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**ROLE OF MEDIA SYNERGY IN POLITICAL ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION: A CROSS-PLATFORM STUDY OF MUMBAI**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The media in Mumbai has become interconnected with print, electronic media and social media platforms to shape the political advocacy communication. The significant growing media synergy plays an important role in shaping public opinion, framing the political narratives and civil participation in political affairs. On one hand this synergy offers opportunities for wider reach and strong advocacy while on the other hand it raises concerns related to bias, mis information and unequal representation of voices. The traditional media which is known for its credibility uses agenda setting power in political communication. Whereas the social media is used for rapid dissemination, public interaction and digital activism. However, the algorithm-driven nature of digital media can also lead to echo chambers, polarized opinions, and the spread of unverified information. This makes it necessary to critically examine how media synergy affects the quality and impact of political advocacy communication. The problem lies in the limited academic understanding of how cross-platform media synergy shapes political advocacy narratives at the urban level, particularly in a media-intensive city like Mumbai. This study aims to examine the role of media synergy in political advocacy communication by analyzing how print, electronic, and social media collectively frame and amplify advocacy messages. This research study seeks to contribute to discussions on media convergence, political communication, and narrative change for social good by highlighting both the potential and challenges of synergized media practices in contemporary urban India.*

**Keywords:** Media Synergy, Digital Advocacy, Digital Activism, Narrative Change, Social Good

**1: INTRODUCTION**

The twenty first century has seen a fundamental change due to the digital transformation which has altered the political advocacy. The political communication has evolved from print, radio and television to the digital age marked by social media engagement, rapid information spread and personalized messaging. The key shifts include the move from party centric newspaper eras to media dominated TV stages and finally to specialized digital platforms increasing public participation and also creating challenges of misinformation. The political communication has evolved into a multi dimensional, cross platform phenomenon where traditional and digital media interact to create a synergetic effect. The synergy in political communication is not just about being everywhere but about inter-media interaction. (Barclay, 2015) An example for this can be a headline in a major Marathi or English daily provides “intellectual weight”. It is then picked by a local political leader in X handle and simplified into a 30 second instagram reel and finally distributed via whatsapp broadcast. This is a pure example of legacy media trigger.

The media synergy has the power to shape public discourse. Through articles, opinion pieces, interviews and documentaries advocates present compelling narratives that highlight the importance of the cause. This can be understood from a user journey where a commuter sees a political hoarding at the Western Express Highway, then he searches for the candidate on Google and then receives targeted ad on Face book. This is a perfect example of sequential synergy. Mumbai is served as India’s financial and media capital has a unique microcosm for studying these synergetic dynamics. The city’s political landscape is determined by dense intersection of traditional grassroots structures---Shakha system. But today these are digitally synchronized with “Digital Yoddhas” (Digital Warriors) of the party. In urban city like Mumbai the political advocacy moves on the hyper-local synergetic path. An example for this can be a issue raised by civic group of people in suburban ward may go viral on Whatsapp and later the same news gain visibility through influencer led digital campaigns and finally make its space in the city’s major news channel. (Media., 2025)

Despite there is an increasing reliance on integrated campaigns, existing literature treats social media and traditional media as separate entities. Previous studies denote critical gap in understanding how these platforms interact specifically within the socio-political fabric of an Indian metro city like Mumbai. This research study aims to address this research gap by analyzing the cross-platform synergy and its role in modern political advocacy communication, providing insights into how digital-physical hybrids are redefining democratic engagement in urban India.

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**2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In today's digital era the political communication transcends from single media platform to hybrid approach which helps to influence the public opinion and digital outcomes. The concept of media synergy is based on the idea of interconnections of traditional and digital platforms that produces amplified political effects. These effects are widely discussed in the past literature to analyze cross-platform dynamics, agenda setting, and political advocacy communication.

(Chadwick, 2017) offers hybrid media system framework which focuses on how political parties switch between old and new media to interact with audience. Studies applying this framework show that political campaigns no longer work in isolation but across a fluid ecosystem of media platforms. (Paatelainen, 2022) studies portray that political parties and their leaders plan to use social media to share traditional media content such as televised debates and news articles as part of hybrid campaign messaging. This type of synergy helps to improve the visibility and personalize political communication, reinforcing the hybrid nature of current political messaging. A similar study by (A.I. Langer, 2021) states that traditional media platforms still have a huge influence over digital platforms due to the agenda setting process. In the research analysis of UK policy scandal it showed that digital platforms contribute to initial visibility, but traditional news media plays a crucial in holding public attention and pushing issues onto political agendas. This underscores that traditional media remain powerful agenda drivers within cross-platform advocacy communication. As per (Zhang, 2023) shows that social media is still influenced by elite who shape the political agenda across platforms more than user agendas do. In a similar research (Severin-Nielsen, 2023) identifies several thematic patterns, which includes cross-media strategies, hybrid campaign tactics, and the challenges of aligning different media logics. According to (Bennett, 2012) social media platforms have redefined political participation by lowering barriers to engagement. He describes this as connective action, where personalized digital engagement replaces traditional collective mobilization. In India, (Udupa, 2018) highlights how social media activism shapes political identities and advocacy campaigns, particularly in metropolitan cities. While media synergy enhances information flow, it can also intensify polarization. (Sunstein, 2017) argues that digital media environments encourage echo chambers, reinforcing ideological divisions. Similarly, Prior 2007 notes that increased media choice allows audiences to selectively consume politically aligned content. When mainstream news frames interact with polarized social media discourse, political advocacy communication becomes both amplified and fragmented. This dual effect of synergy and polarization is increasingly visible in politically active urban centers such as Mumbai.

From the above research we can assume that in contexts like Mumbai, political advocacy communication may involve a complex interplay between traditional news outlets, political advertising on television and print, and highly localized digital engagement. Political advocacy according to (Abid, 2025) is such a marketing that intersects with political communication more broadly and that social media marketing strategies contribute significantly to shaping political narratives, though they remain underexplored in non-Western contexts and in cross-platform comparative studies.

**3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY****3.1 Aim**

The aim of this research is to study how media synergy functions in political advocacy communication in Mumbai by analyzing interactions between traditional news media and social media platforms in shaping political narratives and public opinion.

**3.2 Objectives**

- To analyze how Mumbai-based news channels frame political advocacy issues in terms of tone, language, and themes.
- To examine how similar political advocacy issues are discussed on social media by citizens, journalists, and political actors.
- To compare traditional media and social media content to identify patterns of convergence, divergence, and synergy.
- To assess how cross-platform political communication influences public understanding and perceptions of political issues.

**3.3 Hypotheses**

H1: Traditional news media in Mumbai will emphasize institutional and elite-driven political frames, while social media will reflect participatory and citizen-centric narratives.

H2: News media will adopt a formal tone in political advocacy communication, whereas social media discourse will be more emotional, informal, and polarized.

### 3.4 Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach to systematically examine themes, frames, and meanings in political advocacy messages across traditional and digital media platforms (Hsieh, 2005)

### 3.5 Research Method

A case study approach will be used for in-depth analysis of selected political advocacy issues that received significant coverage across both news media and social media in Mumbai.

### 3.6 Data Collection

The study uses secondary data collected from publicly available news content and social media posts related to selected political advocacy issues during a defined time period.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Data is analyzed through iterative coding and thematic categorization, focusing on framing, language use, emotional tone, and cross-platform narrative alignment.

### 3.8 Limitations

The qualitative findings offer contextual depth but may not be generalizable beyond Mumbai or the selected political cases due to the focused nature of the study.

## 4: DISCUSSION

### Case Study 1: Mumbai Media Coverage of the 2019 Indian General Elections

The 2019 General Elections represented media intensive political event in the country's history. Mumbai-based television news channels covered election campaigns through prime-time debates, candidate interviews, manifesto discussions, opinion polls, and live reporting of rallies. The dominant frames observed in news narratives revolved around leadership appeal, national security, economic development, and governance performance. Political advocacy messages were often structured around party ideologies, campaign promises, and strategic alliances. The tone of coverage largely reflected institutional authority, expert commentary, and elite political voices, reinforcing mainstream political agendas. Parallel to traditional news coverage, social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube became highly active spaces for political advocacy. Hashtags such as #AbkiBaarPhirModi demonstrated how political advocacy messages were digitally mobilized and personalized. A key feature of the 2019 election communication environment was the continuous flow of content between platforms. Television debates were clipped and shared on social media; viral social media content was featured in news bulletins; and politicians frequently referenced media appearances in their online posts. This reciprocal circulation created a hybrid communication loop where traditional and social media reinforced each other's agendas. Such cross-platform interaction enhanced message visibility, shaped issue salience, and intensified political polarization. This case study provides a concrete example of media synergy in political advocacy communication within Mumbai's media ecosystem.

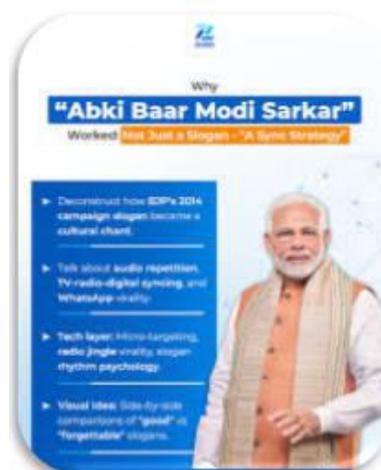




Figure 1: Media coverage of 2019 General Elections

### Case Study 2: Political Advocacy during the Mumbai COVID-19 Governance Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented public health emergency that required continuous political communication, policy announcements, and crisis governance. Mumbai-based news channels reported daily government briefings, municipal corporation updates, hospital preparedness, lockdown regulations, and vaccination drives. News narratives largely emphasized official statements, expert opinions, and institutional decision-making processes. Political advocacy within traditional media took the form of press conferences by government representatives, debates on policy effectiveness, and investigative reports highlighting governance successes or failures. The tone of coverage was predominantly informational and authoritative, positioning traditional media as a key legitimizing platform for public policy communication. Simultaneously, social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp emerged as important spaces for citizen-driven communication. Individuals shared real-time updates on hospital bed availability, oxygen shortages, vaccination experiences, and appeals for medical assistance. A significant feature of pandemic communication was the reciprocal influence between media platforms. Viral social media posts highlighting resource shortages or administrative gaps frequently prompted follow-up coverage by news channels. The COVID-19 case provides a critical example of cross-platform media synergy in Mumbai, demonstrating how media convergence influences governance communication, public engagement, and accountability in contemporary political environments. This case illustrates that during crisis governance, political advocacy communication is no longer

confined to political elites or news institutions. Instead, digital platforms empower citizens to participate in agenda-setting, demand accountability, and influence policy discourse. Traditional media and social media together created a hybrid communication environment that shaped public trust, policy compliance, and political legitimacy during the pandemic.



Figure 2: Media coverage of Covid 19 Pandemic

Case Study 3: Farmers' Protest and Media Narratives in Mumbai

The farmers’ protest against the three farm laws (2020–2021) emerged as one of the largest political mobilizations in recent Indian history. Mumbai news channels framed the farmers’ protest primarily as a national political and policy issue, emphasizing its implications for economic reform, agricultural policy, and political stability. The tone of reporting often reflected institutional perspectives, focusing on law and order, negotiations between farmer unions and the government, and electoral consequences. Political advocacy in traditional media was thus largely mediated through elite actors and formal political discourse. In contrast, social media platforms functioned as powerful spaces for grassroots political advocacy. Farmers, activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens used Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to share protest footage, personal testimonies, and calls for solidarity. A defining feature of this case was the constant interaction between platforms. Viral protest visuals and testimonies circulated on social media were frequently picked up by news channels, while televised debates and political statements were reposted and critically discussed online. This reciprocal flow produced agenda overlap, where both platforms addressed similar issues, but also narrative contestation, as interpretations and emphases differed sharply. Social media challenged traditional media frames, while mainstream coverage provided institutional legitimacy and broader reach. The farmers’ protest case provides strong empirical grounding for analyzing media synergy in Mumbai, illustrating how political advocacy narratives emerge, circulate, and clash across platforms.



Figure 3: Media coverage of Farmer Protest in Mumbai

**Case Study 4: Political Advocacy Around the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019**

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed in December 2019, triggered widespread political protests and debates across India. In Mumbai, demonstrations at locations such as Gateway of India, Azad Maidan, and university campuses became focal points of political mobilization. The interaction between traditional and

social media created a hybrid advocacy environment marked by both synergy and polarization. Social media content from protests frequently influenced news coverage, prompting live reporting and investigative stories. Simultaneously, televised debates and political statements were circulated and critiqued online, extending their reach and reinterpretation. However, differing frames between institutional media narratives and activist-driven digital discourse led to parallel information flows and ideological polarization across platforms. This case focuses on how protests and political advocacy related to the CAA were covered by Mumbai media and discussed on social media. News media often relied on official and institutional perspectives, while social media facilitated emotional, identity-based, and activist-driven discourse, creating both synergy and polarization.

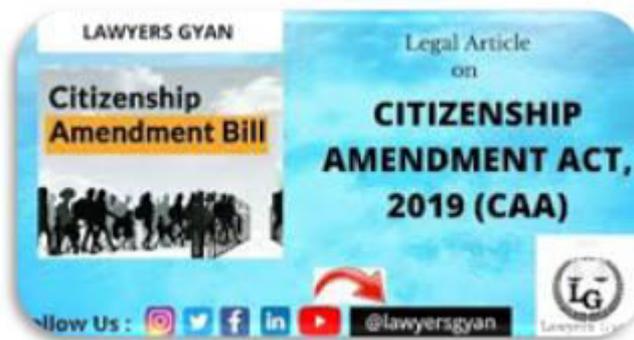


Figure 4: Media coverage of Citizenship Amendment Act

**Case Study 5: Media Synergy in Mumbai Municipal Elections and Local Governance Issues**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections and debates on local governance issues represent a critical arena of political advocacy communication at the urban level. Mumbai-based news channels and newspapers extensively covered BMC elections and civic governance debates through candidate interviews, party manifestos, opinion polls, and televised discussions on urban development. On social media platforms, political advocacy became more localized and citizen-driven. Residents used Twitter (X), Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to highlight everyday civic concerns such as potholes, flooding, waste management, corruption, and delays in public services. A notable feature of this case is the continuous flow of content between platforms. Viral citizen posts exposing infrastructure failures were often picked up by news channels for follow-up

reporting. Conversely, televised election debates and political promises were circulated on social media for public commentary and critique. This reciprocal exchange created strong media synergy, where traditional media provided visibility and legitimacy, while social media ensured sustained public pressure and participatory engagement. The BMC election and civic governance case offers a localized yet powerful example of media synergy in Mumbai's political communication environment.



Figure 5: Media coverage of Media Synergy in Mumbai Municipal Elections

## 5: CONCLUSION

This research study sets out to examine how media synergy plays an important role in political advocacy communication in Mumbai by analyzing the interaction between traditional news media and social media platforms in shaping political narratives and public opinion. As per the stated aim and objectives, the research explored framing patterns in Mumbai-based news channels, discourse trends on social media, and the points of convergence and divergence between these two communicative spaces.

The findings from the case studies indicate that traditional news media predominantly frame political advocacy issues through institutional, policy-oriented, and elite-driven narratives, thereby confirming **Hypothesis 1**, which proposed that mainstream media emphasize formal and authoritative political frames. In contrast, social media platforms were found to encourage participatory, citizen-centric, and emotionally driven forms of political expression, providing alternative or oppositional narratives to those presented in traditional media. This supports the second part of **Hypothesis 1** regarding the participatory nature of social media discourse.

Further, the analysis reveals that news media maintain a structured and formal tone in political advocacy communication, while social media discourse is characterized by emotional intensity, personalization, and, at times, polarization. This observation validates **Hypothesis 2**, which predicted tonal differences between traditional and digital media platforms.

Across all cases, the study identified strong patterns of cross-platform synergy, where political content circulated reciprocally between news channels and social media, amplifying issue visibility and shaping agenda-setting processes. This directly fulfills the objective of comparing media platforms to identify convergence, divergence, and synergy. Additionally, the interaction between traditional media authority and digital participatory engagement was found to significantly influence public understanding, trust, and perception of political issues, fulfilling the final research objective.

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In conclusion, the study establishes that media synergy is a defining feature of political advocacy communication in Mumbai. The interplay between traditional and social media not only reinforces political narratives but also transforms citizens into active participants in the political communication process. Understanding these cross-platform dynamics is therefore essential for comprehending contemporary political discourse, democratic participation, and public opinion formation in urban India.

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