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Role of Social Media in Political Campaigning and its Evaluation Methodology: A Review

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Abstract

The empowering growth of internet has created a pathway for politics to use social media strategy. Social media has changed the approach of political communication and politicians and political parties are opting social media for new way of connecting with voters. This paper focuses on evolving the social media role in political campaign in India and deliberates on the unique methods to collect data. Various marketing approaches and their characteristics are connected with political campaigning and the challenges are focused. Unique methods for deliberating the political campaigning are evaluated. The evaluation methodology consist of four methods includes bellwether, policymaker rating, intense period debriefs and system mapping and are briefly discussed.

Keywords: Politics, Social media, Political campaigning, Evaluation methodology, Voters.

Introduction

In this present scenario, everyone wants to be in the platform of social media, since everything is towards the digital era. Every individual is linked to others via social media for the purpose of regular communication. One of the latest survey reports of social marketing agency, "We are social" stated that India has 242 million of people using social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and other mobile apps like Hike, WhatsApp, Line etc. This has become a beneficial and best possible way for the marketers to reach every individual in a simple manner.

But, how the power of social media is used by the politicians for their campaigns successfully? Meeting each and every individual personally is not possible for the politicians. So it is necessary for them to get connected themselves directly to other people, where in this case, social media provides a hand in hand solution. Social media has grown tremendously and recognized widely for various purposes. The use of social media in politics and during political campaign has become a vital part for every political parties and candidates. Since social media sites are capturing more

attention and traffic than a public or official campaign websites, it has become valuable and critical for them to get connected. Social media which not only allows the politicians to seek information but also it let them to interact with other and express them online through posting on social networking sites and blogs about political opinions, attitudes and commentary (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2008). On the other hand, it also helps the users to politically express themselves by encouraging friends to vote, making online donations, status updates and posting graphics etc.

Social media has the significant impact on the elections relating to number of people involved and the speed of communication. For example, in 2008, Barack Obama, the U.S. president used the social media successfully for his campaign since he understood the social media and leveraged it and it was the initial campaign where social media was pervasive. Politicians, tries to create an interesting posts and make the followers engaged which is similar to the strategy followed by a brand or media company. This paper focuses on evolving the social media role in political campaign in India and to deliberate on the unique methods to collect data.

Voter-Consumer Analogy

Kotler and Levy (1969) disputes that for marketing professionals, political challenges are important challenging area; where academics with political science or marketing circumstances have investigated on how the commercial and political marketing event have accomplished from each other (Wring, 2002). Norris (1999), and Kavanagh (1995), who are with a political science experiences, have recommended that both political parties and businesses expands the concept of marketing "campaign" to accomplish their success.

Political campaigns and commercial campaigns are having similar characteristics. Commercial campaigns focus on promoting particular products, services, or ideas to the consumers, with an aim of creating the awareness of products, services or ideas and reassert and refine their distinguishing competitive brand positioning, for continuing their profit level and market share (Kotler et al., 2005). Similarly, political campaigns intend to promote parties, candidates, political agenda or political causes, targeting at voters as a commercial consumers, where the purpose is garnering votes, increasing awareness and to improve the possibilities of winning the election (Holbrook, 1996).

In political market, positioning is more likely to be product oriented than market oriented (Baines et al., 2007). Butler and Collins (1996), recommend that candidate or the party must position themselves based on the position in electoral race both they are a follower, challenger or leader; and they disregard to recommend the implications of competitive positions and impact of policies communication. The issue with the political positioning is that the creation of steady image with a single theme.

In marketing, one of the widely used concept is "Branding", that includes the concept of marketing goods and services in commercial sector to the consumers that is similar like marketing politicians, their parties and political agenda to the voters.

Brand which provides the badge of origin and assurance of quality to the consumers in identifying the particular product, service or idea (Hackley, 2005). Needham (2005) has explained the benefits of branding technique applied to politics. Promoting the candidate or political party as a brand will be intensifying the candidate or party, which is brand loyalty throughout the election and also on non election period. It is possible that the loyalty towards the brand of product is lesser for any particular individual and higher for the loyalty of a political party; but it is also possible on vice versa for many other individuals (Peng and Hackley, 2009). For instance, an individual can buy one branded mobile phone for his/her lifetime, but will vote for dissimilar parties at different elections. Branding techniques are used by the party managers to emphasize and spotlight certain important characteristic or quality of the candidate (Needham, 2005).

On the basis of functions, political advertising and commercial advertising are similar to each other. For instance, advertising emphasizes the characteristics rather than influencing (Hackley, 1998; Ehrenberg et al., 2002). Similar to the brand advertising, political advertising also influences the brand loyalty of an individuals' that changes the affiliation. It reminds the audiences about the brand and makes it active, providing a sense of visibility and existence in marketplace. It is always factual that commercial advertising is as it of like political advertising (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995). Therefore, advertising in both sectors like political marketing and commercial marketing will frequently reinforce the trust and will provide confidence to not to turn away from the loyalty path as the values they connect with brand will remain true and steady.

Researchers like kotler (2005), from the field of marketing and Maarek (1995) from the field of politics, have studied to understand the messages received and interoperated by the consumers and voters by using communication process model. They classified the consumers and voters on the basis of contextual level in spite on procedures. The assumption made by them that consumers and voters (considering that both belongs to same category but engaged with dissimilar kind of messages) process messages crucially in similar manner.

The brand and voting consumption analogy seems to have a stronger bond in certain respects. Meticulously there is a significant relation between marketing management and political campaign management field, as political marketing arena has adopted certain methods and practices of brand marketing. This presumes the resemblance between consumers and voters are in sense for the idea of demand or vote management. Furthermore, there is a controversy that in spite of the similarities, consumers and voters are relatively different on considering their respective contexts in detail.

Voters Differ From Consumers

Lock and Harris. (1996), has drawn the attention to the vital difference between political arena and marketing, highlighting the dissimilarities between the propagandistic characteristic of certain political campaigning and the ideology and some functional and instrumental

applications familiar in brand marketing. There are certain difference among product/ service marketing and political marketing as listed by Lock and Harris (1996). This is applicable to the international contexts over certain degree and it includes: introduction of new brand is much easier in the commercial arena and unusually in the pattern of a new party it is much complicated; the candidate or political party are intangible, conglomerated product like voters cannot disentangle; in spite of the preference, voter has the collective choice which might not be their preferences while consumers gets a refund on purchase; no price is relatively attached to selection of party or voting, that widely discriminate to make it as a purchase; each voters make their decision and selection on the same day whereas consumers do not. According to Solomon (1999), consumer brand influencing factors are social class, family, ethnicity and religion and Powell (1998) argued that primarily political attitudes are shaped by media usage, family, education and peers. O'Shaughnessy (2002), has additionally described some micro and macro level differences between commercial and political marketing that includes deliberating the concepts of "symbols", "embedded value" and "rhetoric". Suggestion given facilitate political requests are widely contingent on symbolic connotation and are significant than brand marketing appeal. Voters recognize that consumer engagement is having a diverse nature to political engagement as they look for shared values and deeper symbols with which relating the candidates and political parties. Among political and commercial marketing, there is a wider range of difference between the depth and amount of media coverage. Service marketing or commercial product receives lesser coverage on comparison of political contests receives higher free media coverage. The character of competition is different that the political party or candidates policies and ideas are continuous flux while the service or product is comparatively constant (O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

Certain researchers view point that commercial marketing and political marketing are comparable but merely on certain areas. Internal and relationship marketing are similar to the political marketing, where the political party develops a relationship with its internal staff and supporters by marketing concepts. Marland (2003) suggestion is comparable, where political marketing is same as real-estate industry since there is a deep human communication inside the service industry disparity along various alternative commercial sectors. There is no comparison of how spectators consume commercial or political mediated messages, but it accomplished that consumers and voters have wider differences than similarities.

Politics and Marketing

In the past, the argument on political marketing was widely based on the perspective that over the political campaigning, marketing was bolted and it supported only fewer contexts (Baines and Egan, 2001; O'Leary and Iredale, 1976). The concept of introducing the marketing technique in the political campaigning always bring an uneasiness to many and on comparing with profitability, only fewer has a conviction that politics is having a greater

intention than the commercial or the other who enlightens marketing along "style" relatively than "substance".

The common distress of political field into the doorway of marketing recommends that critic's gives higher credibility to "*power of marketing*" than the marketer's grants for themselves. In commercial sector marketing, loyalty and trust are considered as much important factors and protective legislation are used to make it stabilized. Similarly, it is noticeable that there is a lack of this protection in politics. The pessimistic spectator sense that from the marketing exposure political consumers suffers a little less than a general consumer. In either of the services, political and financial, the higher authority has the wider knowledge than the voters (consumers). It is stated that in either of the conditions, consumers are expecting higher assurance in making a exact decision, and this is done by the marketing through providing a adequate information (Baines and Egan, 2001). Even though the political campaigners' needs are perceived across all over for augmented marketing, the results are distant from the notoriously sensation by general measures of marketing success.

Baines and Egan (2001), suggested that marketing is performing a vital role in modern politics, but the outcomes are unsatisfactory. From the marketer's perspective the outcomes are distressing as the elevated purchases (higher votings) are equivalent to the measure of success. Inspite of the issues, it is widely predictable that marketing stimulates the demand in the commercial world. Baines and Egan (2001) states that unsuitableness of marketing in the context of political campaigning, inappropriate application of marketing concept to political campaigning by experts and political campaigning are negatively affected by marketing since political campaigning are not free market are the potential reasons for politics is getting faded away in marketing context.

Lock and Harris (1996) argued that most of the professionals are not familiar with "political marketing" and they believed that commercial marketing concept was diverse from their field of expertise. The concern was that the belief of cynic's on marketing is likely to focus only on image and not on issues. The indication was that there is lack of importance to voter's decision making process in marketing. Some researchers highlighted the direct use of marketing technique in political campaigning. Political campaigning is performed over minimum amount of budget, short period of time, intense competition and unique nature of "product". They also highlighted the distinctive requirement in politics to acquire the maximum share of the vote.

Political Participation in Social Media

Getting connected to the public on a personal and social level has become vital for the politicians and the tool they use for it is campaigning. As the rise of social media all over the world, politicians use the social media for communication on a larger scale with minimum effort. Practitioners are seeking to evaluate the upcoming relationship between politics and social media. Narendra Modi social campaign in 2014, Barack Obama presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2012, Arab Spring in 2011

activated the interest in political action and networked digital connectivity. A study in 2012 *"A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization"* revealed that Facebook feeds relatively affects the pattern of voting by testing the concept of voting behavior can considerably influence by Facebook messages. Certain messages provoked by friends stimulated the numbers directly by 60,000 voters and 280,000 voters are increased indirectly by social contagion, where the number of voters raised to 340,000 overall. The report of a journal, *"Social Media Use and Participation: A Meta-analysis of Current Research",* 2015 conducted a study between social networking sites and civic engagement and revealed that there is 82% significant relationship between political engagement or participation and social networking site use, where the supporting effect is that youth population is sampled randomly; it has found a relation between election campaign participation and social media use but it tend to be weaker; social media is having a positive effect on citizens' participation. Langlois and Elmer (2013) stated that social media sites like Twitter have become essential site for rapid response in context to political events. Furthermore, voters and consumers both prone to ignore the media messages, whether commercial or political, if they don't feel it appropriate (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999).

In general, it is identified that there are similarities between marketing and political campaigning practices and in micro level there are certain unidentified factors regarding specific audiences related to political and commercial. In order to make a insights into various kinds of engagement that take places between consumers, voters and campaigning, it is necessary to understand the evaluation methodology.

So far, the literature review relied mostly on the nature of political context and practices. Following this, the forth coming section focuses on the evaluation methodology for political campaigning.

Evaluation Methodology and its Types

In simple term, evaluation method defines "how" the data are gathered. It is a standardized method for collecting quantitative or qualitative data which is used to examine whether or not a strategy intense to produce the desirable outcome. The data collection method in advocacy evaluations includes the traditional methods like interviews, surveys, polling or focus groups (Coffman and Reed, 2009).

However advocacy process is complex, dynamic and fast paced that makes the data collection critical since it majorly focuses on the outcome which leads difficulty in processing and measuring (Stuart, 2007). Therefore, for assessing policy change and advocacy new innovative methods are established. Four new methods namely Bellwether methodology, Policymaker ratings, Intense period debriefs, System mapping are introduced to overcome the earlier issues. These methods are proven in real life judgments and are found to be relevant, timely and efficient (Coffman and Reed, 2009).

Bellwether Methodology

Harvard Family Research Project are the developers of Bellwether methodology that

determines the position of proposal or policy issue on policy agenda; the way in which other influential's and decision makers are talking and thinking about it; and finally the way in which policymakers are going to act to it (Blair, 2007). "Bellwethers" or prominent people who are politically informed and are trackers of policy issues where they belong to private or public sectors are interviewed for data collection. Bellwethers are the leaders who are innovative and knowledgeable and their opinion on policy issues are esteemed and lead to prognostic value in policy arena.

There are five steps involved in bellwether methodology on which setting up the bellwether sample and interview requires a special "twist" that differ this approach from other interviews (Blair, 2007).

i. Selecting the bellwethers category for interviewing. The types or categories include funders, advocates, the media, trade associations, business community or researchers. The chosen types must characterize the individuals' type where the opinion should be essential and prominent on policy issue of interest.

ii. Choosing bellwether sample. Once the bellwether category is determined, the process of selecting the individuals is provoked. In the chosen sample, half of the sample must comprise bellwethers who has no unique or precise association with the policy concern being explored. This method provides a greater probability that issues the knowledge identified through interviews which links to the advocacy efforts instead personal experience. Additionally, the criteria also includes ethnic, gender and geographic diversity.

iii. Setting up the interviews. This is a critical process, where the interview focuses specially on policy issue of interest that is not known to the bellwethers. They are educated about the overall setup but will not receive any specific details. Therefore the responses received from the bellwethers can be ensured as unprompted and authentic.

iv. Performing the interviews. Bellwethers knowledge on the policy of interest is determined through interview questions. For instance, interview will be started by enquiring the issues that bellwethers think is the foremost for policy agenda. The response designates the issue listed, and in case of indication, it makes path to list out the adjoining issues. And further questions are prone to specific that relates to familiarity with issue of interest and later content analysis is performed to discourse the issue.

v. Analyzing the data. Formative and summative data are obtained from bellwether methodology. Formatively, advocates get the information about the precise gaps on knowledge of bellwethers about the role played by their messages among this audience. Summatively, the message from the advocates is communicated around bellwethers and noticing whether the message is successfully moved onto the policy agenda. If the advocacy strategy continues for multiple years, then this method is repeated over time.

Policymaker Ratings

Harvard Family Research Project is the developer of Policymaker Ratings. This method determines the political will or policymakers defined group proposals or

specific advocacy issue is supported. This method was developed in order to measure the perceived insufficiency indicators. For instance, voters opposing specific bills are measured. It neither generates additional loads for advocates, rather it profitably conveys what they previously familiar through their regular intelligence associating and outreaching (Coffman and Reed, 1999).

Policymakers of interest are rated by advocacy on a sequence of three scales, assessing:

"Policymaker level of support" – on supporting the issue, individual policymaker provides assistance for an issue with regard to their action or public behavior.

"Policymaker level of influence" – policymakers are influenced over policy issue of interest which is alike to the concept of a power analysis. On the established paradigm, the ratings are related to the policymaker influence.

"Rater level of confidence"- on first 2 scales, there is an accuracy of confidence.

In rating process, the participation size is 3 to 5 advocates. The policymakers are rated independently or they are grouped and finally the average rating is calculated. Composite ratings are calculated after ratings are complete and aggregated across policymakers. Various other data like caucus membership, committee membership or district representation can be included for diverse analysis (Patton, 2008). Similar to the bellwether methodology, policymaker ratings is repeated over a period to analyze how and whether indicators shift.

Table 1 Policymaker rating scales

Scale	Ratings	Description
Support	1 Not supportive	No confirmation is found that this sort of individual has supported policy issue (opposition)
	2 Somewhat supportive	Favorably inclined to policy issues (supports rarely in small or one on one conversations)
	3 Supportive	Occasionally supports behind the scenes or publicly for policy issues (role in budget negotiation, speaks in public hearings, encourages colleagues)
	4 Extremely supportive	Takes leadership to support policy issue and advancing it (makes it as a vital part in their agenda)

Influence Criteria 1. Majority party member 2. Applicable content expertise 3. Experience/ seniority 4. Respect/ reputation 5. Committee member 6. Leadership position	1 Not influential	Only 1 or no criteria is met
	2 Somewhat influential	2 criteria are met at least
	3 Influential	Key committee or/and 3 or 4 criteria met
	4 Extremely influential	Leadership position or/and 5 or 6 criteria is met or/and chairs a committee
Confidence	1 Not confident	Ratings are based on a guess on unreliable information over policymaker or not related to interest.
	2 Somewhat confident	Ratings are based on a fair guess. For instance, obtained information from a source are not 100% verifiable
	3 Extremely confident	Ratings are reliable and trusted since advocates directly contact individuals or access right information

Intense Period Debriefs

Innovation Networks are the developer of intense period debriefs. It connects the advocates in classifying inquiry subsequently in a policy window or extreme stage of action occurs. High intensity activities are experienced by lot of advocacies. Such period are represented to be detracting opportunities for collecting data and learning, where advocates are prone to limited time for interviews (Coffman and Reed, 2009). The inappropriate outcome is that assessment has few considerable gaps in data in advocacy cycle time when the requirement of data are necessarily valuable.

Intense period debriefs identifies such kind of circumstances as a general advocacy certainty and adjust to it. Soon after the intense activity period or policy window occurs, it meets individuals or focused group with advocacy stakeholders and use the "debrief interview protocol" in order to catch the advocates current experience data (Patton, 2008). Intense period debriefs method function is similar to "after action review" and seizure the data like aura of the public and political context through policy window; to determine the perspective outcome is achieved or not; the response of the campaign members on the events, particularly the actions that occurred in off the screen; adjustment of strategies in hindsight.

This method gathers the real time and in-depth information in a practical, targeted and respectful way. Stuart (2007) stated that the idea of this method grew the needs to encourage participation from individuals and key groups those are engaged in various segments or 'spheres of influence' enclosing decision makers.

System Mapping

This method is helpful for advocacy efforts focusing for transition in systems. For instance, similar kind of efforts might try to improve or change the organization; build mutual relationships among actors or organizations; or can modify the environment or context through policies are exposed conversely certain social modification are ensured (Coffman and Reed,2009). The result transmits to differences to or inside a system with these effort types.

System mapping includes visual mapping of system, recognizing chunks and association with the system those are predictable for modifying and the way it diversify, and finally recognizing the methods of measuring or catching up whether those modifications are ensured. Proceeding the way, change in theories are mapped by system function; they demonstrate the place of changes are forecasted and help frame and guide assessment. While presenting the outcomes to the evaluation stakeholders, it supports as an influential picture. It provides a beneficial substitute for the various conventional theories of transform and logic replica; moreover, it is inclined to be linear and have certain issues catching up the proposed change in connection or relationship in a complex system.

There are various ways in which system mapping can be executed. It could engage vital informer interviewing the individuals inside that particular system modeled to record the system appearance and working function of the system. Mapping and network analysis process are used which is a method that determines whether or not there exists a relationship between groups, people or institution, even more their strength and nature, and mathematical algorithms are used to explore the relationship between them.

Conclusion

From the observation and manuscripts collected from the literature on consumers and voters, and projected on several angles to which comparing and examining consumers and voters are performed. Particularly, there are micro and macro perspective. On a broad perspective, consumers are considered to be voters and also conversely considered. This is reasonable for believing that the ground process of political with commercial media messages is related. For instance voters might be affected by the image of politicians and political parties brand image which is similar to individual getting influenced by product or service brand image. It is easy to draw a conclusion that tradition in both marketing and political communication is compatible. Furthermore, considered that it is likely involved to scholastic with marketing, communication and political background might opt same kind of method when examine their participants despite either they are voters or consumers.

The evaluation methodology consist of four methods includes bellwether,

policymaker rating, intense period debriefs and system mapping. These techniques are specially designed to counter to advocacies unique measurement challenges and they are efficient, relevant and timely. Evaluation methodology generates both qualitative and quantitative data where policymaker ratings method alone focuses on quantitative and other methods are qualitative. It is concluded by evolving the role of social media in political campaign and deliberating on the unique methods to collect data. Further, this study can be elaborated on expanding differences in nature of commercial branding and political marketing with reference to consumer engagement and the study can also be deepened statistically by empirical research.

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