

Political Branding: An Exploration of Potential Areas of Research

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Abstract: VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity are no longer just the issues faced by the commercial world, but also by the contemporary world of politics. These can be attributed to few of the factors such as: high political convergence; decreasing voter turnout and loyalty; voter cynicism; continuous media attention and scrutiny; need to improve brand image and equity; and cope up with changing macro environmental factors like growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), to name a few. This VUCA has led the need for application of commercial branding principles in politics; to identify and differentiate the parties and political products from the competitors and build long-term voter relationship. Political branding has been relied upon by politicians and parties in many countries few of them include the US, the UK, Canada and Australia. Even the Indian Prime Ministerial Elections 2014 has transformed the facet of Indian politics with catholic capitalization of the concepts of “marketing and branding” in the political arena. Despite branding has permeated into politics in numerous ways, it has derived limited academic attention (Marsh and Fawcett 2011). As the domain of political marketing and branding is proliferating, there is a need to identify various areas that practitioners and researchers can investigate; and work upon to build and manage strong political brands. Hence, the objectives of this study are: to analyze the political branding strategies suggested by researchers as well as those used by political parties and candidates across the world; and propose potential areas of research in political branding. Cooper’s Taxonomy of Literature Reviews has been considered as a guide to perform systematic review of literature. The literatures reviewed were then organized, analyzed, and their implications were drawn in context of three set of brand equity drivers quoted in Kotler et al. 2012; which are: brand elements, marketing program and secondary associations. The analysis section evaluates the arguments of various researchers and strategies used by political practitioners. The discussion and implication section of this study depicts future scope of investigation that can be used as research objectives to base the potential research in the field. This study will be beneficial to the political practitioners for mobilizing their research and branding activities around these areas, and for the academia, researchers and students to conduct detailed research in milieu of their country or region adding to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

Keywords: Political Branding, Political Marketing, Branding, Marketing, Politics, Review

I. Introduction

Anything can be marketed; be it physical goods, services, ideas, persons, place, property or experiences (Kotler et al. 2012). The question hence punch the clock is, can marketing and branding be applied to politics. If yes, what is to be marketed and branded: political parties, candidates, ideologies or policies; and how? Having accepted the existence of political brand raises the question of how to build and manage these brands. This study hence endeavors to elucidate such inquisitions with reference to application of marketing and branding concepts in politics.

Political marketing is delineated as the set of processes, activities or political institutions applied by political parties, candidates and individuals to create, exchange, deliver and communicate promises of value to voters, political party stakeholders and society at large (Hughes & Dann 2009). Political branding is the way political parties identify and differentiate themselves to voters and political market in general (Mensah 2012).

Political branding has been relied upon by politicians and parties in many countries including the US, the UK, Canada and Australia, to name a few. Even the Indian Prime Ministerial Elections 2014 has

transformed the facet of Indian politics with catholic capitalization of the concepts of “marketing and branding” in political arena.

The usage of marketing and branding in political practice dates long back in history, however not as sophisticated application as in current scenario. Its first mention in academic literature dates back to the 1960s and 1970s (Kotler and Levy 1969; McGinness 1969; Nimmo 1973; Shama 1973). Broadening of marketing from the 1970s (Kotler and Levy 1969; Kotler & Zaltman 1971) empowered scholars to research marketing beyond the bounds of commercial scope (Butler & Harris 2009). Several other reasons for the emergence of political marketing and branding seem to be: changes in the macro environmental factors in which parties operate (Butler and Harris 2009); growing competition among political parties; decreasing points of differences between them; reduction in voters turnout ratio; as well as degeneracy of voter loyalty, to name a few (a summarized set of reasons derived from the references cited in this study). Besides, Lock and Harris, 1996 stated that political party or candidate constitutes a complex intangible product which electorate cannot unbundle and consequently majority of voters have to vote on overall package, concept or brand image. These factors have led political parties to face challenges of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Despite branding has permeated into politics in a numerous ways, it has derived limited academic attention (Marsh and Fawcett 2011). Political branding practice is still developing (Downer 2013). This emanates the need to research the emerging discipline of political marketing and in specific political branding. Hence, based on a systematic literature review, this study aims to:

- analyze the political branding strategies suggested by researchers as well as those used by various political parties and candidates in different countries;
- propose potential areas of research under this broader arena of political branding

This study will be beneficial to the future researchers, academia and students as, by assimilating and critically analyzing the strategies suggested in wide variety of literature, it brings under one roof various avenues of future research in political branding. Besides, political practitioners can conduct research in these areas for their target segment(s) to assess the effectiveness of various political branding strategies in their context; and frame the strategies to meet their goals.

To address the research objectives, the structure of the paper is as follows: After the introduction (section-1), section-2 details out the methodological approach adopted for this study. Section-3 analyzes the literature to identify future scope of research in the field of political branding. Section-4 is discussion and implication followed by section-5 highlighting the summary of the study.

II. Methodological Approaches

On the basis of literature review of complete articles from leading journals, as well as few thesis, conference proceedings, news and web articles in political marketing and political branding, this paper endeavors to investigate existing studies in these fields to analyze the strategies suggested by researchers and that are followed by the political practitioners. A major part of literature is covered from the journals indexed with Scimago.

To facilitate the systematic review of literature, Cooper’s Taxonomy of Literature Reviews (1984) had been adopted. Cooper’s Taxonomy of Literature Reviews (1984) proposes decision to be taken pertaining to six characteristics: focus, goal, perspective, coverage, organization and audience of the literature review. Considering this, the methodology for this review paper decided upon the categories for these six characteristics, which are described underneath:

Table No. 1: Taxonomy Table of Literature Reviews

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Categories/ Method decided to be used for this study
1.	<i>Focus</i>	Practices or applications
Description: The review concentrated on the application of marketing and branding concepts by political practitioners to enhance equity of their brands. Also it endeavored to encompass the opinion and knowledge of various researchers pertaining to application of branding in political arena.		
2.	<i>Goal</i>	Integrate to generalize findings; critically analyzing the literature; explicating argument
Description: The study aims to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate, summarize and generalize the findings of political branding works of various researchers from the literatures reviewed; • with critically analyzing the same either in context of comparing and contrasting the political branding strategies across time, geography; or opinion of different researchers; • the ultimate aim is to explore various arenas which political practitioners can consider while designing their branding strategies or for conducting research; as well as researchers can conduct detailed investigation on the various ambits explored through this study. 		
3.	<i>Perspective</i>	Neutral representation
Description: While analyzing various literatures, the study attempts to draw attention towards the pros as well as cons of various types of		

political branding strategies and leaves the platform open for the researchers to explore the impact of the strategies in specific context and markets.		
4.	Coverage	Exhaustive review with selective citation and representative
Description: The study has used a combination approach of having attempted identifying maximum literatures however with certain limitations; but trying to cover majority of the issues pertaining to political branding.		
5.	Organization	Conceptual
Description:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the first level, articles were reviewed on “political marketing and branding” theories to gain broader conceptual and strategic insights. • At the second level, literature was reviewed on various themes in context of political branding like: brand elements; segmentation; targeting; positioning and brand image; products (e.g. political leaders and candidates); price (exchange); place; promotion; cultural branding; negative advertising; brand personality; brand relationship; brand equity; and voters’ perception. • At the third level, under these themes, strategies given/ founded by authors of the papers, as well as those cited by the authors in the papers were studied. • At the fourth level, similarities and differences, if any; in the perceived effectiveness or applicability of the given strategy between researchers was analyzed (for e.g. across time, context, geography). • Later, this study attempted to identify potential areas in which studies can be conducted by researchers and political practitioners to help them identify effective political branding strategies to differentiate political brands, influence voters and develop long-term relationship with them. 		
6.	Audience	Specialized scholars, General Scholars, Practitioners
Description:		
The study has integrated, analyzed and brought the work done by various scholars under one umbrella, which can be beneficial to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scholars interested in conducting research in the field of political branding and marketing; • academicians as well as students of political science, marketing and brand management; • political practitioners can also undertake research on the effectiveness and applicability of various arenas mentioned here, in their context, which can help them develop effective political branding strategies. 		

Source: Developed by researchers for this study

Besides, for considering a base to support the study, the “three set of brand equity drivers” mentioned in Kotler (2009) has been considered, and an endeavor has been made to fit the concepts of political branding reviewed here in this framework. As observed from the existing studies that despite the research in political branding has proliferated, majority of the studies found were qualitative in nature; with scant robust and exhaustive models of political branding or political brand equity. Hence, the above stated framework has been considered for setting the flow of this study. The use of this framework can further be substantiated with the following justifications:

- The conceptual framework of political marketing and branding depicts that they are amalgamation of commercial marketing and branding concepts with political science, respectively.
- Besides, it was mentioned in Kotler et al. 2012 that anything can be marketed; so can be the political products. Even Keller 2002 mentioned that branding principles have been applied in almost every situation where consumer choice of some sort is involved.
- Despite of few differences in commercial and political products; many researchers in the literatures reviewed have agreed to the applicability of commercial marketing/ branding concepts to the political sphere.
- Also, Scammell 2007 mentioned that, political branding is an all-inclusive marketing and image identity campaign.
- Further, analyzing various brand equity models as mentioned in Kotler et al. 2012 it was inferred that the ultimate aim of any brand is to consistently work upon improving its brand equity.
- Hence, these “three set of brand equity drivers” mentioned under were considered as the base for this study:
 - (i) The initial selections for the brand elements or identities making up the brand (for instance, brand names, logos, slogans, jingles, URLs, symbols, characters, packages, signage and spokesperson)
 - (ii) All marketing activities and supporting marketing programs accompanying the product and service
 - (iii) Leveraging of other secondary associations (for e.g. place, thing, or a person)

III. Analysis of Existing Literature

As per the methodology and framework mentioned above, the analysis of the existing literature is discussed underneath:

3.1. Initial selection of brand elements

At a very basic level, the political party name is a brand with which party leaders, individual candidates, councils, party manifesto and all other different varieties of political products are attached (Lock & Harris 1996). However, the control that party holds over the presentation of these political products carrying party’s brand name is quite limited and constrained as compared to commercial brands (Lock & Harris 1996). This implies that maintaining the image of its brand name can be a major challenge for the political parties.

Despite of the challenges, different party brand elements have their own significances in building a successful brand. A descriptive, meaningful and memorable brand name would enable a party brand to induce high recall, establish recognizable brand image and develop strong, favorable and unique brand associations with the consumers (Hughes, 2003; Keller, Heckler and Houston 1998). Like the name “The Australian Greens” was given to the national party brand in 1992 to symbolize and associate party’s core values of ecological integrity, peace and disarmament, social justice, and participatory democracy (Colebatch 1993). The selection of party brand color can further help reinforce the brand association (Keller 1993) by leveraging the meaning of the brand, as in the case of The Australian Greens, party brand color selected was green.

However, worth a thought is the concern expressed by Hughes 2003, in line with general considerations of choosing brand elements as suggested by Kotler et al. 2012 that brand elements should be transferable and adaptable; so what if Australian Greens launches policies which are not around environmental concerns, will it affect party’s brand positioning and image; is one of the areas which parties and researchers can investigate upon. Hence, it is imperative to select brand elements in a way they have easy transferability and adaptability. Giving a ray of hope to the above issue is a statement given by Aqueveque 2008 that extrinsic cues, described as lower level attribute of a brand can be altered without even changing the physical product (intrinsic cues); so can be the brand elements.

Researchers and political brand practitioners have also emphasized on the significance of recognizable brand logo (e.g. Ditsch 2012) and graphics (Seidman 2010, Nee 2011) to convey brand meaning and image; and overall brand equity. For instance, Obama’s strong and positive brand is partially attributed to the strong use of visual imaging in 2008 election, especially the brand logo where “O” stood for Obama, and the red-and-white stripes stood for the country and the national flag; which became an integral part of campaign from official Facebook page to the official t-shirts (Seidman 2010; Sonies 2011). Lewandowski (2013) considers logo as a core element of candidates or campaigns.

Researches on the characteristics of logos have shown that voters prefer simpler multi-meaning logos with more repetitions (Janiszewski and Meyvis 2001). Ditsch (2012) added to this by quoting that the fluency – consumer recognition and inclination to choose a specific logo increases with exposure. Hence, it can be inferred that not only does the logos convey the meaning but also the frequency of their repetition also enables strong brand association and brand recall. As in 2012 US Presidential elections, Lewandowski (2013) in some 20 select images marked that Obama’s logo was featured nine times whereas his competitor brand Romney’s logo was featured in just three out of 20 of his images. This implies the future scope of research can not only emphasize studying the impact of visual attributes of logo on voters but also the impact of where the logo is appearing and the frequency of its repetition.

Further, political convergence and political parties becoming more similar in terms of their intrinsic cues (issues, policies and other central attributes) expresses the concern of political parties to differentiate and identify themselves with the voters. A solution to this concern seems Bettman et al.’s argument that in such a situation, voters will use their right brain and hence, base decision on peripheral pieces of information; supported by Lazarsfeld *et al.* 1968; Neuman *et al.* 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998 that voters depend on cognitive shortcuts as an alternative for detailed information. This is where brand elements in the form of well represented visual identity and extrinsic cues can be constructive. For e.g. the Modi campaign in Indian General Elections 2014 became quite popular for its slogans like “Abki Baar Modi Sarkar”, “Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi” and others. Even following the guidelines of having short, simple and easy to pronounce brand names, in the same election, brand Narendra Modi was featured as “NaMo” in the campaigns. Also some other extrinsic cues such as spokespersons with charismatic personality dimensions like extroversion, passionate, telegenic and entertaining (Hansen and Kock 2003); and identifiable symbols are critical in vote catching terms rather than policies (Butler and Harris 2009).

Also usage of sign can be seen being used by politicians. Like in the case of brand Obama’s 2012 campaign the rally sign was letters “2012” with “0” written in the form of his brand logo as well as his website address being communicated along with. Even the NaMo campaign in India has seen an extensive use of the sign of “V” made by brand NaMo during few public appearances symbolizing victory.

Despite the usage of brand names, logos, fonts, symbols and slogans are not new means of political branding; the way they have been utilized has become more sophisticated and meaningful. Along with these traditional ones, a remarkable trend has been witnessed in the application of URLs and hostnames as contemporary brand elements. Like in 2012 election campaign rally, brand Obama’s slogan “FORWARD” (O, written as logo of brand Obama) was accompanied with the brand’s hostname “BARACKOBAMA.COM”. Similarly in Indian General Elections 2014, brand Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), to accomplish its mission of getting 272+ seats (majority win in the election) made its <http://namonumber.india272.com> to build a wide network of NaMo voters, which had become very popular.

A strategy of repositioning the political brands have also been witnessed with parties changing their brand name and logo attempting to rejuvenate their brand image with the electorate; like in a case where British politician William Hague considered changing the Conservative party's "torch of freedom" logo and also the party's name for the same reason.

3.2. All marketing activities and supporting marketing programs accompanying the product and service

Under this section the political branding strategies in terms of the marketing program is analyzed in the context of "STP + 4Ps". That means how political brands apply the strategies for segmentation, targeting, positioning, product, price (exchange), place and promotion.

Segmentation and Targeting

An interesting trend has been found in political marketing with respect to application of segmentation (bifurcating market on the basis of distinct customers' needs and wants) as a strategy over years. As in the case of commercial products being mass marketed, political products also adopted the trend of targeting broader markets in 1960s. However, research by Kirchheimer in 1966 endeavored to challenge this perspective by signaling a potential threat of this strategy as parties being perceived as "catch all parties" by the voters. However this perspective was dampened by few parties of Anglo-Saxon democracies in 1980s. Amidst of these controversies of whether mass marketing or segmentation is more effective strategy, several studies on voter segmentation were being reported by Ahmed and Jackson 1979, Yorke and Meehan 1986, Baines 1999, Smith and Saunders 1990, and Baines et al. 2003; with Smith and Saunders (2002) accentuated upon segmentation as an effective strategy.

Gradually, the research in segmentation seems to mature with introduction of a remarkable hypothesis of first-order and second-order segmentation given by Hooley and Saunders 1993. Basing political campaigns on the basis of geographic or demographic variables is applying first-order segmentation (Butler and Harris 2009). For example, the winner of Jakarta Governor Election 2012 Jokowi-Ahok targeted voters on the basis of socio-demographic (young voters; middle class; educated, intellectual and entrepreneurial), and geography (urban voters and Chinese ethnics). Whereas, the competing team focused on elites and bureaucrats considered representative of upper class citizens (socio-demographic). Besides, considering demand and preference factors based on behavioral segmentation as focal point is applying second order segmentation.

Various bases of segmentation as suggested by researchers over years are: ideological perceptions (Johnson 1971); psychographics (Ahmed and Jackson 1979); class (Himmelweit et al. 1981 and Heath et al. 1985); geo-demographics and lifestyle (Yorke and Meehan 1986); gender (Gardner et al. 2001); political technical service features (Baines et al. 2003); and party/ leader image perceptions (Baines et al. 2005). Ideological perceptions is even addressed in 1991 (Smith and Saunders 1991) and 2001 (Smith and Hirst 2001). However, a change can be witnessed over years from segmenting the voters on ideological, psychographics and class basis to political technical service features and image perceptions basis; that is, emphasis from first-order segmentation to second-order segmentation.

A novel progression in the area of political segmentation and targeting can be witnessed in the research of Smith and Speed 2011 proposing the strategy of cultural branding, a sustainable competitive advantage by staying in tune with the popular culture in the society. The first systematic empirical research and comprehensive analysis on cultural branding has been made by Holt (2004) (Lewandowski 2012). Culture here means what is mainstream requirement of majority of the people in the society. Kirchheimer 1966 mentioned the decline in class-based voting which was even stated by Downs 1957 that support can be gained by parties not by appealing ideologically to class interest but by moving to where most of the voters are, that is, the middle ground of politics. It is witnessed that the mention of cultural branding by Holt 2004, and Smith and Speed 2011, is in line with the researches made in 1966 and even 1957. This implies that with the passage of time, the main theme of politics to gain support by serving the major issue concerning the society, remains the same.

However, the cultural branding concept of political world seems to be quite different from the concept of niche marketing (targeting narrowly defined segment) widely being practiced in the contemporary commercial world. This is reasonably logical too, as political brands' success depends upon support by majority, the larger chunk of the market; making niche segmentation seems not a very appealing strategy for political brands and hence, no such study has even been noticed in the literatures reviewed.

Hence, it can be inferred that the political parties should channelize their product, price, place, promotion and positioning strategies on the basis of the segment(s) targeted. This approach can be termed as market or consumer-orientation, which forms the base of the contemporary marketing principle, proposing parties to be more voter-driven rather than ideology (product)-driven. The concept of market-orientation as an effective strategy to build and maintain brand equity was mostly addressed since 1990s; by Harrop 1990; Narver and Slater 1990; O'Shaughnessy 1990; Deshpande, Farley and Webster 1993; Butler and Collins 1994; Newman 1994; Maarek 1995; Collins 1999; Kotler and Kotler 1999; Newman 1999a; Brown and Gunter 2002; Duncan

2002; Henneberg 2002; Henneberg and Eghbalian 2002; Newman 2002; Rindfleisch and Moorman 2003; Lees-Marshment 2004; Schneider 2004; Ormrod 2005; Reeves et al. 2006; Smith and French 2009; French and Smith 2010; and Downer 2013. As in the commercial world consumer-centrism/ market-orientation is gradually proliferating, so in the political world.

Positioning

Positioning, an act of designing a distinct image in the minds of customers (Kotler et. al 2012), was emphasized by Lock and Harris 1996 in political marketing. Brand image development has also been considered as a fundamental strategic management task of political parties by Kavanagh 1995, Kotler and Kotler 1999, and Schweiger and Adami 1999. Its significance has been seen up to the extent that in 2001 Smith and Worcester found that image was a greater element of voting behavior than the parties' policies and issues, especially in British politics. Smith 2001 found the evidence of effectiveness of image based strategy over issue based in the increased popularity of Liberal Democrats. Since political parties are more susceptible to undesired publicity than the commercial brands and parties becoming similar in terms of functional aspects (policies and issues), it becomes imperative to study different strategies that can be deployed by the political parties to build and manage their brand image.

Hence, understanding the significance of building brand image and a distinctive positioning of political brands, the question arises is what image to build. Researchers have highlighted the positive and negative image aspects which can serve as a guide to the political practitioners. Few of the positive image dimensions associated with leaders found are: capability as a leader and dealing with crisis; understanding of world and country's problems; sound judgment; personality; patriotism; down to earth nature; and more honesty compared to others. Few of the negative image dimensions associated with leaders found are: talking down to people; narrow minded; inflexible; out of touch with ordinary people. The party positive image dimensions encompass: party keeping its promises; representing all classes; looking after problems, interests and needs of people and country; moderate; with good team of leaders; sensible policies; and professional in approach. Whereas, the negative image dimensions associated with the party are: extremist approach; promising anything to win the votes; out of touch with common man; divided; and too dominated by leader. (Smith 2001)

After knowing what image to build, the next issue arises is how to build, that is what factors influence party's brand image. In 1998, Powell emphasized on the influence of family, media usage, peers and education on voters. Contradictorily, Smith 2001 has given much emphasis to political communication rather than traditional family influences and party's policies to create strong, favorable and unique image; especially emphasizing on message, that is, what party communicates; and tools like image based advertising, events and celebrity endorsements. Media bias and spin also affects image building. Even the type and the way these medium are used also conveys the meaning. For instance, in 2012 Jakarta General Election, Jokowi made use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Blackberry messenger which made him regarded as a leader symbolizing youth, elderly and women voters (Ediraras et al. 2012). Not all tactics can be used as it is; for instance, Blackberry messenger is no more popular in these days in India. This means that depending upon time and trend in the market; the strategies and tactics need to be adapted.

Product

Political marketing practitioners market: parties, ideologies, issues, policies and personalities of candidates like brands. In almost all the election campaigns across the world and across the time, parties, candidates and issues are the political products been highlighted, so there is no question to the use of these, but the question is pertaining to their relative importance and effectiveness in different situations. For instance, historically ideology was used by parties and politicians, whereas contradictorily various studies here have identified that when the ideologies, issues and policies become look alike (less differentiated), or voter involvement is less, voters use mental shortcuts to base their voting decision on candidate personality traits and similar extrinsic cues rather than intrinsic cues like issues and policies.. A market research in UK confirmed that party and leader's images were more influential in attracting voters than their policies (MORI 2005).

Ediraras et al. 2012 emphasized the significance of party candidates and their elective ability as focus of public, media and fellow politicians, especially in case of change of party targeting. Ediraras et al. 2012 highlighted the political candidates (product) characteristics. For instance, it was identified that Jokowi displayed traits like polite, loyal, loving, calm, willing to listen, aspirational, inspirational, charming, strong, understanding, gentle temperament and mature but firm in administration. Whereas, Ahok depicted traits like emotional, but with firm capability and realistic vision. Seidman 2010 also argued that voters vote for candidates who draw right feelings and not the one who presents best arguments. In fact Armstrong and Graefe 2011 suggested a bio-index method, rating candidates on their biographical and demographic information (for e.g. height, weight, hair, facial hair, physical attractiveness, race, religious affiliation, surname, voice, perceived

facial competence of candidates, has authored books, wear glasses, has military experience), wherein the candidates with highest favorable score on these variables have a probability to win the popular vote and argues that for 27 of the 29 elections this method has correctly predicted the popular vote winner. The indication here is that in different studies, researchers have identified different characteristics of parties and candidates; the question is what characteristics does your voter segment expects and what do they perceive in you?

Due to this augmenting significance of political candidates' image in influencing voters' behavior, the sub-field of branding, personal branding, has been witnessed in political branding. This has given rise to 'personalization' or 'personification' of brands in politics, a development in which political leaders become the chief anchor of interpretations and assessment in the political process (Holtz-Bacha et al. 1998). Positive impact of political brand personification was highlighted by Lau and Redlawsk 2001, Bartle and Griffiths 2002, Schneider 2004, Needham 2005, Needham 2006, Guzmán & Sierra, 2009, Davin and Mian 2010, Smith and French 2011; as leaders with their abilities, personalities and reputation convey wider and simple meaning of this complex political product to the voters and provides imperative heuristic device in political brand decision making.

However this strategy of political brand personification was criticized for having negative consequence by Llyod 2008, qtd. in Zamora 2010 with arguments that it may raise expectations of the voters with that individual to an unrealistic level, may arise issues in succession planning in the parties, it may override party ideologies, and this type of organizations cannot be perceived as sustainable organizations by their supporters. Hence, research need to focus on the effectiveness of the strategy of political brand personification.

Besides, a concept that has gained attention is "totality of political product". As Lock and Harris 1996 stated that voter cannot unbundle the complex intangible product of political party or candidate and have to vote just on totality of overall concept, package or brand image; which was even once quoted by Australian Prime Minister, John Howard. In that respect of intangibility as a characteristic of political brands, its analogy can be drawn with the concepts and strategies of service marketing.

With respect to the brand extension as a product strategy; the possibility of launching a new brand in the form of a new party is far more complex and unusual compared to that of commercial brand (Peng and Hackley 2009). Some breakaway parts of national political parties in India have deployed brand naming strategies can be said to function as brand extension. Subramani and Parulekar 2009 identified correlation on many aspects of brand image between parties in India like Nationalist Congress Party, Nationalist Trinamool Congress, Kerala Congress, and similar having 'Congress' in its name, with Indian National Congress. They further suggested that since parties are finding drop in membership and decades old parties with mass marketed products may feel difficult to stay relevant to large electorate with varied needs; parent political parties should segment the electorate and target different segments through their brand extensions. However, brand extension as a strategy is not widely espoused in political marketing, hence, political brand extension, its feasibility, ways to do it, and its impact can further be researched upon.

Besides, not much addressed in literatures is one issue pertaining to handling the variety seeking behavior of customers (voters). Is this consumer behavior applicable to the political brands? If yes, how should political brands handle it? Like in a study Smith and French 2009 quoted that political brands offer an epistemic value to some voters who have an inherent desire for change and variety.

Price

Shama 1975 and Kotler 1982 emphasized the process of transactions between candidates and voters. According to Wagen 1983, price strategy in politics connotes the way a political organization raises campaign finance and attracts members. This is in context of monetary exchange, as parties are voluntary organizations, which requires support from people for its operations. Modern communication medium like Facebook, Twitter, Blackberry messenger and Youtube had been employed to collect funds and sponsorship – ICT is a popular crowd funding tactic these days. Interestingly, Jokowi-Ahok campaign also raised funds through selling trinkets, plaid shirt red and blue, t-shirts and similar items. A similar strategy was adopted by brand Donald Trump for the US Presidential Elections 2016 wherein it was said that the fund was raised using the website by seeking donation, selling campaign merchandise, presidential shirts; and by use of paid search advertising to drive donations.

Whereas, Reid 1988 stated that political price is a psychological and emotional purchase. This seems to be reflected even in the works of Niffenegger 1990 and Wring 1997 who referred price as voters feelings of national, economic and psychological anticipation and hope in exchange of their votes and trust they put on political parties. For instance, Brand Trump communicated his brand promise of "Make America Great Again". Also it was quoted in Smith and French 2009 that political parties are organizations where in politicians sought to exchange promises and ideas for electoral support. However, electorates' lack of trust on political brands these days has been addressed by various scholars. Besides, the concept of experiential marketing seem to be reflected in what Cosgrove 2007 and Needham 2005 quoted by Lees, that branding, as a strategy, is delineated

by not only the promise but also the delivery of a distinctive and targeted product experience. This depicts that exchange not only has to be in the form of fulfilling the promise but also delivering the experience to the voters.

The modern marketing theory is based not on selling what is produced by seller but what is wanted by customers, that is, market/ customer-orientation in politics, as discussed earlier. This seems to be visible where political brands takes participation and feedback of voters so as to come up with effective policies is increasing rapidly, like in the case of Jokowi's 2012 General Election campaign (Ediraras et al. 2012).

An ultimate and healthy exchange of parties with voters and other stakeholders is accentuated in the concept of relationship marketing, an idea of establishing long term cordial relationship with voters, as moving into 21st century (Luck et. al 2003). This is suggested by many scholars like Dean 2001, O'Shaughnessy 2001, Duncan 2002, Luck et al. 2003). However, keeping in mind the famous saying that charity begins at home, the political parties should focus on improving internal relationship, loyalty and unity within the party.

Place

Place strategy refers to the distribution and the ways a company puts its products and services before its consumers. In politics this can be compared to party at grassroots level. Political brands heavily rely on volunteers who help in execution at regional and local basis. This network of party at grassroots level also help liaison with the national apparatus to formulate and coordinate regional events, rallies, tours by the party leaders. (Wring 1997)

(Wring 1997) Local electioneering envisaged traditional activities like leafleting, canvassing, and 'getting the vote' out on polling day as called by American strategists (Kavanagh 1970, Denver and Hands 1992). Contradictorily, most modern campaign canvassing is more concerned about identifying and contacting probable and confirmed party supporters rather than first persuading them (Wring 1997). One of the reasons for this can be the decline in the accessibility of volunteers (Wring 1997). The other can be increasing interest of party central headquarters to sustain common brand awareness and image in all party electoral communication (Wring 1997). This is also one of the main objectives of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) – one voice, once message. But is this not contradicting the fundamental of 'integrated marketing', a pillar of holistic marketing which emphasizes marketing mix elements to work in coordination to create synergistic effect. Here, it seems IMC is obstructing the work of place strategy.

Seyd and Whiteley 1992 challenged the notion that local canvassing and campaigning is ineffectual justifying with potential electoral payback of maintaining a healthy association at this level; which is even visible back in 1987 in work of Farrell and Wortmann who suggested that new and affordable form of campaign technologies may increase the worth of constituency level electoral initiatives. In fact Swaddle 1988 suggested the use of telephone canvass banks, computers and direct mail initiatives as effective tactics in UK elections. However, contradictory view was quoted by Wring 1997 which claims that post-war due to this decline in grassroots membership, localized forms of campaigning seems to be ineffective. Despite of this in the contemporary politics use of internet, emails, SMS, mobile apps shows the use of modern technology for reaching the voters; which seems to overlap with promotional tactics.

Besides, not just reaching the voters and delivering in pre-election campaigns is sufficient in modern competitive political scenario. Rather brand promise should be delivered continuously while the party is in power, or through its continuous efforts, and constituency centered service delivery throughout the electoral cycle. Parties should have long term planning focus (Baines 2002 and Smith 2001), that is, a need for permanent campaign (Smith 2001 and Sparrow 2001). Needham (2005) claimed that campaigning is 'nonstop' (Hecl, 2000) and 'total' (Nimmo, 1990). The idea of permanent campaign by parties was also supported by various scholars like Nimmo 1999, Butler and Collins 2001, Sparrow and Turner 2001, Newman 2005, and Bulter et al. 2007.

Promotion

As per various brand equity models, the ultimate aim for a brand is to achieve brand resonance, that is, a sustainable relationship with the customers (voters). According to Luck and Chapman 2003, communication is the pedestal of relationships. Hence, political promotion would form an important pillar for building political brand's equity. Peng and Hackley 2009 in line with this thought emphasized up to the extent that despite political branding campaigns deploy various brand marketing tactics of consumer research, segmentation, targeting, positioning, product, price, and place; but advertising and communication techniques depicts the most visible attempt by political marketing practitioners to market their political products.

However, out of various tools of promotion, not all can be translated well in politics. Rosenbaum 1997 found that face to face contact of leaders via canvassing, a type of personal selling has lessen in significance over post war period. Also, in 2001 UK General elections, posters had been less effective. However, contradictorily, various political campaigns in India still uses house canvassing and posters, and even in 2013 Jakarta General Elections, Jokowi-Ahok did house canvassing. Does this imply that from country to country, the

voters' responses to political communication vary? Similarly sales promotion tools and tactics do not gel up well in political communication. Smith 2001 emphasizes image-based advertising, publicity, celebrity endorsement and events as imperative tools in contemporary era for image building. Kleinman 2001 suggested few other tools such as public rallies, press conferences (publicity), and contemporary tools of internet and interactive marketing such as direct mail, internet and text messaging. Few other non-conventional modes are websites, email, social media, blogging, mobile app and online videos. These media are useful especially to reach young voters as it has been found that young voters prefer internet over TV (Leppäniemi et al. 2010). Not just in 2001 but also back in 1996, Grigsby recommended the use of interactive marketing, database marketing, and personalized marketing. Dean 2001; O'Shaughnessy 2001 also emphasized these techniques. However, social media has its own limitations which have also been addressed by various researchers.

The modern principles of management are based on systems approach and contingency approach. The above paragraph depicts a clear picture of contingency approach. Interestingly, the application of systems approach is visible in what Luck et al. 2003 suggested political brands; to make use of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) practice to have unified message, and build brand relationship. An example of IMC usage is Bharatiya Janata Party's 2014 Facebook post on 6th December, 2013 which promoted the launch of "Run for Unity" event along with URL and contact person details given for getting more information about the event. This example itself shows that to make an "event", a tool of promotion, successful, other tools of promotion like URL (internet as a tool), Facebook (internet and interactive tool) and contact person for more details (personal selling) has been used in integration and coordination with each other to create synergistic effect. Luck et al. 2003 considered IMC a logical, practical and inevitable future for political brands.

Not only tools of promotion but medium of promotion in these tools can also form the basis of research. For instance, Peng and Hackley 2009 analyzed the responses of British voters to well-known television election broadcast with an argument that television advertising is the area where political marketing most visibly identifies with brand marketing. Hence, a scope of research can envisage the study of effectiveness of various medium and vehicles of promotion to achieve political brand objectives.

Message content, characteristics and repetition are also imperative for right branding. Boriboonchutuporn 2013 suggested that repetitive consumption of positive news about a candidate will positively influence voters and hence, political brands should try to have the media regularly accentuate their good side. In terms of message content, many researchers have suggested using simple, direct, memorable, meaningful and likeable messages for conveying what the political brand believes and what it stand for. Communication messages may highlight the party ideology, leaders, candidates, issues or policies. Different types of message appeals (transformational vs. emotional) as used in commercial branding can also be applied to political branding. However, a further study is required on these areas as for instance, emotional appeal can be positive (hope, honor, trust) as well as negative (anger, frustration, anxiety), so what is the impact of these appeals in which situation.

Hackley 2005 believed that even details like dressing style, cinematic style and lifestyle values can help the framing of likely message interpretation, which unfortunately went wrong with Niel Kinnock in 1994. Interestingly it is been suggested that political brands should try to reinforce the self-concept (Smith and French 2009) of the voters, that is more similar the fit between individual's actual or ideal self and the brand, higher will be the brand preference (Malhotra 1988). However, this was contradicted by Aaker 1996 and 1997 that despite consumers (voters) do not have or aspire to have similar personality traits as political brands they may like to have relationship or may value them. This implies a need for careful study on the message content and characteristics because message strength is a vital part of persuasion.

Not a great surprise, a widespread use of negative advertising, in various campaigns, across various time period and countries has been found. This comparison can be on the basis of issues, voting records, experiences, broken promises and more. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1991 proposed different argumentation modes of attack such as direct comparison, direct attack and implied comparison ads. Surlin and Gordon 1977, Lang 1991, Newhagen and Reeves 1991, Shapiro and Rieger 1992, Pinkleton 1997 quoted that voters are thought to remember negative ads better than positive ads and are even more influential. Because of its proven effectiveness negative advertising would continue to be used in political communication which can be complemented with humor appeal (Smith 2001). Nevertheless, the impact of negative ads on voters may also be impacted by their level of involvement, credibility of source/candidate (Yoon et al. 2005), repetition of the ad, degree of knowledge to the voters, commitment to the sponsoring or target candidate/ party to name a few. For instance, involved voters feel more cynicism when a candidate with high credibility uses negative ad compared to when a low credibility candidate uses such ads.

Besides, the effectiveness of negative ads is questioned by researchers over years. Pinkleton 1997 found that negative comparative ad lessen or negatively affects targeted candidates not lowering sponsoring candidate's evaluations, but these types of ads receive low credibility ratings. In the same study certain scholars have quoted that voters dislike such ads; consider them uninformative, unethical and deceptive; and may have

backlash against the sponsor. Savigny (2005) argued that such ads may have unintended negative repercussions on sponsoring party as well as may suppress voter turnout. This is in contradiction to what Lau and Pomper 2001 stated, that apart from where extreme levels of negativity permeate, there exists some evidence to recommend that it in fact stimulates turnout. Lloyd 2008 pointed that these ads may provide short term benefit but may damage the political brand image and democratic system at large in the long run, and political consumers are left to choose their Government on who they dislike the least because political brands have created negative brands define by who and what they oppose. Peng and Hackley 2009 also highlighted that negative conservative advertising was widely considered as having Labor party in UK lost its election under the leader Neil Kinnock. So, the impact of negative advertising is again perplexing hence needing further research in the context of specific markets.

3.3. Leveraging secondary association

Political brands have been witnessed leveraging secondary brand associations to create connect with the voters. For example, many of the studies suggest deploying celebrity endorsement as a strategy to develop association with the voters. The expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness of the celebrities can be leveraged to appeal the voters. The source of secondary association can also be opinion leaders (e.g. community leaders), where parties associate themselves with them to create connect with the voters.

Not only celebrities are deployed to build association but even candidates image is crafted as celebrity to develop association. Hughes (2007) suggested use of personal brands of candidates for co-branding. In a study Sonies 2011 compared the celebrity image of the two US Presidential candidates Regan and Obama. Despite the celebrity image of the candidate may create a positive impact on voters, Alexander 2010 argued that candidates' celebrity image with no real political credentials is not much meaningful. In fact Smith 2009 stated that for voters, political parties and their politicians are not different but amalgamated to build an associative network in memory of the overall political brand.

Few other tactics of secondary brand associations envisage linking the political brands with national symbols such as featuring of national flag in party campaigns; national flower e.g. India's BJP party logo has lotus flower which is India's national flower; associating with renowned and respected national figures; like the BJP campaign in General Election 2014 in India associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Other than this, a widespread technique used by the political parties is co-branding, making coalition with other parties to leverage the benefits existing with them. For instance in Jakarta, Foke-Nachrowi team was supported by eight big and coalition parties. Also they took support of elites and bureaucrats representative of the upper class citizens. In India and other multi-party government system also, to win, form the government, or to gain support, the strategy of making alliance with other parties is quite popular, rather sometimes inevitable.

Butler and Harris 2009 highlighted a largely under-researched area of lobbying as a political communication strategy, which is on rise as an academic arena of interest. It can also be inferred as a secondary association used by the parties. However, other than linkage of political marketing with interest lobbying; not much has been found about interest groups, pressure groups and policy networks.

IV. Discussion

As discussed earlier, contemporary politics is facing few challenges like: high political convergence; decreasing voter turnout and loyalty; voter cynicism; continuous media attention and scrutiny; need to increase brand image, relationship and value; and cope up with changing macro environmental factors like growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These raise the need for application of branding in politics to identify and differentiate the parties and political products from competitors and gain voter loyalty but the study in this arena is scarce with few notable exceptions. As there are certain differences between political and commercial brands, the future scope of research can envisage the extent to which concepts of commercial branding be applied to politics.

Political brands can achieve its goal of reaching the apex of brand equity model, that is, brand resonance, on the basis of the three pillars discussed earlier: (i) Brand elements (ii) Marketing Program and (iii) Secondary associations. The further discussion will draw the future scope of research on these three broader branding strategies.

Considering brand elements as political branding strategy, few of the research areas envisage:

- the study on influence of various types and characteristics of brand elements on voters' behavior,
- their role in creating brand salience (breadth and depth of brand awareness), brand association and inducing political participation among voters',

- the level, to which voters rely on brand elements as extrinsic cues rather than rational appeal to make voting decision, which is, smoke versus mirror (substance versus spin – as in the work of Palmer 2002) effect, can be studied,
- the role of brand elements in repositioning of political brands,
- political practitioners can also be interviewed to know the way they try to convey meaning about their political brands through effective use of brand elements.

Future scope of research under segmentation and targeting as political branding strategies may include:

- a comparative study of impact and effectiveness of mass marketing versus segmentation-based marketing for political brands,
- a comparative study of impact and effectiveness of first-order versus second-order segmentation,
- cultural branding, and
- market-orientation.

Future scope of research on positioning as a political branding strategy may encompass a study of:

- factors influential in framing strong, favorable and unique associations and image about political brands in the minds of voters,
- impact of positive and negative image dimensions on voters' attitude about political brands,
- tactics that can be deployed to effectively create desired image about the above factors in voters' mind, and
- repositioning of political brands.

The future scope of study in context of product as a branding strategy for political parties can envisage the study of:

- characteristics of various political products and their influence on voters;
- impact of brand personalization (personification) on voters and party in long run,
- the level of perceived totality of political products by the voters and its impact on them,
- applicability of brand extension in politics and its impact on voters,
- strategies to handle variety seeking behavior of the voters as consumers of political brands.

The future scope of study on pricing (exchange) aspect of political brands can include research on:

- expectations of voters in exchange of their votes and trust they are placing on political brands,
- strategies and tactics to build trust and long term cordial relationship between voters and political brands
- impact of brand promise fulfillment on voter loyalty over competitive branding effects on voters
- strategies and tactics to create unique and targeted product experience of political brands for voters
- very scant studies seem to be conducted on pricing (exchange) aspect of political branding strategy, which requires to be focused upon.

Even studies on placement as a political marketing and branding strategy is also scant and hence need more research. However, few of the arenas to conduct research for effective political branding include:

- tactics and strategies for political organizations to deliver their brands and brand promises to voters,
- effectiveness of permanent campaign and what can be a systematic long term plan to execute it, and
- how to integrate place strategy effectively with other elements of marketing mix.

Promotion as a strategy for political marketing and branding strategy can encompass a study on:

- effectiveness and influence of message repetition, various tools, medium, content, characteristics, and sources of promotion on different voter segments,
- impact of free media on creating political brand image and how to manage it effectively, and
- how to make the best utilization of IMC.

The future scope of research on leveraging secondary association as a strategy for political marketing and branding can include study on:

- impact of celebrity endorsement and their characteristics to influence voters,
- impact of celebrity image of political candidates on voters,
- impact of secondary brand associations such as national symbols/ icons, coalition with other parties, political lobbying and opinion leadership on voters.

V. Conclusion

Political branding generally is the way parties identify and differentiate themselves to voters and the political market in general, including the media, civil societies, prospective financiers and even the competing parties (Mensah, 2012). The political marketing process model provided by Wring (1997) implies for the political marketers that they should have a thorough understanding of the political environment they will be operating in; their political market; and voters' behavior to: frame appropriate marketing programs and branding strategies targeted to the voter segments based on market-oriented approach through proper market research, to enhance brand image, brand equity and brand relationship with the voters and other stakeholders.

Despite political product encompasses: political party, policies, political leader, political candidate, issues, and services, but political parties should bear in mind that everything a party "does" and "does not", matters. Avoiding unwanted publicity is what the political parties can rarely avoid and hence, a well-planned political branding activity is what they need. Although there are certain differences between commercial and political brands, the marketing and branding concepts can be applied to politics with certain modifications.

Political parties should create brand positioning to create coherent and consistent brand image based on their brand mantra which should be unique and be communicated through effective communication tools and mediums. The paramount objective of branding is to create strong, favorable and unique brand associations and image in the voters' mind. Political marketers after understanding their voters, political market and marketing environment should make use of right blend of intrinsic and extrinsic (brand elements, brand personalities of candidates, celebrities and other visual clues) cues, and leverage their advantage to position right image and associations in target consumers' mind.

Political opinion leaders and social networks may help political brands to influence voters especially at constituency level, and hence, selection of right opinion leaders and continuous interactions with them as well as voters will help brands gain credibility and long-term relationships.

Information technology has its pros as well as cons. Effective and efficient use of information technology can help political brands build better salience, associations, meaning, engagement and relationship with their voters and other stakeholders.

Role of free media is very strong in political market and political brands are highly susceptible to unwanted publicity. Media can make or destroy brands. Hence, proper handling of media is very important for the political brands.

Despite negative advertising and personalization of brands leverages positive benefits in the short-run, they may cause damage to the overall political brand in the long-run and hence, should be used cautiously. Although, winning elections may require political parties to focus on short-term goals, but their main goal should be long-run effective permanent campaign execution. Permanent campaigns will help brands create strong favorable and unique associations and image; fulfillment of brand promises; and consequently development of brand credibility, loyalty and relationship leading to high brand equity.

Political brands must understand that they are complex intangible products which voters cannot unbundle and hence, totality of brand is vital. Hence, political brands should work on building, managing and measuring the brand equity of overall political brand, in unity.

Finally, as there are certain concerns expressed by some researchers that application of commercial branding in politics may create an overall negative impact on democracy at large; hence, in context of socially-responsible marketing orientation (a part of holistic marketing orientation), political parties must frame their marketing programs and branding strategies in a way that is ethical and develops credibility and trust for the political brands in voters. Also, their strategies and communications should be authentic enough to cope up with the challenges of voter cynicism and should maintain the decorum of the prevailing democracy in the country.

Hence, there seem to exist, a lot of scope of future research in the field of political branding which can be beneficial to researchers, political practitioners, and democracy at large; to deal with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in the political sphere.

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