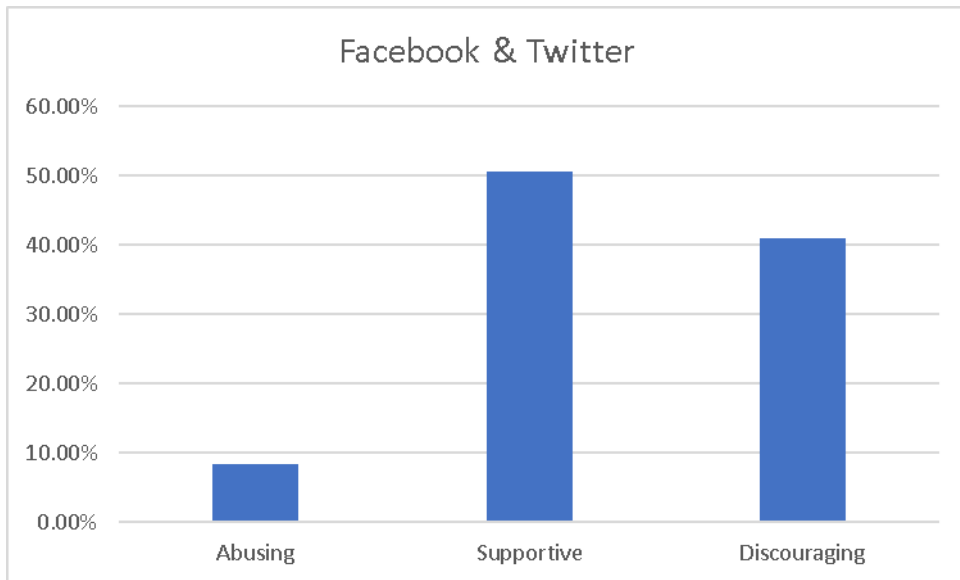

Figure1: Language Used in Comments on Posts and Tweets

Although the results are slightly interesting while looking at the language of comments on posts and tweets separately shown in figure 2, it can be easily observed that most of the comments on Facebook pages of MNAs are supportive which is 65.4 % of all the comments chosen for this study. It can be inferred from this finding that the MNAs are considered credible on Facebook meaning they enjoy good reputation and their strategy is working really well. The public like their posts and express the same thought and feedback in the comments section. The findings also point out that the number of discouraging comments on Facebook is much less i.e. only 29.5%, however 5.1 % comments consists abusive language. On the other hand, the findings of Twitter is very much unlike Facebook, making it very interesting.In the case of

Twitter, the number of supporting comments is really less in comparison to Facebook, which is only 28.8 % meaning that the public may not like the tweets of MNAs much and they don't support the views expressed in their tweets. On the contract, surprisingly the number of discouraging comment is a lot more when compared to Facebook, 57.8 % of entire comments are discouraging for MNAs. This further proves the finding that MNAs are not getting positive response on Twitter, infact their reputation is at stake in case of Twitter. Whatever may the subject be of the politcal actors' tweets, regardless they are satisfied with the use and also belive they are using it efficiently, the audience comments depicts a different story. Another important finding is that the number of abusive comments is more on Twitter that is 13.4 % making it double of the abusing comments on Facebook.
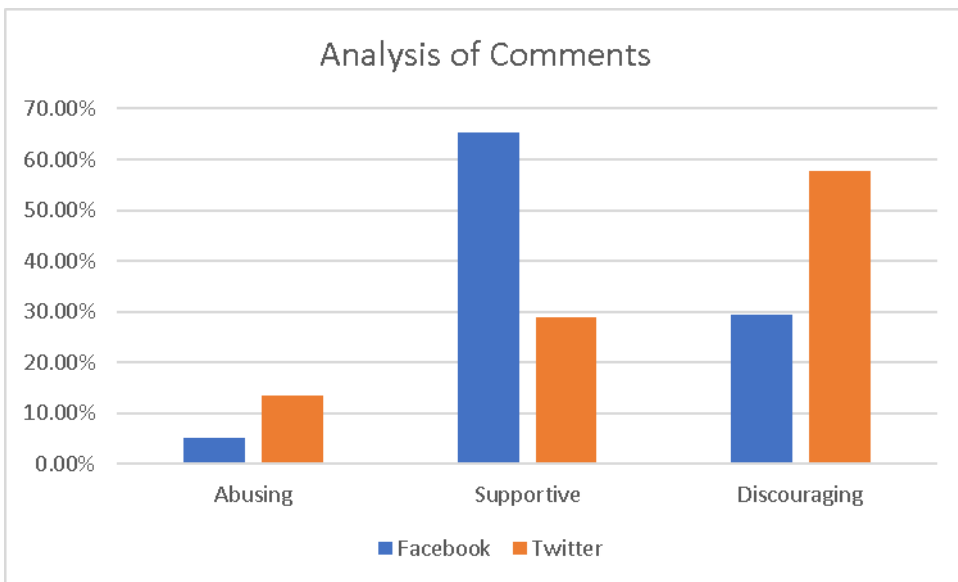

Figure 2: Comparison of Analysis of Comments on Posts and Tweets

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal some interesting facts, the findings evidently display that most of the comments are supportive for the politicians and a small amount are discouraging together but if the findings of Facebook and Twitter are considered independently, Facebook posts has m supportive more comments while Twitter has more discouraging comments, and the number of abusive comments are also higher in the case of Twitter. From these results, it might similarly be gathered that the audience that follow MNAs on Facebook contemplate them more credible and perhaps that can

be the reason they obtain more supporting comments there. It is worthy to mention here that Facebook is understood as more personal galaxy and it has been observed that MNAs use them to tell about their personal information and public also desire to know what's going on in their personal lives. On Facebook, the audience is limited as compared to Twitter and the one has completed control over communication there whereas Twitter is considered more asymmetric and open platform. Furthermore, another reason for the difference in audience behavior can likely be that the audience are not the same on Facebook and Twitter, and have dissimilar views and likings, hence the different type of response. Whatsoever the motives are, it is recognized that MNAs are handling their reputation better on Facebook. While on Twitter, MNAs do not get more supportive comments, in fact, the public give them discouraging response which is evident by the kind of language they use. It can be safely concluded that finding can be that the public do not approve of the strategy used by MNAs on Twitter and expect from them to produce better and effective content. During the analysis, few very interesting comments were noted which are worth mentioning here like someone responded for Imran Khan "No Problem Khan, Again U-Turn", another comment openly rejects the credibility of Imran Khan, the then opposition leader, "No More support, you losses your credibility". Another comment regarding the policies and political situation of Pakistan was "RIP Politics" which clearly means that people are just fed up of the political system of Pakistan and don't want to trust it any more, for them it is a dead horse now. The then, ruling party also enjoyed the discouraging comments and people chanted for him "Go Nawaz Go" another one criticizes the policies of the then chief minister of one of the province "cheap policy and Perveiz Khattak leave CM chair" another discouraging comment was "Ahsan Iqbal, so you want to make Pakistan 2nd Greece, come on when people like you justify the rubbish it really make us lol". Another comment containing negative feedback stating "Imran Khan by hiding in home, you are disregarding rest of your party as well". There were many interesting supporting comments as well like "Yes PTI, success is yours inn InshaAllah", "love your for this", "Congratulations, what a glorious victory you have", "Unconsciously in Love, Murad Saeed the Great" and "don't worry things will get better". These types of responses give a very good overview about what type of comments are actually made on the posts and tweets and what type of reputation politicians are enjoying.

Keeping the whole discussion and findings in view, it is also imperative to state here that all around the world Twitter is established as a more serious and credible way of political communication with the public and the initial investigation also discovered that political leaders use Twitter as a medium for self-promotion (Enli & Skogerbo, 2013, Golbeck et al, 2010) information distribution (Saebo, 2011; Smal 2011) destructive politicking, party deployment and image management (Jackson & Lilleker, 2011). US President Donald Trump also relied on Twitter more for his political

campaign, but the case in Pakistan seems different. In Pakistan, politicians are enjoy positive reputation on Facebook rather than Twitter which means they are not focusing much on the content they are producing in their Tweets. It can be said that it is important for MNAs to consider to be more active on Twitter and be aware that their public is not passive any more, they are very active and want to indulge in political discussions. The public knows the importance of social media and they communicate on it and political actors should try to take full advantage of this. nature of social media and taking full benefit of it. The public show their behavior by their likes and dislikes openly on social media. And if the public is not in favor of any political actors, literature shows that, the public can destroy repute of a political leader in no time. The things can go viral in seconds and usually the loss is irreparable.

Conclusion

With the assistance of results, it can be easily established that generally the behaviour of public on face book and Twitter appears to be supportive not discouraging. The public is more active by commenting positively about the MNAs but if studied individually it can be claimed that Facebook has more supportive comments as compared to the discouraging response MNAs get on Twitter. This displays that MNAs are relishing better reputation on Facebook if compared to Twitter or it can be said that they are successful in managing it well. MNAs should reassess their approach of connecting with the public on Twitter considering that it more appropriate platform for political communication and building better images and Twitter owns more influence in terms of official interaction and distribution of information to the public.

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