

Physical Proximity

Dr. Kirpal Singh

Social media is popular with the young but can never replace the strength of walkabouts.

Although social media provides effective communication amongst youngsters, walkabouts are still essential in gaining the people's votes for the elections.

Dr. Kirpal Singh, 66, a Professor at SMU, thinks that walkabouts are advantageous for politicians to garner votes.

"There's nothing to replace walkabouts," he says. "Walkabouts are a platform that any great politician can use to great advantage. I would call social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter cold media. Even though they're more current, nothing can replace the memory of a walkabout. Meeting a political figure face to face and having tea with them are things that cannot be replaced. Some people say social media is more effective for young people, but I don't think so."

However, he acknowledges the merits of social media.

"It provides an effective and good channel for instant communication. I can comment on my current and now thinking. Politicians can use it to connect with potential voters what they are thinking currently, and the reach is 24/7, whereas the physical contact of walkabouts takes time and space. With social media, I can be in Sydney or Melbourne, and reaching out to people is still possible," he adds.

Dr. Singh nevertheless feels that social media is not an effective channel by itself when it comes to the elections.

"Even though I think social media is popular among young people, face-to-face engagement is more effective. It's still not possible for you to cast a vote by social media yet, and you cannot underestimate the impact of face-to-face engagement with political figures. It's hard work, but the more they go out and meet people, the more confidence people will have in them when they vote."

Reported by Atifa Othman



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Dr. Kirpal Singh

Dr. Kirpal Singh, 66, is a Professor at Singapore Management University.