

# A Study on the Impact of Political Marketing on Perception and Response of Voters in Lucknow

## Abstract

This paper tries to clarify the response of Lucknow's voters for the various techniques adopted by the political parties to attract and engage the vote bank. In the current study, different scales are used to calibrate the perception of voters towards the issues targeted by the major political parties. The perception in turn is used to assess the success of the strategy implemented. The key factors for victory in the promotional campaigns are identified, viz. market segmentation, promotion influence, media assortment, adjusting the image of existing candidates, etc., which is of vital importance to both practitioners and scholars, even beyond the field of politics.

**Keywords :** Election Campaign, Political Marketing, Perception, Voter Response



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## Introduction

“Politics is not a game. It is an earnest business.”

By Winston Churchill

The gap between politics and business is miniscule, if any. Gone are the days when fate of our nation's democracy would be decided by colorful and vibrant political campaigns. Today's politicians have a lot on their plate, apart from preparing their speeches and organizing outrageously huge rallies. They are expected to be conniving marketers, astute administrators and ingenious team leaders. Politics has indeed rushed miles forward to become an earnest business. Political parties have considerably amplified their splurge on political marketing. The voters are put on the same pedestal as the consumers, who need to be engaged, engrossed and paid undivided attention to. The politicians have effectively stepped into the shoes of a service provider in an extremely competitive marketplace. Their campaigns target the consumer base with marketing modus operandi to attract and retain the electorate. A political party, when gearing up for elections, literally stands no chance without assimilating a marketing approach. The modern day Prime Ministerial candidate, in order to be successful, must rely on marketing not only to win the elections, but also to be an effective leader after entering the 7, RCR.

This paper employs an analysis of voter perception and behaviour to reveal the influences of the various political marketing strategies. A study sample has been drawn from Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh where the voters have a mercurial history of choosing different political candidates time and again since 1980. The findings will be significant for the marketing of political candidates, especially in the party's promotional campaigns and image-building activities.

The history of political marketing has been considerably refined with the wheels of time and subsequently undergone a lot of developments. While tracing the development of political marketing, it is noticed that its earlier theories stemmed from the traditional marketing theories developed for the consumer goods market (Reid 1988; Kotler 1975; Shama 1975). However, in due course of time, important differences have become apparent between the usage and competence of marketing theories utilized for political purposes and those for economic purposes. Political marketing, conventionally, derived a lot of concepts from various academic and practical disciplines such as psychology, sociology and political science (Scammell 1999; Newman 2008). The wedge of differences between political marketing and these other fields of study led to defining the former as a separate branch of science, with its own subject matter and methodology of research (Newman 1994; Lock and Harris 1996).

The following objectives have been formulated for this study:

1. To study the voter awareness and response with reference to the recent political marketing trends
2. To examine the relative importance of the key factors for a political marketing strategy

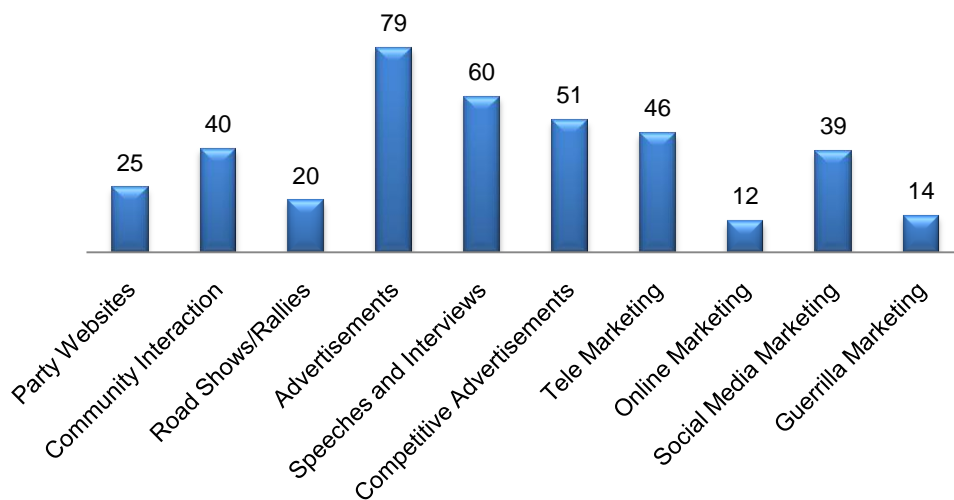
3. To identify the issues that the voters are confronted with while responding to a political marketing campaign

For the purpose of research, simple random sampling technique has been used. The data for this research project has been collected through a survey conducted in the Lucknow City. A structured questionnaire was designed for the benefit of speed, and for acquiring specific and concise information.

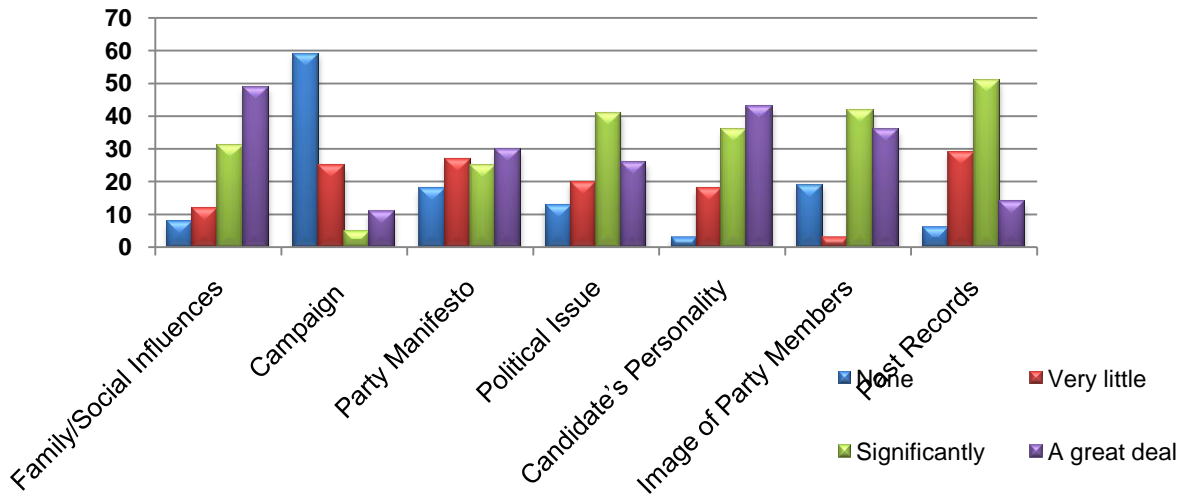
Moreover modern respondents choose to give direct response. There were 20 questions in the questionnaire, including both open-ended and close-ended questions. A Likert Scale, calibrated from 1 to 5 was also used to measure the relative importance of the factors. In this scale, 1 denoted the least important factor (LIF), while 5 denoted the most important factor (MIF). The survey was conducted on 100 voters whose demographic information is given as follows:

<b>Age (in years)</b>	18-20	16
	21-30	32
	31-45	18
	46-60	27
	More than 60	7
<b>Gender</b>	Male	45
	Female	55
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	20
	Self-Employed/Business	27
	Employed	28
	Retired	3
	Housewife	22
<b>Education</b>	Uneducated	21
	Primary Education	20
	Intermediate	12
	Graduate	36
	Post Graduate	17
<b>Monthly Income (in Rs.)</b>	Less than 10,000	22
	10,000-20,000	30
	20,000-35,000	23
	35,000-50,000	20
	More than 50,000	5
<b>Religion</b>	Hindu	49
	Muslim	32
	Sikh	11
	Christian	5
	Other	3

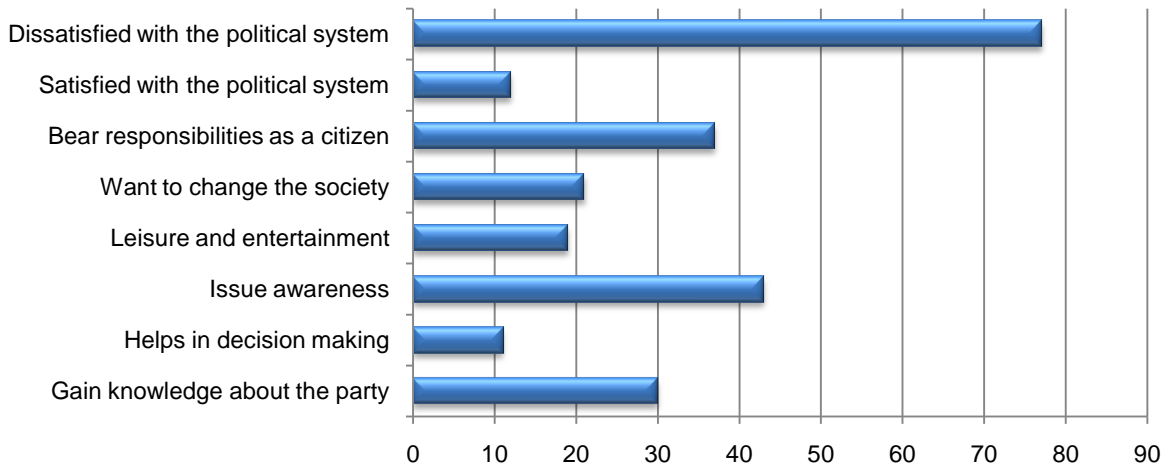
**Figure 1:**  
Experience with the political marketing techniques



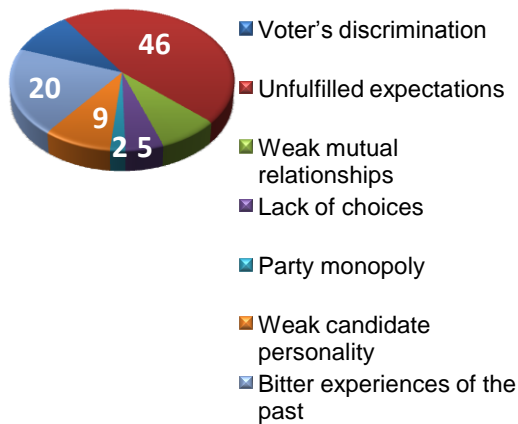
**Figure 2:**  
Factors in a political marketing campaign that influence the voting behaviour



**Figure 3**  
Reason(s) to be updated about the political marketing activities



**Figure 4**  
Reason behind the loss of trust in the information marketed by the political parties



**Table 2**  
Relative importance of factors to be marketed for a political candidate's image

Rank	Factor	Mean Score of Importance
1	Strong leadership	4.20
2	Fair and Impartial	4.16
3	Keep the promises made	4.07
4	Area-specific agenda	4.01
5	Visionary	3.96
6	Communication skills	3.88
7	Trustworthy	3.51
8	Proven success rate	3.50
9	Team-based approach	3.27
10	Admit mistakes and provide follow-up	3.26
11	Hardworking	3.09
12	Participation in social activities	3.05
13	Ability to handle the global manipulative influences	3.04

**Table 3**  
**Relative importance of issues as a basis for political marketing**

Rank	Issues	Mean Score of Importance
1	Good governance	3.96
2	Freedom from Corruption and Crime	3.87
3	Poverty Eradication and Employment	3.66
4	Inflation	3.59
5	Healthcare and Education facilities	3.41
6	Infrastructural Development	3.28
7	Women Empowerment	3.19
8	Religion/Caste/Minority Vote	3.02

After conducting the study, the following findings were uncovered

- 79% of the respondents have experienced the Advertisements of the political parties and 60% have witnessed interviews and speeches (as shown in Figure 1). Only 12% of the respondents are familiar with the digital marketing techniques of the political parties. This indicates that most of the voters still depend on the traditional modes of Political Marketing, the popular ones being Party Advertisements (Print, TV, and Radio) and Candidate Speeches and Interviews. Community Interaction and Social Media Marketing are also gaining quick approval of the voters.
- Voters feel that a political candidate should exhibit strong leadership abilities (Mean Score of Importance: 4.20) and has to be fair and impartial in order to succeed (as shown in Table 2). It is noteworthy that a candidate's image influences the voters more than the trust issues against the candidate's party. The area-specific agendas hold more importance than global manipulations and social participation of the candidates.
- Political Marketing also needs to be concerned with the prevalent issues in the society. The most critical issue for today's voters is of good governance (Mean Score of Importance: 3.96) as shown in Table 3. The issue catering to religion, caste or minority vote ranks the lowest in the opinion of the voters (Mean Score of Importance: 3.02).
- Voting behaviour and perception is highly affected by the family and social influences, with a staggering vote of 49% (as shown in Figure 2). The critical importance of this factor is higher in the younger generations than in the older people. Candidate's personality and illustrious past records are also big factors that influence the vote bank.
- 77% of voters (as shown in Figure 3) agree that dissatisfaction and disagreement with the current political system motivates the voters to remain updated with the current trends in Political Marketing.

- The voters believe that the political parties undertake the marketing activities not to inform or make the voters aware, but, to simply, gain more votes. The promises made during the marketing activities are not trusted by the voters. This loss of trust has occurred because of unfulfilled expectations as suggested by 46% of the voters (as shown in Figure 4) and bitter past experiences.

The following recommendations can be proposed after careful evaluation of the research findings

- Using pre-voting poll surveys, the political parties could try to identify the attributes of an ideal political candidate's image, key socio-economic struggles of the nation, and best approach to confront those struggles.
- Marketing research could be exercised to unearth ways of reaching the floating voters. This segment consists of undecided voters who finalize their decision at the actual time of vote or a short time before that. They are the most receptive to marketing stimuli; hence instead of dealing with the hardcore loyalists, it is this segment at which the greatest marketing efforts should be directed.
- The parties can introduce area-specific versions to their comprehensive political marketing strategies. Another way of enticing the local voting markets is to use micro-segmentation. It could help mobilize the passive supporters to actually go and vote for the party.
- Marketing efforts based exclusively on Religion or Caste might generate a hostile response. This polarization strategy should best be avoided and used only as a last resort.
- The political marketing activities need to be more concerned with designing its issues and campaigns to respond to voters' actual needs. The seemingly right intent of the party leaders might not fit the voters' criteria of the right thing. They should focus on aligning the party image with the prevalent political issues as it is their issues rather than image that has the centre stage in political marketing.
- Political marketing need not be limited only to the period of the election campaign. Real time software, social media and continuous networking with the electorate helps extend the modern campaigning to governing.
- To beat the trust issues, expectations and promises attached with the political marketing campaigns need to be practical, probable and achievable.
- The political candidates need to come out of their red and blue zone to be one with the people. They should work towards adapting both theory and practice of political marketing to the changing dynamics of modern politics. It is time when the masses start viewing the government as people's government as opposed to viewing themselves as government's people.

A leader, able to move mountains, or for that matter, the opinion of the electorate, leaves a momentous mark of triumph in the political arena. This triumph is short-lived, but it is also the one factor of vital importance. This is the factor that would be

discussed and re-discussed by the political gurus trying to predict the tidal wave of voter opinion. The leaders have to successfully wade their way through this colossal marketing challenge and be the front-runners of moving the public opinion in a desired direction. It is also judicious to know which segment of the electorate is the most receptive to the marketing efforts of the party. One mistake of ignorance, and the hard reality would come crashing down, leaving the political ambitions shattered.

The electorate today knows it all and wants it all. Standing for what is right for the country and upholding the best interests of the nation over the political interests is critical. Most times, doing the right thing is not the easiest. The hard blows should be dealt with care as they can cost the chance of losing popularity or of getting re-elected. Creating awareness among the voters and superseding their individual goals with goals for the social good is imperative. In this age of digital growth, the future of political marketing holds great promises. Technological advancements have bridged the gap between the government and its electorate. The politicians have become more interactive, more accessible and more real. Advances in social media and the enhancement of telecommunications industry have facilitated the democracy to be directly approachable, thereby increasing the interest and participation of voters in the elections.

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