Branding attributes of political parties and leaders in India

Preeti Malhotra Surya*, Amaresh Jha

School of Communication GD Goenka
University, Haryana

*Corresponding author:
Preeti Malhotra Surya

Preeti.surya999@gmail.com

School of Communication GD Goenka
University, Haryana

Abstract

What is common between corporate brands and political brands? Can political entities achieve branding on the lines of corporate brands? The current paper develops a conceptual framework of branding in the political market environment of India. The paper outlines the conditions under which political players develop branding attributes such as credibility, personality, associations akin to a corporate brand to achieve branding. It discusses various dimensions of the political market during and beyond elections and also describes how user engagement on social media alters the perception of a political brand. The discussion draws from the social media strategies deployed by the Indian political parties and leaders to win over the voters, the customers of a political market during elections and even gets down to identifying the characteristics of social media posts that seem to impact electoral outcomes. It describes how the political leaders and parties calibrate their social media posts to the response generated by the social media users on social network sites (SNS). The study is aimed at chalking out a conceptual framework of political branding, identifying the key elements of political branding, describing the branding strategies deployed by the political actors, demonstrating the impact of user engagement on political branding and identifying the characteristics of social media posts that contribute to brand perception of political actors. In crux, the study draws from corporate branding theories, political marketing frameworks and behavioral sciences in its attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of political branding and shed light on the political marketing strategies that may have contributed to the branding of political entities.

Keywords: Political branding; Political marketing; Branding strategies; Political communication; Social media.

Introduction

Credibility, brand heritage, brand associations, brand equity, digital footprint and engagement, content strategy (including narratives in message content and content designs), and goals of marketing communication are some factors that nurture and develop political brands [1-6]. Political branding is an age old concept. Mrs. Indira Gandhi acquired the brand identity of being an "Iron Lady", Mr. Vajpayee a "Dove" and Dr. Man Mohan Singh "Mr. Clean". A Business Standard news report dated July 2019 highlighted that Google and Facebook registered over Rs17crore political ad spending between February 2019 and July 2019 on account of the general elections 2019. Indicating the same trend, PTI cited Facebook's ad library report to underscore that out of the top 10 political advertisers, including government pages, eight were related to the BJP and had spent nearly Rs 2.3 crore on

Facebook ads between Feb 7 and March 2, 2019. (Source: Scroll. in) **(Figures 1 and 2)**.

The Indian Express Graphic dated August 2019 describing the political ad spent by the Government of India further reinstates the relevance of the current study. The Indian Express info graphic establishes that while government ad spend on declined from Rs 247.84 crores in 2014-2015 to 156.52 crores in 2018-2019, ad spend on the internet increased more than four-fold **(Figure 3)**.

Though all the three info graphics capture the trends in the pre and post-election time, branding is an on-going process and goes beyond election driven media management efforts.

Political leaders representing party brands leverage party logo, top-recall historical visuals, the personality traits (inclusive of the dialect, slogans and dressing styles), credibility of the political

Figure 1 Cumulative spend science Feb 20 Google transparency report.

Figure 2 Graphic dated August 2019 describing the political ad spent.

Figure 3 Info graphics capture the trends in the pre and post-election time.

party, issue ownership and aspirations of the customers of the brand. The voters are the customers in a political market [1]. Armed with data on consumer behavior, social media handles of political leaders and political parties deploy multiple content and marketing strategies to sway public opinion in their favor. Political consent is crafted in the online environment ahead of the electoral outcomes.

The success of a political brand may be gauged by the distance between the performance of the leader and the expectations of the voters/customers from the brand [1]. The conceptual framework of political branding is unique to the timeframes and the systems of governance. Political brands are intangible and therefore, exist in the minds of the political customers/voters [2]. In other words, perception or image plays an important role in the formation of a political brand and therefore the principles of human branding when applied to political marketing adds to the brand personality of a political entity [7,8]. Equally significant are the branding strategies deployed by political leaders in recent times. Though social media strategies of political leaders and political parties are a dominant research trend, the larger brand dynamics of a political leader or party cannot be restricted to social media alone. The credibility of social media as a tool of political communication has eroded due to the Cambridge Analytical episode and the shift in political ad spent on OTT platforms was visible in the just concluded US elections. Therefore, just as we borrow concepts from corporate branding studies, an attempt is being made to have an integrated approach (offline and online) to devise the conceptual framework of political branding, its elements and strategies [6]. The research questions that the study addresses are

1. What are the attributes of political actors that achieve branding?

2. What are the branding dimensions for political parties & political leaders?

3. What branding strategies deployed by the political leaders and parties lead to favorable electoral outcomes?

4. Is user engagement an effective indicator of political branding?

5. How does user engagement contribute to branding outcomes for the political parties?

6. What are the characteristics of political social media posts that achieve branding and yield favorable electoral outcomes?

The study approaches the process of culling out the concept from the existing pool of knowledge by branding concepts from apolitical studies on branding to political markets and secondly it looks at interpreting political concepts from branding perspective **(Figure 4)**.

Political product

There are three dimensions to a political product offering (i) Ideology, (ii) Person and

(iii) Party [5]. Ideology is best reflected in the manifestoes of the political parties and also draws from the official stance taken by the political leader/party in prior situations. Ideology

Figure 4 Explaining about study approach to political branding.

Figure 5 Chart of explaining a key social media technique.

also indicates how power is assigned and what institutions are responsible for enforcing the proposed political order [5]. Person refers to the face of the party, often cited as the prime ministerial or chief ministerial candidate or president of the party [5]. Party refers to the organizational entity that aspires to achieve and stay in power. Party as well as the person comes with a brand history or a brand heritage [5].

Credibility and brand value

Figure 5 shows Jain and Ganesh 2020 pins the success of a political leader or a political party to credibility and asserts that credibility is at the root of effectiveness of all social media techniques. The study examines the link between credibility and the image of a political leader. The paper describes credibility as a "continual development" and infers that the political information that is in sync with the priorities and aspirations of the voters (customers of a political market) capture their attention. Once the interest of the voters/customer is generated, the same can be further leveraged in the interest of the political leader and political party by maximizing interaction between them. The scholars claim that credibility reduces the distance between the voters and political leaders [1]. Over a period of time, the voters develop long term loyalty to the political leader/party and develop an emotional connect that further fortifies the credibility dimension. The paper claims that personality traits such as humility, tenacity and accuracy add to the credibility of the political leader and concludes that credibility attributes result in high user engagement.

Therefore, the realities being portrayed by the political leader must be in sync with the

Concerns of the intended audiences and portrayal inclusive of the interpretation of the portrayal are the essential ingredient of credibility. The research paper cites

(I) Value systems,

(ii) Interpretation and context of individual voters and

(iii) Context in which the message is delivered as the three aspects of credibility. Greater accessibility and applicability translates into stronger credibility of a political leader [1]. The study states that there are five sub elements to the credibility of a political leader:

(I) Traits of the political leader, (ii) Image of political leader, (iii)
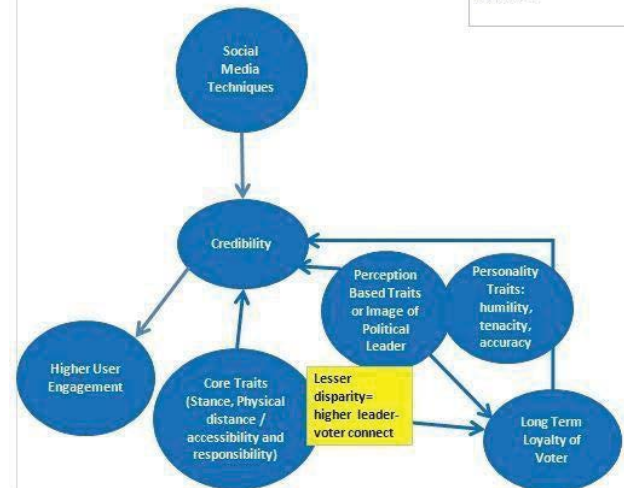
Preformat of political leader, (iv) Protection of political leader, (v) Reduction of distances between the political leader and voter.

Elements and political binding

For the purposes of defining credibility, Jain & Ganesh, 2020 segregate traits of a political leader into (i) core/image traits (i.e. stance, physical distance and responsibility) and (ii) externalized/ defense traits (i.e. anticipation and reduction of distances and engagement). Core traits are functional whereas external traits are perception based. When a concerted effort is made to reduce the disparity between the two traits, connection between the leader and the voters increases (**Figure 6**).

Brand Personality

Lees-Marshment 2008 draws an analogy between political brands and corporate brands, lists elements of political marketing, highlights different dimensions of political branding such as rebranding, brand heritage, brand perception and even prescribes a best practice guide to political branding. The chapter titled Political branding of the book states that brands are intangible and psychological and include a logo, narrative, consistent set of images and three to five selling points. Political marketing, asserts Marshment, draws from elements such as strategy, goals, political market research, product development and communication.

Successful brands act as simplifiers, are unique, clearly differentiated from competition, aspiration driven, embellished with positive vision, symbolize better internal values and are high on credibility and performed. The author cites varied literature and arrives at five principles of successful party branding. The principles are: (i) Market research, (ii) Brand design, (iii) Brand Implementation, (iv) Brand communication and management, (v) Brand delivery. Prescribing a best practicing guide to political branding, the author states that the public perception of political

Figure 6 Explaining chart of political brand.

brands is the outcome of experience of the public as well as the communication about the brand. This in turn creates a brand heritage which is not easy to change [3]. Political entities to be seen as brands with a reputation must create a sense of identity with the political leader and party to cause a long term trustworthy relationship.

A political brand with clear, coherent, differentiated, aspiration driven, symbolic of superior internal values, credible, competent, sincere and trustworthy is the outcome of effective political branding exercise [3]. The author introduces the concept of brand equity and defines it as an attribute where brand consumers are aware of and loyal to the brand along with creating positive brand associations. Lindblad 2019 and Lees Marshment 2018 also create a narrative about effective political brand personality and use terms such as sincere, exciting, competent, sophisticated, strong, open and empathetic to convey positive brand personality.

Crowd culture: Another important contribution to the concept of branding has been made by Holt.D 2016, who advocates that cultural branding that leverages crowd cultures is the "real locus of the digital power". Drawing parallels with brands such as BMW, Axe, Chipotle, Old Spice and Dove, the author prescribes five steps to ensure effective branding. The exercise begins by

Mapping the cultural orthodoxy in the society followed by the identification of the cultural opportunity emerging from the orthodoxy. Further the new ideology should be diffused into the crowd culture being targeted for communication. The brands are then advised to continually innovate with the aim of leveraging cultural flashpoint. The research paper claims that the mega brands invested billions in branded content but A- List Celebrities stole the march and cornered larger social media subscriptions

with little investment. Brands succeed when they break through in culture, and "crowd cultures" are a great vehicle for doing so.

Brands, says the study, serve as prolific innovators. The paper cites the examples of reputed brands to demonstrate the arrival of crowd cultures in digital space. In the context of political branding the allied social media handles of political leaders and political parties create brand value for themselves through crowd culture.

Personal Political Brand Identity: As for the personal political brands, Pich & Newman 2019 discusses how political brands are operationalized. The study claims that personal political brands projecting authentic characters and distinct identities are structured around tangible dimensions such as physical appearance, style, online and offline communication tools and actions. Intangible dimensions such as lived experiences, skills, values and personality characteristics are equally significant when it comes to personal political branding. The research paper makes a significant contribution by developing Personal Political Brand identity Appraisal Framework- a theoretical model. The scholars of the study claim that personal branding as a strategy is grounded in the impressions management literature and draws from individuals actively managing a positive identity.

Candidates are the brand ambassadors of the corporate party brand, suggest the researchers, further prescribing that the corporate parties must strike a fine balance between party authority and individual authenticity. The study claims that political parties use priming, framing and agenda setting to develop persuasive messages thereby contributing to management of candidates' political brand image. The paper defines framing as a method of clearly communicating the

outcome of policy in action, further adding that creation of favorable brand associations and desired imagery are crucial to political strategies. The paper asserts that effective brand communication impacts the voting intentions for the candidate and young voters understand symbolic communication created and expressed by the politicians and the government. Effective brand communication is linked to acceptance of and engagement with political brands [2]. Trustworthy political brands.

Can mobilize citizens and cause voter participation by communicating an array of signals ranging from intangible, symbolic, value-laden cues and tangible elements such as appearance of candidates by way of his/her apparel and style.

Political Brand= Political party+ political leader + policy

Pich and Newman 2019 describe political branding as "the critical application of traditional branding concepts, theories and frameworks to politics in order to provide differentiation from political competitors and identification between citizens and political entities."

Political parties, pressure groups, movements, politicians, candidates and campaigns can be conceptualized as political brands. Creating a differentiation from competition is the key goal of a political brand, which unlike a corporate brand, is a multidimensional and complex entity. A political brand comprises party, leader and policy.

As for the party leader as the face of a political brand credibility is a key contributor in developing an authentic personal political brand image. A collaborative, multi stakeholder approach accompanied by a crisis management strategy facilitates the development of brand image from the perspective of voters. A relatable personality and humility are the personal traits consistent with a credible political brand image. In addition to this cultural antecedents of trust contribute to effective political brand communication. Effective political brand communication thrives in the environment of collaborative stakeholder communities.

Harvey and Branco 2019 suggests that the politicians, local party supporters and party members are equally important elements of political brands and emphasizes the need to revisit concepts, theories and frameworks to include brand communities, brand architecture and event based branding.

Branding Strategies

Internal Alignment: Issue ownership is yet another dimension of effective brand communication. Lindblad 2019 is set around Swedish general elections of 2018 and looks at brand identity from the perspectives of party leader profile positioning, negativity in branding and issue ownership. The study provides a conceptual framework of branding and states that political branding Includes (i) wide strokes of political reputation; (ii) psychological interpretation of something

i.e. something conveyed and something perceived; (iii) parties, policies and politicians. The researcher claims that parties must consider the preferences of their own members and design a brand strategy to achieve branding internally.

Branding strategies are not only unique to the systems of governance, but they must devise a method to effectively curtail the distance between voters and politicians. Social media platforms make political campaigns an ongoing process.

In context of political marketing, branding brings together communication, personalities and popular culture. Among the factors that impact political branding are the voters' choice and analysis of political reputation and tone of the voice of politicians. The research paper looks at both the ownership as well as symbolic representation of brands and states that good brands are simple, unique, reassuring, ambitious, and credible and endowed with clear values.

There are four dimensions to a political brand: (i) tangible-symbol, colour, and name; (ii) intangible-history, heritage and experience; (iii) attitude in branding; (iv) issue ownership.

Personalization: The research paper claims that the voters associate a political brand with the brand personality of the politician and this in turn leads to personalization of a political brand [7]. The political brand goes beyond addressing functionality and adds an emotional connect between the party and the voters. The study defines brand identity as the image a political party aspires to create and convey to the voters and describes brand image as what the voters view the party, politicians and the policies as. Accordingly the researcher infers that the personality of a political party is the associative network of human attributes that the voters perceive the party to possess.

Political communication through social media makes political parties and politicians more accessible to the voters and creates a demand for personal and private information of politicians' lives to complement their public image.

Social media contributes to political branding as it reveals the personalities of the politicians through sharing of pictures from both public and private spaces. Politicians use social media to convey the personality traits they want to be associated with and the political parties use social media to highlight the features they want the voters to notice and identify the political leader with. The politicians' personality conveyed through social media handles add to the brand personality of the political party he represents. The study claims that brand positioning in context of political branding is aimed at creating an image that is (i) aligned to the qualities that the voters are seeking in a party (ii) consistent with the previous actions of parties and politicians.

The research paper also discusses negative campaigning and gives directional and evaluative perspectives to the concept. In directional context, negative campaigning occurs when a party or a politician states something negative about their opponents, while in the evaluative context, negative campaigning entails making false statements about the opponents. The researcher describes anti branding as intentional actions aimed at communicating and spreading negative associations in forms of impressions, feelings, and thoughts about the opponents.

The fourth brand dimension that political branding comprises is issue ownership. Drawing from the issue ownership theory, the paper claims that political parties brand themselves through

ownership of issues they have a reputation of handling with competence or the issues that they are associated with. The parties garner votes on the basis of the issues they highlight and are linked with.

Lindblad 2019 differentiates between the personalization of a political party from personalization of a political candidate. Personalization of a candidate can achieve political branding for the party if in the social media post, the candidate is stated to hold a position in the party (for example a potential Prime Minister or a chief ministerial candidate) or if the city mentioned in the post is home of the candidate. In similar vein, television interviews can be personalized if they reveal private information about the candidate/politician or if a caption of an image describes a party leader as a person outside politics. Pictures that capture the emotional side of a politician also achieve branding by humanizing the otherwise protocol driven public image. The research claims that positioning entails neutralizing opponents' strength and leveraging opponents' weaknesses. To ensure statesman profiling of a politician, the social media post may include a leader's picture in front of the government building dressed as a statesman or a video graphed speech bringing out the leadership qualities of the candidate.

Lindblad 2019 discovered that in the context of Facebook, the political parties with the highest share of politician based posts had the least amount of posts in total and that political parties with prime ministerial candidates preferred statesman profiling over personalization of their candidate. The study did not find a correlation between the mention of other parties in the posts and the party positioning outcomes.

Political parties with the highest share of posts about other parties also had the highest number of posts in total, implying that in such cases, the political parties had higher number of posts mentioning themselves in comparison to the posts mentioning other parties [7].

The mention of other parties in the Facebook posts could be explained by the size of the political party. The inquiry also concluded that negative campaigning was most likely to be used by the political parties in power. Smaller parties concentrated on fewer political issues while the larger parties profiled and positioned themselves citing a larger variety of issues. The largest numbers of Facebook posts were from the party aspiring to hold the prime minister's office. The research paper reflected that the political parties posted more about the issues that the voters trusted them.

Celebrity Endorsement: There are a number of studies that attempt to underscore the branding strategies of political leaders and parties though the majority of them are set around elections. Pal 2019 claims that the presence of celebrities in Modi's twitter posts changed the campaign dynamics during 2014 general elections. The research specifies three periods of engagement with celebrities:

(i) mid to late 2013 (ii) 2 months prior to 2014 elections in March-May (iii) late 2014 i.e. six month after Modi came to power while examining 9040 tweets from twitter handle "@narendramodi". The study concludes that spiritual gurus such as Ramdev, Sri Ravi Shankar and Amritnandmayi were central to Modi's outreach plan (**Figure 7**).

On similar lines, Baishya 2015 discusses the impact of Modi's selfish going viral in the same

Election and observes that Modi's selfies with his own mother and with Chetan Bhagat conveyed authenticity of his persona and made him appear accessible. The research points out that the impact of Modi's selfie strategy captured the imagination of ad makers as well. Baishya exemplifies the point citing Amul butter advertisement with a punch line "Ab ki Baar Bhajapa Sweekar". Selfie, claims the researcher, was used as an index of the real.

Human Branding: However [8] brings in a fresh perspective to political branding by applying human branding to the political market and attempting to find connections between human and organizational brands. The research paper draws from the associative network model and synthesizes human branding theory and political marketing theory to gain new insights into the relationship between political actor and political offer. The study claims that policies, party and leadership are the three dimensions of the product offered in a political market and a political product comprises ideology, person and party. Ideology spelt in the manifestos detail principles and policy proposed for political order. Person is either the candidate or the political party's leader. Party is the political organization that aspires to attain and retain power. Political brand heritage is the history of the brand in the minds of political customers or voters. The research scrutiny applies associative learning to political communication through policies that the party advocates, perceived brand heritage and the reputation of the party candidate or leader. Brand positioning says the research paper is an integrated and consistent set of activities aimed at causing a certain position in the minds of consumers. Further, the paper claims that brand authenticity and brand authority are the two

Figure 7   Bollywood celebrities facilitated the arrival and sustenance of brand Modi.
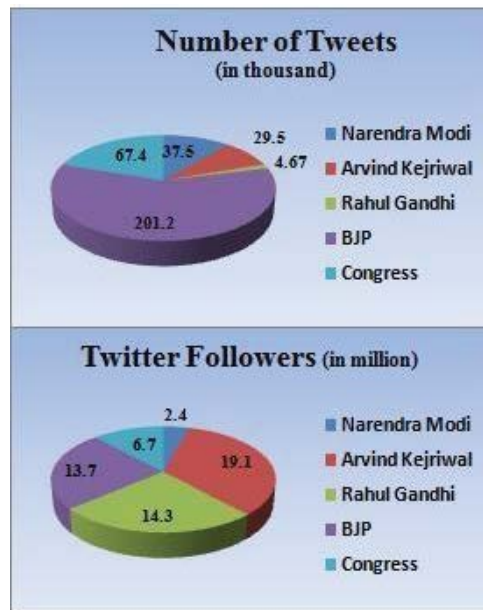
Figure 8 Digital footprint of five key political stake holders in India retrieved from Facebook and Twitter on May 25, 2020.

factors impacting human brands in politics. Brand authenticity, according to Speed et al 2015, is the relationship between the person and the ideology or the proposed policy. Brand authority on the other hand is the authority of the human brand or the political leader in the political organization. That the slogans or other forms of political communication must be aligned to the political market's desire is best exemplified by Barack Obama's Yes We Can campaign in the 2008 US elections.

Social media branding: According to Google Transparency Report on India, BJP is the leading advertiser with an ad spent of Rs 154, 543,500 (Since Feb 2019), next in the list is the Tamil Nadu based DMK at Rs 49,793,250 followed by the Indian National Congress at Rs 29, 312,000 [9]. asserts that social media marketing has emerged as the most effective tool of political marketing with 26% of the country's population using social media platforms. Kumar 2019 lists celebrity endorsement, political advertising, canvassing through mobile phone as the prominent techniques used by the Indian political parties in 2019 General Elections. As per the Election Commission of India 2019 general elections were the most expensive elections in the world. A report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India claims that the potential voters using Twitter are 4.3crore. The corresponding figures for Facebook a nd Whatsapp are 24.1 Crore and 37.9 Crore respectively. Kumar 2019 also states that social media war rooms of the two leading political parties – BJP and Congress indulged in issue based propaganda through social media expert volunteers calling them cyber warriors.

NAMO App was countered by Digital Saathi App of Congress. The research paper cites a report of ADG Online, the agency responsible for managing Brand Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister), to highlight that nearly 33% of the first time voters in the 2019.

General elections were influenced by political communication

through social media platforms. It is also observed that both BJP and Congress invested 5 to 7% of their total election budget on marketing through social media platforms. The study outlines news management, internal cohesion management, parallel campaign management, fund raising, communication, product, cost and distribution as the key functions of political marketing. The surge of social media as a tool of political marketing, says the research scholar, is because the traditional communication is regulated by the Election Commission of India. The cost of inserts in mainstream media is more expensive compared to social media releases.

Competition research, direct marketing, internet marketing, market segmentation, and branding are some of the marketing techniques at work while designing marketing communication for political parties (**Figures 9 and 10**).

Among the modern strategies of political marketing used during 2019 General Elections in India, the research lists propaganda or the controversies directed at the rivals through social media platforms, and persuasive communication on policy agenda pushed through mobiles via tele calling or SMS functions. Social media platforms ensure better reach of political messages though the credibility of these platforms is still far from acceptable levels [10].

Describes social media as a "valuable repository of information" and an effective communication and distribution channel to understand and influence customer perception and behavior. The research set in South Africa addresses the question regarding the components of a framework for implementation of social media marketing strategies in political context by evaluating demographics, degree of internet awareness and acumen for social media usage.

As for engaging through social media, Aynkoya et al. 2015 defines it as a process of communicating and connecting with the target audience/viewers to garner their attention. Engagement involves understanding of the consumer behavior and designing communication focused at the niche audience rather than generating a generic communication for mass consumption. Political marketing, state Aynkoya, Calitz & Cullen 2015, refers to aligning political offerings of the political party in the form of policies, leaders and issues with the dimensions the voters or political customers identify themselves with. Political parties deploy strategic marketing techniques as per the orientation of the electorate and create an appropriate identity reflected through its ideology, campaign or the candidate it chooses as the face of the party. Political communication is described as the flow of information from a political system via varied communication channels to the public or the electorate. In other words, after creating an identity as per the strategic marketing mechanisms, the political party designs a communication strategy to convey the said identity to the voters. Political communication facilitates interaction between and development of association between the political system and the stakeholders.

Social Media technologies democratized flow of information paving way for bottom up communication thereby empowering voters to express and enforce their political views [10]. The

Facebook Footprint of Political Stakeholders In India			
Political Stakeholder	Date of Page Creation (FB)	Number of Followers	Number of Likes
Narendra Modi	5- May 2009	45,925,986	45,643,472
Rahul Gandhi	12-Apr-17	3,591,562	3,233,070
Arvind Kejriwal	13-Dec-12	8,556,178	8,130,660
Indian National Congress	20-Feb-13	5,773,389	5,570,802
Bharatiya Janta Party	30-May-10	16,018,033	16455930

Figure 9 Facebook foot print of political stake holder.

Twitter Footprint of Political Stakeholders in India				
Political Stakeholder	Number of Tweets (in Thousands)	Followers (Million)	Number of Tweets (in Thousands)	Date of Joining
Narendra Modi	37.5	2.4	37.5	May-11
Arvind Kejriwal	29.5	19.1	29.5	Nov-11
Rahul Gandhi	4.67	14.3	4.67	Apr-15
BJP	201.2	13.7	201.2	Oct-10
Congress	67.4	6.7	67.4	Feb-13

Figure 10 Twitter foot print of political stakeholder in India

dictatorial rules in Arab nations such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were overthrown through the political movements unleashed via social media platforms. The study establishes the role of digital communication media and technologies to enhance collective action by advancing relationships between public, politicians and political parties.

Digital media creates and sustains interpersonal networks between the public and political stakeholders beyond organized political formations. By generating social capital for the politicians and political parties, social media handles promise to deliver cognitive and emotional engagement, campaign mobilization and an opportunity to direct political participation.

Social media handles such as Facebook and Twitter create a ripple effect connecting users, friends of users and friends of friends of users [10]. Social movements in the Middle East and North America through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are cases to the point. Studies reveal that the e ownership of Facebook is independent of the age, gender, social or economic factors. Aynkoya, Calitz & Cullen 2015 concedes that the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political marketing requires a systematic, strategic, tactical and operational approach.

Kapoor and Dwivedi 2015 cite a 2014 study of London School of Economics to announce "Obamafication of Indian political campaign". In a point wise comparison between Obama's 2008 campaign and Modi's 2014 campaign, the research highlights: (i) ByMo (Obama's brand name) is similar to NaMo (Modi's brand name); (ii) Obama is the first social media president of the United States while Modi is the first social media Prime Minister of India;

(iii) Just as in case of Obama's 2008 campaign, nearly 2 million volunteers signed up to join Citizens for Accountable Governance (CAG) group and ensured rich digital footprint of Modi

(iv) Akin to Obama's dashboard campaign, Modi initiated 272 plus drive (v) the twitter handle of Modi releases content in regional languages. The move is perhaps aimed at leveraging the rise of vernacular in the online environment and striking a pan India connection. Interestingly, the official website of the Narendra Modi i.e. NarendraModi.in, publishes content in English, Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Manipuri, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil, Assamese and Odua.

Nalin Mehta 2019 reiterates that digital platforms are indispensable to the larger political mobilization which he claims is the fallout of the rise of "digital data-consumption society". While the author decimates the concerns on digital divide pointing out that the internet users in India went up eight times between May 2014 and May 2019 with over 50% Google searches coming from non-metro cities of India. In another significant observation, the researcher claims that the tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Share Chat and Tik Tom voluntarily agreed to a code of ethics proposed by the Election Commission of India during 2019 general elections in India. The prominent election specific initiatives of Facebook include candidate connect, share you voted and poll check programmers. However the study claims that regulation of social media handles and aligning them to the electoral processes is a work in making.

Can social media platforms predict electoral outcomes? [11]. looks at the possibility by attempting to understand the predictive power of social media platforms deploying volumetric, sentiment and social network approaches for three countries-Malaysia, India and Pakistan. The study finds that mining twitter to forecast election outcomes augurs well for India and Pakistan and sentiment approach signified by the positive.

Sentiment on social media interface in close proximity of elections signals higher vote share for a political party. So how do any social

media handle impact or contribute to political branding? Wei and Xu, 2019 states that during 2016 US Presidential elections tech giants Facebook and Google

Turned into hidden political agents the research examines the effect of new media on politics in international and cross cultural contexts, asserting that aspects such as cultural norms, political systems or systems of governance, and digital literacy must be factored in to draw accurate inferences on the impact of social media on political communication. Drawing from various public opinion and media theories including agenda setting, opinion leadership, two- step flow, third person effect, and hostile media effect, the paper tests the relevance of these theories in the new media environment and announces the emergence of Hybrid Media Systems powered by new power players (exemplified by FB and Google) in political communication.

User Engagement Branding Indicator: Though restricting the study to the social media platform of Albania Socialist Party, Gambarov, Zenelaj and Belba (2015) identifies the scales to measure user engagement on Twitter and Facebook. The paper investigates how political parties use social media networks for political marketing. The researchers cite the online donation campaign initiated during the 2008 presidential campaign of Barack Obama was an innovative use of social networks in political campaigns. The initiative fetched Obama Marketer of the Year title. According to the paper, Twitter engagement is measured by (i) the follower number, (ii) talking trends and

(iii) Retweets numbers. Likewise the scales for monitoring the Facebook are (i) page likes, (ii) comments and like numbers, (iii) monthly new friends, and (iv) monthly deleted friends [12].

Lists the factors that motivated political parties to deploy new media as a tool of political communication, among the new media communication tools of political parties are blogs, Mobile SMS texting, Flicker, Webinar, Video Sharing site and Web below. The research claims that new media technologies offer anonymity, rich and diverse information, omnipresence, speed, ability to combine different kinds of recorded audio or video information and absence of regulatory authority intervention making it an ideal tool for political marketing [13]. Undertakes a quantitative content analysis to investigate

The profile level and post level drivers of user engagement in political communication. The researchers define interaction as the degree of responsiveness includes profile outreach, profile activity, vote share and page type as the profile characteristics motivating user engagement. Similarly they claim that deliberative elements (that entails linking posts with empirical evidence), tonality, emotions, humor are the post characteristics that influence user engagement. Stronger arguments have high persuasive powers causing higher user engagement whereas longer posts are more likely to contain sophisticated information. The research inquiry also claims that referring political competitors in the posts enhances user engagement. Negative tonality, emotions, humor and call for action increases user engagement.

Heiss, Knoll and Matthes 2019 investigate how Social Network Sites (SNS) invokes political engagement in adolescents. The

study discusses the outcomes of intentional and incidental mode of exposure to political information. In an earlier study, Knoll, Matthes and Heiss (2018) highlighted the psychological processes that connect social media use (SMU) and political participation to the proposed Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM). The paper lists a set of interrelated processes as prerequisites in social media usage aimed at generating political participation. The inquiry cites goals systems perspective to propose that the cognitive constructs of goals and sub goals drive human behavior, claiming that to be able to explain political participation, understanding of how citizens form, activate and implement participatory goals in a behavioral situation is a must. The SMPPM accounts for uses and gratifications (U&G) approach, appraisal theory and a priming paradigm among others to predict conditions under which social media exposure fosters political participation. The research takes a holistic view of the social media usage and political participation taking in view multiple factors in all its complexity [14]. (2020) draws the concept of User Engagement (UE) from interactive information retrieval studies. Providing a conceptual definition of user engagement, the researchers describe it as an emotional, cognitive and behavioral investment a user makes in a digital application. User engagement is indicated by frequent page visits, longer time investments and more interactivity. The study uses Amazon Mechanical Turk (M Turk) to find effects of interest on user engagement. It examines the effects of post tasks on user engagement. It focuses on self-reported task perceptions such as complexity, difficulty and interest as well as search behaviors such as querying and bookmarking.

Using multi-level modeling to establish task topic effects on user engagement, the researcher concludes that the more search engine results page exploration and greater perceived task difficulty negatively impacts the engagement. On the other hand book marking pages have a positive effect on engagements. In an interactive information retrieval where tasks drive user engagement with information search systems, the research paper aligns self-reports and search behaviors while evaluating online search engagement (**Figure 11 and Tables 1-2**).

Political Branding (Best practices): Political brands are driven by perception and image management is an important aspect of brand building. The perception of a political brand is the outcome of the communication about and voter experience caused by the said communication. Over a period of time, political parties and political leaders develop a certain listening among the electorate and this goodwill or brand equity that they create for themselves is not restricted to either a single media platform/communication channel, nor is it limited to a single election. However, every election gives an opportunity to the political parties and leaders to enrich their brand equity and add value to their brand heritage. To build positive brand equity, the political parties and leaders must be differentiated, reassuring, credible, competent, sincere and trustworthy.

Positive associations that political parties and leaders create win them voters' loyalties that may last lifetimes. Political leaders in specific must be perceived as visionaries, aspirational, distinctive and clean to carve a niche among the voters. Empathy and crisis

Different Perspectives on Elements and Strategies of Political Branding

Element of Political Branding	Sub elements of Political Branding	Sources
Brand Personality	**1. Credibility** 1.1 Traits of the political leader 1.2 Image of Political Leader 1.3 Performity of Political Leader 1.4 Protection of Political Leader 1.5 Reduction of distances between the political leader and voter **2. Brand associations/ Associative network model** 2.1 Favourable brand association and desired imagery signalled by intangible (symbolic, value laden cues) and tangible (candidate's appearance, apparel and style) communication **3. Brand heritage** **4. Brand equity** **5. Political branding includes:** 5.1. wide strokes of political reputation 5.2. psychological interpretation of something i.e. something conveyed and something perceived 5.3. parties, policies and politicians **6. Tangible:** Symbol, Colour, Name **7. Intangible:** History, Heritage and experience **8. Branding attitude** **9. Issue Ownership**	Jain and Ganesh, 2020; Pich and Newman, 2019; Lindblad, 2019; Lee Marshment, 2018; Speed, Butler Collins, 2015

Figure 11 Different prospective on elements and strategies of political branding.

Table 1: Social media branding credibility.

User Engagement-A Branding Indicator	Stronger credibility results in higher user engagements	Jain and Ganesh 2020 brine argullo &capra 2020
Social Media Branding	Politicals we on-going processes	Jiin aid Cinedt, 2020; Lindblad, 2019; Heidi, Rnoll aid klcttbei, 2019; klelttc, 2019; Per Attn, 2019
	Post Cbaractensbcs Drive en event	Heidi, Schmacls fi hlcttbei, 2fil8; Jiidkn,kined, Skoric aid Hilbert, 2018;
	Pioffi characteristics drier In mint Social Media Polihcal Parhcipabon Model	Kndizihc, 2016; Cuabmri, Zenelcj mid Belbc, 2015; ¥jBkovc, Cxtitz d Callen, 2015; Kipoor A Ihriioli, 2015;BziAyz, 2015

Table 2: Political Product Explaining of Political parties.

Political Party + Political leader + Policy		Leemklnrshment, 2018; Speed, Butler & Collins, 2015
	1.1 Ideology: Party Manifestos	
	1.2 Pers+ui- Faoe of the party, prinre ministerial or chief ministerial candidate or party president	
	2.1 Market Research	
	2.2 Brand Desisp	
	1.3 Brand Implementnhon	
	2.4 Brand Porrimiirir-*hon and cement	
	2. u Brand Delivery	

Internal Alignment	Issue Ownership Analysis of political reputation within and outside the political organisation	Jain and Ganesh, 2020; Lindblad, 2019
Personalisation	**1. Personal Political Brands with authentic characters distinct identities** 1.1 Tangible dimensions: physical appearance, style, online and offline communication personality characteristics	Pich & Newman, 2019
Celebrity Endorsement	A- List Celebrities garner larger social media subscriptions	Pal.J, 2019; Kumar, 2019; Holt, 2016; Baishya, 2015
Human Branding	Brand Authority and Brand authenticity impacts Human Brand in Politics	Lindblad, 2019; Speed, Butler & Collins, 2015
Crowdculture	Leveraging cultural branding crowd cultures is the "real locus of the digital power" Crowd cultures are prolific innovators	Holt, 2016

Figure 12 Political brands are driven by perception and image management.

management are some of the skills that the voters look for in their leaders. With 52% of the country's population in the under 25 age segment, brand communication targeting the emerging voters can prove to be the game changer in the times to come.

Involving stakeholders by engaging them as volunteers or social media warriors and coining slogans such as "Har Har Modi, Ghar Modi'' to create mass appeal paid rich dividends to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Branding public policy and demonstrating the commitment of the government machinery to the said policy will establish efficiency and clean governance reputation of the ruling political party. While BJP is calibrating its branding exercises to meet the expectations of the young voters and will need to constantly reinvent itself on the basis of the learning.

From consumers' behavior, Congress must to begin with at least identify the attributes it aspires to be associated with. The labels "dynasty" and "corrupt" attached to Congress will take time and effort to wean off. Decontaminating the party brand is the task in hand for Congress. The party must first work on the perceptions internally before effectively communicating its brand value at the national and international levels. Brand communication and brand management within the political parties are essential for them to be perceived as viable and sustainable political options. Perceptions are not created in a day and therefore would require sustained efforts in this direction.

Conclusion

Based on the above review of various researches, the research questions of the current study are addressed as under:

What are the attributes of political actors that achieve branding?

Findings: Credibility; Positive brand personality (dialogues, slogans, distinct dressing styles); Brand associations; Brand heritage; Brand equity; Rich user engagement on Social Media; Issue ownership

What are the branding dimensions of political parties and political leaders?

Findings: Political product offerings; Internal alignment; Personality traits such as humility, tenacity and accuracy in addition to accessibility, consistent set of images, unique selling points, differentiated from competition, perception high on credibility and performed; (i) Tangible (symbol, color and name) (ii) Intangible (history, heritage, experience)

What branding strategies deployed by the political leaders and parties lead to favourable electoral outcomes?

Findings: Effective brand communication- differentiated, reassuring, credible, competent and trustworthy party brands; visionaries, aspirational, distinctive clean are brand values. Preferred in political leaders

- Social media strategies- Post format as well as message design (e.g persuasive, call to action content); Political information in sync with priorities and aspirations of voters
- Celebrity endorsements
- Personalization (e.g. emotional images of party leader)

- Personal Political Brand Identity (Symbolic representation of brands, Impression management, active management of positive identity; balance between party authority and candidate authenticity);
- Brand perception aligned to the expectation of voters
- Brand associations (brand communities, event based branding);
- Issue Ownership

Is user engagement an effective indicator of political branding?

Findings

Yes; Number of followers, FB likes, Monthly New friends and retweets all reflect effective branding; Political parties and politicians leverage consumer behavior- patterns reflected in election outcomes

How does user engagement contribute to branding outcomes for the political parties?

Findings: User engagement is the emotional and cognitive investment a user makes; Frequent Page visits, longer time investment and more interactivity reflect better brand recall;

Book marking has a positive impact on engagement; More SERP negatively impact engagement

The concept of political branding has acquired a new dimension with social media handles making it an ongoing process, taking it beyond the election rhetoric. Most research studies pertain to pre pre-election timeframe when the electoral budgets make political branding dependent on a specific political event. There is a need to understand political branding, its elements and marketing strategies in totality, which is what this research paper attempts to achieve. It borrows from diverse studies including the ones that test the applicability of corporate branding principles to political communication to understand the outcomes the communication has had for the political brand. It also attempts to understand how interactivity and user-engagement can contribute to political branding. Few studies on social media use and political participation have gone beyond analyzing the count of followers and retweets, to examine the message design and content aspects of the political posts. Even the social media studies that examine the content dimension only focus on the behavioral aspects of the users, thereby leaving a gap in the perception or branding outcomes of social media posts for politicians/ parties. The researches on political branding are set in different systems of political governance and one finds little proof that the same inferences will be replicated in India. Hence, a reference has been made to branding strategies deployed by the Indian politicians to win over voters -the customers in a political market. In a nutshell the current study integrates concepts of corporate branding, political marketing, social media theories and psychological perception based definitions to draw an outline of political branding. The future studies may map the definitions developed in this study to the political narratives emerging from different media platforms and empirically test their relevance to branding outcomes for political parties and political leaders.

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