

Abstract:

As Abraham Lincoln has said, democracy is government of the people, for the people and by the people. Citizens elect their representative for governing them, and for making suitable policies for the development of the country. Earlier, the involvement of the citizens in democracy was limited because of insufficiency of means for connecting with their representatives. But with the emergence of new media, democracy has gained a new dimension – the participation of the citizens has increased. They can comment on, criticize or support their representatives, their parties and the policies of the government. The use of mobile phone, new apps, internet and social networking sites has been increasing exponentially in India. New platforms have become available for people to voice their opinions.

The tools that have become available with the new media are many, and have made one-on-one interaction easier, cheaper and less time consuming, and therefore so much more extensive and effective. But the larger question here is, how aware are our elected representatives of these tools? In other words, do they use new media? Do they have their own websites? Do they use social networking sites to interact with their voters or member of the constituency? Do they respond to emails? What is their opinion about the new media?

This is an attempt to find out answers to all the above questions. This is a case study for determining the usage of new media by all the Members of Parliament (MP) of Maharashtra. There are 48 MPs from Maharashtra. This study hopes to understand their attitude towards the new media. Effective use of new media can enhance communication between the citizens and their representatives. This will lead to a better and healthier democracy.

Key Words: New media, democracy, new media and democracy, politicians and new media

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Introduction:

The media play significant role in democracy. With the changing technology communication and form of media is also changing. This change in media scenario is even more significant. The tools that have become available with the new technology are many, and have made interaction easier, cheaper and less time consuming, and therefore so much more extensive and effective. Earlier, the involvement of the citizens in democracy was limited because of insufficiency of means for connecting with their representatives. But with the emergence of new media, democracy has gained a new dimension – the participation of the citizens has increased. They can comment on, criticize or support their representatives, their parties and the policies of the government. The use of mobile phone, new apps, internet and social networking sites has been increasing exponentially in India. New platforms have become available for people to voice their opinions.

And the government of India is also taking note of the increasing popularity of the social media. The government has decided to set up a new media wing of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to highlight government initiatives on social media platforms. For this new media wing the government is planning to spend Rs 22.5 crore for five year (2012-17), the wing is the biggest communication initiative undertaken by the I&B Ministry which already has substantial presence on the virtual landscape, including Twitter, Facebook and a blog."The entire media paradigm over the last couple of years has undergone a complete transformation. There is a physical civilisation that has evolved over the millennia and a virtual civilisation that is evolving. The new media wing will put in place the building blocks for a system where the government has a substantial presence in the media of tomorrow. It will naturally be two-way because a top down approach does not work in the net space. We will put in place grievance redressal mechanisms," I&B Minister Manish Tewari said. (www.indianexpress.com, 2013)

The study has shown that the political parties in India are actively using the social networking sites for the campaigning of the upcoming general election. Two leading parties Indian National Congress and Baratiya Janta Party are neck to neck in the cyber race (FLAME, 2014). First time social media at this extend is being used in the election not only by the political parties but also by the voters.

Review of Literature:

Pamela Philipose has written in EPW (Feb, 2013) an article ‘Anxieties in the Republic: Media Metamorphosis and Popular Protest’. In this article the writer has mentioned the how old media is working with increasingly popular new media. The writer has explained how the new media was effectively used in Anna Hazare agitation and Delhi gang rape cases. She has concluded with ‘at this juncture as we hurtle towards 2014 and another general election is that the media, Old and New, will be a player in Indian politics on a scale that has never been envisaged thus far’.

Afiya Zia, in the article ‘Social Media Politics in Pakistan’ published in EPW (Feb, 2012) has stated that urban youth are using social media to protest in Pakistan. She calls cyber-activism as ‘celebrated product of globalisation’ and adds that this ‘allows overseas Pakistanis to freely participate in domestic politics and support pressure groups without the kind of risks that “live” activists face’.

The article ‘Reconfiguring the mediapolis: New media and civic agency’ written by Maria Bakardjieva (2011) talks about how new media can play important role in the growth and invigoration of Bulgarian civil society. The research showed that the online media can act as transmitters, translators and mobilizers in the society. The blogs and website were used effectively to voice their opinions in Bulgaria.

Ernest J. Wilson III has written an article ‘Digital Media, Democracy and Diversity: An Imperfect Discourse’ (2008) In the article he says that ‘digital media can make to education, healthcare, cultural understanding, and economic efficiency seem, to some, to be limitless. Among the enthusiasts of digital media there is the belief that digital media can provide fuller, more meaningful participation in national civic life. Democracy itself can be made better through digital media.

The interview of Dr. Karol Jacubowicz was published in Central European Journal of Communication. (2012) There he talks about how new notions of media are changing users behavior and the impact of new media on democracy. He says that the new media can strengthen the democracy as well as destroy the democracy as it may fragment the society.

Research Question:

The tools that have become available with the new media are many, and have made one-on-one interaction easier, cheaper and less time consuming, and therefore so much more extensive and effective. The voters, political parties and the government are using new media for participation, to reach to voters and to spread the policies respectively. But the larger question here is, how aware are our elected representatives of these tools? In other words, do they use new media? Do they have their own websites? Do they use social networking sites to interact with their voters or member of the constituency? Do they respond to emails? What is their opinion about the new media?

Research Methodology:

Maharashtra is second largest state according to the number of members after Uttar Pradesh (80). Out of 546; there are 48 members of parliament (MP) from Maharashtra. To limit the scope of research, only four tools of new media were selected to study, those are tools are: Websites, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube channel. For this research, first the existence of these MPs on different social networking sites was checked. Their accounts on different social networking sites were studied. The attributes of the websites were studied in detail.

The email seeking basic information about their constituency was sent in Marathi to all the available email-ids of these MPs received from the official site of Loksabha i.e. <http://loksabha.nic.in/>. To study the interactivity through emails, 51 emails were sent twice with the interval of 13 days. The email reads as follows:

Dear sir/ma'am,

I am a free-lancer. I am writing an article on the background of for upcoming general election. For this I need detail information on following questions. This will be very important for my article:

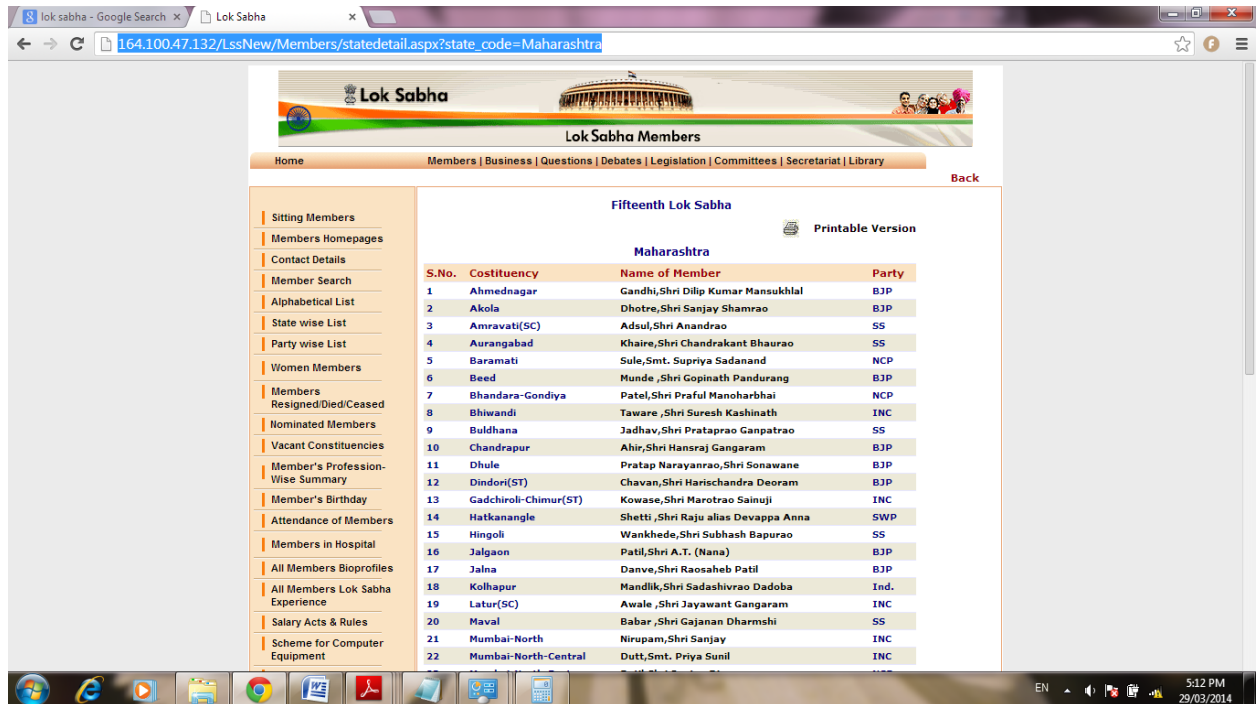
- 1) What are the crucial problems in your constituency as per your opinion?
- 2) What you have done to solve this/those problem in your tenure?
- 3) What will be your/yours party's strategy for upcoming election?
- 4) Is social media influential for the campaigning or to be in touch with voters? If yes, how are you using this social media? If no, please give reasons.

Please find some time to respond that will be great help.

Thanking you.

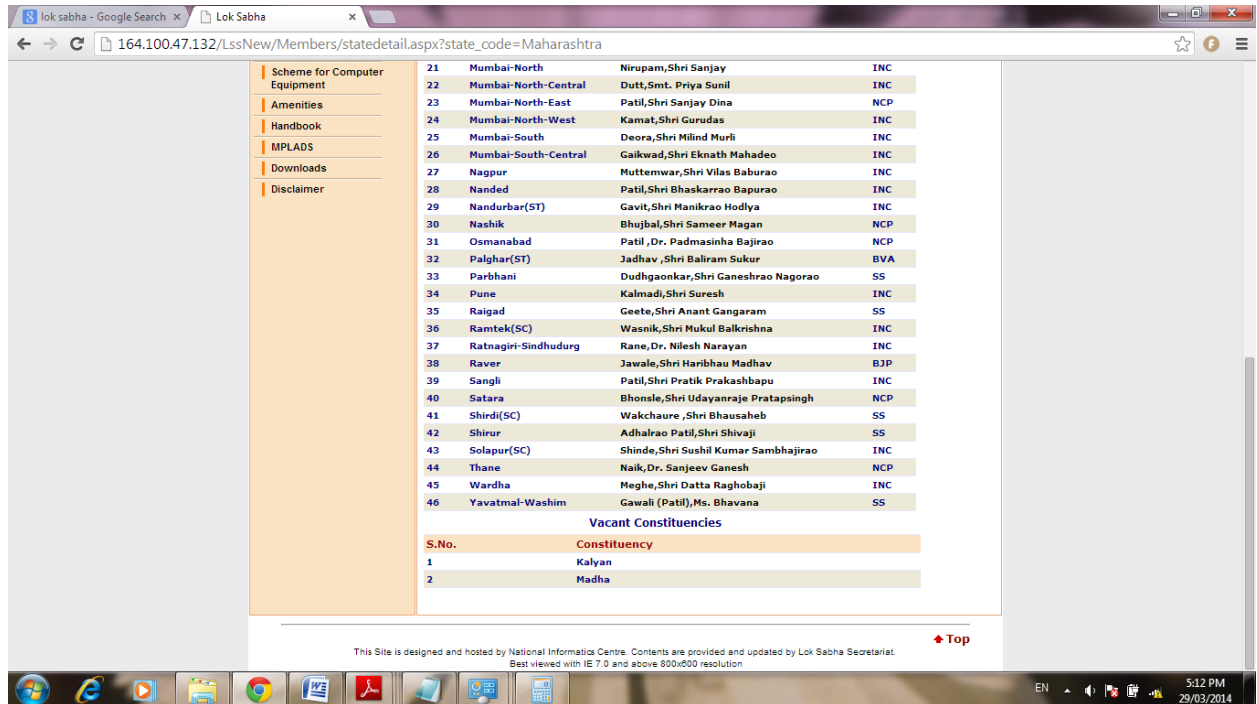
Data and Analysis:

The list of MPs from Maharashtra:



The screenshot shows the Lok Sabha Members page for Maharashtra. The page is titled "Lok Sabha Members" and "Fifteenth Lok Sabha". It includes a sidebar with navigation links and a main table of members.

S.No.	Constituency	Name of Member	Party
1	Ahmednagar	Gandhi, Shri Dilip Kumar Mansukhlal	BJP
2	Akola	Dhotre, Shri Sanjay Shamrao	BJP
3	Amravati(SC)	Adsul, Shri Anandrao	SS
4	Aurangabad	Khair, Shri Chandrakant Bhaurao	SS
5	Baramati	Sule, Smt. Supriya Sadanand	NCP
6	Beed	Munde, Shri Gopinath Pandurang	BJP
7	Bhandara-Gondiya	Patel, Shri Praful Manoharbhaji	NCP
8	Bhiwandi	Taware, Shri Suresh Kashinath	INC
9	Buldhana	Jadhav, Shri Prataprao Ganpatrao	SS
10	Chandrapur	Ahir, Shri Hansraj Gangaram	BJP
11	Dhule	Pratap Narayanrao, Shri Sonawane	BJP
12	Dindori(ST)	Chavan, Shri Harishchandra Deoram	BJP
13	Gadchiroli-Chimur(ST)	Kowase, Shri Marotrao Sainuji	INC
14	Hatkanangle	Shetti, Shri Raju alias Devappa Anna	SWP
15	Hingoli	Wankhede, Shri Subhash Bapurao	SS
16	Jalgaon	Patil, Shri A.T. (Nana)	BJP
17	Jalna	Danve, Shri Raosaheb Patil	BJP
18	Kolhapur	Mandlik, Shri Sadashivrao Dadoba	Ind.
19	Latur(SC)	Awale, Shri Jayawant Gangaram	INC
20	Maval	Babar, Shri Gajanan Dharmshi	SS
21	Mumbai-North	Nirupam, Shri Sanjay	INC
22	Mumbai-North-Central	Dutt, Smt. Priya Sunil	INC



The screenshot shows the continuation of the Lok Sabha Members page for Maharashtra. It includes a sidebar with navigation links and a main table of members.

S.No.	Constituency	Name of Member	Party
21	Mumbai-North	Nirupam, Shri Sanjay	INC
22	Mumbai-North-Central	Dutt, Smt. Priya Sunil	INC
23	Mumbai-North-East	Patil, Shri Sanjay Dina	NCP
24	Mumbai-North-West	Kamat, Shri Gurudas	INC
25	Mumbai-South	Deora, Shri Milind Murli	INC
26	Mumbai-South-Central	Gaikwad, Shri Eknath Mahadeo	INC
27	Nagpur	Muttemwar, Shri Vilas Baburao	INC
28	Nanded	Patil, Shri Bhaskarrao Bapurao	INC
29	Nandurbar(ST)	Gavit, Shri Manikrao Hodiya	INC
30	Nashik	Bhujbal, Shri Sameer Magan	NCP
31	Osmanabad	Patil, Dr. Padmasinha Bajirao	NCP
32	Palghar(ST)	Jadhav, Shri Baliram Sukur	BVA
33	Parbhani	Dudhgaonkar, Shri Ganeshrao Nagorao	SS
34	Pune	Kalmadi, Shri Suresh	INC
35	Raigad	Geete, Shri Anant Gangaram	SS
36	Ramtek(SC)	Wasnik, Shri Mukul Balkrishna	INC
37	Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg	Rane, Dr. Nilesch Narayan	INC
38	Raver	Jawale, Shri Hanibhau Madhav	BJP
39	Sangli	Patil, Shri Pratik Prakashbapu	INC
40	Satara	Bhonsle, Shri Udayanraje Pratapsingh	NCP
41	Shirdi(SC)	Wakchoure, Shri Bhausaheb	SS
42	Shirur	Adhalrao Patil, Shri Shivaji	SS
43	Solapur(SC)	Shinde, Shri Sushil Kumar Sambhajirao	INC
44	Thane	Naik, Dr. Sanjeev Ganesh	NCP
45	Wardha	Meghe, Shri Datta Raghobaji	INC
46	Yavatmal-Washim	Gawali (Patil), Ms. Bhavana	SS

Vacant Constituencies

S.No.	Constituency
1	Kalyan
2	Madha

http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/Members/statedetail.aspx?state_code=Maharashtra

Website:

Out of 48 elected represented only 13 members have their own websites.

Sr. No.	Name of the MP	Party	Website
1	Milind Deora	INC	http://www.milinddeora.in/
2	Praful Patel	NCP	http://praful-patel.com/
3	Gopinath Munde	BJP	http://www.gopinathmunde.com/
4	Supriy Sule	NCP	http://supriyassule.com/en/
5	Dilip Gandhi	BJP	http://www.dilipgandhi.in/
6	Gurudas Kamat	INC	http://gurudaskamat.com/
7	Nilesh Rane	INC	http://nileshnrane.com/
8	Shivajirao Patil	Shivsena	http://www.shivajirao.com/
9	Sanjeev Naik	NCP	http://www.sanjeevgnaik.com/
10	Sanjay nirupam	INC	http://sanjaynirupam.com/
11	Priya Datt	INC	http://www.priyadutt.com/
12	Sanjay Dina Patil	NCP	http://www.sanjaydinapatil.com/
13	Sharad Pawar	NCP	www.sharadpawar.org.in/

- 1) **Milind Deora:** He has one of the most interactive websites. His website is a good reflection about his principles, his values and his action. Major attributes are Meet Milind, Values, Milind Mapped, Way Forward, Know More, Twitter History, Articles published, Letter to the Citizens, Citizen Speaks, Correspondence, Volunteer Registration, Spotlight and Media Centre. He has provided his detail postal address, telephone number, fax number and email id. Connection to all the social networking sites is available. The website is well designed. The updates about 2014 election are there.
- 2) **Praful Patel:** His describes himself on the website as ‘a man with vision’. The web attributes include About, Leadership, Vision, Sports, Social Initiatives, Educationalist, Airports, Current Affairs, Constituency, Downloads, Testimonials, Videos, Contact Us. Two addresses are available one of Delhi and another of his constituency i.e.Gondia. Complete postal address with telephone number and email id is provided. There is nothing special in this website.
- 3) **Gopinath Munde:** This may not be his official website. The website is not updated. The website describes him as ‘a vision for a better tomorrow’. The web attributes include About me, My Party, Constituency, My Speeches, Album, Bouquets and Brickbats, Contact. The intro on the website reads as ‘Using Internet and setting up my own web site was not part of my dreams until recently. And here I am presenting to you my web site. This sudden

and speedy change brings me the happiness and gladdens me to note that you have spared your precious time to share my joy. I need not tell you that we in Bharatiya Janata Party are anxious to learn and practise what is in the interest of the people and the nation'. The website is not at all attractive. Only postal address and telephone number is available. The information related to his 2009 general is still on the home page and not a word is written about this election.

- 4) **Supriya Sule:** This is again one of the most well designed websites. The web attributes include Home, About me, My Party, Constituency, In Parliament, Initiatives, Media, Gallery, Talk to Me. Visually it is attractive. This is the only website where her blog (<http://blog.supriyassule.com/>) is also attached. All the information about her association with other organization is provided on the website.
- 5) **Dilip Gandhi:** This is a well designed website. The web attributes include Home, Biography, Work, Khasdar Nidhi Report, Media News, Photo Gallery, Video Gallery, and Contact Us. The photo gallery is quite good on the website. The complete postal address, telephone number, fax number and email id is given as contact information. The site is connected with other social networking sites also.
- 6) **Shivajirao Patil:** This is not very dynamic site in designing. The web attributes include Home, Personal MP, Industrialist, Gallery, Achievements, Join Hands, and Contact Details. The journey of Mr. Patil is mentioned on the home page itself.
- 7) **Gurudas Kamat:** The website is attractive. It begins with the 'Jai Ho' song with the pictures of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Mr. Gurudas Kamat. The web attributes include Know your MP, Initiatives, Bharat Nirman, Gallery, In the Media, Get in Touch, Resources, Lok Sabha Election 2014. The updates about 2014 election are there.
- 8) **Nilesh Rane:** This website is also visually attractive. The web attributes are Home, About, Parliament, Work Report, Gallery and Get in Touch. The picture file is attractive and well used here. The section called 'social wall' is something innovative compare to other websites.
- 9) **Priya Datt:** This is again a well designed website. The web attributes are Home, About Priya Dutt, Constituency Details, MPLAD, Contact Us, In Parliament, Key Initiatives,

Image Gallery, NDMCT Initiative and Twitter activities. The website is connected with other social networking sites.

10) **Sanjeev Naik:** This is also one of the most attractive website designs. On home page Dr. Sanjeev Naik talks about his inspirational leaders, progressive visions and youth leadership. The web attributes include Home, About me, My work, News and Media, Parliament Activities, My Constituency, Contact and Downloads. The list of the funds he has sanctioned for different work has been provided on the website.

11) **Sanjay Dina Patil:** Did not open the site quite a number of times.

12) **Sanjay Nirupam:** The website is quite attractive with the background music. The web attributes include Home, Profile, Footprints, Journey, Media, Contact, Join Me, Ask Question, Photo Gallery, Videos. The contact details include only postal address and telephone number. The facility to search the name in the voter list is provided only on this website.

13) **Sharad Pawar:** www.sharadpawar.org.in/ this website comes on searching. But on clicking on it <http://ww2.sharadpawar.org.in/?folio=7PO8W4MMJ> this website containing ads other than information about Sharad Pawar.

Overall Observation of Websites:

Most of the websites are not updated. Only Two out of 12 websites were updated. Only four websites have made their Marathi version available. The Picture Gallery of most of the websites was put in good use. Most of the MPs have mentioned what they have done in the Parliament but this information is not in detail. Only six websites are quite attractive and innovative in nature, and rests have followed a regular design pattern.

Twitter:

Out of 48 members only 21 MPs have presence on Twitter. There are only two authentic accounts. Milind Deora and Sharad Pawar have their authentic Twitter account. Remaining 19 accounts lack authentication. There are lots of fake accounts in the name of MPs. Suresh Kalmadi has 4 accounts on his name and there are hate-post against him on the same accounts.

The Twitter user can be put in chart:

Sr. No.	Name of the MP	Tweets	Following	Followers	Last tweet on the account (last checked on 31 march 6.30pm)
1	Sharad Pawar	50	1	25.9 K	Mar 27, 2014
2	Priya Dutt	407	23	27K	28 Mar, 2014
3	Milind Deora	2963	77	126K	45 min (31 Mar, 2014, 18.30)
4	Sanjeev Ganesh Naik	0	51	106	No Tweet
5	A.T.Patil	281	33	748	Mar 15, 2014
6	Dilip Gnadhi	47	140	47	Mar 25, 2014
7	Anandrao Adsul	351	25	31	29 min (31 Mar, 2014, 18.32)
8	Supriya Sule	19	145	1,943	Jul 25, 2013
9	Gopinath Munde Fans	110	245	100	4 hrs, (31 Mar, 2014, 18.35)
10	Praful Patel	7	3	40	Dec 19, 2013
11	Hansraj Ahir	35	76	50	Dec 12, 2013
12	Raju Shetti	3,287	13	444	3 hrs, (31 Mar, 2014, 18.35)
13	Bhavana Gawali-Patil	14	0	8	Mar 23, 2014
14	Shivajirao Patil	2	62	11	Aug 1, 2013
15	Udayanraje Bhosale	0	3	41	No tweets
16	Nilesh Rane	313	79	512	16 hrs, (31 Mar, 2014, 18.37)
17	Sanjay Nirupam	121	90	10.1K	6 hrs, (31 Mar, 2014, 18.40)
18	Sanjay Dina Patil	509	10	180	1 Feb, 2014
19	Gurudas Kamat Fans	275	342	618	Mar 29, 2014
20	Vilas Muttemwar	There are two accounts in this name			
21	Suresh Kalmadi	There are four accounts in this name			

Facebook:

Out of 48 members only 14 MPs have their presence on Facebook. And there are only two authentic accounts on Facebook. Milind Deora and Sharad Pawar have their authentic Facebook account. Remaining 12 accounts lack authentication. There are pages on Facebook but those indicate only the 'likes'. Those pages do not give any details about the activity of that MP. So, those pages have not included in this study.

The Twitter user can be put in chart:

Sr. No.	Name of the MP	Facebook account detail	About updates
1	Milind Deora	61,142 likes and 7684 are talking about this	Regularly updated
2	Manikrao Gavit	356 followers	Updated but not regularly
3	A.T.Patil	14,639 likes and 2,457 talking about this	
4	Anandrao Adsul	Does not show friends/any other information	Not updated
5	Supriya Sule	8269 followers	Not updated
6	Raju Shetti	21,519 likes 2,253 talking about this	Regularly Updated
7	Raosaheb Davane	376 likes 7 talking about this	Not updated
8	Shivajirao Patil	4,982 friends	Not updated
9	Pratik Patil	5000 friends	Not updated
10	Nilesh Rane	2,522 likes 500 talking about this	Regularly Updated
11	Eknath Gaikwad	20 likes 12 talking about this	Not updated
12	Gurudas Kamat	84,312 likes 4,432 talking about this	Regularly Updated
13	Priya Dutt	12,183 followers	Updated but not regularly
14	Sanjay Nirupam	1000 followers	Updated but not regularly
15	Sharad Pawar	81,762 likes 16,879 talking about this	Regularly Updated

Youtube :

It is very interesting to know that none of the MP has a channel on Youtube, which is considered one of the best video sharing sites in the World. More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month (<http://www.youtube.com/>). There are different videos uploaded by news channels and supporters of the particular MP/party but there are no official channels with a single exception. There is only one authentic channel of Milind Deora on YouTube. He has uploaded 23 videos in last one year and he has 54 followers.

Email:

This is the shocking finding of this study. MPs do not interact through emails. They do not use this option of communication. The email ids were collected from the profiles/personal information available on the official website of Loksabha. Out of 48 members, 37 representatives have provided their email ids in their profiles. Other email ids have been collected from the official websites of representatives. Total 51 emails were sent twice to 48 Members of Parliament from Maharashtra (first on 12th March and second 25th March 2014). Not a single response was received from any elected representative. Out of 51 emails 12 email ids were deactivated because they were not in use. It means that other 39 mails which were delivered did not bother to response.

In a nut shell:

The status of usage of social media of 48 MPs of Maharashtra

Form of social media	Users
Website	13
Twitter	21 (Only 2 authentic)
Facebook	15 (Only 2 authentic)
Youtube	only 1 authentic channel
Email	51 (sent but no Response)

Conclusion:

The low-cost, low-maintenance and timesaving nature of social media can be used effectively not only to interact with the citizens/voters/netizens but also to propagate the information. But the politicians in Maharashtra still have not realized this fact. Though leading political parties and voters/citizens are using social media, and the number is increasing each day, the leaders at individual level, they still are not using social media effectively. Out of 48 MPs only few of them are actively using different social networking sites. Milind Deora is the leading MP in case of use of social media and he uses social media effectively. Others do not use social media. There can be many reasons to this, they may not be aware of the strength of the social media or they think that their targeted voters do not use social media, hence the representative do not use social media. Political leaders have to use social media to interact with voters especially young voters as this is the cheapest way to communicate and propagate their work.

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