SUMMARY

The 2014 Lok Sabha election marked the first vibrant online campaign in Punjab and Chandigarh that had individual politicians and political parties taking to New Media to engage with potential voters. While some individual politicians did it on their own, others relied on online campaign strategists. Similarly, for the parties too it was a mix of volunteers and IT professionals who did the job. As the New Media effort picked up, the politicians upgraded from merely posting pictures of offline events and scanned news reports to more engaging and sometimes online exclusive content on their web pages. By the time campaigning peaked in early 2014, the potential voters too began using online platforms like Facebook communities and comments on blogs to express their views about the prevailing political scenario. However, the interactions of potential voters were more with fellow visitors to the online pages of politicians than with the politician. The way WhatsApp groups and Facebook communities came alive with political discussions added a whole new dimension of digital political discourse to the election campaign. The synergy between the new-age politician, potential voter and New Media was reflected in the way potential voters responded well to politicians sharing online space with them is giving new hope for e-democracy to draw youth into political engagement. The reach and scale of the online campaign has only grown between 2012 and 2016, ahead of the Punjab assembly elections in 2017. The idea of a managed citizen being engaged in a networked society has clicked.