

Political Leaders and Marketing: A Brand Identity Study

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Abstract

Brands are powerful determinants of success. It is unsurprising to see how branding tools and processes are employed in political context. Notwithstanding the differences, the exchange, choice and discrimination between competing candidates makes the political arena similar to marketing in general. A democratic form of governance enjoys several similarities with competition. The Indian political space is highly divided and fragmented based on voter demographics and psychology. In sync with market reality, the political players are also highly diversified. In the next general elections, the most dominant voting group is going to be the youth segment often called 'now generation'. Change is also visible in the political leadership of two major national parties. The competing leaders Narendra Modi of the BJP and Rahul Gandhi of the Congress have a brand building task in their hands. The first question in brand building is to understand what the brand stands for. This study explores the identity of these two leaders by applying content analysis to their communication. It is interesting to find that both brands are driven by a dominant discourse on change, but seem to adopt different routes to achieving the same.

Keyword: Political Marketing, Brand Identity, Democracy, Competition, Brand Image

Introduction

For a long time, the term brand and branding have been used narrowly in business context. But gradually branding as an art and science of value creation broke barriers to cross over to many non-business categories. As a result,

it is not uncommon to use brand along with places, countries, political parties, festivals, social outfits, cities, and people. Systematic brand development can benefit products, services, and companies by positively altering performance metrics like sales, profits, commitment and relationships. In any market there are solid brands and then there are laggards. The differentiating aspect between the two categories is in their brand building efforts. For instance in mobile phones Apple has enjoyed leadership in smartphone category by building an iconic brand status. The same is true for brands like Nike in sports shoes and Rolex in luxury watches.

The last two American general elections demonstrated how a meticulously crafted branding strategy can build a political brand. Barrack Obama's presidential campaign provided an excellent demonstration of power of branding. His first brand building campaign which used the slogans, 'Change we need', 'Change we can believe in' and war cry 'Yes we can' found resonance with the innermost cords of Americans. But his brand building was not confined to developing slogans and chants alone but rather to appropriating the inner, unheard voice of the people. Obama's success can be traced to his ability to listen to the thoughts that were never given voice but did hurt. He attended to this invisible void, the paradigmatic shift that people wanted in the way America was run by the Republicans. The Indian political space has been undergoing a subtle but profound change. Mere simple sloganeering and rallies organized around personalities are not sufficient. The choice rules are moving away from simple heuristics to complex contemplation model of selection. This call for a radical alteration in the way political brands are planned and created.

Political Market, Exchange and

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Marketing

The political market works on almost identical principles as commercial markets. Marketing encompasses a gamut of activities that involve mutually satisfying exchanges between individual and organisation (Alderson, 1957; Bagozzi, 1975). At the core of marketing is the exchange in which two or more parties voluntarily exchange something of value. That is something is given up in exchange for something in return. This process is very palpable in marketing of tangibles like a salt or soap. In political marketing the intangibility of exchange makes political marketing a bit confounding: what is marketed? Who is marketer and consumer? What flows between exchanging parties? What is the nature of value? What is the purpose of exchange?

The marketing concept underwent broadening of its scope from being confined to goods centrality. The earlier definitions limited marketing to the flow of business activities that directed flow of goods and service from producer to consumer (Committee on Definitions, 1960). However, later in late sixties a wider view was adopted to broaden the marketing concept from business activity to a 'pervasive social activity' involving both profit and not for profit organisations (Kotler & Levy, 1969). This opened gates for social organisations to adopt marketing in furthering their ends. Later marketing's applicability was examined in the context of promotion of social causes like selling brotherhood, safe driving and family planning (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). But marketing principles need to be applied to non-profit organisations because of differences in their character. Attention must be paid to the factors which create differences like multiplicity of customers, multiplicity of objectives, service offered, and public scrutiny (Lovelock & Weinberg, 1978).

Marketing edifice is built on the concept of exchange. Three types of exchanges can be distinguished: restricted, generalised and complex (Bagozzi, 1975). Restricted exchange involves reciprocal relationship between two parties like seller, buyer or salesman and retailer. Here both parties directly benefit from an exchange. Generalized exchange involves three or more participating actors and participating actors do not benefit directly from each other. For instance a social organisation takes garden maintenance expenses from a hotel where people come and enjoy who then read the sponsorship signage and patronize the hotel. And complex exchange

involves a system of mutual relationship involving three or more actors wherein each of the actors is involved in at least one direct exchange. This is best illustrated by relationship between participating actors in a distribution chain (manufacturer-retailer-customer). Exchanges can be characterised by three types of meanings: utilitarian, symbolic and mixed. Utilitarian exchange is typically exchange of money for some function or utility providing good like soap. Symbolic transfer pertains less to survival and more to psycho-social aspect of existence. Here the product or service is bought for what it means rather than what it does. Lastly, mixed exchange combines both utilitarian and symbolic transfer.

Prior to making any attempt to generalize marketing theory into a new space it is important to explore its generalisability. It is important to understand to what extent political space is similar to the concept of market? Are actors, objectives, tools and flows similar? Marketing is derived from market which refers to a place or space where parties engage in exchanges to satisfy themselves. In this context markets are mechanisms to move up on the ladder of satisfaction for the parties involved in exchange. Marketing in the context is a process of actualizing these exchanges.

Drawing parallel between a business market and political market, the commonality includes the following: customers in politics are equal to voters, the market players or competitors are political parties, the product takes the form of packaged manifesto, the flow from buyer is that of the act of voting, and the purpose it to create voter satisfaction and the long term goal is to develop committed voter base or loyalty. Like any other market, the essence of marketing is competition and strategies to outmaneuver the rivals in a similar way that political outfits try to outwit each other. Political marketing shares many concepts and tools with marketing of goods and services and these include known concepts like buyer, seller, consumer behaviour, segmentation, image, loyalty, product concept and positioning. The same is true for the tools like marketing research, advertising, factor analysis and multidimensional scaling. It is not uncommon to see marketing terminology is being used in the world of politics (Sharma, 1975). Words like value, strategy; positioning, channels, competitive advantage; rivalry and target have become language in a political scene. Accordingly the political arena is viewed as market and political parties and politicians are recognized as brands

(Kavanagh, 1995; Schneider, 2004; Scammell, 2007)

Theoretical Foundations: Democracy and Competition

The State like any other industry imposes larger external boundaries within which firms or players operate. Structurally markets can differ in their dimensions and produce different forms of competitive dynamics. In economics markets are classified and can be scaled on a continuum with two opposing ends being monopoly on the one side and the perfect competition on the other. This categorisation is generally based on four structural aspects of a market and these are: the number of buyers and sellers, the degree of product differentiation, entry and exit barrier and information about the offerings of the players. The key idea that favours competition over any other form of market structure is that it produces best possible outcomes in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Large number of players, free entry and exit and making of informed choices by the customers is likely create competitive pressure on participants to perform their best to attract and retain customers.

The debate about the form of governance goes back to the times of Aristotle and Plato. Even Greek Philosopher Aristotle, way back in 384-322 BC, proposed that one or few or many people may be engaged in governance. This puts the form of governance in to three categories monarchy being the governance by one and aristocracy is governance by a few and governance by many is polity which is now known as constitutional democracy. Later Plato proposed six types of governance namely aristocracy, monarchy, democracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny (Griffith, 2000). Superficially some kind of parallel can be drawn between governance forms and market structures. The idea of aristocracy is based on the 'rule by the best', monarchy in which power is vested in a single figure like king, autocracy which implies unquestioned concentration of power in one hand. All these forms of governance come close to monopoly structure in which market or people become subjects and state's instrumentality is displaced in favour of people in power.

Democracy is a form of government wherein people are directly involved in selection of governing class. Democracy enjoys parallel with competition in which the centre of power shifts from the ruler to the ruled. The rulers of state are not created by some operation of

entry barrier imposed in the form of heredity or wealth. Abraham Lincoln once said that democracy is the 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'. Democratic form of governance shares many similarities with competition like free entry, informed choice, pressure to deliver the best outcomes, and ultimately the customer or people franchise. Democratic regime of governance is executed through republican organisation of state in which people do not directly legislate or govern rather it is done through an indirect process. People elect their representatives to governing councils through free and fair selection process. Often two terms, democracy and republic are believed to mean same thing but are actually different. A republic involve participation of people in representative election process but a republic is governed by a charter and democracy not.

By looking closely at democracy and competition, several similarities can be observed (Becker, 1958): the most important aim of political parties is to be chosen by electorate in the same way as companies aim to be chosen by consumers; political parties have other goals like welfare, international standing or income distribution, similarly firms in competition may be guided by a host of other objectives like corporate reputation, market share or consumer wellbeing; in democracy people have freedom of expression and speech to criticize and in competition consumers can also express their dissatisfaction with a supplier; just like firms need to be responsive to the needs and wants of their customers, people in power need to be responsive to the will of people; people in office must refrain from being guided by their own interest as managers should dissociate their mandate from their own personal interest; under ideal competitive conditions the survival is envisaged of a most efficient firm similarly the most efficient party must survive in democracy.

One of the mechanisms that deal with resource allocation is through price system. The other such systems include bargaining, random, bidding, political fraud and deceit. Even in a democracy political system is not preferred over price system for resource allocation because a person in power drops down to a lower level of mental performance (Schumpeter, 1947). It is often said that 'what is perfect competition in economics is pure democracy in politics'. Some common assumptions here are: information, adjustments and absence of rigidities (Frey, 1970). The choice is made at an intersection point of voter and

parties. Political players seek to maximise voter share same as firms try to maximise market share. A voter enjoys information about programs and promises and he or she can discover when these are not implementable like consumers enjoy knowledge about the products and services offered in competition.

The context: Indian Political Landscape

The political market in India is shared by a complex amalgam of national, regional, state, identity and religious players. These players owe their emergence and sustenance to equally complex voter population structure. The population is segmented on the basis of multidimensional criteria which include age, spoken language, religion, gender, caste, geography, and ideology. Some of the important players are as follows:

- **Indian National Congress:** The oldest party founded in 1885 and played a significant role in Indian freedom struggle. Currently it leads the United Progressive Alliance headed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi. This party has been voted into power the maximum number of times. Some of the iconic figures of the party include names like Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi. The party is positioned as centrist in its orientation with a slight leftist favour. The fundamental core values of the party are-secularism, nationalism, social justice, inclusion, and economic liberalisation. It is often criticized for minority appeasement policies.
- **Bhartiya Janta Party:** It was founded by Shyama Prasad Mookerjee as Jana Sangh in 1951 and was later renamed as BJP in 1980. BJP positions itself as a democratically constituted party which focused on value based politics which can be summed as 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav'. The party is guided by values such as nationalism, swadeshi movement, Hindutva, integrity, right orientation. Many believe it to be a hard liner Hindu party but it never claims it to be so.
- **Bahujan Samaj Party:** It primarily came into existence to represent socially and economically suppressed backward classes and religious minorities like Sikhs, Muslims, Parsis, and Buddhists. It was founded by Kanshi Ram in 1984 primarily inspired by BR Ambedkar. Currently it is headed by Mayawati. The party is committed to bring-

ing about "Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation" of backward and minority classes who were vanquished, trampled upon and forced to languish. Though its dominant sphere of influence is in UP, the party has made rapid progress in other states.

- **Left Parties (Communist Party of India and CPI-M):** This group includes one of the oldest parties founded in 1925 and is based on left wing communist ideology. It is a part of coalition of leftist and communist parties. It is currently headed by AB Bardhan. At the heart of the party lay struggle against imperialism, feudalism and monopolies. Communist Party of India (Marxist): founded in 1964 as a result of a split from CPI. The party strongly opposes capitalism, liberalisation, globalization and detests imperialist sentiments. The party opposes neo-liberal economic policies and communal politics.

The diversity of Indian population limits the effectiveness of any player that aims to mass cover the entire market. Quite like the diversity of consumers severely curtails the effectiveness of mass marketed product or services, over the years the appeal of national political brands has witnessed serious erosion. There is nothing like a 'be all' political brand on the scene now like the status which Congress enjoyed for decades. The fragmentation is both visible and clear. This has given birth to new set of political parties which reflect sentiments of small voter groups based on narrow local considerations like cultural or economic agenda. Some of the regional political parties are as follows:

- **Factions of Congress:** National Congress Party and Trinamool Congress were creation by breakaway faction from INC in 1999 which protested against the leadership of Italian born Sonia Gandhi. The state of major influence of NCP is the state of Maharashtra. The party takes a centre and centre left stance and is guided by values like progressiveness, secularism, equality, social justice, federalism and nationalism. Similar is the case of Trinamool Congress, led by Mamata Banerjee. This party is a major force in West Bengal and is ideologically committed to secularism, federalism and socialism in particular it is pro-poor in its orientation.
- **All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK):** These parties espouse Tamil cause. These

outfits started with anti-north India sentiments resisting Aryans and defending Dravidian pride and its protection by reservations for Dravidians. MG Ramachandran founded AIADMK which was inherited by Jayalalita in 1987 after the death of MGR.

- **Telgu Desam:** Founded by NT Rao to promote Telugu culture and pride, it belongs to Andhra Pradesh. Its fundamental idea is to promote welfare state based on social equality and justice. In this sense it is a centrist state party.
- **Akali Dal:** It is devoted to espouse the cause of Sikhs and exerts control in Punjab. The party is founded on identity and religion and represents interest of Sikh community.
- **Shiv Sena:** This party's origin can be traced to protests against people migrating into Mumbai initially Gujarati businessmen and later people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Ideologically the party is given to promoting Hindu- Marathi pride and protecting the interest of Marathi people.
- **Off shoots of Janta Dal- Samajvadi Party, Rastriya Lok Dal, Rastriya Janta Dal, Janta Dal United, Biju Janta Dal:** These parties are committed to the ideals of secularism and justice to all, with a particular emphasis on the socially weaker sections of the society. Their influence is confined to different states for example JD (U) and RJD wield influence in Bihar, SP and RLD are active in UP and BJD is a strong force in Odisha.
- **Others:** India being a highly diverse country with people divided along different considerations, there are parties which are founded to represent their cause irrespective of the size of the base. These groups are primarily given to promoting regional or state cause. Some of the other parties active on the political scene include, Haryana Vikas Party, National Conference (Kashmir), Manipur People's Party (Manipur), Maharashtrawadi Gomantak in Goa, Sikkim Democratic Front (Sikkim), and Mizo National Front (Mizoram).

Political Brand Positioning

The political market in India is highly diverse and fragmented. This diversity and fragmentation is reflected in ethnic, cultural, regional, demographic, and psychological aspects of people who inhabit India.

India's struggle for freedom for British Raj was one major rallying force that could drive unity in diversity. This sentiment benefited Indian National Congress as a political brand in developing an appeal that could cut across diversity. Accordingly this party achieved victory in first five successive political bouts after independence. Like a common evolution process that witnesses in any industry in which the introductory stage is followed by fragmentation, the Indian political landscape underwent similar transformation.

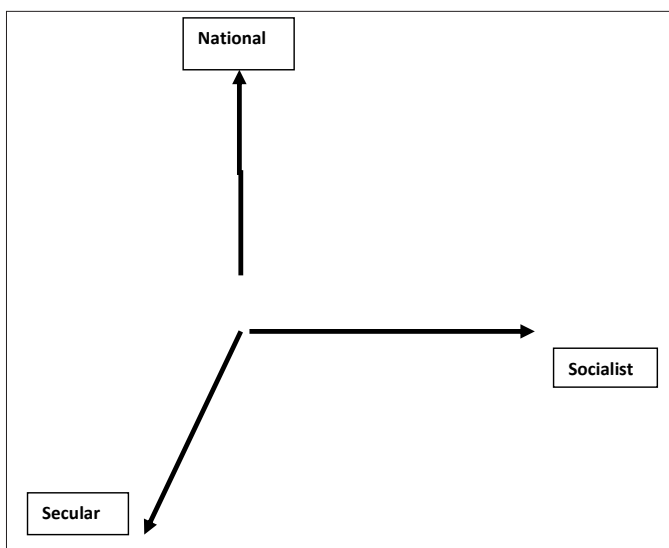
Technically fragmented industries are the ones in which no single company has large share and can strongly influence the industry outcome. Usually the fragmented industries are inhabited by a large number of small and medium size players (Porter, 1980). In the industrial economics context two factors that prevent industry fragmentation are presence of significant economies of scale and barriers to entry. These cause industry to be concentrated. Similarly consumer demand can be instrumental for an industry to fragment. The diversity in consumer preference diminishes appeal of a single brand and hence prevents it to acquire a dominant share. However diversity is not the only factor, diseconomy of scale and scope facilitate fragmentation (Caves & Williamson, 1985; Tirole, 1988).

The decline of one dominant political brand, Congress manifests its inability to cater to a differing voter preference. Like in any other emergent industry, the pioneer invests to develop and consolidate its product or service on generic considerations like quality and performance, Congress managed to steer through initial general elections on basis of generic nationalist agenda. The core proposition of its brand revolved around aspects such as secularism, inclusion, socialism, and economic empowerment. But its failure to meet population diversity led to political brand proliferation based on narrow regional or religious considerations. Notwithstanding the difficulty in defining the political marketplace, a political outfit can consider itself as a brand with a clearly articulated offer involving functional and emotional values to its target electorate group (White & Chernatony, 2002).

How a brand is to be perceived in the market depends upon what position it wants to occupy in prospect's mind. Positioning is an integral part of marketing strategy and it involves designing an offer to occupy a distinctive place in consumer's mind (Kotler, 2003). In goods marketing context, an act of positioning starts with product which

may include service, company, institution or person but it is not what one does to a product rather what you do to the mind of the prospect (Ries & Trout, 1982). The ultimate aim of positioning is to yield competitive superiority by creating value that is both relevant and different. The political brands in India seek to broadly position themselves along three important dimensions: sectarian versus secularism; regional versus national and socialism versus free market economy (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Positioning Dimensions of Political Brands



The positioning that various parties enjoy using the above three dimensional framework suggests that national parties like Congress, BJP and Communists have overlapping points of parity and also point of differences. One thing that runs common across these three is their national focus but these differ in their economic orientation, communist parties have left leanings whereas both BJP and Congress are for free trade and liberalisation. But BJP is perceived to be sectarian party (Hindu) whereas Communists and Congress enjoy secular image. Most of the regional parties attempt to position themselves using old tried and tested plank of being secular, socialist with a focus on regional pride as the chief rallying point. The perceived failure of the national parties in seamlessly meshing regional aspirations of people with national agenda has been instrumental in giving birth to a fragmented political scene in India. In economics cartelisation is one of the strategies that firms used in oligopolistic market structure; the politics of coalition is a similar reality.

Brand Identity: A Study of two Brands

The next general elections in India are poised to be different for two reasons. First is the size of the youth in the total population. The youth population (15-14 years grew three fold during the last four decades of the last century from 73.33 million in 1961 to 195 million in 2001 (Dev & Venkatanarayana, 2011). Currently India has the largest youth population, 70 percent of its population is below the age of 35 years, and this makes India the youngest nation (GOI, 2011). This youth population may imply a paradigmatic change in the voting population as these are children of liberalisation. This demographic group now constitutes a vital target group for any political brand because they are likely to view elections from a prism uncolored by past baggage. Voters are more likely to act rational and less prone to influence by class affiliations (Downs, 1957). The brand heritage of both Congress and BJP is unlikely to resonate with this population because struggle for independence, its heroes, ideological contradictions, and historical events of the past are far too removed from their birth after the liberalised era. Often loosely labeled as 'now' generation, these people are governed by the desire for instant gratification and want good jobs, salary, cars, houses, governance and development.

Besides the change in the nature and composition of electorate market, the two national political brands face challenge of maintaining relevance in new emerged reality. This is nothing new in managing a product or service brand. Brands, in order to stay relevant evolve in their proposition and positioning. Consider the case of a brand like Lux from Hindustan Unilever. At the heart of its timelessness is hidden careful strategy of revitalisation and rejuvenation. Brands, in the absence of strategically induced change are likely become irrelevant and outmoded. Four strategies can be considered to stay relevant (Aaker, 2011). Attribute or benefit parity with competition that are must have in a category. Second, a brand can leapfrog over competition to jump over a new category or subcategory like iPod Sensor. Third, repositioning the brand to align its value with changing market dynamics and lastly sticking to brand's core and constant improvement like Gillette.

Given the fact that electorate market scenario in the next general election is unlikely to be an extension of the past, the political brand like Congress and BJP cannot afford to

lower their anchors with same identity and image. In order to be successful, brand managers must select a meaning before entering the market and operationalize it in the form of an image (Gardner & Levy, 1955). Brand image is the totality of the perception or set of associations held by a people which include attribute, benefit, price, and personality aspects of a brand (Keller, 2003). Identity on the other hand is about defining what the brand stands for or what associations it seeks to develop or how a manager wants its brand to be perceived. Identity involves answering some critical questions (Kapferer, 1977) like: why does the brand exist? what is its vision? what are its values? who is it targeting? what is its know-how? what is its vision of product category? Both of the national political brands appear to be poised for a fierce battle in the coming national elections. And battle lines are almost drawn between prime ministerial candidates, Rahul Gandhi of Congress and Narendra Modi of BJP. It makes an interesting study in brand building as to find out their brand vision.

The players

Both Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi are anticipated to be the prime ministerial candidates for BJP and Congress respectively. One of the ways in which their vision can be decoded is by analyzing what they communicate with their audience. For this purpose two of their speeches were chosen to explore their vision. Narendra Modi's speech which was delivered at SRCC in Delhi and Rahul Gandhi's speech delivered at CII were content analysed to discover possible patterns and values. In the first analysis, Text STAT version 2 was used to find out the word used by these leaders in their respective speeches and their frequency. The data obtained using this tool is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequently used words in by Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi

Words (N Modi)	Frequency	Words (Rahul Gandhi)	Frequency
I	17	I	55
We	100	We	75
You	51	You	51
Our	47	People	31
World	41	India	22
Friends	37	Movement	16
Gujarat	37	Ideas	15
India	32	Infrastructure	15

Words (N Modi)	Frequency	Words (Rahul Gandhi)	Frequency
Country	23	Country	10
Development	19	Poor	10
People	17	Business	7
Natural	13	Energy	7
Century	12	Forward	9
Sector	12	Environment	7
Youth	8	Everybody	7
Global	8	Growth	7
Young	8	Partnership	7
Governance	6	Tide	7
Opportunity	6	Together	7
Vivekananda	6	Young	7

On the whole Rahul Gandhi used 897 different words, compared to Narendra Modi who used 1250 different words. Table 1 does not reveal much in terms of insight, except three of the most often used words in their speeches were 'I, we and you'. One thing that stands out in the usage of these words is that Rahul used more of 'I' as compare to Modi (55 versus 17) and the usage of 'you' has been more by Modi compared to Rahul (100 versus 75). Counting only the words which have more than ten counts Modi emphasized upon world (global orientation), India and Country (nationalistic orientation), Gujarat (example), development (agenda), friends (personalisation) and people (target). Rahul used 'people' instead of 'you', the usage of the word 'poor' and 'infrastructure' is unique to his delivery.

In order to get a complete blow up of the ideas of these two leaders, two speeches of each were content analyzed. Content analysis is a widely employed tool in social sciences including historical and political research. Its use can be traced back to the period of Second World War in which the US government used it to evaluate enemy propaganda which led to the publication of *Language of Politics* in 1940 (Lasswell *et.al.*, 1965). Content analysis is a method of research where the contents of a message are analysed to draw conclusion (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The inferences drawn could be about the sender or senders of message, the message itself and the audience of message (Krippendorff, 1980). With content analysis the extent to which specific references, themes, attitudes etc permeate a message could be determined (Stone, 1966).

In performing the content analysis on the available texts of the two leaders, an inductive approach was employed. The process in this kind of analysis involves making note

and heading on the margins of the text and repeating the process so that no aspect is left out (Burnard 1999, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Once the categories are generated then these are grouped on basis of their similarity and dissimilarity. Later these categories are regrouped into higher order categories (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Dey, 1993). The results of first categorisation are given in Table 2. In case of Narendra Modi the following higher order categories emerge: reality assessment (knowledge of ground reality), problem identification (despair, poverty), vision of the future (development, leadership, India of future, empowerment), endowment orientation (people, youth power, and entrepreneurship), problem solution strategy (skills, technology, out of box thinking, innovation, governance, reforms, tackle corruption, institutionalisation), getting in specifics (railways, milk revolution, manufacturing), policy (business and trickledown effect) and philosophical orientation (minimum governance, self-belief, India pride, new secularism, optimism).

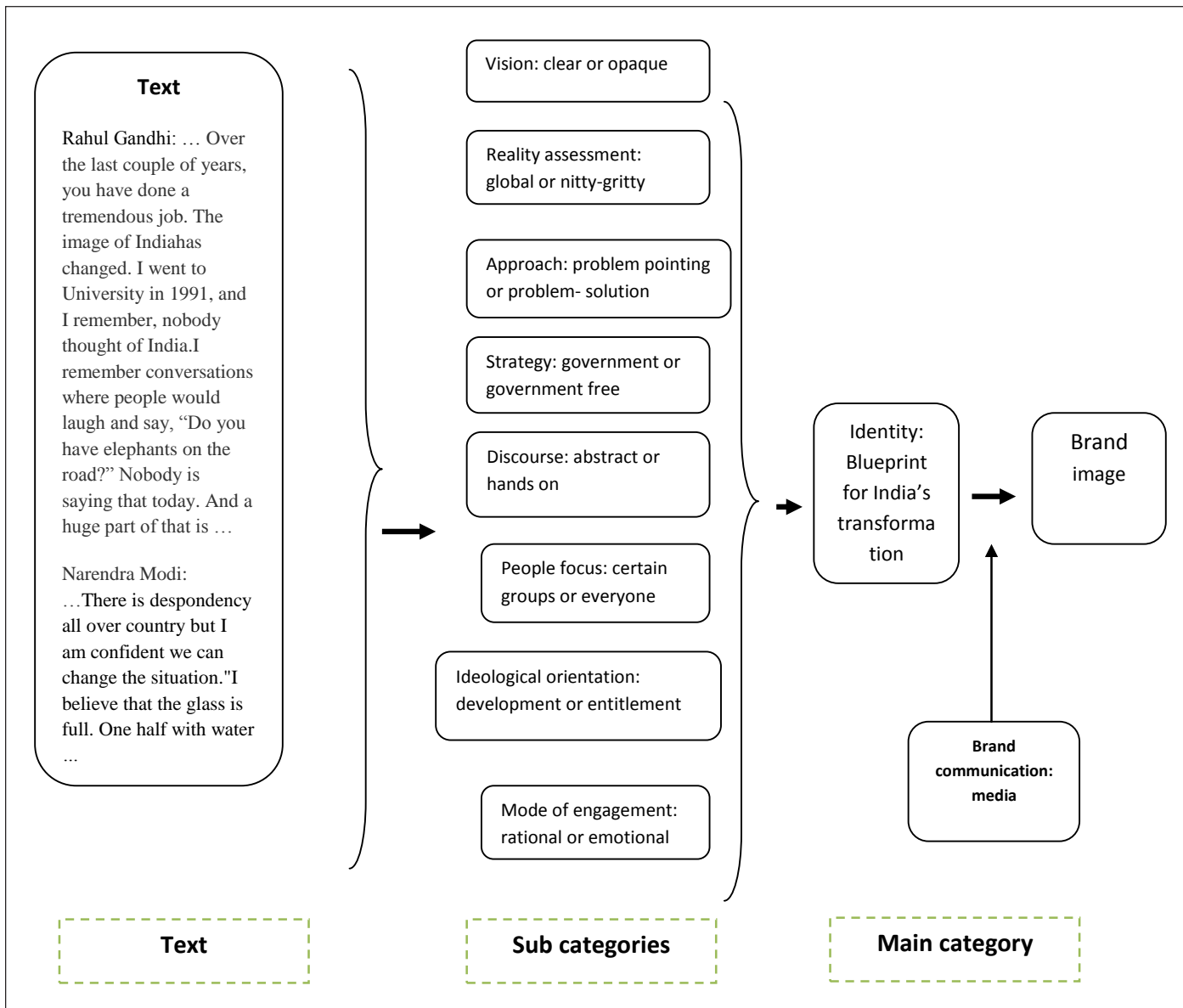
Table 2: Decoding brand identity Narendra Modi versus Rahul Gandhi

<i>NarendraModi- categories</i>	<i>Rahul Gandhi</i>
Good governance	Gratitude to party and workers
National pride- people, resources,	Reference to history, legacy & leaders
Change is possible	People orientation
Despair, despondency, poverty	Inclusiveness- of disenfranchised
Minimum government	List of achievements – Acts, people
Technology to solve problems	Common man, marginalized sections
Knowledge supremacy	Challenges- empowerment, inclusion, prejudice
Youth power- dividend	System drawbacks-unresponsiveness
Developmental politics	Youth, women, poor, marginalized, exclusion
Action/ do orientation (act not Act)	Governance- red tape and corruption
Institutionalisation not individualisation	System transformation-new political architecture
Secularism refined- protection of every one	Emotional personal and family references
Attack on corruption through technology	Flow of ideas and people

<i>NarendraModi- categories</i>	<i>Rahul Gandhi</i>
Facts not abstract hyperboles	Empowerment
Empowerment through e governance	Secularism
Reforms- out of box ideas/ new ideas	Movement of people and ideas-migration
India orientation	Infrastructure- knowledge and physical
Exemplification / solution orientation	Skill development
Can do spirit	Industry university and government partnership
Skill development	Job creation
Achievement orientation	'Rights' based paradigm
Possibilities/ optimism	Rule based government
Pro poor governance	Entrepreneurship
Democracy redefined	India's evolution
Economics in place of politics	Pitching the party
	Anecdotes
	Obsolete system-education
	Human aspiration, energy
	Not incremental but exponential solution
	Vision more than money- inclusion/ compassion
	Industry's role in job creation

One of the most visible patterns visible in Rahul Gandhi's addresses is idea abstractness and a commentary style. The issues are highlighted at higher order categorisation and solutions are not neatly defined pushing them into a realm of subjective perception. The broad categories that can be abstracted are as follows: leveraging history and heritage, problems (secularism, poverty, exclusion, jobs), critique of system (unresponsive, divorced from reality, red tape, corruption, obsolete), and solution (government-business partnership, exponential improvement), philosophy (common man, secularism, empowerment of poor), people (youth, women, poor, marginalized), policy (right based governance) others (migration of people, infrastructure, praise of the party, praise of people).The abstraction process is given in Figure 2. The identity of two leaders is extracted by inductive process. The important dimensions their identity identified through this process relate to vision, reality assessment, approach, strategy, focus, ideological orientation and model of engagement. On the whole both the political brands are

Figure 2: Abstraction of Categories from the Text

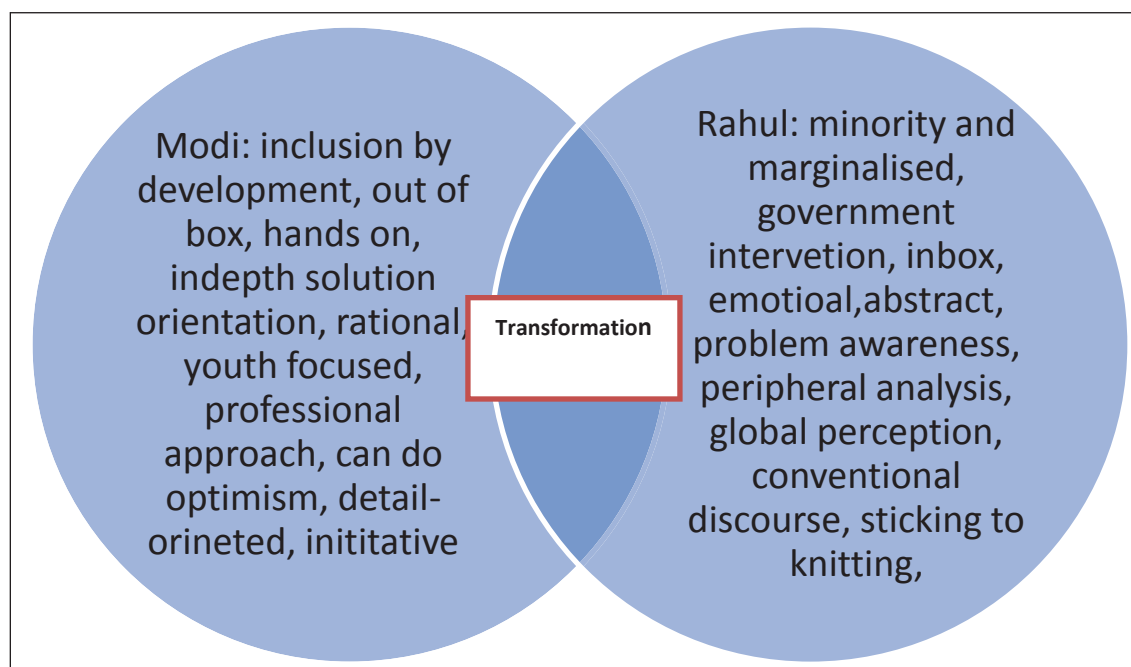


guided by similar goals of India’s transformation by systemic changes but differences are discernible in their approaches.

Two of the identity-defining questions that must be articulated pertain to brand’s promise or value proposition and route to its delivery or implementation. What unique set of association does that brand seek to create (Aaker, 2008). Implicit in this question is articulation of the promise that is made to customers by the brand. According to Keller (2008), four questions are fundamental to brand identity articulation :who are you (core identity),what are you (core and extended identity), what about you (value proposition) and what about you and me (brand-

customer relationship). Identity is a brand’s charter that spells out its vision and mission. How does it aim to establish its relevance for customer and how is it going set itself apart from others? Communication is one of the ways a brand externalizes its identity. A close scrutiny of the abstracted categories reveals interesting points of similarity and differences between the two brands. Global similarity between them can be categorized under the rubric of ‘change ‘or ‘transformation’. Both brands are transformational in their essence- governance transformation for the people of the country.

Modi seems to have a clear vision on two of the fundamental questions: where you want to go (end state)

Figure 3: Brand identity Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi

and how are you going to go there (strategy). Change, in Rahul's conceptualisation is left in un-concretized and ambiguous form. DNA of Modi is development, Rahul on the other hand carries forward Congress's legacy of inclusion, entitlement and secularism. One brand here is attempting to break away from the past; Modi de-emphasizes Hindus, hindutva and attempts to redefine secularism by inclusion of all without explicit reference to any minority community in order to broaden its appeal. His broad discourse is on development as means to welfare of all, new out of box approach to inclusiveness. Rahul Gandhi, on the other hand, is attempting to leverage upon Congress's heritage and reinforces its values and ideals, inclusion based on rights and Acts with explicit references to its core territories. One brand is about change and the other is about continuity.

Promise or proposition is important to get people interested in brand but equally significant is persuasion as to how what it promises is going to be materialized. In terms of routes to realisation, both the brands assume different routes. Modi's approach to welfare and inclusion is development with a clear focus on entrepreneurs and business through spillover effect, his brand is positioned as enabler with minimum interventions (minimum government, maximum governance). This is clearly a right of the center paradigm implying uplifting all through business. Brand Modi does not attack perpetual socio-

economic problems with 'more' of old techniques, rather he approaches these with innovation, technology and out of box ideas and builds the support with evidence.

Rahul Gandhi continues with legacy and promises to take the baton forward by explicitly referring to his core territories like the marginalized groups and the minorities. A linearity of progression is evident here. Rahul does seek partnership with business but continues to stick to its knitting by proposing rights based entitlement model (Acts like MNREGA, Food Security). Unlike Modi who analytically deconstructs and breaks the big problems down into small parts and offers solutions by application out of box ideas, Rahul Gandhi, on the other hand does mention about big macro socio-economic problems facing the country but does not take them forward to offering concrete solutions.

Brand Modi seem to be building relevance and resonance with youth or now generation taking a route through enterprise based development model, social media, communication technology, and youth icon like Vivekananda. Modi comes across as high performance result oriented functional brand who appeals to logic and reason. Rahul on the other hand predominantly appeals to emotions (emotional personal references and anecdotes related to marginalised sections). In terms of values, Modi brand comes across as optimist, doer, energetic, innovator

and logic driven. Rahul brand on the other hand is affect driven, conformist, and in box thinker (Figure 3).

Concluding Remarks

The marketing of a political candidate and brand building is no different from commercial markets. Almost identical strategies and tools are employed in creating winning exchanges in the political arena. Like a brand makes a conscious choice in market selection and targeting, different political brands do the same. Market choice and target selection is discernable in most of the successful political brands in India as is reflected in their expressed identity. A discontinuity of political market scenario is on the horizon. The demand or voter side of the equation has undergone a major transformation. In the coming general elections the children of liberalised era are going to be a major group. Often described as the 'now' generation for their psychological orientation for instant gratification and hedonism, they are likely to view political players through a new prism unaffected by past baggage. On the supply side, the top two political brands are passing through a leadership transformation phase. The discontinuity is manifesting in new leadership that is likely to assume the steering role. The names of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi as two probable prime ministerial candidates for BJP and Congress are intensely debated.

Brands are created by marketers but are housed in peoples' minds. Brands are valuable because they direct consumer preference and choice. Branding begins with identity articulation. It requires answering the fundamental question as to what a brand stands for. Later the identity is communicated to create brand image. It is the image which drives behaviour. This study was aimed at uncovering the brand identity of both Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi by a process content analysis of their communication by an inductive approach. The study found that both of the leaders aim to position themselves as 'transformational' who seek to change India with their brand of governance but the differences are palpable in their ideas and ideologies. The important dimensions identified in their identity include aspects like vision, reality assessment, approach, strategy, focus, ideological orientation and model of engagement. On the whole both the political brands are guided by similar goals of India's transformation by systemic changes but differences are discernable in their approaches. The core to their difference is concept of secularism by way of minority focus or focus

on all, policy of entitlement or development, government free or government involvement, problem orientation or solution orientation and logical or emotional perspective. This study is reveals only one side of the branding; it will be worthwhile to investigate how much of resonance these ideas have with the voting population, especially the youth.

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