



## Dimensions of Political Marketing in India

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### ABSTRACT

The research paper presents a broad overview of the concept of political marketing and its significance in the contemporary era of information revolution and democratic resurgence. It provides meaning, definition and various dimensions of political marketing as a concept and method and subsumes mainstream marketing practices. It also attempts to analyze the origin and development of the concept in different political and social contexts and its usage as a powerful instrument in election campaigns and policy making. It explains the various functions of political marketing such as product, distribution, cost, communication, management function, fund raising function, parallel campaign management function and internal cohesion management function. It explores the area and tools of marketing in relation with the Politics.

**Keywords--** dimensions of political, Multiple Participants, candidate focus

over time on various fronts. The world is rapidly transitioning towards a digitally and technologically dominant scenario, social media marketing, political blogs, awareness, and other digital marketing campaigns are on the rise.

### *New Vs Old Marketing Strategies*

The traditional methods of campaigning have still been abundant in India with prospective political candidates going from *door to door* distributing freebies, promising a well-being, gesticulating manners and courtesy, and portraying themselves as a personification of transformation, evolution and a patient and purposeful listener. Especially, this is seen when the election is declared and the candidates name has been shortlisted. The reason these doors to doors and traditional campaigns have prevailed is the belief that is invested in personal contact. Personal contact is more impactful, and this is further executed by distributing freebies, announcing and requesting for votes through blow horns on rickshaws, TV and radio ads, broadcast, campaign posters, vouchers, and so on. Hence, political parties have also been attempting to balance out and strategies their marketing campaigns between conventional and digital, and media and social media.

There are two significant components<sup>2</sup> that political campaigners aim to collaborate and maintain in sync: the candidate focus and the environmental forces. Under the former, there are further four classifications namely, party concept, product concept, selling concept and the marketing concept. And, the latter forms party to technology, structural shifts, broker shifts in influence, political action committees, consultants and pollsters. These 2 factors are blended and organized systematically through the marketing campaign along with the stages of the political campaign. In the marketing campaign, the initial step is a market or voter segmentation. The campaigning team has to assess and evaluate the needs and exigencies of the voters. This assessment should be followed by creating a general profile of the voters and then identifying the segments of the voters.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Political Marketing<sup>1</sup>*

Political marketing is the process by which political candidates promote themselves and their platforms to voters through masterly-crafted communications aimed at gaining public support.

The modern political marketing landscape provides countless opportunities to connect with potential voters and shape public opinion; including cold calls (remember *Namaskar. Main Atal Bihari Vajpayee bolrahaon of 2004*, *Behnoaur Bhaiyo* of Narendra Modi), email campaigns, direct mail leaflets, radio spots, social media outreach, and television news and talk show appearances (such as *Aap Ki Adalat*), One to One (Multiple Participants) Debates, Seminars/Press Conference etc.

The campaigning of political marketing is not an easy task. It involves rigorous marketing strategies so as to *magnetize and reorient the votes* from the citizens and to win the elections. These marketing strategies have been experimented with at various levels and are expanding

Moreover, marketing and political campaigning is not just all about the voters and their responses, but also the fact that the prospective candidate holds a balanced out quintessentially prominent significance in the entire general picture. The campaign has to first analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate along with the suitability and of course the past portfolio also plays an important role. On the grounds of these strengths and weaknesses, the competition of the candidate is orbited out, jotted down, integrated, evaluated and then compared. Once the campaigning team figures out the target segment and relate it to the expertise of the professional, the image of the candidate is established and portrayed to the society in a good light so as to highlight their involvement, efforts, diligence and credibility.

The process of scrutiny of the candidate is a cumbersome process, and it involves various tedious decisions. Once the voter and the candidate are thoroughly scrutinized, the strategy formulation and implementation commences with a product campaign dais, push marketing and basic efforts, polling and organizational development and control. For instance, the political party BJP is an epitome of how they followed marketing campaigners to the tee. To begin with, their strategy of analyzing their voters and segregating them on different levels so as to ace the persuasion and trust gaining and receiving the maximum number of votes. The vote acquisition took place by identifying the values of the voters in terms of *deepfunctional values* (such as Swadeshi and its juxtaposition with globalization, free market and foreign policies), *internal social values* (such as Dharam Rajya, secularism, security, justice and efficient development), *various emotional values* (such as Hindutva, and a uniform civil code.), *conditional values* through temporary events, and lastly epistemic values (such as innovations, varied orientations, and incumbency factors). Every citizen, irrespective of caste, creed, gender or race is a voter and hence, this voter has to be the highlight and the objective of the entire campaign. Considering the aforementioned example of the Bharat Janata Party (BJP), we could claim that the cognition and emphasis laid on all these factors from a universal standpoint is what led to its victory. Triple Talaq issue has been the latest issue involving the muslim minorities.

One of the most essential or initial factor of Political Marketing Campaign is the brand imaging of a political party or a leader. It has been worldwide seen in the US where the elections are mostly focused on the branding of the party. It is a brand that helps acquire votes and eventually wins trust. If we see this digital era, campaigning has greatly expanded and has been absorbed into various means such as forums, tweets, hangouts and chats, blogs, unique agendas for promotions, and other social platforms through which problems could be talked while campaigning simultaneously and user participation

would be encouraged, and thus proving the value and capability of the political party or the leader.

## II. OBJECTIVE & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study, is a qualitative research design, titled '*Dimensions of Political Marketing in India*'. The objective of this paper is to analyse the political platform vis a vis Marketing tools. The study is based on secondary data, to achieve the objective, secondary data is examined which is sourced from website, online sources and scholarly articles, magazines, books, internet.

## III. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

One of the most effective platforms for raising awareness of political issues, encouraging people to vote, and promoting political candidates is *Social Media*. Although, social media is primarily used by young people, it's a great platform for energizing a voter demographic that's typically unconcerned in mainstream politics.

Political marketers use a variety of stratagems to connect with potential voters with the help of social media. These techniques range from honest and direct – such as operating an independent Facebook page – to misleading, unfair and manipulative.

One of the most effective ways to create support for a particular candidate by means of social media is to building a Facebook Page for the party or candidate. This enables a political marketer to reach thousands – or, in the case of a large party – a larger number of potential voters using status updates, messages and event invitations.

While a Facebook Page lets someone to connect with people that are already interested in a party or candidate, it doesn't allow to enlarge its base easily. One of the best ways to appeal new supporters is through the use of viral memes and videos.

Facebook and Twitter users love to share funny images, interesting clips and videos and other content that relates to hot political issues. By creating viral videos and pictures, one can raise awareness of its candidate – or a hot political issue – organically. Engineering virality is difficult, and trying *too* hard to make a video or image go viral can often have the opposite of the intended effect. The best viral videos look natural – they're neither overly positive *or* overly negative about their issue matter.

### *Negative Campaigning*



Winning an election requires a candidate getting more votes than their closest competitor. There are two

ways to achieve this: bring attention to the good things your candidate will do, and bring attention to the *bad things* their competitor will do.

Negative campaigning is a form of political marketing that focuses on convincing voters *not* to vote for the candidate's opponent. The most well-known form of negative campaign is the personal attack advertisement – ads that emphasize on a candidate's record of dodgy dealings, their disputed history or their political failures. While negative campaigning might seem dirty and unsportsmanship nature, it has a widespread range of benefits. Since negative campaign is targeted towards those likely to vote for your opponent, it can sway these voters into changing their mind and shifting over to your candidate's side.

Negative campaigning usually takes the form of television ads, newspaper columns, political debates and direct marketing. During recent elections, social media is increasingly being used as a negative campaigning platform to show up on Facebook and Twitter.

Although it can be incredibly effective when done right, negative marketing can be ineffective without the positive campaign to support it. In this, various comparatives are also used such as in case of Delhi Assembly Elections, Arvind Kejriwal and Sheila Dikshit were placed in poster and compared, the former being projected as Honest Leader.

#### **Direct Mail Marketing**

Although social media and television are the best platforms for connecting with the younger generation of voters, many people still respond very well to old-fashioned direct mail marketing.

Brochures, leaflets, short form manifestos and other direct mail documents are all excellent tools for persuading people in a particular geographical area to vote for a certain candidate, party or policy.

Since direct mail is geographically targeted, it's an extremely powerful marketing tactic for energizing a voter base prior to a local mayoral or council election. With the right amount of leaflets, yard signs and public rallies, towns and boroughs can swing election results and give your party or candidate a significant advantage.

Like all other forms of political marketing, direct mail marketing needs to reinforce the narrative you've created around a party, policy or candidate. It needs to focus on your benefits, your strategies for improving the community, and the advantages you and your party can offer over your competitors.

At its core, direct mail marketing – whether it's for a political campaign or a brand king new product – is all about statistics.

#### **Media and Public Relations**

Old media platforms such as television and radio attract massive listeners, making them valuable tools in any political marketing platform. Being able to organize

radio and TV appearances is one of the most important tasks of any political marketer.

Connecting with media insiders might seem difficult, but it's remarkably easy once you start thinking of media companies as groups of individuals instead of colossal entities. With the right pitch, the right person, and the right strategy, you can easily earn massive amounts of publicity for your policy, party or candidate.

**Kejriwal's** salesmanship lay in translating the India Against Corruption movement into a political formation positioned for the mass market. And then he kept everything consistent with that positioning, starting with the way the team descended on people assembled at marketplaces, puja-pandalsetc, the language the party-people spoke, what they wore, all of which became news and make sure AAP stayed top-of-mind.

Here again, AAP played by the new rules. Right from publicly declaring details of the donation it was receiving from people in India and across the world to giving planned interviews, it was always there. It urged NRIs to leave video messages of support to the party on YouTube. The best part, it did not restrict itself to the typical suspects, Facebook and Twitter. It used Google Plus and LinkedIn in a big way, and the latter proved to be a major source of donations. Quora too had a lot of threads where people spoke about AAP, and the party made sure these threads were regularly updated. Interestingly, when the party wanted people to stop donating money for the elections, they declared it on Twitter.

The most ideal instance of exemplifying the most accurate and the best use of social media and campaigning strategies would be the case of Mr. **Prashant Kishore** and the influential role that he played in the elections and the victory of the Modi campaign during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, and how he designed and devised his strategies while working for Nitish Kumar.

Prashant Kishore selected to channelize the marketing strategy for the Bihar elections through a different style of campaigning- by targeting the opponent and trapping that competitor in a web thus diverting their attention from their original motives and agendas of going about in the campaign. A while before Modi was about to give his speech at the rally in Bihar, Prashant Kishore, being aware of Modi's temperament and plans of action, attacked his twitter wall with a plethora of questions. Just through the medium of this platform, he succeeded in diverting Modi's attention to replying to his word attacks rather than focusing on his own goal. He states, "He walked into our trap. Instead of saying what he wanted to, he started his speech by replying to our tweets...Our purpose was limited: do not allow a Modi hype to build...".

Kishore's team was very well knit with lawyers, web professionals, financial managers with whom he planned out the marketing strategy while taking every

aspect into account. Around 10,000 phone numbers were added on the list of people who were informed about the latest developments via audios, videos, and info graphics and pre-recorded messages. Bicycles were distributed, and every action clearly projected out the purpose, objectives and capabilities of the progress driven political party. The strategy further involved allies and collaborating and chalking out actions to overpower a particular opponent (Kishore collaborated with Lalu Prasad).

The functioning of the Prashant Kishore campaigning team is an epitome of how marketing strategies and new trends can be efficiently and precisely implemented in political campaigns while catering to the youth as well as the aged. Prashant Kishore is very much clear in his thought process and always demands what he finds best for the client whether its projection of a Brahmin Face as a CM candidate from INC or a month long **Kisan Yatra** from Deoria to Delhi by a senior leader or open interaction of ground party workers with senior leaders. His philosophy in his own words "Go Big or Go Home". He always wants to capture audience minds with larger than life campaigns whether it's **Chai pe Charcha** or **Har Ghar Dastak**. His strategy is always simple backed by data and analytics, but it is execution which is tough and makes PK the modern Chanakya of Indian Politics. Who have thought even in wild dreams, coalition of two contemporary big political rivals Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav.

However, the purpose of such campaigns must be extended and their goals must be more long-term and more focused on the citizens and their welfare rather than votes and a seat in the Parliament!

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In other words, political marketing is the outcome of the marriage between marketing and politics. As an activity and method, it reflects the penetration of the political space by marketing. It has been concluded that the following are broad list of the generic functions of a successful political marketing. However, this list is indicative only, as there may be other functions which directly or indirectly affect the marketing dimensions.

1. **Product Function:** In political marketing practice, there should be an exchange between political parties and electorate in the electoral market. Like mainstream marketing, each political party has to offer some product which they wish to sell in the market. Here party wants to market its product which is the assurance of a good government. In some cases, the product may be image of the candidate, a philosophy or certain specific foreign policies. Hence the entire marketing process is intended to market the product. In India, the main product function of BJP was to sell Modi Brand and a good governance based on change. The AAP candidate Arvind Kejriwal, was the selling brand for AAP coupled with flawless good

governance, on the basis of which, a historic win was recorded by the AAP in Delhi in 2015.

2. **Distribution Function:** The distribution function refers to the conditions regarding the availability of exchange offer to the exchange partner. The function has two aspects- campaign delivery and offering delivery. The campaign delivery function provides the primary exchange partner- the electorate-with access to all relevant information about the political product. This includes the dissemination of information regarding crucial party policies and programs, placing the candidates in right channels, making sure that medium of distribution fits the ideology of the party etc.

3. **Cost Function:** One of the main functions of political marketing is to sell a product which is cost effective compared to other products in the market so that customer gets greater monetary satisfaction. In political marketing, cost function refers to the management of attitudinal and behavioral barriers of voters through calculated campaign strategies. The voter should receive all the information regarding the product without spending money for it.

4. **Communication Function:** Communication involves the function of informing the primary exchange partner of the offer and its availability. It is often seen as the heart of political marketing. For a political party, it implies, providing political content, political ideas and future programs but also aiding the interpretation and sense making of a complex political world. Often the communication function involves simplification of political messages, concise political stand etc. The communication function interacts with the campaign delivery aspects of the distribution function-the latter provides the medium while the former defines the content. The communication function prescribes a dialogue with the exchange partners – a multidirectional flow of information and shared agenda setting.

5. **News Management Function:** This function is closely linked to communication function. But newsmanagement function is targeted to secondary exchange partners or intermediaries of which media is an important part. In other words it is the management of publicity of the candidate and party. Public relation activities, media management, online advertising campaign management etc. are news management functions. In the era of communication revolution news management plays a vital role in success of political marketing.

6. **Fund Raising Function:** In mainstream marketing fund raising is not an issue. But political marketing management cannot survive without fund raising. In fact the success of other functions largely depends on fund raising function. In order to provide the political actor with appropriate resources, a distinct fund raising function needs to be addressed. A political party depends to a varying extent on membership fee, donations, etc.

7. **Parallel Campaign Management Function:** This function describes the requirement of co-coordinating the

campaign management activities of a political party with those of parallel organizations. Coordinated and synergic use of managerial activities allows for a more efficient deployment of campaign resources. Furthermore, the use of parallel campaigns and the endorsements by other organizations can increase the trustworthiness of the political messages.

**8. Internal Cohesion Management Functions:** Besides the external management aspects, internal structure and functions of the political party also needs to be managed professionally. The function is concerned with relationship with party members and activists as well as the spoke persons. The internal marketing functions play a critical role in creating internal stability and therefore the credibility of the party regarding its outside image.

*The analysis of above research paper has been done keeping in mind the various marketing tools. The behaviors of the voter also play a vital role in decision making in political marketing. The study of this behavior has not been included in this paper.*

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