# Content Analysis of Political Party Websites in India

**Anna Kaushik**
Deputy Librarian, University of Kota, Kota, Rajasthan, India
(E): drkaushikanna@gmail.com

## Abstract

Website of any political party is considered as a main source to catch and impart the different types of information to the targeted audience. This study aims to analyse various contents, options, applications, search facilities, resources, and other information available on the selected political party websites by using a checklist. The results of this study revealed that the majority of political party websites are building on different patterns, options and designs and have diverse information regarding their respective party history, constitution, logo, manifesto, photo gallery, current events, speeches, contact, and web 2.0 applications. It is also discovered from results that some political party websites do not have essential contents such as date of updating, feedback/suggestion option, party membership information, option for disabled people, mobile applications, public forum, and so on. This study may be helpful in developing the quality and in-depth contents for the political party websites of India.

**Keywords**: Content analysis, Political party of India, India, Political party websites

## 1. Introduction

Political parties play multi-dimensional roles in democracy in any country and build on constitution, principles and so on with a group of people—the politicians. Political parties earlier used various print media for imparting their movements, voice, and other information to public but with the emergence of Internet technologies especially World Wide Web (www, W3), political parties are not only transforming their various printed communication and information into electronic modes by using web-based cutting-edge technologies but have also developed websites for their political parties with quite a few facilities in terms of storing, linking, presenting, sharing, participation, collaboration of all kinds of information and inputs. Gibson, Ward and Lusoli (2002) study claimed that in the mid-1990s political parties went online and built their online websites for six main reasons: (i) information provision to public and 'old' media, (ii) campaigning, (iii) targeting youth audience, (iv) symbolic significance, (v) virtual infrastructure/efficiency gains, and (vi) soliciting voter/member feedback and participation. Since then, in democracy, websites are treated as a main instrument for connecting people, dissemination of information, communication movements, and campaigns and for other purposes as well. Owing to the dramatic increase in the number of Internet users and demand of mobile applications in different environments and huge impact of mobile technology and communication on society and public, political parties are also adding the diverse applications that are used for various mobile devices. These include mobiles, iPhones, iPods, tablets, and so on. On the other hand, content analysis of websites has proved its significance in terms of useful guides, instrument of improvement, quality benchmarks, development of users centric, well informative, equipped with latest technologies and dynamic websites. Hence, in this study an attempt is made towards content analysis of selected political party websites through predefined checklist in order to make political party websites full of contents from all angles.

## 2. Literature Review

Different studies were carried out by diverse authors focusing on the issues of online, Internet roles/usages/impact, content analysis, linking patterns, and social networking sites used particularly on different political parties' websites worldwide. Mukherjee (2009) measured the popularity of political parties' websites by link analysis and using way back machine. This study further judged the popularity of the Internet by applying webometric techniques and using Google, Yahoo, and Alexa tools and found that the Internet is being used as a viable tool for different purposes by the political parties of India. Weare and Lin (2000) investigated methodological issues, challenges and opportunities encountered by researchers in determining sampling, unitization, development of content categories, coding, and content analysis of World Wide Web. Small (2011) analysed intersection of microblogging and content of Canadian politics on Twitter by using key word hashtag (#cdnpoli). Gibson, Ward and Lusoli (2002) study dealt with origin of parties online and reasons, standards and other issues related to development of political parties' websites of various countries in the Internet age. Zhou (2009) conducted content analysis of blogs in China regarding dismissal of Shanghai leader Chen Liangyu and discovered from this study that bloggers give quick response and actively engaged with discussions and opinions on politically sensitive topics in China. Park and Thelwall (2008) investigated the linking patterns and social structure of politicians' websites in South Korea and found that members of the South Korean National Assembly linked most to party websites, and linking patterns did not change between 2003 and 2004. Wright (2009) discussed assumptions and observations

regarding significance of blogging by the politicians especially in connection to theories of representation and public sphere through politicians' blog namely 'Read my day'. Through the hyperlink analysis, Soon and Kluver (2007) investigated the use of the Internet by political groups of Singapore in order to build online community. Semetko and Krasnoboka (2003) compared the political role of the Internet in Russia and Ukraine and discussed opportunities provided by the Internet for political parties for communication, use as a source of information and developing websites of political parties with good standards. Zhang *et al.* (2009) conducted telephone survey of Southwest residents to examine reliance on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube that engaged citizens in civic and political activities. This study further investigated the influence of social networking sites on political attitudes and behaviour and the role of interpersonal political discussion in stimulating citizen participation. Conway and Dorner (2004) evaluated the New Zealand political party websites by using 50 predefined criteria ranging from information provision to privacy including resources generation, participation, networking, currency, navigation, and accessibility. Gibson and Ward (1998) examined the effects of UK political parties' use of the Internet on issues of intraparty democracy and interparty competition by using content analysis of party websites and found that the Internet can be used primarily as a tool for information dissemination. Berenschot (2011) discussed the connection between small-time criminals (or *goonda*s) and politicians in a locality in Ahmedabad, Gujarat (India) and found that politicians used small-time criminals to 'get things done'. Karandikar (2009) investigated the design, functional characters and features of Indian political party websites by using an integrated quantitative approach and found that Indian political party websites have scope for improvement to use the Internet as a participatory and convergent medium. As such,

there are different studies conducted on variant topics and issues of political party websites but no study was found on content analysis of political party websites of India.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:
- To identify political party websites existing in India at national level.
- To investigate the status of party related information, resources, web 2.0, and other facilities available on selected political party websites.
- Rating of the political party websites on the basis of score obtained by individual political party websites.
- To suggest measures for the improvement of political party websites.

## 4. Methodology

A search was made on Google search engine using the term 'political party in India' to get the information on political party websites available in India and different studies published in Library and Information Science and other subject journals were also consulted for obtaining information on political party websites. In this effort, eight national political party websites were discovered and found suitable for this study. Political party websites for this study were selected on the basis of political parties that are known to be the leading parties at the national level (Table 1) and those political party websites were not included that were not national or leading parties and those that were not popular enough at the national level. The 90 check points for this study were developed by studying various studies solely focusing on contents and evaluation of different kinds of websites and by thoroughly examining various possibilities through which information/content of political party websites may be analysed and evaluated at par with content/evaluation of other kind of websites conducted so far in different studies. These 90 check points contain

user search interfaces also. These 90 points checklist may be considered as the benchmarks for other political party websites and for other special kinds of websites in terms of content analysis and evaluation as these 90 points were developed by studying of political party websites very thoroughly. Further, each selected political party website was thoroughly examined and analysed by using 90 points checklist developed for collecting the data regarding the information contents, services, resources, search, web 2.0 tools and other facilities available on the national political party websites of India. The coding method was also used which includes: Yes= 1 and No= 0, E= English language, H= Hindi language, U= Urdu language, M= Marathi language; and Bharatiya Janata Party= BJP, Indian National Congress= INC, Bahujan Samaj Party= BSP, Samajwadi Party= SP, Communist Party of India (Marxist)= CPI(M), Aam Aadmi Party= AAP, Communist Party of India= CPI, and Nationalist Congress Party= NCP and point numbers 9, 11 and 12 (i.e. language of the website, types/genre, and language of the site contents) in Table 2 calculated as one to analysis data during a period from January 1, 2015 to January 31, 2015.

## 5. Significance of this Study

It is clear from literature review of this study that no study has been conducted so far on content analysis of political party websites in India. However, this study is an original work towards Indian political party websites and may be useful for developing special framework/check points as per their nature for contents analysis/evaluation of websites related to library and information science domain especially for contents analysis/evaluation of databases, podcasts, consortium, and so on and also for other variant kinds of websites.

## 6. Limitation of the Study

This study is confined to only eight political party websites existing in India at the national level and providing various information, resources, links, web 2.0, and other facilities to the users.

## 7. Political Parties of India

Table 1 provides information regarding names of political party websites, respective party foundation year, party symbol(s), image(s), and Universal Resource Locator URL(s) of various political party websites selected for this study.

## 8. Analysis

### 8.1 Basic information on the websites

Table 2 presents basic information given on the selected parties' websites. This information includes name of the party, homepage sign, contact address, toll free numbers, language of the websites information and contents, type/ genre, web counter, site map, search facility within websites, copyright information, privacy, feedback/suggestions, and party symbol on every webpage, etc.

It can be seen from the table given above, that name of the party and homepage sign information exist in (100 per cent each) political parties' websites and 87.5 per cent each political parties' websites have contact address, E-mail address and respective party symbols on every webpage of the selected party's website. Seventy-five per cent party websites have got fax number, phone number and copyright related information while very less (only 12.5 per cent) political party websites have information with regard to SMS number, toll-free phone number, update date and feedback/suggestions options on the political party websites, respectively.

It is interesting to note that majority of selected party websites have information/ contents in English language only but very few political party websites (equal to 12.5 per cent) are providing information/contents in two and three languages which include Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in both English and Hindi languages, Indian National Congress (INC) in three languages, viz., English, Urdu, and Hindi, and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) also in three languages such as English, Hindi and Marathi, respectively.

**Table 1**: Selected political parties for the study

| S.no. | Name of the party | Foundation year | Party symbol (s) and image(s) | | URL (s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) | 1980 | Lotus | | http://www.bjp.org/ |
| 2. | Indian National Congress (INC) | 1885 | Hand | | http://www.inc.in/ |
| 3. | Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) | 1984 | Elephant | | http://www.bspindia.org/ |
| 4. | Samajwadi Party (SP) | 1992 | Cycle | | http://www.samajwadiparty.in/ |
| 5. | Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) | 1964 | Hammer, Sickle and Star | | http://www.cpim.org/ |
| 6. | Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) | 2012 | Broom | | http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/ |
| 7. | Communist Party of India (CPI) | 1925 | Ears of Corn and Sickle | | http://www.communistparty.in/ |
| 8. | Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) | 1999 | Watch | | http://www.ncp.org.in/ |

It is important to note that about 62.5 per cent political party websites namely Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) comprise (.org) domain name in their respective URL(s) which indicates 'organization' domain name and the next majority (50 per cent) is observed by four political party websites that have domain name (.in) which represents India country and third majority (12.5 per cent) was noted from Indian National Congress (INC) party website which has (.nic) domain name separately.

Further, Communist Party of India (CPI) party website was built on 'Blogger' software, which is extensively used for developing blogs on the Internet, and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) website was developed on 'Drupal' software.

More than half of selected political party websites, (62.5 per cent) have information about site map and search facility within websites followed by equal 37.5 per cent from privacy and disclaimer statements and quarter (25 per cent) political party websites provide webmaster contact and feedback/suggestions provision whilst out of eight political party websites, none of the political party website has spelling error, information for disabled people, and web counter indicators.

## 8.2 Party-related information

Table 3 provides information regarding party history, organization, functioning, and other facilities given on respective political party websites in which 100 per cent political party websites have their respective logo(s) which denotes the concerned party symbol(s).

Similarly, 100 per cent political party websites have information regarding concerned party history, news and update, and photo gallery on their separate websites.

**Table 2**: Basic information on the websites

| S. no. | Basic information on the websites | BJP | INC | BSP | SP | CPI(M) | AAP | CPI | NCP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Name of the party | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2. | Homepage sign | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 3. | Contact address | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. | E-mail | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. | Fax number | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. | SMS number | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | Phone number | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. | Toll free phone number | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9. | Language of the website | E | E,H,U | E,H | E | E | E | E | E,M,H |
| 10. | Browser information given | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11. | Type/genre | .org | .nic.in | .org | .in | .org | .org | .in | .org.in |
| 12. | Language of site contents | E | E,H,U | E,H | E | E | E | E | E,M,H |
| 13. | Web counter | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14. | Sitemap | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. | Search within party website | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 16. | Web master contact | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 17. | Privacy statement | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 18. | Disclaimer statement | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19. | Information for disable users | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 20. | Is website update date provided on the website? | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 21. | Is copyright status clearly stated? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 22. | Spelling error found | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 23. | Feedback/suggestions facility | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 24. | Party symbol on every webpage of website | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

*Coding*: Yes =1 and No= 0, E= English language, H= Hindi language, U= Urdu language, M= Marathi language

**Table 3**: Party-related information on the websites

| S. no. | Party-related information | BJP | INC | BSP | SP | CPI(M) | AAP | CPI | NCP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Party logo | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2. | History of party | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 3. | Philosophy of party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. | Constitution of party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 5. | Mission statements | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | Manifesto | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | Party's core issues | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. | Party's governing body | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 9. | Names of former main leaders | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 10. | Party's organization information | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 11. | Party CMs information | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 12. | Party MPs information | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 13. | Information regarding different committee(s) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 14. | Party resources download facility | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15. | Indication of number of membership | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 16. | News & update features | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 17. | Party Bulletin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 18. | Internet TV | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19. | Information regarding EVM machine use | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 20. | View current event facility | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 21. | Link to party existence in different states | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 22. | Party website fonts/themes different view/accessibility facility | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 23. | Party publications | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 24. | Books and monographs | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 25. | Link to search engines | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 26. | Grievances redressed | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 27. | Mobile app(s) facility | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 28. | Get alert option | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 29. | Join the party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 30. | Become a volunteer | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 31. | Press releases | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 32. | Speeches | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 33. | Video releases | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 34. | Public forum | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 35. | Photo gallery | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

**Table 3**: Contd...

| S. no. | Party-related information | BJP | INC | BSP | SP | CPI(M) | AAP | CPI | NCP |
|--------|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| 36. | Photo yearly-wise view facility | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 37. | Video gallery | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 38. | Login facilities within website for users | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 39. | e-registration of first time voter | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 40. | e-registration facility with different mobile app(s) for voter | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 41. | Helpline for making voter ID cards | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 42. | Tutorials/ 'how to' guides for using different applications | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 43. | Online donation | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 44. | Donation help | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 45. | Donation FAQ | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 46. | Donators list | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 47. | Donation options (cheque) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

*Coding*: Yes= 1 and No= 0

Equally (87.5 per cent) political party websites contain information about parties' constitution and press releases which are very essential components of the political parties, followed by next majority three-fourths of total percentage (75 percent) equally information related to party's governing body, name of former main leaders, party organization information, view current events facility and video gallery separately.

More than half (about 62.5 per cent) political party websites provide information with respect to individual parties—members of parliament, information about different committee(s) constituted for various purposes and linking facility to connect states in which concerned party is existing, followed by equally (50 per cent) information with regard to respective political parties manifesto(s), parties' core issues, party publications, join party option,

party speeches, video releases, login facilities within websites and e-registration of first time voter on their party websites, respectively.

Just more than quarter and less than 50 per cent of total percentage, (37.5 percent), political party websites provide information with regard to philosophy of party, Chief Minister(s) (CM(s)) of the respective parties with their governments in different states of India, party bulletin, books and monographs, grievance redressed, different mobile applications facility, get alert option, public forum, and donation options by cheque separately.

Equally quarter percentage, 25 per cent political party websites have information regarding mission statement, party resources download facility, Internet TV, information regarding Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), become a volunteer facility, e-registration facility with different mobile applications for

voters, helpline for making voter ID cards, tutorials/how to guides for using different applications available on respective party websites, online donation option, donation help, donation FAQ, and donation list individually.

Out of the selected political party websites for this study, less than quarter percentage (12.5 per cent) party website namely 'Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)' facilitates users to view BJP website by different fonts sizes and similar percentage (12.5 per cent)— 'Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))' provides facility to view CPI(M) party website through different themes—blue/yellow, black/white, and standard.

It is significant to mention that a very few (only 12.5 per cent) political party website, viz.,

BJP is facilitating users to see photographs year-wise which are available on its own website, whilst out of eight selected political party websites, none of the party websites is providing information regarding number of membership and link to any search engine respectively.

### 8.3 Multimedia contents

Information related to multimedia contents such as audio, video and icons/graphics features given on political party websites is listed in Table 4. Foot and Schneider (2002) examined the role of the Internet in electoral politics in the United States and also did analysis of US political web sphere during the election season in the year 2000, based on web materials and interviews with political web producers. As such audio, video, images, and icons/graphics contents give new

**Table 4**: Multimedia features

| S.no. | Multimedia headings/contents | BJP | INC | BSP | SP | CPI(M) | AAP | CPI | NCP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Audio features** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Are audio contents available on the website? | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Video features/contents** | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Are video contents available on the website? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 3. | Are video contents clearly labelled on the website? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 4. | Are video contents clearly accessible and compatible through any video media player? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 5. | Is video search facility within website given? | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | Are video contents size given on the website? | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | Is video created date given on the website? | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | Is video created number given on the website? | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Graphics/icons/images features** | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. | Do graphics/icons/images features able to illustrate contents of the website? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 10. | Do graphics/icons/images features with proper colour combination available on the website? | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Coding: Yes= 1 and No= 0

look that instantly attracts the users and make party websites much informative, decorative, and dynamic too.

It can be seen in the table given above that maximum (100 per cent) of each political party websites are able to represent graphics/icons/image features and consist of proper colour combination which attracts users in first look, the next majority (75 per cent) is noted through availability of video contents, clear labelling of videos and accessibility as well as compatibility of available videos of respective six political party websites (i.e., BJP, INC, BSP, AAP, CPI(M) and NCP) except Samajwadi Party (SP) and Communist Party of India (CPI), followed by equal 25 per cent political party websites, viz., Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) which provide search facility and video created date of concerned video(s) and very few (only 12.5 per cent) political party websites namely BJP facilitates users to search video(s) numbers that is a very useful interface for searching and finding of desired video among other available video(s), whilst it is surprising to observe that none political party website has audio contents and size of video(s) available on the respective political party websites.

## 8.4 Web 2.0 applications and tools

In the present scenario, Web 2.0 tools and applications are playing imperative roles in collecting, storing, and disseminating information with many flexibilities as well as different formats and environments (Table 5).

Table 5 defines that each political party website have social networking sites ranging from one to seven social networking sites which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Google+, LinkedIn, and so on. Small (2010) in his study also argued to Canadian politicians to use Twitter as a tool for broadcasting the official information to their party members and public domain. The second highest majority (50 per cent) is noted from web 2.0 application 'blog', which is very much used for keeping abreast of the happenings in the particular party politics field. Apart from this, 37.5 per cent political party websites have very popular Web2.0 application namely 'YouTube' that is used for playing video(s) extensively. Similarly, (37.5 per cent) political party websites are facilitating users to Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds, which is largely used for automatic dissemination of current information or contents for those users who subscribed to these RSS feeds. It is surprising to note that a

**Table 5**: Web 2.0 features

| S. no. | Web 2.0 features | BJP | INC | BSP | SP | CPI(M) | AAP | CPI | NCP |
|--------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | RSS feeds | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. | Blogs | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. | Wikis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. | Book marking & tagging | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5. | Social networking sites | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 6. | Instant messaging | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | Podcast/Vodcast | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | SMS | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9. | Mash-up | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Coding*: Yes= 1 and No= 0

very few about equally (12.5 per cent) political party website namely BJP comprises facility of SMS, book marking/tagging and Instant Messaging while out of all the eight selected political party websites, no political party website has Wiki and podcast/vodcast on their separate party websites.

## 9. Rating of Political Party Websites

For making rating of the political party websites included for this study, a quantitative five-point rating scale was developed which ranges from 'excellent' to 'improvement needed', respectively. The rating calculation was done on the basis of the score obtained out of 90 check points by each political party website from Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. The rating scale developed for the above purpose for political party websites is described as under:

- 73 – 90 : Excellent
- 55 – 72 : Very good
- 37 – 54 : Good
- 19 – 36 : Average
- 01 – 18 : Improvement needed

Table 6 demonstrates that majority of the political party websites got 'average' rating,

followed by three political party websites which received 'good' rating. Political party websites namely Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), and Communist Party of India (CPI) do not have enough information/contents in contrast to other five political party websites. Only Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) website was rated as 'excellent' as it consists of much more information/contents relatively than the other selected political party websites for this study.

## 10. Findings

The following findings came to light from the above analysis of the results of the study:

- Most of the political party websites are not regularly kept up-to-date and reviewed as very few political party websites (only 12.5 per cent) provide update date on their political party websites.
- It is found from Table 2 that majority of the political party websites developed their contents only in English language and do not have information and contents in mother/national or regional languages, therefore, users have a limitation to fetch information only in English language.

**Table 6:** Rating of political party websites

| Name of the party | Total score (T2) | Total score (T3) | Total score (T4) | Total score (T5) | Total score (T2+T3+ T4+T5) | Rating of political party websites |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) | 20 | 43 | 8 | 6 | 77 | Excellent |
| Indian National Congress (INC) | 14 | 25 | 7 | 1 | 47 | Good |
| Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) | 13 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 28 | Average |
| Samajwadi Party (SP) | 11 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 29 | Average |
| Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) | 15 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 42 | Good |
| Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) | 13 | 32 | 5 | 2 | 52 | Good |
| Communist Party of India (CPI) | 11 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 28 | Average |
| Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) | 7 | 22 | 5 | 1 | 35 | Average |

- No clue or information is provided by any political party website for disabled people.
- It is discovered from this study that only 25 per cent political party websites provide facility regarding feedback/suggestions, which is an essential component for two-way communication and improvement of the website.
- It is found from this study that very few political party websites provide different options for photographs, videos, fonts, colours, and so on.
- It is also found that only a few political party websites facilitate users to various mobile applications.
- Only a few political party websites have a public forum facility and party bulletin, which is an essential component of any political party dealing in public domain.
- Party core issues, mission statement, helpline guides, online party bulletin, EVM machine use, and login facility within websites for voters are provided by a few political party websites.
- It is found from analysis that some information and contents of the political party websites are in scattered form and not arranged in logical order too.
- It can be seen from Table 4 that none of the political party website has audio contents and size of the video contents. Besides this, very few political party websites are facilitating towards variety of search facilities such as video numbers and created date and so on.
- Though, almost every political party is using popular social networking sites on their individual websites but it is discovered from analysis of this study that many political party websites have not included other tools and applications of Web 2.0.

## 11. Suggestions

The following suggestions have been made on the basis of the findings of this study:

- Political party websites should be kept up-to-date regularly and update date must be mentioned on the each webpage of political websites that is necessary in currency point of view.
- It is suggested that apart from English language, each political party website should develop its information and contents at least in Hindi language as Hindi is the national language of India, and also may be in other regional languages particularly for those states where the concerned political party has a high political influence.
- Information for disabled people should be added on political party websites at appropriate place.
- It is strongly suggested that feedback/suggestion provision must be included on the website in order to generate two-way communication and getting valuable inputs from users and improvement made accordingly time to time for maintaining quality of the websites. It is also necessary that feedback/suggestions mechanism should be properly routed with full swing.
- Different viewing and displaying options should be added to make political party websites much flexible and usable as well as navigational.
- Latest mobile applications must be clubbed with respective political party websites in connection to make political party websites compatible with every kind of environment and platform.
- Public forum should incorporate in respect to connect people and for getting valuable inputs, opinions, and reflections against the respective political party's different movements and issues.
- Full text online reading materials such as party bulletin, books, monographs, and so on with compatible software, should be included into the contents of political party websites that can be accessible for all and free of cost.

- Political party websites which do not have the party's core issues, mission statement, helpline guides, information about EVM, and login facility within websites should add all this information  for attracting the voters and public.
- Political party websites should link a good number of internal and external resources into separate political party websites.
- All information and contents on respective political party websites should be arranged in logical order.
- Different search interfaces such as audio, video, mash-up, podcast, and so on must be incorporated on political party websites so as to make these websites more attractive, informative, and versatile.
- Political party websites must use cutting edge technologies and tools such as cloud computing and others as well.

## 12. Conclusion

This study provides a cursory look on the information, tools, options, resources, and other facilities available on the selected political party websites whose contents vary from one political party website to another. It is discovered from analysis of this study that there is scope for improvement in contents of the political party websites particularly update, mission statements, online party bulletin, searching facilities within websites, audio contents, party membership information, login facility within websites, EVM and voter ID information, and web 2.0 applications. It is also noticed from analysis of this study that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have good information/contents in comparison to other four selected political party websites, therefore, it is suggested that political party websites which do not have essential information/contents on their websites should include all essential information/contents and also compare their respective websites with other kinds of well-developed or well-rated websites available on public domain from time to time and modifications should be made accordingly or as per the need. For building political party websites more attractive, effective, informative, dynamic, and decorative—contents full of information in concrete form, arranged in logical order with best colour and contrast and equipped with cutting edge technologies and mobile applications, that are accessible and compatible with different environments, should be incorporated. More so, every political party website should include update date, facility to view information for disabled people, search interfaces and feedback/suggestion option in order to receive different opinions, ideas and reflections by the users and public in order to improve the quality of information and contents of political party websites as 'content is considered as king for any political party website'.

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