



Digital strategies in election and governance: BJP's electoral and post electoral digital media management in Assam

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Abstract

With the rapid rise of digital media, there is also a shift of political communication in recent years. Political parties are trying their best to influence masses through digital campaigning through various social media sites. The IT cells of political parties have become more active in last few years. Leaders seek to strategically use digital platform for not only the party's favour, but also for building their own images. This study will focus to explore the use of social media platform by the BJP in Assam specifically in 2021 Assembly election. It explores how digital campaign strategies such as memes, songs, short videos are employed for sustained image building of the CM and of the party itself. By analysing the interplay between political messaging, digital propaganda and voter engagement, the research will examine how BJP's IT cell, meme culture and online narratives contributed to its political success in the state. As an exploratory study, this paper aims to provide insights into the digital and social media campaign strategies employed by BJP in Assam, shedding light on the effectiveness of online mobilization and its long term implications for regional politics.

Keywords: political communication, digital media, social media management, image building, IT cell.

Research questions

RQ1. What role has BJP's IT cell played in shaping digital narratives during the Assembly election, 2021 in Assam?

RQ2. How can songs and memes affect the personality of a leader or a political party?

RQ3. How is the Assam BJP maintaining its post- election digital communication strategies and in what ways are these used to divert public discourse during critical political moments?

Research method

This study will be purely qualitative in orientation (Aarzoo & Lal, 2025). It will be facilitated through secondary data in form of various articles, newspaper reports and social media content analysis (Rahman et al., 2022). A discourse analysis of digital propaganda, including memes, songs and short narratives will help assess their role in shaping public perception and electoral outcomes.

Significance of the study

The study is of considerable importance as it aims to provide a wider understanding of the effectiveness of social media communication in political context (Kumar & Lal, 2023). By addressing these issues in context of Assam, it will contribute to the growing discourse on digital politics in India. It will also enhance its focus on the continuous use of social media campaigning by a political party after election victory throughout running the government.

Introduction

The successful Social media campaigning in the support of Barack Obama in US presidential election, 2008 marked a significant turning point in the use of social media in Politics (Aarzoo & Lal, 2025c). In case of India, the 2014 Lok Sabha election was a remarkable example where the country witnessed vast use of social media campaigning by the political parties. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party was way ahead than the other parties in this regard. The trend remained same in next two consequent Lok Sabha elections of 2019 and 2024. The state elections in the country are also not lagged behind (Aarzoo & Lal, 2025b). This paper examines BJP's digital media strategies in Assam, focusing on the 2021 Assembly election and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It explores how digital campaign tools or social media campaigning form of memes, songs and short stories have been employed for sustained image building of the chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the party itself (Aarzoo & Lal, 2025a).

The use of Social media as a means of Digital campaigning in Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2021 by Assam BJP

The state of Assam had witnessed a massive protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 which was announced by the BJP government in 2019. The amendment act seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs who migrated to India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh before 2014 (Aarzoo & Lal, 2026c). The people of Assam along with the student organisations, intellectuals and many notable figures of Assamese society came together against the bill and felt that the bill would lead to an influx of lakhs of Bengali speaking Hindu people, hence, fears losing the Assamese identities at the hands of Bengalis. It was a challenge for the incumbent BJP government to tackle the protest and also to not lose the electoral support in next election (Lal & Aarzoo, 2026c). Opposition parties, specifically Congress tried their best to keep the CAA issue alive during the election campaigning, But BJP was successful to kept the debate during election campaign outside the CAA ambit (Deka). The present Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma was the formidable force of the party in campaigning. The incumbent Chief Minister of the State, Sarbananda Sonowal was also side lined from focus to some extent by the campaigning style of Dr. Sharma. Interestingly, before 'the election, the ruling party didn't confirm the Chief Ministerial candidate, though Sonowal was the incumbent Chief Minister.

In this election, a song centered on Himanta Biswa Sarma gained immense popularity all over the Assam. The starting line of the song was "Ahise, ahise Himanta ahise, akhare batora loi" (Himanta is coming with the ray of hopes) (Lal & Aarzoo, 2026a). The song became very popular not only in social media but, Sharma's road shows where the party workers and Himanta was seen dancing with the beat of the song, also received unbelievable public support, raising the graph of his popularity (Sarkar & Lal, 2023). During the time of the Covid 19 Pandemic, Himanta was super active as the health minister of the state and he showed his excellent administrative skills in controlling the health sector in that critical time. At that time, a small girl of Assam wrote a poem for Himanta, calling him „Himanta Mama“ (Maternal uncle). The poem was widely circulated in social media and from that time, the Mama word become associated with him and the students, youths and even the middle aged people started calling him Mama (Aarzoo & Lal, 2026b). His Conversion from Dada to mama is very significant and he used it very positively to become more closer to the people. The hashtags used by BJP in this election- # Selfie with development and # Progressive Assam gained a lot of popularity during the visit of Amit Shah when he urged the people of the state to take selfies

with various developmental works around Assam done by BJP and post it in their social media accounts with these hashtags (Sarma 2023). Further, the party widely shared the videos of Road shows and motorcycle rallies, meetings with the photos of large public gatherings and also some photos of the Congress meetings where there were very small gatherings in the social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter of the party and Individual accounts of MLAs, MPs and various leaders. Moreover, advertisement in Various News channels also was a significant part of BJP's campaign. For example, Interviews with the beneficiaries of Arunodoi Scheme, With students getting scholarship, Short stories about the prevention of Rhino hunting during the reign of Sarbananda Sonowal etc were regularly played in almost all the top rated News Channels of the state (Lal & Sharma, 2021). Thus, through a proper strategy and a successful digital and social media campaigning, BJP was able to win 60 seats on its own and the NDA alliance won 75 out of 120 seats indicating a clean sweep in the State and a week after the result was declared, ending all speculations, Himanta Biswa Sharma was sworn as the Chief Minister of the state replacing Sarbananda Sonowal (Aarzo & Lal, 2026a).

How BJP is maintaining their social media after election?

For the ruling party, it becomes very important to remain in touch with public through their schemes and development work after election and BJP in Assam is very effectively maintaining it. The CM is highly active in all social media accounts. A very unique initiative has been started by Himanta Biswa Sarma that very frequently he comes live in facebook at night in between 9-10 pm and announced important informations related to government schemes, government Exams etc. This serves as a way for Himanta Biswa Sharma to engage with people on facebook and expand his reach on social media (Singh et al., 2022). Furthermore, he is actively working to maintain a hindutvawadi image and often uploads various short videos of the slokas from Madbhagawat Gita in his Twitter (X) and Facebook account (Rahman et al., 2024). A recent incident involves the chief Minister addressing students in his facebook live, where he suggested that this year the State education Board should give extra marks to all the students in social science paper of class 10 HSLC exam because HSLC candidates are complaining him that the paper was very tough. These are some ways the Popular politician is trying to maintain a regular communication with the public through digital media or social media (Saika et al., 2021). During a recent interaction with media persons, the CM himself highlighted the shifting trend from print to digital media (Lal, 2023). He noted how his live social media announcements, such as the unveiling of the employee transfer portal on January

1 or updates on reduced road accidents during new year's eve was viewed by over one crore people.

Conclusion

The way political parties connect with people has changed to a large extent with the rise of social media. This study shows how BJP has mastered the use of social media and digital tools to engage with voters, share opinions and build a strong political presence. From Creative cartoons, campaign songs to well crafted short video messages, their digital strategy played a key role in influencing voter perception especially during the 2021 Assam Assembly election. The study highlights how elections are no longer fought on the ground but also in the digital world. The IT cell and social media management teams are often called as Online warriors and their working place is referred as „war rooms“. Therefore, digital and social media has emerged as a very powerful tool in political arena, which can influence the public to vote for a specific party to a large extent.

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