Political Marketing In India: A Review Of Key Strategies

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Abstract— Political marketing is a compulsory ingredient for successful political endeavors. It is most popular in countries that practice democracy. India is among the countries that are democratic in the world and this means that individuals are elected into positions of power through a competitive campaign process. Due to this, politicians have to show the voters what they have for them and a reason enough for them to be voted in. The electioneering period cannot be a success without the application of political marketing. Campaigners use political marketing to communicate with the electorate. However, it requires the intervention of a specialist in political marketing to help the political parties to apply the right channels and the most tactful strategies. This paper looks deeply into the whole issue of political marketing, borrowing from already published sources about political marketing to understand the whole concept. The political parties in India have capitalized on political marketing and based on the stiff competition in the arena of politics, parties have resorted to strategies to beat the rest. In India, political parties are using both traditional and modern strategies. However, the modern strategies are in fact gaining track in media. These strategies have at times acted to the advantage or to the detriment of a political party. Every strategy is uniquely applicable to a specific target audience and it is therefore upon a political party to have an understanding of such vital information. In the near future, political marketing is set to undergo rapid changes and at the same carry along with some challenges that are usually synonymous with change.

Index Terms— Political Marketing, Democracy, Electoral, Campaign, Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

An Initially, the political parties were having the lack of an integrated and sophisticated understanding of marketing applications. They were simply following the simplistic and populist follower mentality in their political moves. In the modern times, evolving professionalism in marketing has not only affected the psyche but the working style of political parties, as well. The parties became more market driven and initiated the implementation of marketing philosophy in their political aspects thus seeking to meet voters needs and wants, producing voter satisfaction, and in turn gaining electoral support to meet their own goals. It is rightly said by Lock and Harris (1996) that "political marketing is concerned with communicating with party members, media and prospective sources of funding as well as the electorate." Actually, voting is a transaction in which voters cast their vote in anticipation of good governance from the winning political party. In political marketing practice, there should be an exchange between political parties and electorate in the electoral market. It is the marketing of ideas and opinions which relate to public or political issues or to specific candidates. It is to position the party in the electoral market. It involves the implementation of marketing tools, techniques and methods in political process like political advertising, celebrity endorsements, involvement of professional consultants and campaign managers, online campaigning, mobile phone canvassing, segmentation, micro targeting etc. It is one of the most important ways that political parties use to communicate to the electorate. It is described as one of the channels through which politicians promote their manifestos as well as themselves (McNair, 2017). While this type of marketing is an ingredient for the success of the political contenders, it is commonly applied in democratic countries. Democracy is a form of government where the people are given the freedom to decide who to lead them through an election. India happens to be the most populous democratic country in the world. This means that in the electioneering period, the political parties have to use all the means available to reach the voters for the purposes of convincing and persuading them. Due to the huge number of population in India, political marketing is the only way that can be used to reach as many as possible (Sequeira, 2017). High population means that there is a very high competition among political parties. The stiff competition has made the political parties come up with marketing strategies to gain a competitive edge against the opponents. This paper will delve into India's political marketing. It will also review the major strategies that are used by political players as well as the challenges and the future of India's political marketing.

TYPES OF ELECTIONS IN INDIA

As India is a Federal Parliamentary Democratic Republic, elections are used as a tool to elect the representatives of citizens of India. In India, elections are held for electing the members of Lok Sabha (Lower House), Rajya Sabha (Upper House), State Legislative Assemblies & Local Governments.

Lok Sabha (Lower House/ House of People): These are the
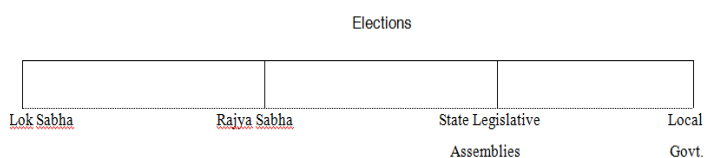
elections where the adult citizens of India choose the 543 members of Lok Sabha (Members of Parliament) through direct voting. The term of MP is of five years or until the body is dissolved by President. The party who wins 272 seats is entitled to form the Central Government and the leader of the party becomes Prime Minister of the country.

Rajya Sabha (Upper House): The members of Rajya Sabha are not directly elected by citizens of India rather they are elected by the already winning candidates of Lok Sabha. The President can also nominate the members at his discretion. The tenure of each member of Rajya Sabha is six years but one third of the members change every year. Lok Sabha is more powerful than Rajya Sabha because it is treated as second level review body during the conversion of Bill into Act.

State Legislative Assembly: Members of State Legislative Assembly are elected by direct voting from particular constituencies. The total strength of the assembly depends

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upon size and population of each state, so, its variable. The tenure of members of Legislative Assembly is five years or until the body is dissolved by governor. The leader of the party is nominated as Chief Minister.

Local Government: Local government includes Corporations, Municipalities, Smitis & Panchayats. The members of local bodies are directly elected by the voters of relevant geographical area.

ROLE OF ELECTION COMMISSION

The Election Commission of India is a constitutional body which is constituted in 1950 to administer the elections in India at various levels i.e. local level, state level or national level. Presently, the Commission is governed by Chief Election Commissioner and two other election Commissioners. These Commissioners hold the office for six years or up to the age of 65 year, whichever is less. These Commissioners are appointed by President of India. The decision is done by majority vote of Commissioners. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) can be removed by only President if it is passed by both the houses of Parliament with special majority on the grounds of incapacity or misbehavior. Similarly, CEC is entitled to remove the Commissioners or the regional Commissioners. The Chief Election Commissioner is responsible for conducting the elections in India in a free and fair manner in order to maintain the decorum of democracy. For this conduct, CEC is entitled to implement the model code of conduct and to take appropriate action whenever anyone does some sort of violation. It decides the constituencies and gets the electoral rolls updated and prepared. It allots the election symbols to the political parties and candidates. It appoints the Tribunals in order to resolve any dispute arising during the conduct of elections. Moreover, the Commission prescribes the campaigning expenditure to be done by the political parties in their political marketing. It keeps close watch on spending. It also demands the audited financial statements from the political parties regularly.

Comparative analysis of Lok Sabha Elections held in 1951-52 & 2019-20

As the elections are considered the Festival of Democracy, the data summarized by Election Commission of India (ECI) emphasizes that 2,354 parties got registered themselves in 2019 against 53 parties that contested elections in 1951-52. It is an interesting fact that the number of parties registered in 2019 elections exceeds the total number of candidates (1,849) who contested the general elections in 1951-52. As far as eligible voters are concerned, nearly 90 crore voters out of 130 crore population i.e. 69.23% were registered in 2019 against 17.32 crore voters out of 35.66 crore population i.e. 48.56% in 1950-51 elections. In order to manage such a big chunk of voters, nearly 1035918 polling Stations were set up for 2019 Lok Sabha election against 2,23,611 polling booths in 1950-51 elections. The1950-51 election was conducted in 68 phases while the 2019 election was conducted in just 7 phases showing the enhancing administrative capabilities of the Election Commission of India. The rising number of political

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parties from 53 in 1950-51elections to 2293 in 2019 elections indicates conflict between individual political party's interest and national interests. Similarly not only the number of parliamentary seats increased from 489 in 1951 elections to 543 in 2019 elections but the age of voters was also decreased from 21 years in 1951 elections to 18 years in 2019 elections respectively. As far as the election expenditure is concerned, 2019 elections are considered to be the most expensive elections all over the world. (Source: ECI)

S.No.	Particulars	1950-51	2019-20
1	Political parties registered	53	2354
2	Voters	17.32 Crores	90 Crores
3	%age of population entitled to vote	48.56	69.23
4	Polling Booths set up	223611	1035918
5	No. of phases for the conduct of poll	68	07
6	Minimum age to cast vote	21	18
7	No. of seats for which the poll was conducted	489	543
8	No. of contestants	1849	8040
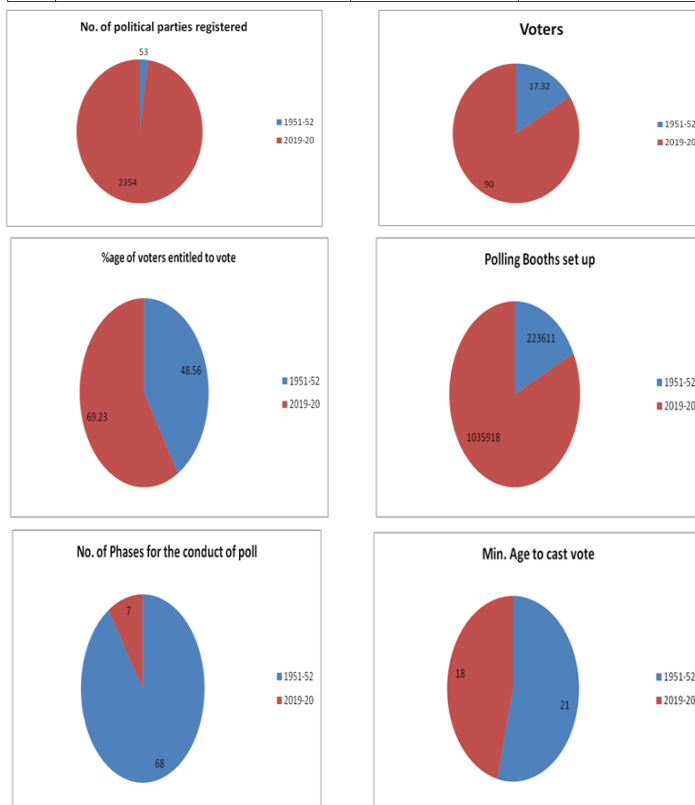
ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Now days, Political parties resemble with business firms. They explore and try to exploit the opportunities in the same way in which the business firms do. They hire a political expert to assess the return on the political investment. Social media is playing a substantial role in Indian democracy. As per the latest report of Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), Twitter has nearly 4.3 crore, Facebook has 24.1 crore and Whatsapp has 37.9 crore users in India respectively who are above 18 year old and constitute a major chunk of Indian voters. Keeping in view the changing scenario of Indian voters' market, the political parties have explored the new ways of reaching out to the voters. The political parties have setup social media war rooms to fight the political battle online e.g. BJP is emphasizing strengthening of defense of the country,

global claims of becoming a big power, implementation of certain harsh steps and enactments like demonetization implementation of GST etc. On the other hand, Congress is propagating the failure of BJP led government on the fronts of economic security, justice and freedom. The parties also appointed certain expert volunteers to cater the same e.g. BJP recruited cyber warriors, cyber army, phone prabhari, cell phone pramukhs etc. Similarly, Congress launched 'Digital Sathi' app and appointed volunteers to coordinate digital campaigns. The basic rationale behind all these initiatives is to disseminate information about the achievements and other campaign activities of their respective parties. Actually, the social media has abolished the physical and social gap. It has influenced people's political efficacy and improved their political understanding as well as their participation. As per the report of ADG Online, nearly one-third of first time voters were influenced by political messages on social media platforms in the 2019 general elections. The report further emphasized that around 40 per cent of youths (18-24 years) kept themselves updated about the political developments through at least one of the five social media platforms namely Facebook, Instagram, Sharechat, Whatsapp and Twitter. More than 50% voters influenced by social media are less than 25 years of age which in turn leads to the conclusion that social media messages have a greater influence on youths. In order to reap the potential of social media platforms, the political parties spend a lot of money in this regard e.g. both Indian political giants BJP and Congress spend heavily in social media marketing i.e. 5 to 7% of the total election budget (SOURCE: IAMAI). But one of the major limitations of social networking sites/apps is that a small number of users can capture the voter and bombard them with their political propaganda without any accountability and that too at a very low cost and a short span of time. This media is considered to be one of the biggest platforms for sharing fake news and misinformation for political gain, a lot has been done to overcome this lacuna but it is still insufficient and ineffective. Moreover, the role of social media must be analyzed in terms of interaction of technology with wider social and cultural issues.

Structure and Process Characteristics of Political Marketing

Before doing the critical analysis of political marketing in India, it is quite essential to understand the structural characteristics of political marketing like political product (i.e. political person, political party, and political ideology), organization and the market. As the political organizations are mainly dependent on volunteers, so their responsibility increases. Similarly, due to presence of varied electorates with different demographic features and resources, the management of political markets also becomes difficult. The process characteristics of political marketing are concerned with procedures that govern political marketing activities.

Structural and Process Characteristics of Political Marketing (Table)
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF POLITICAL

Structural Characteristics	Process characteristics
Product	Style of Marketing
❖ Person/ Party/ Ideology ❖ Loyalty	Media
	Communication standards
Organization	Tactical Voting
❖ Dependence on volunteers ❖ Negative perception of Marketing	
Market	

Source: (Butler, P. & Collins, N., 1994)

MARKETING
Political marketing is the marketing of ideas and opinions which relate to public or political issues or to specific candidates. It should be wisely managed for it to yield better results. The founders of concept of political marketing argue that there are eight common functions that constitute to fruitful political marketing. These functions are:

Product Function
Theorists view political marketing in the context of a market where there is a product being traded between the politicians and the voters. This product can be the ideology, manifestos or a promise by the political aspirants that they shall improve the livelihoods of the electorate. The product can also be the political image of a politician. . The political candidate is advertised to gain positive perception, attitude and approval from the public e.g. In India, the main product function of BJP was to sell Modi Brand and a good governance based on change. The ideas like 'Development and Change', 'Sab Ka Sath, Sab Ka Vikas' were highlighted as products indicating the political agenda of the political party i.e. BJP. These ideas were successful in attracting the elite class as well as masses of India. Thus, the whole process of political marketing must have an element of a product (Henneberg, 2003).

Cost Function
Unlike in corporate marketing, where cost effective marketing is practiced to attract consumers and to persuade them to buy a product, political marketing is different. Theorists argue that cost function in political marketing refers to managing the attitudinal and behavioral barriers of electors by providing the relevant information concerning the product (ideology, person or manifesto) as soon as possible, without an expense.

Distribution Function
The rationale behind this function is to deliver the right message to the right target market through the suitable distribution channel. It lays emphasis on providing the electorate with access to all relevant information about the political product. The theorists held the belief that political marketing involves making political deliveries in the form of vital policies of the political party as well as various programs of the party, ensuring that the choice of media to use is in line with a party's ideologies, and putting the aspirants through the appropriate platforms.

News Management Function
This function manages both the party and the aspirant's publicity. This function includes management of the media, activities connected with public relations, and the management of online marketing. In the political arena, there is lots of propaganda that are spread to sabotage the image of a political figure. Therefore, the management of the news is very crucial as far as political success is concerned (Henneberg, 2003).

Communication Function
This function focuses on providing political content or ideas at proper time. It ensures that the information available to the electorate is succinct and simple to comprehend. The timing of the advertising 'Ab ki baar Modi Sarkaar' campaign on TV was very crucial. 'Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi' was well accompanied with his pre-recorded video messages in villages. While the BJP" s campaign was decisive and to the

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point, the Congress campaign, with the tagline Harhaath Shakti, Harhaath Tarakki, failed to impress the masses.
It is a function that is at the center of all other functions. All the functions must be connected to this function because communication is the heartbeat of political marketing.

Fund-raising Function
This function is one of the most vital functions in a campaign period. It allows an aspirant to raise the necessary resources required for the campaign period. A good percentage of political aspirants rely on support from their parties, friends as well as donations.

Internal Cohesion Management Function
Along with the external management aspects, the political party must also be managed professionally internally. This function involves creating an internal environment that fosters cohesion among the members, activists and spoke persons of a party. In political marketing, it creates internal stability and improves the credibility of the party leading to building up of goodwill of the party in the outside world.

Parallel Campaign Management Function
According to this function, the synergy created by a political party and an organization for the purpose of campaigning contributes greatly to a party's image. These two partners usually carry out parallel campaigns where the associating organization endorses the party. This makes the electorate to have confidence in such a party. From the above functions, it is clear that political marketing requires solid background information. In India, political parties are now employing specialists to aid them in the process of political marketing (Henneberg, 2003).

TECHNIQUES USED IN POLITICAL MARKETING
Political marketing involves the organized political campaigns comprising of different techniques:

Direct Marketing: It is the foremost and classic method used by the political parties. They deliver their message through mails, phones, fliers, speeches, concerts etc.

Competition Research: Political marketing doesn't only involve the propaganda of its own USPs, rather it is focused on the publicity of negativity of opposition but the negativity must be concrete and evidenced one. It requires a lot of research on the same issue. It is actually based upon SWOT analysis emphasizing that the weakness of a competitor is one's own strength.

Internet Marketing: The use of internet marketing is on the rise. Political parties use internet marketing tools like e-mail marketing, pay per click advertising or social media, blogs to advertise their political agenda, party, candidate, campaign, party etc.

Market segmentation: Political marketers use the technique of market segmentation i.e. segmentation of the target voters to design their speeches keeping in mind their cultural background, demographic features etc.

Product Development: In political marketing, the product is the party or ideology or the candidate. As the voters are very

much interested in knowing about the product, the parties tend to design the product in most effective and elaborated manner e.g. creating the image of their candidate by highlighting struggle in his life, his achievements, and his contribution in social, economic, cultural or political arena etc.

Market Surveys: Such surveys are also conducted by the political parties to critically analyze the acceptance of the candidate and accordingly to design the political strategies.

Branding: Political parties also use branding for their marketing. They pose their candidate as a brand or a symbol of prosperity. BJP used the image of Narendra Modi as a brand in 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha Elections by emphasizing Modi wave.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES USED BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA
Political parties use social media because traditional communication medium are highly governed by election commission of India. Initially, it was the use of static webpage to promote campaign goals, promises and information. Sice then the popularity of social media or the social networking sites (SNS) is increasing day by day not only globally but locally also. For example, the 2008 U.S. presidential election was the first election to utilize fully the power and reach of the SNS's to impact voters. In the same way, during anti-corruption movement 2012 in India, social activist, Anna Hazare used social media to connect people in New Delhi. Social media is playing entirely new role in Indian democracy. Now a days, political parties and politicians have found a new ways of reaching out to a younger and aspiration population. It was for the first time in 2009 Indian elections when online voter registration and transparency campaigns started. Political parties are becoming tech savvy. BJP, one of the major political parties in India used social media even before 2009 general election, though it lost. India has gradually adopted the use of modern strategies for political marketing. PM Narendra Modi with his team best understood the potential of new media and the opportunities offered. The credit of initiating Political advertising in India goes to BJP who started the first ever political ad campaign 'India Shining' on T.V. It was the effective use of technology especially social media i.e. (Google+, Hangouts, Facebook, Twitter, Blog, Youtube, Whats App, LinkedIn) that led so called NaMo campaign to success in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The success of the campaign paved the path for every political campaign in the near future because it showed not only how to spread the messages efficiently and effectively but to exercise the multiplier effect of the same through social media platforms. Similarly, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) utilized the technologically advanced social platforms not only to approach the people but also to accept donations through these channels. As per Internet Giant's Indian Transparency Report, political parties and their affiliates have spent Rs 3.76 crore on advertisements since February 19, 2019. BJP has taken a big lead in advertising on Google and its affiliated platforms such as YouTube with an ad spend of Rs 1.21 crore, while its main rival Congress has spent only Rs 54,100, the search engine said. If we examine the state wise ad spending, Andhra Pradesh was the biggest ad spender with (Rs 1.73 crore), followed by Bihar (Rs 10.5 lakh), Maharashtra (Rs 17.19 lakh), Uttar Pradesh (18.47 lakh). While modern strategies are the

most appropriate in the current dispensation, the traditional strategies cannot be ignored. It is only through the efficient integration of traditional media with new technology is useful in reaching to masses successfully. For instance, the door to door campaigns are very important because they offer an opportunity for the electorate to engage in a live conversation with the candidates. Besides, it is advantageous to the aspirants because they are able to convince the voters at a personal level.The modern strategies involve the use of media through televisions, radios, digital media, and social media. The emergence of social media has made people to virtually come together and interact with each other at the comfort of their homes and workplaces. Political players in India have seized this opportunity and as per now, social media is the most effective communication tool in political marketing. This is because the information is passed quickly from one social media user to another in a very short span of time through online sharing. Political aspirants create an account with Face book or Twitter and thereafter attract followers that will be viewing whatever they post in their status updates. At some points, the strategy used by the politicians is to create propaganda directed at their rivals in a controversial manner. The created controversy goes viral and the politicians sell their image far and wide. Although social media is widespread, it is mainly popular among youth. Statistics on the use of social media indicates that since the year 2017 the percentage of the Indian population on social media has been on the rise since then. In 2019, social media users in India stand at 260 Million users which represents 26% of the total population. It is projected that social media usage will accelerate further. The graph below shows the growth of social media usage from 2017 and the growth projections up to 2023("Topic: Internet usage in India," 2018). Televisions and radios are also used in India. However, political parties shy away from the services of these media because they usually charge exorbitantly. Besides, there is a high possibility that the information may not reach those in rural settings. To cover the rural areas, political parties have opted for strategies like the use of posters, mobile vans with public address system and holding meetings. Another modern strategy in political marketing is through mobiles. The current generation has widely adopted the use of smart phones. These phones have made it easy for individuals to access information wherever they are at their convenience. In a recent report released by Investment firm Omidyar Network claims that Indians use mobile phones most for social communication and entertainment. The average mobile Indian internet user spends almost 70% of the time on Apps like facebook, whatsapp & other entertainment apps. Out of this 70% time, 38% time is spent only on social media giant Facebook and its other family apps like whatsapp, instagram etc. This is much more than the U.S. users who visit these apps for only 50% of the time they spend on the mobile phone. This potential of internet based mobiles is rightly identified and exploited by political parties and they have been using tele calling and SMS functions to reach directly to the voters. This was a strategy that was successfully used by BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party in Lok Sabha polls. This strategy is mainly used to persuade individuals through sharing of attractive policies that a party intends to implement once in power. BJP members tactfully used this strategy to convince their followers that they were the right people to vote (Banerjee & Ray, 2016). Nonetheless, this strategy can be unethical especially where a company contacts an individual without prior consent.

Data Extracted from Statista.Com (Internet Usage in India)

Moreover, Social media activities can be either used to predict
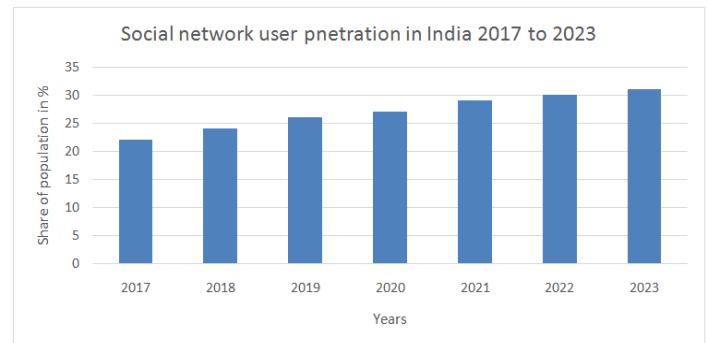
the outcome of elections. However, many companies have attempted to use the data which is available from the social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and other platforms to predict election outcomes. Political campaigning has become a major focus in the growing field of social media studies.

FUTURE AND CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL MARKETING IN INDIA

The future of this form of marketing lies primarily on the internet and social media. This is evidenced by the fact that current digital generation is going to replace the older generation. This indicates that in the near future, almost everything is going to be digitalized and as such, political marketing is going to take a new twist. However, this change shall come with its challenges. One of the major challenges is that anyone has the ability to access the internet and post anything whether true or false. This is an indication that in the future, political marketing shall face the challenge of credibility and transparency.

CONCLUSION

The importance of political marketing in the political arena cannot be under-estimated. It has helped to build or destroy political figures based on the strategies chosen. From the above discussions, it can be concluded that political marketing is a field that should be viewed with a lot of seriousness if a politician is looking to emerge victoriously. It is a prerequisite for a politician's success but it should be used strategically.

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