Does Political Marketing Strategy Affect Performance of National Political Parties in Lok Sabha Elections ?

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Abstract

India is the largest democratic country in the world. It gives the right to its citizens to vote irrespective of their caste, religion, status, or gender. However, the health of a democracy can be influenced by political marketing. The political parties try to influence the voters, but these parties face various challenges in selecting the correct and best strategy to win the elections. Therefore, the present study was conducted to contribute towards existing literature by examining various political marketing strategies and help the politicians or political parties to understand the marketing dimensions such as voter segmentation, candidate positioning, advertisement and campaigning, political rallies, and opinion polls, which can affect the decision of voters. The study used the data of the last three Lok Sabha elections, that is, 2014, 2009, and 2004 for analysis purposes. Panel least square method was applied to analyze the data. The findings of the study provide better insights to political parties while framing their strategies to influence voters.

Keywords : National political parties, Lok Sabha elections, marketing strategies, political party performance

Marketing is an organizational function and a set of strategies used to create, deliver, and communicate value to customers and focusing on customer relationships in such a manner that ultimately provides benefits to the stakeholders as well as the organization (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Marketing is not only confined to companies, but it is also used in politics. Marketing is to influence customers by promoting and selling products. Similarly, marketing in politics is to influence the eligible voters to get more votes. Political marketing is a fundamental part of political life. All politicians such as presidents, prime ministers, chief ministers, MLAs, MPs, etc. all are unintentionally applying marketing strategies in pursuit of various political goals. Marketing strategies in politics are used to frame policies, to influence the eligible voters from whom they seek votes, for creating new segments to target eligible voters, and for creating the political brand of a party to develop an attractive vision.

The dynamics of politics have changed with the involvement of social media. Now, the voters are much more aware and educated as to all the information regarding the activities of political parties at one click. In this extremely dynamic world, politics is developing from the conventional way of marketing to a more advanced technological way which is used by the politicians to promote their political products to reach more eligible voters (O'Cass, 2001).

Political marketing is an utmost important ingredient for successful political activity. India is a democratic

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country, and politicians are required to show voters what they have done for them and for the development of the nation. So, parties must know the right channel to communicate this information to voters. They must use tactful strategies to influence voters to win elections (Kumar, 2019). The modern political marketing methods provide countless opportunities to connect with potential voters and shape public opinion, including cold calls, email campaigns, direct mail leaflets, radio spots, social media coverage, and television news and talk show appearances (Trehan & Gupta, 2015). Consequently, politics is getting highly influenced by marketing tactics. Many concepts of political marketing have been explored in various research studies such as the possibility and worth of adopting the concept of 'customer value,' which is ultimately derived from commercial marketing for applying in the area of political marketing (Brennan & Henneberg, 2008).

Review of Literature

Political Marketing Strategies

Marketing strategies are the long-term, forward-looking approach to plan the fundamental aim of attaining a sustainable competitive advantage. These strategies are often used to approach people and convert them into customers. Political parties also tend to use these strategies to attract more voters. These political strategies may have a significant effect on the performance of political parties. According to Kumar (2019), political marketing is all set to undergo rapid changes, and it should be viewed with a lot of seriousness. Widagdo et al. (2014) conducted a study to find the relationship between political marketing strategies and candidate selection. It was found that political product, promotion, and placement decisions were associated with candidate selection ; whereas, political price was not associated with candidate selection. Kemunto (2016) analyzed the effect of political marketing strategies on the performance of Kenya as a tourist destination. The study considered the data of the past 26 years to analyze the relationship between the variable : political marketing strategies and the other variable : performance of Kenya. The research study concluded that the use of political marketing strategies did not change the number of visits of tourists to Kenya.

Voter Segmentation

In business-to-business marketing, companies may segregate customers into groups based on some common factors such as gender, age, religion, and occupation, etc. so that companies can target each group more aptly and efficiently. In politics, political parties also use a market segmentation strategy to break down voters into different groups to get more votes from a particular segment. Phillips et al. (2010) found that voter segmentation can help in the formulation of various political communications strategies. The study discovered the deterministic research techniques for campaign strategists who wanted to comprehend the process of voter decision making. It also established a combination of methodological and technological innovations that exhibit the time, cost, and geographic limitations that are often linked with the conduct of research related to voter decision making. Rusch et al. (2013) described a non-partisan campaign that focused on increasing the overall turnout of voters. Based on a real data set of 19,634 eligible voters from Ohio, the study developed a modern statistical framework that predicted about individual's turnout likelihood for a particular cause, party, or candidate as well as data-driven voter segmentation. Gbadeyan (2011) found that voter's support was the best political marketing strategy used by political organizations in Nigeria.

Candidate Positioning

Positioning is another marketing tool that captures the spirit and vision of the candidate to win and subsequently

frame the strategy accordingly. Political parties tend to assess the candidates and select those who have more capability and power to bring more votes to the party. Newman (1994) discussed various steps to develop a candidate's position. The study described that there must be an assessment of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, resulting in the articulation of his/her political philosophy. Further, the same assessment process should also be undertaken to analyze the opposition candidate position to have a better approach to the competitive environment. At last, the candidate must target the selected group of voters to get more votes by highlighting his/her strengths in comparison to the opposition candidate. Tomz and Van Houweling (2008) also examined the relationship between candidate position and the choices of voters. They considered three criteria of candidate positioning by which voters might select the candidates. The criterions were proximity, direction, and discounting.

Advertisement and Campaigning

Advertisement and campaigning is the strategy used to promote a product in the market. The mass population is addressed through broadcast, telecast, social media, and hoardings & posters, etc. (Sharma et al., 2020). Politicians also use these means of advertisement for promotional purposes. This marketing strategy may have an impact on the performance of national political parties in India. Safiullah et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the effect of social media platform Twitter on political marketing. The authors observed that there was a positive correlation between the number of tweets and votes gained by a political party. Omo - Obas (2017) conducted a study to examine the effect of political branding on the preferences of voting brands amongst the youth in South Africa. It was found that the brand identity of a political party could positively affect brand image and brand preferences. Positive word of mouth had a significant positive effect on brand image, which ultimately had a positive influence on brand preference.

Sardana (2017) also found that advertisement campaigns played a vital role to win elections. The results showed that various advertisement agencies were at the back of BJP's successful campaign in the Lok Sabha elections for the year 2014 and later on in the same year and also in the assembly elections in Maharashtra and Haryana as well as assembly elections of five states of India in the year 2017. The study also found that the role of advertising agencies has increased over time to manage various campaigns competently and effectively within the overall framework of the political approach adopted by their political party clients. Gbadeyan (2011) found that positive publicity was another political marketing strategy after voter support which was used by political organizations to win elections in Nigeria. Santekellur et al. (2014) found that digital media could be very useful for political communication to influence voters.

Political Rallies

A political rally is an assembly of people who have a similar political viewpoint and they are gathered to listen to the political agendas of the speakers. Madestam et al. (2013) found that a large number of rallies increased the turnout of voters in favor of the Republicans in the 2010 congressional elections in the United States. Warner et al. (2019) found that attending a Sanders or Trump rally was not significantly associated with attribution of malevolence and acceptance of political violence through democratic mistrust in the United States.

Opinion Polls

An opinion poll is an assessment of public beliefs through questioning to further make predictions for elections results. The predictions based on opinion polls may affect the voting decision of people. Macreadie (2011) discussed that the surveys are in quest for some unadulterated, unmediated public opinion rather than guides to what the public is likely to think about an issue given their exposure to certain sorts of information. Elections are

also imperfect measures of public opinion because they reflect just the feelings of the individuals who cast a ballot (Adams, 2019 ; Brooker & Schaefer, 2015).

Performance of Political Parties

The performance of political parties is mainly based on how individual political parties perform by mobilizing, organizing agents, and implementing various political marketing strategies in the elections. It can be measured through the number of votes polled or the number of seats won. Lynch et al. (2006) examined the performance of political parties in the long-term. It was discovered that the policies, leadership, hierarchical, and communications skills require long-term investment and rejecting the hypothesis that the long-term electoral success is fundamentally based on the promises and resources employed in the final election campaign. Aceron (2011) discussed the steadiness and performance of political parties in Southeast Asia : Philippines. Creating a supporting constituency around this leadership action, connecting up the endeavors through cross-party exchanges, and arrangements on a legitimate framework supporting party-based politics were few ways to improve the stability and performance of political parties in Philippines.

Need and Significance of the Study

Many research studies have focused on the conceptual framework of marketing strategies adopted by various companies, but there is hardly any study which has focused on political marketing strategies and the performance of political parties in India. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill this gap. The study aims to examine the effect of political marketing strategies on the performance of national political parties in the Lok Sabha elections. The significance of the present study is to help politicians and political parties to understand the marketing dimensions such as voter segmentation, candidate positioning, advertisement and campaigning, political rallies, and opinion polls which can affect the decision of voters. After extensive literature review, this study frames the conceptual framework of political marketing strategies.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are :

(1) To explore the political marketing strategies adopted by national political parties in India.

(2) To examine the effect of political marketing strategies on the performance of national political parties.

Political Marketing Strategies – A Conceptual Framework

The study explores various determinants of political marketing strategy with the support of literature and based on the literature reviewed, a conceptual framework of political marketing strategies is prepared (Figure 1). The determinants are : Voter segmentation (Gbadeyan, 2011 ; Phillips et al., 2010 ; Rusch et al., 2013), party candidate positioning (Newman, 1994 ; Tomz & Van Houweling, 2008), party advertisement and campaigning (Gbadeyan, 2011 ; Omo - Obas, 2017; Sardana, 2017), political rally (Madestam et al., 2013 ; Warner et al., 2019), and opinion poll (Brooker & Schaefer, 2015 ; Macreadie, 2011).

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of Political Marketing Strategies*
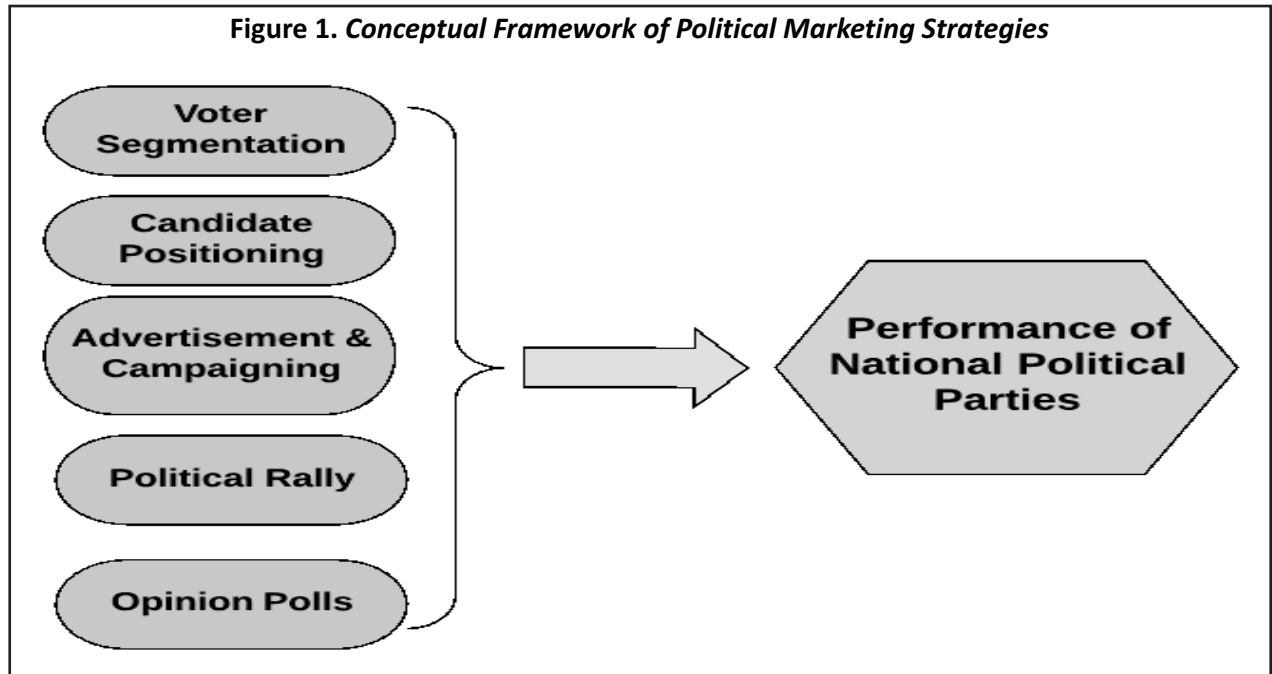
Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data, which were collected from the official website of the Election Commission of India (ECI) ; published annual reports of national political parties ; the official website of Prasar Bharati ; official social media accounts of national political parties ; websites of opinion poll agencies ; articles, news, and various journals. The study considered the data of the past three election years, that is, 2014, 2009, and 2004. The sample size consisted of three national-level political parties out of a total of seven national political parties registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI). The selection of three national political parties was done based on the number of seats contested throughout India. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and Indian National Congress (INC) contested for more than 400 seats out of a total of 545 seats (543 + 2 Nominated) as compared to other national-level political parties. Therefore, the study only considers major parties : BJP, BSP, and INC for analysis purposes.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses are framed :

✥ $H_0 1$: There is no significant effect of state-wise voter segmentation on state-wise performance of political parties.

✥ $H_0 2$: There is no significant effect of seat-wise candidate positioning on seat-wise performance.

✥ $H_0 3$: There is no significant effect of party-wise advertisement and campaigning on party-wise performance.

✥ $H_0 3a$: There is no significant effect of party-wise broadcast/ telecast of advertisement on party-wise performance.

↳ **H₀3b :** There is no significant effect of party-wise social media followers on party-wise performance.

↳ **H₀3c :** There is no significant effect of party-wise publicity expenditure on party-wise performance.

↳ **H₀4 :** There is no significant effect of party-wise political rallies on party-wise performance.

↳ **H₀5 :** There is no significant effect of party-wise opinion polls on party-wise performance.

The study applied panel least square for analysis purposes as it deals with cross-section as well as time-series data. The assumptions regarding stationarity, heteroskedasticity, and serial correlations were checked through the Augmented Dickey – Fuller test (ADF), Breush – Godfrey serial correlation LM test, and white test, respectively with the help of EViews 9.
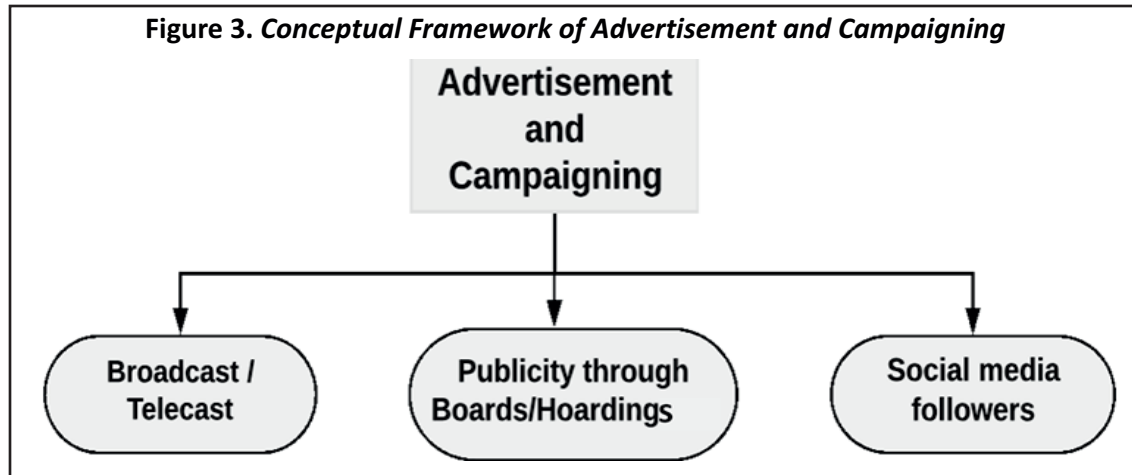
Data Collection

The dependent variable, that is, performance of political party is measured in three different ways (see Figure 2). For better insights into the results, it considered state-wise votes polled to each party, state-wise seats won by each political party, and party-wise total seats won in past three elections in the years 2014, 2009, and 2004.

Further, the study considers various independent variables such as voter segmentation, candidate positioning, advertisement and campaigning, political rally, and opinion polls (See Figure 2). For voter segmentation, state-wise data of eligible voters for the past three Lok Sabha elections was considered for analysis purposes. Another independent variable : candidate positioning was measured through the data of seats allotted to the number of candidates (number of candidates positioned) in various states as each party strategically gives tickets to the candidates who have the capability and a major influence on the people of that particular region or place. This may have an effect on the election outcome.

Figure 2. *Political Marketing Strategies Model*
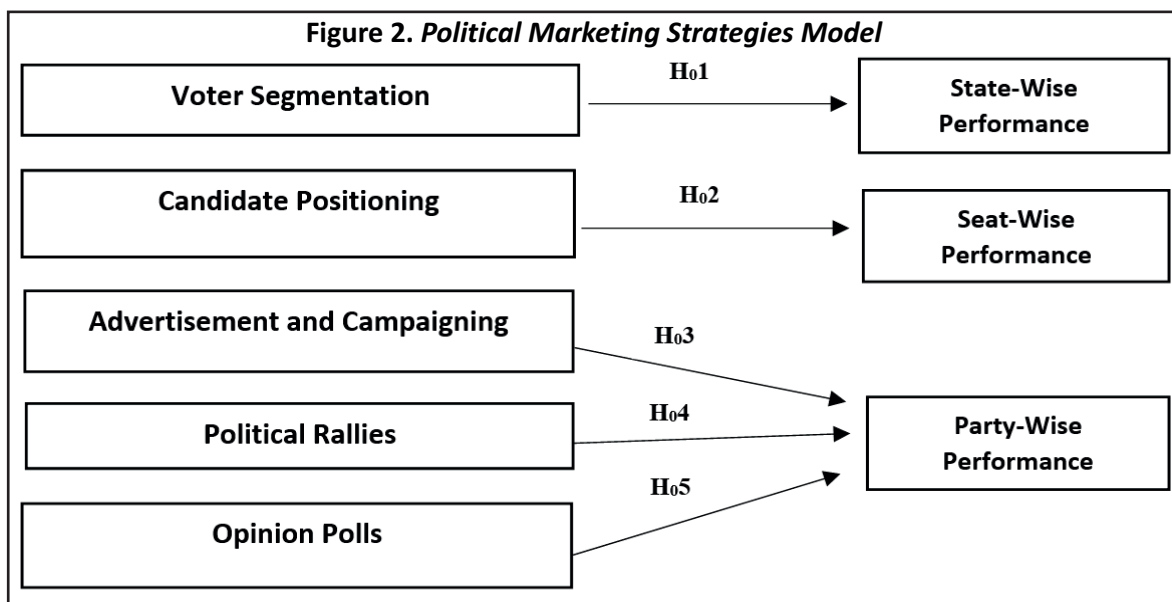
Furthermore, the variable : advertisement and campaigning (see Figure 3) is measured by taking into consideration broadcast/telecast of advertisements on radio and television, respectively ; publicity expenditure on hoardings, boards, and pamphlets, etc. ; and social media followers.

Figure 3. *Conceptual Framework of Advertisement and Campaigning*

The data regarding broadcast and telecast time of advertisements were collected from the official government website of Prasar Bharati and election publicity expenditure data were collected from annual reports of national political parties : BJP, BSP, and INC. For social media followers, the study considered the four most popular social media which are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram (Statista, 2019).

The study considered the opinion polls conducted by renowned Hindi or English news channels such as STAR News - AC Nielson, CNN - IBN, NDTV, ABP News-Nielsen, and Times Now. Lastly, for public political rallies, there was no official data regarding the number of rallies conducted by each party. Therefore, the study considered the expenditure done on conducting rallies by BJP, BSP, and INC as proxy variables and the data were available in the annual reports submitted by these parties to the Election Commission of India.

Data Analysis and Results

The study used panel data techniques to analyze the effect of political marketing strategy on the performance of national political parties. The study considered the number of determinants as per literature which ultimately has an effect on the performance. Based on the hypotheses, the study formed the following model :

$$PER_{it} = a + b_1 VS_{it} + b_2 CP_{it} + b_3 AC_{it} + b_4 PR_{it} + b_5 OP_{it}$$

where,

PER = Performance of political parties,

VS = Voter segmentation,

CP = Candidate positioning,

AC = Advertisement and campaigning,

PR = Political rallies,

OP = Opinion polls.

The data used in the present study were cross-sectional data as well as time-series data. Therefore, the present study applied a panel unit root test on all the series to check the stationarity and it was found that all the data series were stationary at the level form (Table 1).

Table 1. *Results of Panel Unit Root Test*

	ADF (Augmented Dicky – Fuller) Panel Unit Root Test	
Variables	**Augmented Dicky – Fuller Fisher** Chi-square**	
	Level Difference	
	Statistics	***p*-value**
Votes Polled	29.1510	0.0001
Voter Segmentation	16.2273	0.0126
Candidate Positioning	8.20361	0.0025
Advertisement and Campaigning	26.5793	0.0001
Political Rallies	16.6617	0.0002
Opinion Polls	27.3510	0.0120

Note. Null Hypothesis : Unit Root, * Test values are significant at the 0.01 level, ** Probabilities for Fisher tests are computed using an asymptotic chi-square distribution. All other tests assume asymptotic normality.

The assumptions regarding serial correlation and heteroscedasticity were also checked through the Breush – Godfrey serial correlation LM test and White test, respectively using EViews 9 and the results show that there is no serial correlation as well as heteroscedasticity in the model as the *p*-value is more than 0.05, which indicates the acceptance of the null hypothesis (Table 2).

Table 2. *Results of Breusch – Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test*

Ho : No serial correlation.			
Breusch – Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test :			
F-statistic	2.404155	Prob. *F*(2,100)	0.0955
Obs*R-squared	4.771228	Prob. Chi-Square(2)	0.0920

Table 3. *Results of Panel Least Square – Effect of Voter Segmentation on State - Wise Performance of BJP*

Dependent Variable : STATE-WISE PERFORMANCE

Method : Panel Least Squares

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	*t*-Statistic	Prob.
VOTER SEGMENTATION	0.150450	0.019550	7.695664	0.0000*
C	859211.9	499259.1	1.720974	0.0883
R-squared	0.367337	Mean dependent var		3235261
Adjusted *R*-squared	0.361134	*S.D.* dependent var		5005834
S.E. of regression	4001117	Akaike info criterion		33.26109
Sum squared resid	1.630000	Schwarz criterion		33.31194
Log-likelihood	–1727.577	Hannan–Quinn criteria		33.28169
F-statistic	59.22325	Durbin–Watson stat		1.993371
Prob(*F*-statistic)	0.000000			

Table 4. *Results of Panel Least Square – Effect of Voter Segmentation on State - Wise Performance of BSP*

Dependent Variable : STATE-WISE PERFORMANCE

Method : Panel Least Squares

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	*t*-Statistic	Prob.
VOTER SEGMENTATION	0.074827	0.009620	7.778632	0.0000*
C	–517225.7	245659.9	–2.105454	0.0377
R-squared	0.372335	Mean dependent var		664511.3
Adjusted R-squared	0.366182	S.D. dependent var		2472903
S.E. of regression	1968745	Akaike info criterion		31.84273
Sum squared resid	3.950000	Schwarz criterion		31.89359
Log-likelihood	–1653.822	Hannan – Quinn criteria		31.86334
F-statistic	60.50712	Durbin – Watson stat		1.913178
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

Table 5. *Results of Panel Least Square – Effect of Voter Segmentation on State - Wise Performance of INC*

Dependent Variable : STATE-WISE PERFORMANCE

Method : Panel Least Squares

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	*t*-Statistic	Prob.
VOTER SEGMENTATION	0.101394	0.014542	6.972609	0.0000*
C	1566531	371362.3	4.218337	0.0001
R-squared	0.322787	Mean dependent var		3167845
Adjusted R-squared	0.316148	S.D. dependent var		3598917
S.E. of regression	2976138	Akaike info criterion		32.66919
Sum squared resid	9.03000	Schwarz criterion		32.72005
Log-likelihood	–1696.798	Hannan – Quinn criteria		32.68980
F-statistic	48.61728	Durbin – Watson stat		2.151381
Prob (F-statistic)	0.000000			

Table 6. *Results of Panel Least Square – Effect of Candidate Positioning on Seat-Wise Performance*

Dependent Variable : SEAT-WISE PERFORMANCE

Method : Panel Least Squares

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	*t*-Statistic	Prob.
CANDIDATE POSITIONING	0.198667	0.022750	8.732780	0.0000*
C	0.538769	0.491176	1.096896	0.2736
R-squared	0.211684	Mean dependent var		3.293706

Adjusted *R*-squared	0.208908	*S.D.* dependent var	7.158195
S.E. of regression	6.366739	Akaike info criterion	6.547020
Sum squared resid	11512.04	Schwarz criterion	6.572587
Prob (*F*-statistic)	0.000000		

Table 7. *Results of Panel Least Square – Effect of Party-Wise Advertisement, Political Rally, and Opinion Polls on Party-Wise Performance*

Dependent Variable : PARTY-WISE PERFORMANCE

Method : Panel Least Squares

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	*t*-Statistic	Prob.
ADVERTISEMENT AND CAMPAIGNING – Broadcast/ Telecast of Advertisement	–0.197350	0.075342	–2.619386	0.0790
ADVERTISEMENT AND CAMPAIGNING – Social Media Followers	**0.132619**	**0.037205**	**–3.564579**	**0.0377***
ADVERTISEMENT AND CAMPAIGNING – Publicity Expenditure	**0.705290**	**0.171905**	**4.102799**	**0.0262***
POLITICAL RALLIES	0.120050	0.107663	1.115051	0.3461
OPINION POLLS	–0.570697	0.673711	–0.847094	0.4592
C	0.493220	1.412570	0.349165	0.7500
R-squared	0.979006	Mean dependent var		1.708250
Adjusted *R*-squared	0.944016	*S.D.* dependent var		0.765804
S.E. of regression	0.181196	Akaike info criterion		–0.343751
Sum squared resid	0.098496	Schwarz criterion		–0.212268
Prob(*F*-statistic)	0.010134			

The effect of determinants of marketing strategies on the performance of national political parties is analyzed using panel data models. As the data are time series as well as cross-section data, so the most appropriate model is the Panel Least Square model as the unobserved heterogeneous variable is not correlated with the regressed variables (refer to Tables 3 – 7).

Discussion

Firstly, the study examines the effect of voter segmentation, candidate positioning, advertisement and campaigning, political rallies, and opinion polls on the performance of national political parties using panel least square. This specified model has *R* - square value of 0.92, which depicts that all these independent variables together explain 92% variation in the dependent variable, that is, performance of political parties. The study does not consider all independent variables together for analysis as the type of dataset used is different and it is not logical to examine the effect of candidate positioning by considering seats allotted to candidates state-wise on the dependent variable, that is, performance of political parties, which is measured through party-wise votes polled. To have better insights into the results, the study must consider the same set of data. Consequently, the study examines the effect of state-wise voter segmentation on state-wise performance ; seat-wise candidate positioning

on seat-wise performance ; and party-wise advertisements, party-wise rallies, and party-wise opinion polls on party-wise performance. Further, the hypothesis testing is done using panel least square with the help of EViews 9.

The results show that there is a significant effect of state-wise voter segmentation on the state-wise performance of BJP (Table 3), BSP (Table 4), and INC (Table 5) as the p - value is 0.000 in all three cases, which depicts that $H_0 1$ is rejected. Though the effect is significant on the performance of political parties, this effect is either positive or negative, which further can be examined through the coefficients obtained in the results. Coefficients in the case of BJP and INC are positive, that is, 859211.9 and 1566531.0, respectively, but it is negative in the case of BSP (517225.7), which implies that there is a positive impact of voter segmentation on the performance of political parties BJP and INC, but there is a negative impact on the performance of BSP. Kumar (2019) also observed that political marketing may build or destroy public figures.

The findings of the study also imply that voter segmentation plays a vital role to win elections. Parties can use any strategy to segment the voters either area-wise, age group-wise, urban-rural locality wise, or education level wise. It must focus on implementing an influential strategy to influence eligible voters by dividing them into segments. Rusch et al. (2013) discussed that voter decisions can be influenced by effective voter segmentation strategy in elections.

The results further show that the R^2 values in the case of BJP, BSP, and INC are 0.36, 0.37, and 0.32, respectively (see Tables 3 – 5). R^2 depicts the total variation in the dependent variable caused by independent variables considered in the model. Generally, it is regarded as the most important indicator of the quality of a study, but Moksony (1990) in the study argued that it has nothing to do with the quality of the model. The coefficient of determination is frequently employed to measure the relative explanatory power of independent variables. R^2 is generally considered a measure of goodness of fit, which has a fatal attraction amongst researchers, but a high value of R^2 does not at all necessarily imply real causal impact. It only explains the percentage variation caused by the independent variable in the dependent variable (Cramer, 1987 ; Moksony, 1990). In the present study also, the R^2 of the model is low. The reason behind low R^2 is that the study examines the impact of independent variables separately on the dependent variable because of different types of data set. When all the independent variables are analyzed together, then R^2 is approximately 0.92, which depicts the fitness of the model. But there is no logic in examining the impact of many voters on the number of seats or number of candidate seats on votes polled. This may provide misleading results. Consequently, the study deliberately examines the effect of only one independent variable, which is state-wise voter segmentation on state-wise votes polled to each party. The results show that the independent variable has 30 – 40% power to explain variation in the dependent variable.

Going further, the analysis regarding the effect of candidate positioning on the performance of national political parties is done. The results show that there is a significant effect of seat-wise candidate positioning on the seat-wise performance of political parties as the p - value is 0.000 (Table 6), which rejects $H_0 2$. Furthermore, there is a positive impact of candidate positioning on the performance of national political parties as the coefficient is positive, that is, 0.538769. It implies that with one unit change in the independent variable, the performance will increase by 0.53 units. The results of the study are supported by the findings of Widagdo et al. (2014), who found that political products, which consisted of party platforms, past records, and personal characteristics could affect the decision to choose a candidate. The results implied that the voters tend to vote for their favorite candidates with whom they are familiar. The voters ultimately select their representatives with the hope that the selected representative will resolve their issues. So, candidate positioning must be done after deeply analyzing the profile of the candidate who has good leadership qualities along with the capability of resolving issues of the public and who very well represent a majority of the people of that locality. Therefore, right candidate positioning is of utmost importance for winning the elections.

The effect of advertisement and campaigning as well as rallies and opinion polls on the performance of national political parties is examined using panel least square. The study considers broadcast/telecast of advertisements,

publicity expenditure, and social media followers as determinants of the variable : advertisement and campaigning. The variation of the data is removed by taking the natural logarithm of the data. The results show that there is a significant positive effect of publicity expenditure and social media followers on the performance of national political parties as the p - value is 0.0262 and 0.0377, respectively and the impact is positive as the coefficients are also positive (Table 7) which reject the null hypotheses $H_0 3b$ and $H_0 3c$. But on the other hand, broadcast/telecast of advertisements, political rallies, and opinion polls do not affect the performance of national political parties, which leads to the acceptance of the null hypotheses $H_0 3a$, $H_0 4$, and $H_0 5$. It implies that the voters' decision does not get affected with the results predicted by opinion poll agencies, political rallies conducted, and various election advertisements. However, on the other hand, their decision gets influenced by publicity and through social media activities. The results of the study are supported by the findings of Sardana (2017), who observed that advertisement agencies were behind BJP's successful campaign in the 2014 parliamentary elections and later in that year in the assembly elections in Haryana and Maharashtra as well as in the 2017 assembly elections in five states of India.

With the introduction of social media platforms, people are now more aware of the activities of political parties. Political parties tend to use these platforms to showcase their contributions and influence more people. The eligible voters tend to follow those parties whom they are likely to see ruling.

Performance Analysis of the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections Based on Findings

Based on the findings of the study, the performance analysis of political parties in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections is conducted (refer to Table 8).

Table 8. *Party-Wise Followers as of March 10, 2019*

Social Networking Sites	INC	BJP	BSP (No official Account Operational)
YouTube	380,844	1,076,386	0
Facebook	5,232,016	15,669,618	0
Twitter	4.93 M	10.6M	0
Instagram	35.7 K	1.5M	0

Source : Official accounts of political parties.

Table 8 shows the number of followers of each political party on various social networking sites and there is a huge gap in the followers of BJP and INC. There was no verified official account of BSP as of March 10, 2019. The findings of the study reveal that social media followers have a great impact on performance and that impact is also positive. This is one of the reasons that BJP won the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 as its number of social media followers was comparatively much higher than that of other political parties. The increase in the number of followers was due to the digital marketing strategy adopted by BJP. As per data collected in March 2019, BJP posted 180K tweets, 17,654 videos, and 2,125 posts ; whereas, INC posted 57.7K tweets, 5,041 videos, and 849 posts on social sites. It implies that BJP was more active on social media sites with more posts, tweets, and videos as compared to INC. More popularity to the party was gained through catchy slogans used such as : *Main bhi chowkidar, Abki baar Modi sarkar, Ache din ayenge*, which ultimately spread on social media sites and became the most popular slogans in a short time.

Next, we discuss the list of candidates declared by BJP, BSP, and INC where the parties applied all the strategies to position their candidates. The number of seats for which BJP and Congress were going to contest was 438 and 424, respectively (refer to Table 9).

Table 9. *List of Candidates Announced by Parties for the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections*

States	BJP	INC	BSP
Andhra Pradesh	25	25	3
Arunachal Pradesh	2	2	0
Assam	10	14	0
Bihar	17	9	40
Chhattisgarh	11	11	10
Goa	2	2	0
Gujarat	26	26	26
Haryana	10	10	8
Himachal Pradesh	4	4	0
Jammu and Kashmir	6	5	2
Jharkhand	13	7	TBA
Karnataka	27	21	28
Kerala	15	16	0
Madhya Pradesh	29	29	26
Maharashtra	25	24	44
Manipur	2	2	0
Meghalaya	2	2	0
Mizoram	1	0	0
Nagaland	0	1	0
Odisha	21	20	TBA
Punjab	3	13	3
Rajasthan	25	25	25
Sikkim	1	1	0
Tamil Nadu	5	9	0
Telangana	17	17	TBA
Tripura	2	2	38
Uttar Pradesh	78	67	0
Uttarakhand	5	5	0
West Bengal	42	42	0
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1	1	0
Chandigarh	1	1	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	1	0
Daman and Diu	1	1	0
Delhi	7	7	0
Lakshadweep	1	1	0
Puducherry	0	1	0
Total	**438**	**424**	**253**

Source : eci.gov.in

The number of candidates positioned by BJP was either more or equal to INC except for the states : Assam, Kerala, Nagaland, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry. However, overall, more candidates were positioned by BJP than INC. On the other hand, BSP positioned candidates in very few states and that too is equal to other parties except for Bihar, Maharashtra, and Tripura. BJP strategically positioned more number of experienced and popular candidates against other parties. It used a medley of Bollywood stars, famous sports persons, and political bigwigs. BJP positioned cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir against Congress candidate Arvinder Singh and AAP candidate Atishi in East-Delhi. This party also positioned Smriti Irani against Rahul Gandhi in Amethi, BJP's Manoj Tiwari against Congress candidate Sheila Dikshit, BJP's Kirron Kher against Congress party's candidate Pawan Bansal, and BJP's Rajya Sabha leader Ravi Shankar Prasad against congress candidate Shatrughan Sinha, etc.

Along with candidate positioning strategy, Shri Narendra Modi used his immense popularity to influence voters. In political campaigns, BJP showcased that each vote would directly go to Mr. Modi. This strategy gave an add-on advantage to BJP. Furthermore, each party used a voter segmentation strategy also. INC focused more on the youth of India ; whereas, BJP focused more on poor category people and farmers. Though the voter segmentation strategy of INC was to target the youth, but it seemed like the INC youth strategy was overtaken by BJP. The reason behind this could be that the BJP smartly targeted the segments of voters through social media (Begde, 2011). Young people are most active on social media and BJP was showcasing all the contributions made by the party on all digital media platforms. Publicity is also another significant factor that may lead to winning elections. BJP also acquired publicity through shows like *Mann ki Baat* and *Chai pe Charcha*.

Implications and Conclusion

This study gives better insights to political parties while planning their political campaigns. Political parties must take strategic decisions regarding positioning their candidates, creating segments of voters, and use social media platforms to influence the voting decision of the eligible voters. Voter segmentation can be done based on area, age group, urban-rural locality, or educational level. Moreover, political parties must use social media platforms to showcase their contributions made for the development of the nation.

The study focuses on understanding various political marketing strategies and their effect on the performance of national political parties. The findings show that candidate positioning, voter segmentation, publicity, and social media followers have a great impact on the performance of political parties and the impact is positive as well. On the other hand, performance does not get affected by broadcast/telecast of advertisements, political rallies, and opinion polls.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The present study is conducted within an Indian context only, therefore, the results cannot be generalized for other countries. Furthermore, the study considers the data regarding expenditure done on conducting rallies by BJP, BSP, and INC as there was no official data available regarding the number of rallies conducted by each party. Consequently, the study used data regarding expenditure done on conducting rallies as a proxy variable and it was available in the annual reports submitted by these parties to the Election Commission of India for public political rallies.

Future studies can analyze the effect of political marketing strategies on state assembly elections. They can also focus on comparing and examining various social media platforms used for political marketing with election outcomes.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Pooja Sharma explored the present idea and encouraged Abhay Grover to investigate about this topic. Abhay Grover collected the data from various sources. Dr. Pooja Sharma contributed to the analysis of the results. Both authors discussed the results and contributed to the writing of the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter, or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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