

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 6, Special Issue 9, May 2017

BRAND STRATEGY: BJP

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ABSTRACT: A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. A product or service to which human beings attach a bundle of tangible (functional product and service (characteristics) and intangible (emotional and/or symbolic) meanings that add value. A brand has one strategic purpose and that is to differentiate itself from competitors.

KEYWORDS: Product, Tangible, Intangible, Attach and Value.

I. POLITICS

Political parties can be viewed as Brands and the politicians are the products. All of them, segment markets and then try to target them. They have different strategies for different segments. “Some fail some succeed”.

II. BRANDS

BJP, Congress, BSP, AIADMK, JD etc. These are the competing brands fighting for one goal. They have various products viz. the politicians.

Brand: **BHARTIYA JANTA PARTY**
Brand BJP formed in 1951 under the leadership of Dr.Syama Prasad Mookerjee. Philosophy of Integral Humanism and Hindutva. BJP has formed government in central for 3 times till now.
Rise of A Powerful Sub-Brand
Under the Nurturing of Umbrella brand BJP Rise of a product that became a brand of its own. Powerful sub brand – **NARENDRA MODI**.

It is not easy for most product brands to go from regional to national but the dilution of the only other national brand, the Congress, and a common need for change also helped MODI. And this brand MODI tapped the common underline need and connect it to benefits that’s why it goes national. There is difference between a regional brand going national and a politician going national. MODI was known outside Gujarat before he decided to move beyond the state, just as Nitish Kumar and Mulayam Singh Yadav Chief Ministers of Bihar & Uttar Pradesh respectively, are known. But these regional leaders did not venture out of their home states in their recent elections. **MODI did.**

Bharatiya Janata Party leader Narendra MODI’s election juggernaut in the 2014 Lok Sabha & Vidhan Sabha of five state polls is an example of how to prepare and successfully implement a marketing and branding campaign. His image face messaging have overshadowed all other brand – even that of his own party. This case study looks at the strategy and tactics behind the creation of brand MODI.

Narendra MODI has rewritten the rules of the game and redefined Indian politics. Brand MODI has not only captured popular imagination but also trumped brand B.J.P.

How did it happen?

The party was the first to recognize and adapt to the fundamental shift in the composition and aspiration of voters. It seized the opportunities to project a new face to address voters’ aspiration.

MODI created an identity that resonated with far more people and deeper than that of the BJP. Like brands make sense at surface and deeper levels.

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Thus was born brand MODI. A humble origin, extra ordinary achievements through sheer hard work and dedication, and a corruption – free image made MODI an apt mascot to challenge the status quo. The branding of MODI and presidential – style campaign was a brilliant response to redefined Indian politics.

The branding of MODI was a well – crafted strategy of the R.S.S and B.J.P. The campaign attracted many newcomers. It was the first election campaign in India to use social media and information technology heavily and first to listen to the voters and respond in real time.

The curtains of General Elections of 2014 are finally drawn. It has been nothing short of a spectacular Blockbuster Movie with a resounding and riveting climax that one may have seen in one of those Marvel Comics Superhero movies. Only that in this case the Action, Drama, Emotions everything was pitched in real life for viewing and to experience. In this long drawn electoral battle, which was fought pretty bitterly, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged victorious with a huge margin with India voting for its current blue-eyed boy Narendra Modi. Till a fortnight ago, people were debating whether the so called “Modi” wave is actual or fictitious; it can be safely assumed that all doubts have been put to rest. In fact yesterday the joke started in social media was it wasn’t a wave but a Tsunami that drowned Congress’s fortune completely. By the day end, people said it wasn’t Tsunami but a TsunNamo. That way this election has been very symbolic right from “Maa Ganga ne bulaya hain” to “Har Bharatbasi jeetega”, with underlying political overtures.

This has been that kind of election where India saw maximum citizen involvement including the affluent class who had stayed away from politics in the past. Modi had successfully polarised India into two schools of thoughts– one who saw him as Leader who would build New India and other who thought was a threat to democracy. There was hardly a third set. We witnessed an upsurge in social media, where friends turned foes, guards were thrown off, there were no mincing of words and verbal duel happening all across the space all for one man -Modi. Hence it wouldn’t be a bad idea to deconstruct the Brand Modi, purely from an academic point of view, to understand how Modi became such a strong brand, that people talked about both way and eventually the marketing campaign of BJP, which took a huge risk to build it around Modi but eventually got back rich dividends.

Phillip Kotler, who is the renowned Marketing Guru talked about Marketing Mix – which basically talked about the 4Ps of Marketing – Product, Place, Pricing and Promotion. Basically putting the right product, in the right place, at the right price in the right time. But starting point of any product had to begin with understanding the basic need of the consumer and assess if there is a demand for it and existing supply.

India was going through a crisis on back-drop of recession and subsequent economic slowdown, complemented by Policy Paralysis, Multiple High Level Corruption, Inflation, Jobs, Security issues and most importantly lack of vision and strong leadership by the current government. While India saw meteoric rise of Arvind Kejirwal, as voice of Mango people of India but euphoria was short-lived with his exit from Delhi government. Though he chose to fight in the Lok Sabha election, including standing against Narendra Modi, from Varanasi, doubts in the mind of people on his sustainability was already seeded. The ruling party had put forward their royal blue-eyed boy Rahul Gandhi as their messiah but his connect to people of India was like former belonged to Mars while the latter belonged to Venus. So from a market standpoint, there was clearly there was a gap for a good leader or organizational set-up which could bring India on right track.

Product: BJP knew that they had a product in their factory that had these core qualities of strong personality, proven track record of governance, tech-savvy, great oratory skills and could potentially be their ace-card in these elections and that can turn the fortunes for them. But the product had its own Achilles heel– he came with a heavy baggage of the past – of being a Religious Extremist, a tyrant with intolerance towards certain minority community and being seen as someone who did not do enough and had alleged linkages in Gujarat riots of 2002. While highest court of India, acquitted him of any charges, he remained a matter of discussion in the people’s court till date. But that didn’t stop Modi’s growing appeal to sect of society particularly the youth and Business class, thanks to his well marketed Gujarat Model.

While BJP was confident that it had a product that had all potential to cater to market needs, they had to eliminate the risks of its failure owing to stiff opposition they may face due to extremist image. But probably party counted on the fact that that we Indians as a nation love to move on and generally forgive and forget things of past. But it was still critical to reposition Brand Modi before relaunching for the Lok Sabha Elections 2014. Repositioning reminds me of

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Cadbury repositioned itself as a substitute to dessert, in recent years as “Kuch meetha ho Jaaye”. To be fair to Narendra Modi, he too had evolved a long way for being RSS worker to one of the best Chief Minister of India.

Hence Brand Modi was launched with an image makeover as Prime ministerial Candidate of BJP who could be viewed as a Leader who was ready to move beyond caste, creed and spearhead in re-building this nation into a New, Progressive India. The brand was typically addressing three kinds of needs: a) Roti, Kapda and Makan b) Jobs and Facility c) Hope and Aspiration And Brand Modi was launched with an image makeover, re-positioning as their Prime-Ministerial candidate who was ready to offer:

- a) Development across all core sectors
- b) Inclusive growth
- c) Vision for a new India
- d) Good Governance

The advantage in BJP offering was a strong decisive leader which inspired people, something the competition clearly was lacking on.

Place: For any product to be successful, it is necessary to reach out to people, through right distribution channels. The successful and effective use of multiple mediums, be it print, television, social media or technology to reach out to the maximum number of people with its message (Read product offering) has been a key success factor of BJP. But the most telling factor that ensured this victory was their biggest distribution system – The vast network of Feet on street RSS and BJP cadres who worked relentlessly to pull off this historic victory. The biggest example would be BJP winning 71 seats out of 80 in UP which probably the biggest optimist within BJP wouldn't have thought as well. But the herculean task was pulled off by the workers, who reached out at each home at village level with their pamphlets/videos of Modi, to communicate their product offering. They were like those numerous cells inside human body to keep it functioning well.

Apart from traditional media, BJP was more active in social media with Narendra Modi himself present on twitter, uploading his speeches interacting with his followers. 3D Hologram Rally/ Video-conferencing were the master stroke which ensured Modi had maximum reach even to far flung people in various villages in India at a limited time. “Chai pe Charcha” was another interesting platform which Modi used to discuss relevant issues and reach out to people. The multiple channels, used by Modi and BJP members in putting the product proposition to people of India, ensured the slow but steady built up of euphoria of Brand Modi that peaked at the right time and the fever reached its peak during elections. Modi's high rhetoric speeches in multiple rallies was icing on the cake.

Pricing: In this case the price India had to pay was simple – go out, stand in the queue and cast their vote sometimes, in the soaring temperature of 40 degree plus in the heat to elect a Modi Government. BJP here too run a focussed campaign to specifically reach out to first time voters, to come out to vote. However cynics would say, India may have to pay a much bigger price for electing Modi – whether those 39% of people who voted for them are right or cynic's only time can tell.

Promotion: It is often said that you being good doesn't help unless the world knows about. This election saw BJP run a very high-visibility campaign almost at your face campaign just like SRK did few years back for his film Ra. one which drew him a lot of flak. A dear friend of mine told me the other day that Manmohan Singh, despite all criticism, had practised some of best foreign policies only if people of India would know.

But BJP left no stone unturned to hype its campaign – which had a fair bit of risk in it – of revolving around Individual Brand Modi with the party as backdrop. The advertising campaign got it right from the go with a tagline that caught the fancy of people from Day 1 - the most used, abused phrase of 2014: Ab ki baar, Modi Sarkar. The creative brain behind the campaign knew fully well that given the active social media, the phrase would spread like wild fire and various by-products of the taglines i.e. joke would be invented and circulated. That's what they precisely wanted and banked upon with an ultimate end objective that of – Brand Recall. Every time the message was circulated, Brand Modi got registered fast and thick among voters. Brand Modi was visible in hoarding to kites to sarees.

Next in the line was there cleverly disguised television campaign which addressed the need of consumer i.e. Indian citizens that of Hope and Aspiration– “Acche Din Aaane wale hain”. The ads here was rolled out in phases, covering people of different sects be it Auto-rick Shaw driver or women in villages, where they spoke how Modi would bring

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back Good days. This was clever marketed campaign which reflected Modi as Messiah of hope with a reassurance message and the inclusive growth Brand Modi wanted to advocate. But it is the BJP Anthem for 2014, which put across a direct co-relation between Brand Modi and Brand India. – That spoke about “Main desh mith ne doonga, Desh nahi jhookne doonga” putting across subtly to voter of India, that if Modi wins, ultimately India will win. The campaign touched the raw nerves of voters and that’s why it worked big time.

Power of any brand depends on how strong reaction evokes – both positive and negative. Brand Modi did that to the core. But most importantly it successfully invoked national sentiment among Indian voters, which eventually resulted in historic euphoria and as one would call wave ensuring a huge favourable mandate towards Modi and by virtue of same to the BJP. The critics would say BJP would have won anyways given the high anti-incumbency wave that was blowing across country irrespective of campaign – my reply to that would be yes they would have probably been single largest party with 170-180 seats but this marketing campaign boosted their chances many folds and ensured they get an absolute majority in next govt, which neither BJP nor its opponents would have thought in their wildest dream.

HOW THEY DO IT?

- Managing strategic political challenges by influencing mass perception and political dynamics.
- Analyzing intangible political macro and micro environment and political dynamics.
- TOWS analysis of current inter and intra political environment`s component.
- Finding the current political temperament, deviations and their latent micro and macro root cause on inter and intra levels.
- Standard micro synchronization among planned strategies, process and campaign execution as per political environment, competition, voters psychology and mass perception need.
- “ARRRE” Approach

A- Activate Voters

R- Retain Voters

R- Return Voters

R- Recommend Voters

E- Engage Voters/Public

Tools:

- 1)Voice Broadcast
- 2) Digital Media Marketing(Social Media Marketing, Email,)
- 3) Missed Call services.
- 4)Public Relation
- 5)Political Branding and Advertising
- 6)Political Survey

III. CONCLUSION

The branding of MODI was a well – crafted strategy of the R.S.S and B.J.P. The campaign attracted many newcomers. It was the first election campaign in India to use social media and information technology heavily and first to listen to the voters and respond in real time.

There was clearly a gap for a good leader or organizational set-up which could bring India on right track. The people of India finds `MODI` a suitable brand for filling this gap.

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ISSN(Online): 2319-8753
ISSN (Print): 2347-6710

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Vol. 6, Special Issue 9, May 2017

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Key Words:

- Rewritten
- Aspiration
- Fundamental
- Dedication
- Campaign
- Marketing Mix
- Product
- Place
- Pricing
- Promotion
- Multiple High Level Corruption
- Policy Paralysis
- Sustainability
- Repositioning
- Governance
- TOWS analysis
- Political temperament