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We the Consumers of 'Mediated Reality'

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Abstract

People across the world perceive/imagine reality through what they see on a computer-device like a smartphone. An effective marketing strategy to woo the consumers would be to project a 'good image' of the product they wish to sell. In this paper, I explain how politicians use images to earn the hearts of people.

Introduction

Narendra Modi, the current Indian Prime Minister, is the world's most liked/followed leader on Facebook and Instagram¹. The social media played an important role in establishing him as a world leader as he tweeted 'India has won.' when he won the 2014 Indian general elections. The National Democratic Alliance(NDA) of which Modi was their prime ministerial candidate won 38.5% of the vote share². What role did technology and social media play in politics?

Body Paragraphs

The Advent Of Technology In Politics

Technology - The Symbol Of Growth And Modernity

The DMK's Tamil Anthem "*Semmozhiyaan Tamil Mozhiaan.*" features a rural woman working in a tech-firm using a mobile phone. It helped to build an image of 'Tamil - the language of modernity' and also portray the late DMK's then supremo Karunanidhi and his son M.K. Stalin as the *leaders of tomorrow*³. Chandrababu Naidu released an image of him using the laptop and also took the center-stage along with Bill Gates to establish himself as a politician who uses the latest technology. However, there was a need for a way to incorporate technology into the life of the people.

'Freebies' Is The Way

Chandrababu Naidu, DMK and the ADMK started distributing laptops not only to promote technology but also to promote themselves. Since the laptops had preloaded wallpapers which when tried to remove would render the laptops useless. Albeit distributing laptops they also distributed cycles, fans, mobile phones, grinders, television sets. Many of these so-called freebies were actually not free instead were bought using the taxpayer's money/state funds. Freebies meant less money for infrastructure, education, and development⁴. Nevertheless, their intentions seemed to be more for self-promotion rather than a strategy for the welfare of the state.

¹ PM Narendra Modi is world No. 3 on Twitter, No.1 on Facebook, Instagram [\[Link\]](#)

² "BJP's 31% lowest vote share of any party to win majority". [\[Link\]](#)

³ A term used to denote people with high potential to become modern leaders.

⁴ Politics of freebies promises a bleak future. [\[Link\]](#)

The 2G Spectrum Scam And The Political morality

The 2G spectrum scam mainly attributed to the DMK minister A.Raja and the Congress government. The total loss due to the scam was pegged at 43 billion USD⁵. Despite the DMK giving freebies and portraying themselves as technocrats, they lost their political morality. Consequently, both the DMK and the Congress-led UPA lost the state and national elections respectively. Although, the *winner*⁶ Narendra Modi's story and image were a bit different.

Modi's Creation Of An Image

The 2002 Gujarat Riots - The Modernizer Brand

The then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi was accused of initiating and allowing the violence against Muslims⁷. It created a black mark on Modi as he was later criticized by Confederation of Indian Industries(CII). Despite the apology from CII, the leadership of the industries in Gujarat transferred to Modi. Subsequently, Modi became the modernizer for the state.

From Sinner To Winner - Gujarat Means Growth

Albeit being barred to enter the US and much of EU, Modi repeatedly won the state elections for Gujarat. But, did Gujarat's growth experience acceleration because of Modi? No, Gujarat's economy has been in good form since 1990, well before Modi's arrival.⁸ Then how did he manage to get votes by calling on the *Gujarat Growth Model*?⁹ He created an image of a visionary who understood the economy well and fuelled Gujarat to growth¹⁰. In addition, a wise marketing strategy was employed to make this image popular.

Marketing The Image - The Social Media

Political Cause Of The Nationalist Leader

Modi's account consisted of posts/tweets of his work, national events, festivals, call-outs to national icons and the *people-influencers*¹¹ with whom his ideologies matched. Although it was much more of a political cause and showed his allegiance to the RSS.

⁵ "2G loss? Govt gained over Rs 3,000cr: Trai" [\[Link\]](#).

⁶ Narendra Modi led NDA won the 2014 general elections.

⁷ Narendra Modi 'allowed' Gujarat 2002 anti-Muslim riots. [\[Link\]](#)

⁸ Did Gujarat's Growth Rate Accelerate under Modi? [\[Link\]](#)

⁹ Highway to Growth. [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁰ Politics aside is Gujarat a great growth Story?[\[Link\]](#)

¹¹ A term used to denote the spiritual leaders, politicians, national icons who have influenced/inspired people.

Tea Seller - People's Leader

Since 2010, Modi addressed the people directly via social media and did not rely on a sidekick to make his updates. Modi's "*Chai pe Charcha*" effectively portrays an image of two common people having a conversation over tea¹². Modi on his birthday, 'followed-back' some of his followers and this was a very big move from him. People could communicate to Modi directly and this helped portray Modi as a people's leader.

Technological Campaigning - Magic Man

Apart from direct addressals, Modi took selfies and posted it with the hashtag **#SelfieWithModi** to create a brand name for himself. Modi impressed by the technology to give 3D holographic speeches, which was used in the Gujarat Assembly elections, also extended it to the Lok Sabha elections. He has given more than 700 rallies at the cost of only Rs 60 crore¹³. People began to perceive him as a *Magic Man*¹⁴.

Reaching Out To Celebs - Charismatic Leader

Modi's hangout call to Ajay Devgan, a Bollywood film actor, became a first of its kind. He persuaded famous cricketers, actors and spiritual figures to urge the youth to vote for national interest, and not for a personal/political cause. This established him as a charismatic leader, with a nationalist interest.

Worshipping the Image

The Young Minds Drawn - Direct Way

The youth are the first consumers of this *mediated reality*¹⁵, as they use technology and social media more. They don't remember the 2002 riots, they are modern and hence look at the news media, what is available to them. They appreciate the images of these politicians and serve as a center of propagation of news to the other family members and friends who do not have access to the mediated information.

The Empire Built Through Social Media - Indirect Way

Modi can decide what news he wants the people to see and when to see it. This gives him an immense power to control the news media, as they too rely on politicians activities/tweets/posts

¹² Why tea? To remind people of his tea-seller past

¹³ BJP spent Rs 60 crore on Narendra Modi's 3D rallies during Lok Sabha polls. [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁴ 'Magic' Modi uses hologram to address dozens of rallies at once. [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁵ A term used to denote one's perception of reality through a computer device. [\[Link\]](#)

to create news. This news serves as the common man's understanding of his surroundings. Directly or Indirectly, people worship the images of these politicians.

Conclusion

I believe that the apt usage of technology to promote the welfare of the state would bring in much more accolades from the people than freebies and imagery politics.

However, politicians have immense power to control the news media by projecting images and marketing them to making people believe them.

In a nutshell, politicians want you to know '*What They Want You To Know*'. This showcases the concept of a 'mediated reality'.

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