

Project Dissertation Report

on

**THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE POLITICAL
MARKETING ON VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR**

Submitted by:
Sonakshi Goswami
2K18/MBA/76

Under the Guidance of:
Dr. Deep Shree
Assistant Professor



Delhi School of Management
Delhi Technological University
Bawana Road, New Delhi-110042



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Dissertation Report titled 'The Influence Of Online Political Marketing On Voters' Behaviour' is an original and bona fide work carried out by Ms. Sonakshi Goswami of MBA 2018-20 batch to the best of her knowledge and is being submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Main Bawana Road, Delhi-110042 in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Masters of Business Administration.

Signature of Guide

(Dr. Deep Shree)

Signature of HoD(DSM)

Dr. Rajan Yadav

DECLARATION

I, Sonakshi Goswami, student of MBA Batch 2018-20 of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, Main Bawana Road, Delhi-110042 declare that the Project Dissertation Report on 'The Influence of Online Political Marketing on Voters' Behaviour' is submitted in partial fulfilment of Degree of Masters of Business Administration is the original work conducted by me.

The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my knowledge.

This project is not being submitted to any other University for award of any other Degree, Diploma and Fellowship.

Sonakshi Goswami

Roll No.: 2K18/MBA/76

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Voters' behaviour could be seen as contagious, which arises from social mobilisation. Online social mobilisation, through political marketing has made huge differences in elections all over the world, including India. The balance of control in the conventional media gamut has transformed with the rise of the Internet. The ability of voters to have access to information, express views, discuss strategies, honour, identity and the brand of a political party has enhanced.

Through this research, an attempt has been made to analyse the influence of political marketing on voters' behaviour. One of the vital roles of campaign management is to assess and confirm the opinion of the electorate. This is achieved partly through sentiment analysis. Social media analytics has become prevalent for political institutions. Through this tool, it has been studied as to how political parties express and seek to alter their target audience's sentiments.

The paper has considered Delhi Legislative Elections (February, 2020) as the sample event. Tweets were analysed to perform sentiment analysis and assess the extent of alteration in voters' behaviour both online and offline, via results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

S. No.	Topic	Page No.
	Certificate	ii
	Declaration	iii
	Acknowledgement	iv
	Executive Summary	v
1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.1.1	History of Political Marketing	3
1.1.2	Present Scenario	4
1.1.3	Online Political Marketing	6
1.2	Problem Statement	10
1.3	Objectives of the Study	10
1.4	Scope of Study	10
2	Literature Review	12
2.1	Political Marketing	12
2.2	Online Political Marketing	15
2.3	Social Media & Political Marketing	16
3	Research Methodology	19
4	Case Study	23
4.1	Case Introduction	23
4.2	Data Collection	23
4.3	Data Analysis	25
4.4	Findings and Recommendations	29
4.5	Implications of the Study	31
4.6	Limitations of the Study	32
5	Conclusion	33
5.1	References	34
5.2	Annexure	36

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The term 'political marketing' works on multiple levels, one of them being a description of techniques that are commercially derived and the other being orientation. The latter is about reciprocity, i.e., the recognition of the marketing concept by politicians themselves wherein an interactive process follows, involving the voters as 'consumers' who aren't passive objects. Political Marketing actually points at the social implications of marketing. It is sometimes thought of as an amalgamation of the terms 'political science' and 'marketing'. Political campaigns have a marketing character within themselves. Thus, it is possible to re-define a nation's present and future by using this tool. This theme draws criticism too. From the time of philosophers like Plato, political marketing is seen as a way to create weak leadership systems, albeit democratic. It is believed to make politics opportunistic and fickle in nature. However, the advocates of political marketing claim it as a messiah for the oppressed in a way that it helps frustrating the evolution of the oppressive majorities.

Political Marketing seem to envisage political behaviour in terms of political self-interest. The cycle of evaluation, planning, execution and election designed to develop, grow and sustain mutually beneficial ties between political parties and voters can be described as political marketing objectives. It has been derived largely from commercial practice, striving towards emotive mass persuasion. Seen as an advertising campaign, political campaigns were being born in the US, especially in 1917 for its presidential elections (Roosevelt versus Hughes). Political marketing permeated through magazines, newspapers, film and radio to finally social media, as we see it today. **Figure 1.1** represents a flow chart consisting of steps designed for political marketing. It comprises 4 stages, starting from gathering historical data and census data, and putting them together with each constituency and segmenting them. In the next stage, the competition in each constituency is determined to calculate the efforts to be applied. Targeting of voter groups comes under the second stage and becomes the next step to concentrate

efforts onto groups in a better way. Stage 3, involves positioning, i.e., the way the party wishes to be seen by its electorate which was already targeted in the previous step. Lastly, stage 4 involves the analysis that takes place after the elections. This process is similar to the conventional STP used extensively in Marketing.

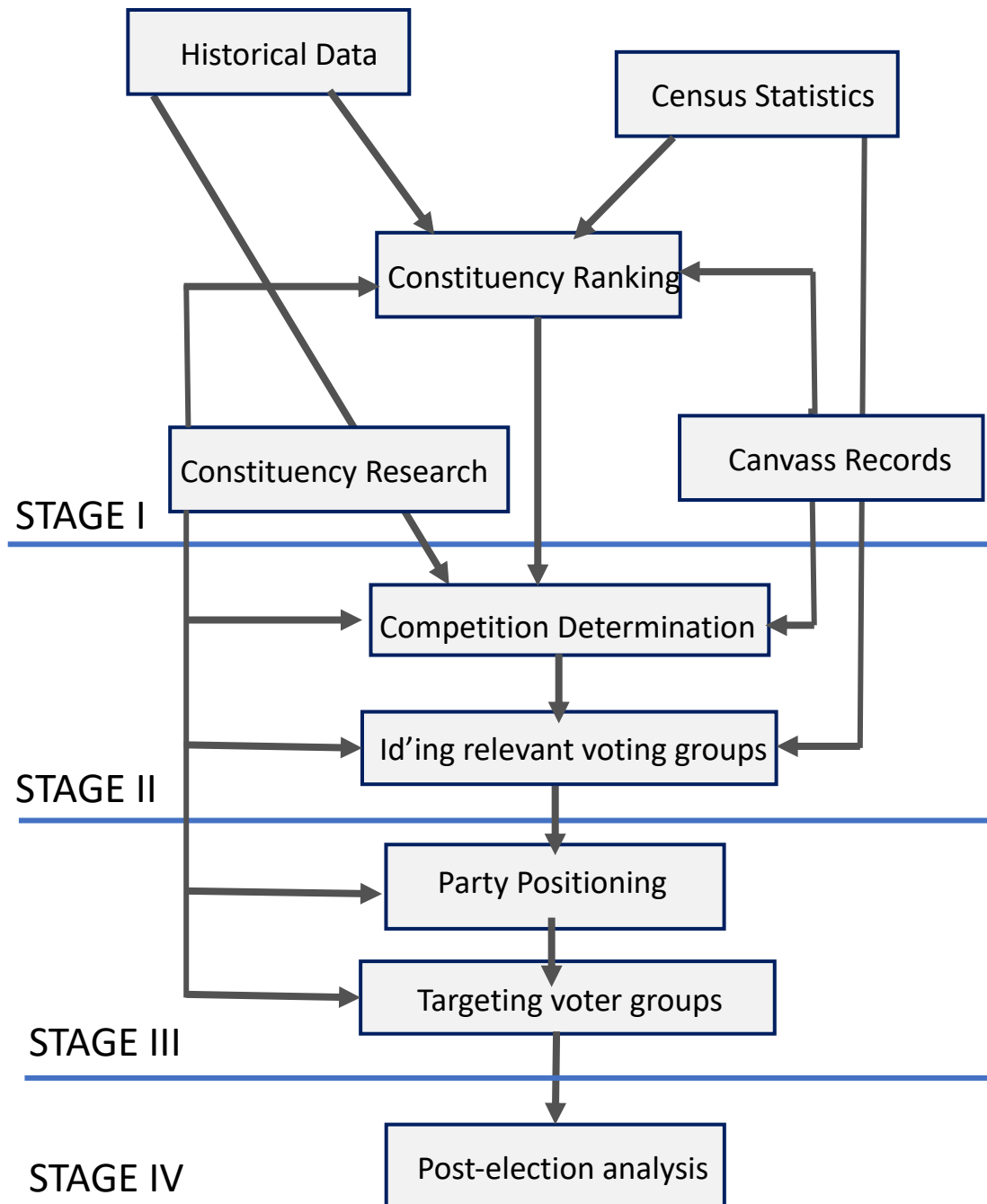


Figure 1.1: Political Marketing Planning Process. Source: Baines, Harris & Lewis, 2002

The voters can see a mirror of the future when they're marketed to. Political marketing, however, during the election process is not just about "spins" and media relations. Political scientists use the term political marketing as a set of marketing activities which happen immediately before the elections. The goal of political marketing is to build and instil optimism, opinions, values, guidance and voting behaviour. Voting behaviour will typically embrace a number of differences, especially in relation to a certain party or candidate.

Political Marketing is now integral to the decision-making process due to the role it plays in motivating the information source use and learning.

1.1.1 History of Political Marketing

During the latter half of the 20th century, the discipline of marketing colonized political campaigning. Historically, political marketing arose from the work of specialists in political communication belonging to various disciplines. The history of the Internet as a political medium is not long. Presidential elections in 1992 became the first major political campaign in the United States to make extensive use of the Internet. When no web browsers were available, the Clinton / Gore campaign used email, newsletter boards and chat forums to disseminate information on the initiative and position papers. The chat group 'alt.policy.Clinton' received nearly 800 messages a day at the height of the campaign.

Political marketing brings in new approaches to gain understanding of political entities. The strategic marketing approach is the same as the market orientation approach. One observation here is that any marketing strategy approach (e.g. production, product, distribution, market, etc.) can be a suitable marketing strategy to be realized by a political organisation, based on the aims and objectives pursued, the target audience of the political entity, the related political setting and the current climate, among others. A political organisation, for instance would mould its behaviour, taking in account the needs of the voters and other stakeholders. This would vary across time, culture and countries. Its lore has now become an international phenomenon. In Portugal,

it is referred as 'elections advertising.' In Latvia, it is called 'pre-election agitation'. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is recognized as a 'political clip' and in Italy, 'self-managed space'. Political marketing was extensively used in the following:

- US Presidential Election (2008)
- Swedish Election (2010)
- New Zealand General Election (2011)
- Jokowi & Ahok, new Governor and deputy as winners of Jakarta Governor Election (2012)
- Indian General Election (2014)
- US Presidential Election (2016)
- Indian General Election (2019)

Candidate-initiated subjects and media-initiated subjects influenced each other in Taiwan's presidential elections, but they were inconsistent with the candidate-initiated subjects, which had a greater effect.

1.1.2 Present Scenario

At present, political marketing has matured into its own field. It is viewed as the marketing of attitudes, ideas and opinions. To speak in a general manner, political marketing is to impact voters' behaviour. Different from the traditional marketing, political marketing involves the selling political ideas instead of goods/services. Nevertheless, it employs almost the same methods as conventional marketing like PR, advertising, et al. **(Figure 1.2)** For both marketing and politics, a set of organisations in multiple domains tend to compete for their target audience's attention. The decision-makers are the consumers or the citizens. Candidates are using the Internet to replace conventional political strategies to reach out to electorate and to generate campaign funds. Parties, politicians and government departments are rapidly involved online in developing and delivering different types of political awareness and communication opportunities. Through exchange of promises to the society, political marketing seeks to sustain long-term relationship with

the voters, giving them an intangible offer. To bridge the gap between what the citizen wants and what the prospective government could fulfil, political marketing comes into play.

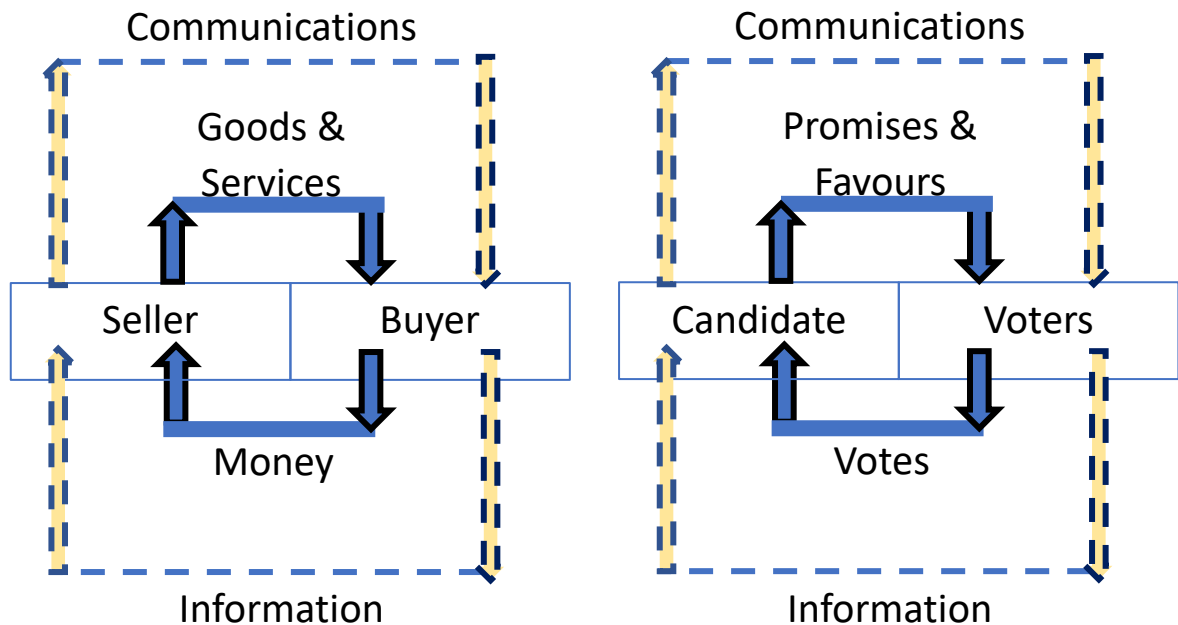


Figure 1.2: Comparison between business marketing and political marketing

Political marketing is an upcoming growth industry at a time when the world around us likes to receive their news through social media. It not just affects people, but also institutions. It seeks to appeal to the citizens' emotions which is central to how this works. Emotions such as enthusiasm and fear are generally invoked during political marketing. In a very short period, politicians in young democracies in the world have enthusiastically incorporated social media in their overall strategy to reach out to their electorate, participate in direct communication with people, and allow for vibrant political discussions.

Researchers have observed that exposure to political marketing can affect vote choice and affect attitudes towards candidates. Its influence is moderated most constantly via political awareness, with those lower in information more influenced by it. A technique, termed as responsive storytelling is aimed at

grabbing interest and then directing it into a customized and engaging flow of information that communicates the narrative in a very unique way. This strategy is and has been used to gain traction on digital media by making the abstentionists the centre of their attention and efforts. This happens by making the less informed voters switching their votes to another side of the political spectrum. The extreme sides of the spectrum consist of loyal supporters or followers who wouldn't budge. A little ahead from each side will lie the voters who are likely to vote for the candidate at the end of the respective sides of the spectrum. And, in the middle, lie the undecided voters who are the easiest to mould. Marketing specialists advise to target these, mostly. **(J. Maarek, 2014)**

Political marketing isn't just used during election time now. It's a permanent process used even for governing purposes.

1.1.3 Online Political Marketing

Online networks are often used to harness social information as compared to face-to-face networks. They have been and can be used to enhance the possibility of cognitive change and social contagion. Political mobilisation that happens on social mediums in the form of political marketing, may have an effect on a voter's self-expression, the way she/he seeks information and finally, the voting behaviour. This is further spread to relationships in the 'offline' mode. Political marketing can effect behavioural change in potential voters. Online mobilization works as it mainly spreads through solid, potentially offline networks with an online representation. Mobilisation on social media is more significant as well as effective than just informational mobilisation. Effectiveness of a message increases manifold when familiar faces are shown to users repeatedly. This can both be for a positive and a negative message. People with a little awareness about politics and less knowledge about the campaign are expected to alter their perception about politicians after seeing political advertisements on social media. With the rising usage of social media as a news source, political marketing can shape a candidate's image.

The Internet is a revolution in cost dynamics. It promotes the 'reaching out' and awareness of voters at a fraction of the expense of mainstream media. Both on the political side and on the voter side, the expense is reduced and the potential exchange is much more important, because social mediums carry far more information and is open in nature. The original question raised here is whether the outcome of the vote may be influenced effectively by reducing the cost of presenting information and reaching the voter through far less expensive means, such as the Internet. Candidates are now able to give more information to voters by reaching out to them via the internet, which is quite difficult when marketing through traditional media. However, the adoption of social media is motivated by a need for political outreach rather than a motive for transparency, and usage can be increased by examples of previous users' engagement success with the media.

The exponential trend of the creation of amateur-level videos has led to massive participation of voters. YouTube and other similar channels have been taken to publicly share their points of view by posting and responding to political aficionados. Campaign management struggle to respond to a vast set of statements from the masses and to organised the unstructured system. Campaign managers, including marketing executives should be able to change tactics, branding or logo in order to easily capture and evaluate the audience's responses quickly. This is especially necessary because the perceptions of the observer give an unbiased image of the voter's real thought.

Figure 1.2 depicts the generation of content by various political parties, on social media before India's General Elections in 2014 and the number of seats won by them, correspondingly.

One of the first online campaign that was run and was also successful was Barack Obama's Online Campaign during US Presidential Elections in 2008. The campaign managers refined the already existing practices in online campaigning. The uninformed voters were engaged through participation on social media. The traditionally marginalised groups' support was gathered on website, my.barackobama.com. This platform provided the activists t share

and exchange their opinions. This contributed to increased voter turnout by onboarding young voters.

Party name	Social media buzz	Political parties won seat in 2014 general election
BharatiyaJanta Party	4,799,330	282
AamAdmi Party	2,248,338	4
Indian National Congress	1,431,518	44
National Congress Party	121,399	6
BahujanSamaj Party	55,186	0
Janta Dal United	43,577	2
BijuJanta Dal	39,644	20
DravidaMunnetraKazhagam	34,692	0
All India Trinamool Congress	32,938	34
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	26,266	9
Samajwadi Party	23,734	5
All India Anna DravidaMunnetraKazhagam	20,653	37

Source: [simplify360°](http://simplify360.com) (2014); Election Commission of India: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx.

Figure 1.2

The Pew Research Center estimates that 44% of American citizens got news from the Social Media about the US presidential elections. In the words that Donald Trump selected which would be targeted at social media, it showed results by people following, tweeting and retweeting which formed Trump's insurgent political marketing plan. The buzz that was generated through him overcame and successfully overpowered the other contenders.

One of the main goals for campaign managers is to establish and maintain the identity of a prospective candidate by a technique known as 'identity manufacturing'. In this method, the concept of integrated marketing communication is used by campaign managers to build a distinct identity of prospective political candidates that reflects the distinctive name, appearance, priorities, and other measurable characteristics of each politician.

During election campaigns, new media has become more and more significant. The Internet's ability to connect and organize people lets politicians

market themselves and interactively engage with the public without journalists' influence. It is not shocking that the Internet has been adopted by political organizations. Digital tools, including Twitter, Facebook and other online networks, are frequently used in political activities.

Candidates are increasingly utilizing online communications with collaborative modes of communication (e.g. response to commenting and reading tweets), and customized forms of communication (e.g. sharing knowledge about their daily lives and personal thoughts). Nevertheless, the degree to which these communication strategies (i.e. socially and immersive-oriented campaigning) influence the electorate (e.g. the proportion of votes that politicians can receive by using social media) remains unclear.

Customized messaging may lead to more interest on the part of policymakers, as such customized stories attract more attention to the post. This generated trust in the nominee, for example, will lead to more votes.

The design of the online strategy focused on various models and characteristics. There are two attributes that are always considered the most important: interactivity and, to a lesser extent, political customisation.

The monitoring as well as evaluation of voters' expectations is a fundamental task in this process. These perceptions, when paired together, give cognitive cues to the optimal ways through which voters evaluate the prospective candidates. Currently, there are a number of organisations that help political parties strategise well. Some of the prominent ones include the Indian Political Action Committee ([I-PAC](#)) [Delhi Elections, 2020, Tamil Nadu Elections, 2020] and Cambridge Analytica [US Presidential Elections, 2016].

Through technological intervention, political consulting firms help the potential candidates to enhance their vote shares. These political advocacy groups support their 'clients' in electioneering campaigns

Social media has the potential of more participation and democracy. It has led to the existence of dialog between the voters and the prospective candidate. The cost-effectiveness and abundance of information are seen as the greatest advantages for working towards building of interactive political institutions.

Social media is positively linked to a political participation, as social media provides people alternative sources of political information.

1.2 Problem Statement

The impact that online political marketing has on voting behaviour is to be studied through this research paper. How do potential voters get influenced and how much it reflects and gets translated in the results of an election are the two key points that will be researched upon. A powerful weapon to revolutionise voter engagement, online political marketing has the ability to lessen the impact or even augment it, according to the message being transferred to the electorate.

Online political marketing has a considerable effect on voter turnout as well as the results. Usage of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to turn the tide by mobilisation of support from the masses by political marketing and generating buzz as a result of it has its own set of outcomes.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Through this study, the objectives would be:

- To examine the effect of political marketing on the decision-making abilities of the voter
- To find the impact of digital marketing on elections and politics, eventually
- To assess the extent to which the electorate participates in the process of elections, acting as advocates for the candidates they support

1.4 Scope of the Study

At present, the nature of traditional communication models has changed, particularly in the online world, as digital users have taken on such an effective role. The main masters of information dissemination are no longer capital and

advertising. The trick for the creation of brands and images is now to interact with clients. The internet has profoundly revolutionized communication, empowered people all over the world as the rise of mass media has changed social interaction, and initiated an age of online engagement and cooperation.

While the political environment is central to this research paper, citizens and stakeholders only play a specific role in brand identification, development and dissolution, with the general public. Consumers have opinions on all products, services and brands, and they gain a new voice from the Internet. Companies worldwide have one problem: the creativeness or obsolescence in response to the change.

According to **Van Steenburg (2015)**, the research done in this regard falls mostly into the following categories:

- Type of adverts
- Technological advancements
- Policy & Ethics
- Branding
- Strategy
- Cognitive Responses
- Inter-cultural comparisons
- Voter as a consumer

This study has been limited to the Delhi Legislative Elections and the tweets during online election campaigning, derived from the most-used hashtags. The findings of this study could be amplified further by the application of more sophisticated tools to assess to what extent potential voters are lured/affected/disgruntled when they're marketed to, online and politically, and also delving deep into the aforementioned categories of research. Additionally, other features such as follow, like, dislike could help in establishing a relationship with the election outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Political Marketing

The habit of watching the news and perceptions about campaign rhetoric have an indirect effect on voter turnout. These two aspects have a positive relationship with each other. **(Allen, Stevens, Marfleet, Sullivan & Alger, 2007)**

Highly-knowledgeable voters have lesser reactance towards opponent ratings, while moderately knowledgeable voters have the opposite reaction towards the same. **(Meirick, 2002)** A positive campaign is affected by contentment, emotions and the act of voting itself. Participation and contentment are the two factors that influence a negative campaign. A single negative event can damage the hard-earned reputation which is valuable in the context of political marketing. **(Bauer, Huber & Herrmann, 1996)**

A user's semantic processes build a political message's mental model, helping to find out how different electoral groups react to political ads. According to **(Vankov, 2013)**, political marketing can be represented by three incompatible concepts, namely selling-oriented, instrument-oriented and relationship-oriented political marketing. The first one is equivalent to the traditional style of marketing that consists of offerings in the form of promises which align with the gaps that exist within the society in terms of caste or class. The second one, i.e., instrument-oriented political marketing is identified by segmentation, targeting and positioning of the political party. Relationship-oriented political marketing involves the societal considerations such as long-term fulfilment of promises that favours all the players in the context. There is inter-dependency.

The scale development of electoral belief has been measured on dimensions: (i) knowledge, (ii) truthfulness, (iii) scepticism, (iv) amusement, and (v) money strategy.

The candidate-as-brand concept is relatively new. Via current branding strategies, there is plenty of scope for evaluating candidate brands and for a deeper understanding of candidate brand creation in a political environment. At a time when the voters' decisions are not strong enough, abstract appeals

are more convincing than concrete ones. Hence, the results of political marketing are more visible among the politically uninformed. **(Kim, Rao & Lee, 2009)**

Assessment of the tone of political marketing by candidates from how much information they're receiving, the voters tend to separate these two aspects from each other. However, it isn't necessary that they find a message uninformative if the tone is negative or attacking. **(Sides, Lipsitz & Grossmann, 2009)**. At the macro stage, the basic analysis of commercial and political marketing is comparable. However, obstacles to contrast between the voter and the consumer revolve around different circumstances in each situation, reflecting micro-level reactions. **(Peng & Hackley, 2009)**

There exist some structural and process characteristics of political marketing which are enlisted in **Table 2.1**.

PROCESS	STRUCTURE
	Product:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party • Loyalty of voters • Adaptability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention from media 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polls 	Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newness of concept, lesser skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance v/s Style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discerning marketing as negative
	Market
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideologically charged • Counter-consumer • Social support

Table 2.1: Structural and Process Characteristics of Political Marketing

Source: (Butler and Collins, 1994)

The product concept explained by **Butler and Collins (1994)** says that the voters have to take the whole 'product', i.e., the party here. A voter might be opposed to a candidate's ideology while supporting the party's ideology or vice-versa. The voter cannot choose to pick up a few attributes but has to take in the entire concept while voting. Parties also tend to gain their electorate's loyalty through their followers which is hard to earn yet stays for long. However, this loyalty tends to shift because of the ever-changing nature of political unions and pre-poll commitments. Failure to perform the promised duties may result in losing their power.

An entity that is engaged in a political process may be termed as a political organisation. It usually comprises people who do not have any formal training for their jobs. Therefore, a negative notion of marketing gets developed because of the presence of amateurs and volunteers. It is believed that the real issues may get hidden or ignored because of appealing to vote banks by cashing in on popular topics. Also, since the need of political marketing is now more than ever, dependence on external political committees have increased.

In a political market, the consumers are the voters who have their own perceptions of the world around them. This makes them vote for a specific party irrespective of how the party may have positioned itself. Further, political structures may often be built on traditions, values, beliefs, customs and religion. This is seen to be more prominent in India, Israel and Turkey where the bonds between political parties and voters is strengthened or weakened according to faith. Counter-consumption happens through the fulfilment of promises by candidates after receiving votes during an election. The citizens vote in exchange of some value. Lastly, to vote and for whom show the extent of the affiliation to a certain school of thought. This could be on the basis of women's rights, unemployment, religion, etc. **(Butler and Collins, 1996)**

Political marketing has been accused of weakening the notion of citizenship as a dedicated and politically engaged person. The primacy of winning office through campaign strategies by satisfying the needs of a few key constituents at almost any expense (including avoiding core beliefs). The relationship between politicians and electorate is more complicated than that understood

by the campaign models and the interests of mainstream constituents, social groups, other elected leaders and the media. **(Savigny and Temple, 2010)**

2.2 Online Political Marketing

As the Internet, a key source of information began to become a dependable source of knowledge for many via social media, the campaign advisors continued to use it to communicate with voters directly and individually. Relationships between prospective candidates and citizens as well as election strategies have since been evolving. Political marketing has evolved over time with the arrival of new strategies and platforms in which politicians can be marketed. We are now living in an age of media abundance, which contributes to selective consumption of information to the public **(Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013)**. However, political marketing has brought in newer advertising prospects as well as challenges, along with political brand evaluation.

Compared to the traditional market setting, many comparisons may be drawn by assessing the viewpoints of consumers with respect to advertisements and political environment during election time. There exists less predictability and increased accountability towards a candidate's electorate. To match one's image with that sought by the voter is an additional responsibility. Unfavourable experiences have high degrees of costs and conflicts involved. Compared to traditional market environment, the speed at which the media, opponents and followers can respond to political communications is quite great. The heightened pressure induced by reduction in time as the Internet continues to play a vital role in the management of political campaigns, continues to be a constant challenge to campaign managers. **(Bal, Campbell, Payne & Pitt, 2010)**

Another comparison made to the traditional media setting is that online content is easily accessible and the cost to engage the electorate is smaller. The internet thus has a mobilising effect on political involvement. Easy accessibility also leads to people being more politically active.

The ability of the Internet to encourage people and improve participation is acknowledged on the condition that individuals engage in a two-way dialogue with politicians. But, if people do not believe that what they think is heard and listened to, the online approach would not be very effective. Nonetheless, it is unclear how much time politicians should spend engaging with their constituents. **(Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013)**

The exposure to a medium influences the preference of voters among undecided voters. Info-seeking and intentions of political campaigning intentions tend to affect the level of political cynicism. **(Kaid, 2002)**

A campaign that has two levels, one targeting the people who use traditional media and two, the younger voters, helps in establishing political communication. Therefore, the Internet must be an integral part of the media mix. **(Leppäniemi, Karjaluo, Lehto & Goman, 2010)**

The existence of digital presence is a strong indicator of overall votes for individual candidates. The use of electronic political media and, in particular, party platforms has a positive impact on voter choices. The usage of Twitter adds on to the benefit of support towards candidates.

2.3 Social Media & Political Marketing

The mass usage of social media has altered knowledge dynamics. The major obstacle, at the expense of digital resources required to reach a large number of people, remained until a few years ago for those who wanted a piece of information to be shared across the world. Today, this barrier has largely been overcome with universal Internet access. **(Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2012)**

Social media has widened the worldwide presence and impact of celebrities beyond the entertainment industry to the political arena. Voters reacted to intensified advertisements by searching for more news and information through television, the Web, and social networking platforms, and by participating in more political conversation. **(Cho, 2008)** The idea to create personal links with voters is a major benefit of social media, but at the same time it makes people more accountable for their online presence and activities.

Social media also provides more time of contact as compared to traditional media. There are lesser or no time constraints unlike in TVCs and press conferences. Added to this, there is increased freedom of speech in a way that politicians can reply freely to many people.

Previously limited to just the influential people in a society, social media now allows otherwise 'invisible' people to express their support or resentment during political campaigns. The expanse of users on social media allows the political parties opportunities to grow attention and project branded keywords revolving around ideologies, manifesto or the rival. **(Gillies, 2018)**

It is upon a political party to decide how each social medium is to be used. Content comes next which is believed to contain languages that promises inclusion of diverse groups. Instead of keeping conversations on a political level, it has been seen that it's better to engage in conversations revolving about day-to-day life. Citizens are more attracted to leaders than the labels. **(Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013)** In the initial stages of an election campaign, social media is used to boost name recognition.

The usage of Twitter by political candidates increase during election campaigning, thereby indicating that Twitter is a significant forum for prospective candidates to interact with their audience, including about their personal lives. **(Kruikemeier, 2014, Golbeck et al., 2010)**. Joining an online conversation and/or mentioning to other people (making use of 'mentions' or forwarding a message to others) is a common form of communication on Twitter. interactivity, or an active two-way contact, is a central component of digital platforms. **(Sundar et al., 2003)**

Candidates who use Twitter during elections receive more preferential votes than candidates who do not partake in political marketing on Twitter. The theme of the campaign always seems to be significant. The amount of preferential votes the candidate receives is considerably affected by interactive communication. The candidates with a clear and direct communication method have been given greater support than the candidates who have not. Tweets by a candidate are not sufficient to persuade the voter to opt for a completely different party than the one the voters are currently affiliated to or follow. The

electorate is more likely to vote for the same party rather than a new candidate. **(Kruikemeier, 2014)**

Many political parties have used Twitter to update their followers about their online and offline activities. The users who are exposed to political marketing on Twitter help them realise the beliefs that they already hold. There is homogenous clustering within the social platform, which has come into public notice. The tweet sentiment of voters is related to political interests of electors. Commonly used to disseminate politically relevant information including comparisons with other parties, the tweets posted on Twitter seem to be a true indicator of the political climate (offline) and can be used to predict outcomes to a certain degree. **(Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner and Welpe, 2011)**

In order to serve their vest interests, candidates must invest early in social media if it's expected that there would be a close fight. Twitter, for example, could be used as one part of the overall political marketing strategy. A decent indicator of voters' interest, this platform could be used by candidates to engage better.

As anticipated, political candidates frequently speak about their feelings, their private lives and their professional practices on Twitter. New media are constantly being seen as a tool for self-promotion by political parties. **(Safiullah, Pathak, Singh and Anshul, 2016)** A politician must be relevant, trustworthy and engaging enough.

In parallel to the usage of social media for election campaign objectives, citizens use them as activist tools to help mobilize and advance their own interests.

Although Twitter offers a very direct way to communicate, Facebook is more casual and social. The usage of the two platforms has to be balanced. **(Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013)**

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The ultimate goal for any political organisation is to improve upon their communication with citizens and voters. Therefore, there is a considerable need to collect, assess, analyse and interpret politically relevant information from social media. The massive amount of unstructured data generated poses a challenge for analysis. Thus, social media analytics paves the way by providing tools and frameworks to work on social media data. It deals with the challenge of analysing huge volumes of content generated by users and establishing links to understand the diffusion of information, sentiments, opinions and rising issues. It has become more and more imperative for political organisations to keep themselves updated about the current discussions so as to avoid scandals and controversies. **(Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013)**

Social media analytics and political communication have a general framework, depicted in **Figure 3.1**.

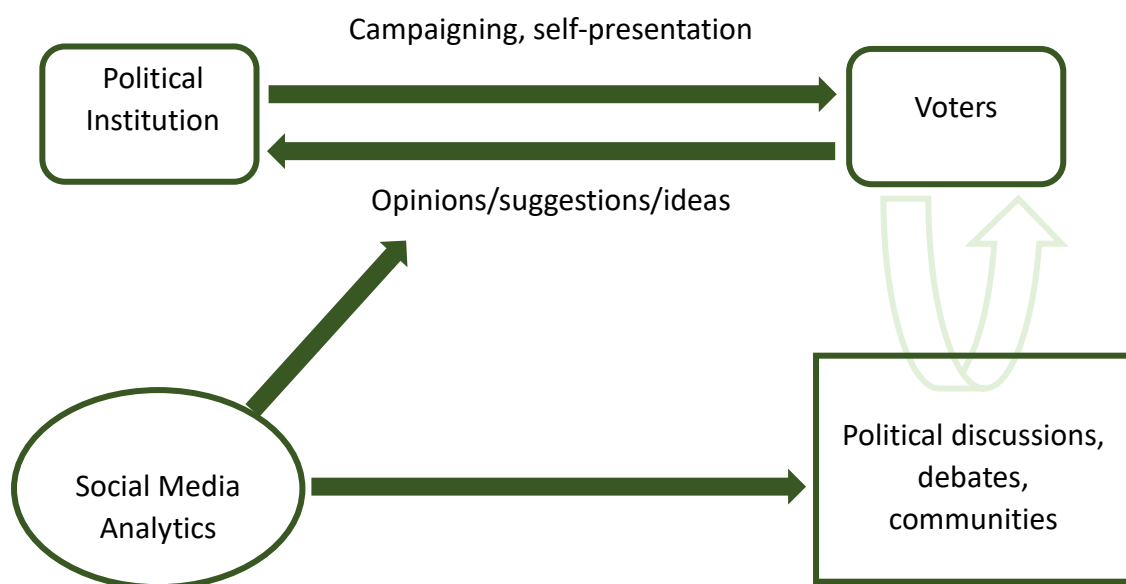


Figure 3.1: Social Media Analytics and Political Communication

Source: (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012)

The research design used for this study consisted of two parts:

- i. Secondary Research: Extant literature was studied within the time period ranging over three decades (1990-2018) and,
- ii. Text analysis via sentiment analysis. Sentiment Analysis is a method to mine opinions of people from what they post online.

The process of Sentiment Analysis includes:

- a) Collection of data
- b) Preparing data for analysis, i.e., cleaning
- c) Recognition of sentiments
- d) Organising sentiments
- e) Output

Extraction of meaningful content from a big amount of data forms the basis of sentiment analysis.

Microblogging websites have turned into this wide spectrum of knowledge, consisting of a plethora of topics on which the users have discussions and debates. The very design of these websites enables its users to express in real-time: Be it sharing positive views or complaining about things they do not approve of. This acts as an excellent source of data for sentiment analysis. The large amount of information contained in microblogging web-sites makes them an attractive source of data for sentiment analysis for political organisations to gauge the voters' sentiments and align their strategies accordingly. It helps them answer questions such as:

- What does the electorate think about us?
- How positive do the voters think of us?
- What would they like us to do?

One of the most famous microblogging websites is Twitter. This social platform enables its users to post messages in real time, called 'tweets'. Tweets are brief posts, limited to a certain length of 280 characters. Twitter's design lets people use acronyms, make spelling mistakes, use emojis and other

characters to convey a special meaning. **Figure 3.1** shows the number of users of Twitter across the world in April 2020. **Figure 3.2** shows the age group of active users on Twitter as of April, 2020 which goes on to reiterate the fact that it is the young voters that are most appealed to via online political marketing.

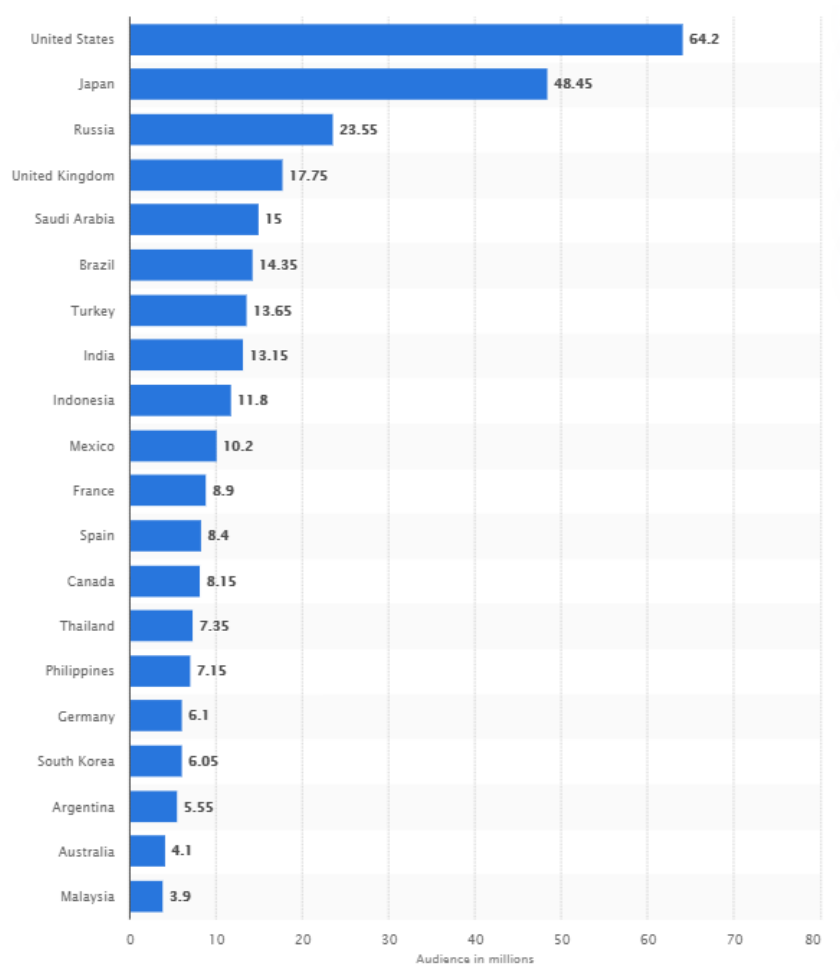


Figure 3.1: Number of Twitter users as of April 2020, country-wise (in millions)

Source: Statista

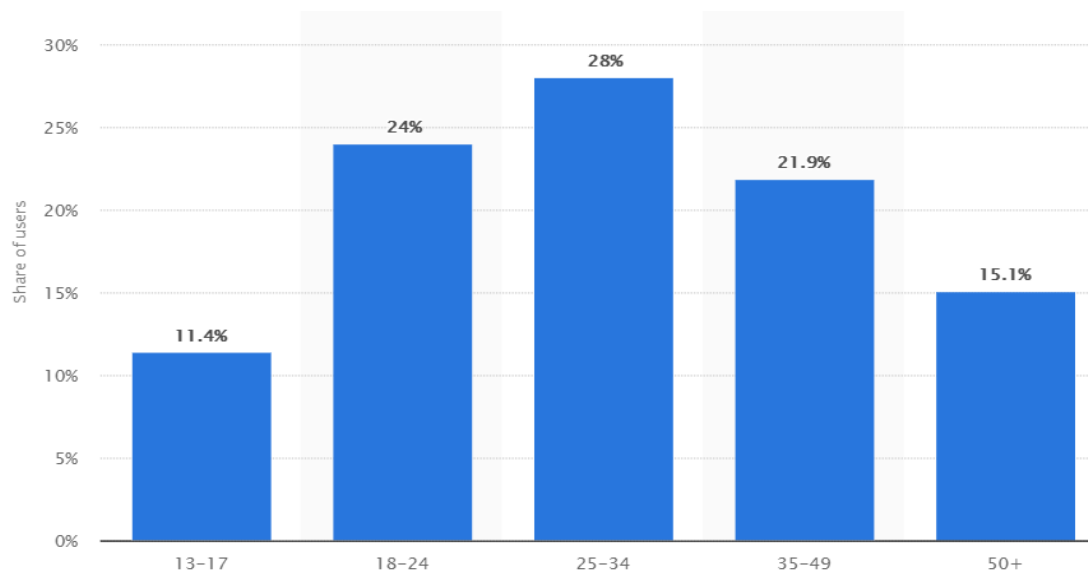


Figure 3.2: Distribution of Twitter users worldwide as of April 2020, age group wise. Source: Statista

Twitter is being used increasingly in the political context. It has become a credible and widely used medium of contact for political institutions, the greatest weapon in an electoral war. These Internet campaigns use a multitude of strategies to attract more people than their rivals and to support one party or expressing their backing for another in case of an alliance. Not only is Twitter popular, but its feature of 'retweeting' serves as a powerful mechanism to share information to followers beyond the original audience to which the message was propagated to in the first place.

4. CASE STUDY

4.1 Case Introduction

To study the impact of political marketing on voters' behaviour, Twitter was chosen as the platform for analysis. The recent Delhi Legislative Elections (February, 2020) was selected for the same. There were three major political parties involved, namely Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Congress. All three parties have a significant online presence on Twitter, comprising the candidates themselves, the party heads, party volunteers and their followers. BJP's Delhi account is followed by 5.72 lakh accounts, while Congress has 1.07 lakh accounts following them and AAP has 1.03 lakh followers.

During the time of online campaigning, BJP's account was the most active one with the greatest engagement rate, followed by Congress' despite having the fewest number of followers.

The three parties had engaged in extensive political marketing on all social media, especially Twitter. To assess if this had any influence on the results, a sentiment analysis of tweets was carried out.

4.2 Data Collection

This study was carried out on [NVivo \(Version 12\)](#) a qualitative data analysis software. NVivo is used to gain rich insights from diverse data. It includes multiple features like model visualisations, word frequency and text queries, hierarchy diagrams, codes, nodes amongst many others.

The sentiment analysis of tweets was done in a series of steps as mentioned below:

- i. Extract relevant data via Web Scraper, i.e., historical tweets from 1st December, 2019 to 7th February, 2020 since the election campaigning is on a rise for at least two months prior to the election date. In order to filter out content, tweets containing the [most used hashtags](#) were picked up (tracking approach). The most used hashtags for AAP were,

#KejriwalPhirSe, *#LageRahoKejriwal* and *#AAPkecandidates*. The party adopted an election strategy of promoting the party leader, Arvind Kejriwal and showcasing their work as well as its candidates without smearing another party. AAP worked with Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) that helped form a strategy for party for the Delhi Elections.

BJP's most used hashtags were, *#AAPBurningDelhi*, *#JhoothiAAPSarkar* and *#DelhiWithBJP*. The former two hashtags are against the AAP and the third one expresses support of the citizens of Delhi to the BJP. The hashtags that were most used by Congress were *#DelhiKiBaat*, *#BharatBachaoRally* and *#कांग्रेस_वाली_दिल्ली*. Congress used the first hashtag as a retort to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Mann Ki Baat*. The second hashtag related to saving the country from other political parties, especially the BJP. **(Sriram, 2020)**

- ii. The data was then stored in an Excel workbook. It was pre-processed or cleaned, i.e., numerals, URLs, time stamps, etc. were removed to maintain accuracy during analysis.
- iii. The data was then imported on NVivo in the form of a text document (.txt).
- iv. The dataset was reviewed manually and categorised under sentiments towards or from the aforementioned political parties. The 'codes' were then subjected to many queries within the software.

4.3 Data Analysis

The sentiment analysis of tweets and the results obtained through queries and visualisations showed:

- i. Majority of the tweets fell under the category of 'moderately positive' sentiment, seconded by 'moderately negative'. **(Figure 4.1)**

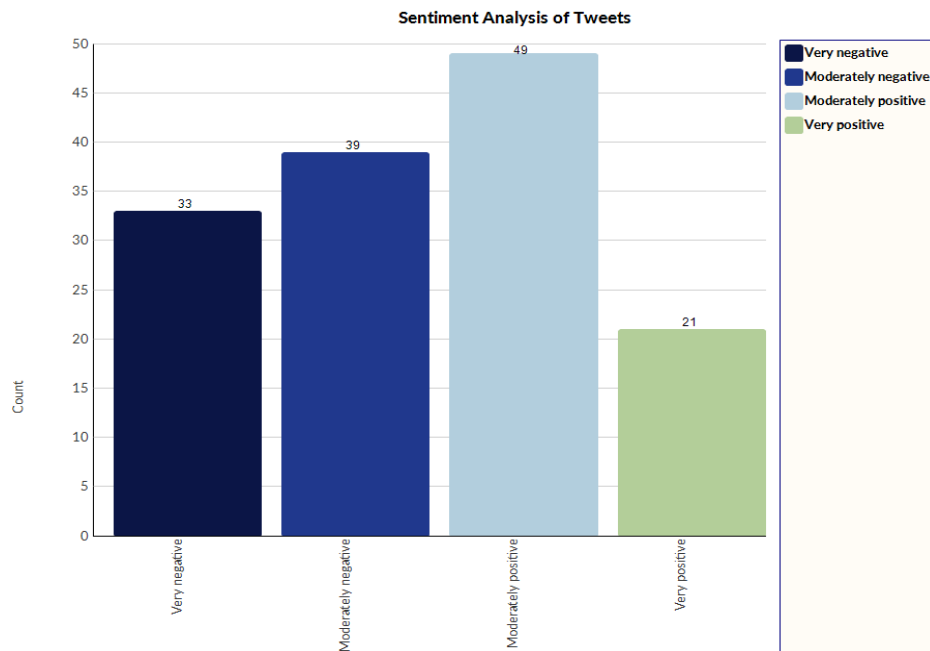


Figure 4.1: Overall Sentiment Analysis of Tweets

- ii. Majority of the [tweets](#) from the Twitter handles of BJP candidates or their followers or party workers fell under the category of 'moderately negative', followed by 'very negative'.
- iii. Majority of the [tweets](#) from the Twitter handles of Congress candidates or their followers or party workers fell under the category of 'moderately negative', followed by 'moderately positive'. The rest of the two sentiments did not carry many tweets.
- iv. Majority of the [tweets](#) from the Twitter handles of AAP candidates or their followers or party workers fell under the category of 'moderately positive', followed by 'very positive'.

v. [Themes](#) for 'very positive' sentiment included:

- absolute majority
- full support
- honest delivery
- mohalla clinics
- public transparency
- redefined activism
- redefined governance
- redefined politics

vi. [Themes](#) for 'moderately positive' sentiment included:

- went door
- gentleman politician
- exceptional warmth
- buses
- honest governance
- laughter moments
- mohalla clinic
- pleasure meeting
- pro-janta initiatives
- speaking truth
- proud volunteer
- tremendous love
- water
- welfare schemes
- [anti-people policies](#)
- [unscrupulous politics](#)

vii. [Themes](#) for 'moderately negative' sentiment included:

- arvind kejriwal
- creating rift
- facing injustice

- report card
- secular fabric
- social harmony
- social strife
- unimaginable achievements

viii. [Themes](#) for 'very negative' sentiment included:

- anti-people government
- arvind kejriwal
- creating chaos
- economic ruin
- mohalla clinics
- polluted traffic jams
- public anger

ix. The most used [words](#) that appeared in tweets from the Twitter handles of BJP candidates or their followers or party workers were:

- fighting
- delhi
- #delhiwithBJP
- modi
- bjp
- vote

x. The most used [words](#) that appeared in tweets from the Twitter handles of Congress candidates or their followers or party workers were:

- #bharatbachaorally
- gandhi
- india
- save
- congress
- people

- xi. The most used [words](#) that appeared in tweets from the Twitter handles of AAP candidates or their followers or party workers were:
- governance
 - delhi
 - kejriwal
 - education
 - electricity
 - support
 - work
 - free
 - water
- xii. Using the feature of 'AutoCode', particular themes were identified. These themes then were subjected to sentiment analysis. The themes were divided by very positive, [moderately positive](#), [moderately negative](#) and [very negative](#). **Table 4.1** shows an example.

	A : Sentiment\Positive\Very positive
1 : absolute majority	32
2 : full support	18
3 : honest delivery	106
4 : mohalla clinics	82
5 : public transparency	106
6 : redefined activism	106
7 : redefined governance	106
8 : redefined politics	106

Table 4.1: Themes subjected to sentiment analysis. Here, themes under 'very positive'

- xiii. A query was run to see what [themes](#) the winning party (AAP) talked about the most on Twitter. The results showed a matrix containing themes, according to their proportion, such as:
- governance
 - schemes

- politics
- water
- kejiwal

amongst others.

4.4 Findings and Recommendations

The outputs received by performing sentiment analysis of tweets on NVivo, as described in [Section 4.3](#) pointed at the various aspects of political marketing and the strategies used by political parties to engage their voters.

Majority of the tweets that came from Twitter handles of BJP or their followers fell under the 'negative' sentiment, proving that the political strategy they adopted was more of attack towards the ruling party, i.e., AAP. Congress, on the other hand, resorted to maintaining a constant stand of saving India from BJP. AAP had a different strategy than the other parties. It chose to talk purely about its work, which explains why the themes their tweets had and the sentiments associated with them were positive. An interesting observation was that the positive sentiment recorded themes that revolved around AAP. Not just the party, but the voters actively talked about those. The negative sentiments recorded themes about AAP's work again, which points out to the discussion led by other parties, particularly the BJP.

This leads to the conclusion that positively-led campaign had an effect on voters' behaviour. Imparting information about their work, resorting to no-attack policy led AAP to reach out to the masses.

There was a difference of around 14 lakh votes received by AAP and BJP, the two frontrunners. Compared to 2015 where the latter had won just 3 seats out of 70, this year's campaign saw a lot of hard work and the presence of star campaigners from all over the country, both offline as well as online. BJP's digital strategy of attack did work to some extent as exemplified by the results. Tabloidisation of issues during the election campaign was high online and often the basis of speeches and/or tweets. They made use of political

marketing in a way that they knew the doors that had to knock on and the kind of arguments to be made in order to attract the desired segments.

AAP managed to retain a major portion of their seats in the legislative Assembly by appearing confident about their work since the last five years. They were successful in maintaining the fidelity of their voters.

Congress resorted to campaigning against BJP, taking a country view rather than a state-view. Considering its poor performance in the last set of Delhi Elections (2015), it distanced itself from attacking AAP as it seemed to not want to distribute its votes. Nevertheless, it managed to secure 3.95L votes but no seats. This was a clever strategy considering how Congress is fighting to sustain itself in the Parliament and the application of resources where they would actually yield significant results.

Previously, any unpopular decision or announcement made by the ruling government would only invoke dissent which would result in the form of protests or strikes. However, with the existence of real-time messaging on the Internet, it has led to the generation of minutest of dissatisfaction with any measure being taken which could also result in governments withdrawing their decisions. In the context of political campaigning during Delhi Legislative Elections (2020), there were multiple instances wherein a few political leaders were accused of hate speech and instigation of riots. Not only this, but some were also seen and hence, discussed by the Twitterati about their religious sidings and appeasement for votes, inviting derision.

There exists an 'engagement ladder' for political marketers that begins from getting a voter's support registered till they become their advocates on social media channels. Modern political marketing, i.e., digital political marketing is therefore, a significant tool for political communication which is a long-term process, concentrated on the positioning of a party and adding to its calculated value proposition.

Recommendations

Being extremely personal as well as social is the key to successfully exert influence from social media campaigning. However, the negative effects of it must be discouraged through awareness. Fake news tends to do a lot of damage before a fact-checker could mediate to refute the claims. Media could thus, play a corrective function in order to mitigate the deficiencies of democracies using political marketing.

The internet penetration might be increasing in India; however, the voters would still like to feel a difference in real life. Political marketing must use a blend of both offline and online marketing to reach out to their voters. AAP engaged in door-to-door campaign which helped its cause.

BJP could have fared well if it had concentrated more on the work it has done in the states under their power instead of attacking personally without sound arguments related to the work not done.

Political parties must hence, focus on creating value for its electorate. As an enabler of a relationship marketing plan, parties must make meaningful and strategic investments in technology. All other fragmented measures are likely to undermine the campaigns of the parties rather than promote them.

4.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have a few practical implications which could be employed in policy-making and put into practice. One, using an integrated approach to emphasise on online and offline-relationship building. This should be put in place for a long-term rather than the election time alone.

Second, performing this experiment or extending it across constituencies, keeping in mind the demographics would provide for an accurate source of relevant data and aid in canvassing support at the local level. Identifying strengths in order to make voters catalysts of collective action and weaknesses to shift undecided voters to the favourable side of the political spectrum could also address the rise of populism.

Third, analysing big data of every voter's data well enough to make use of 'interactivity score' and with the usage of sophisticated technological tools to recognise the need for stratagems. Having an edge over the opponent is the key to engagement and reach. The sentiment of posts may determine the degree of effectivity of a subject.

Lastly, with the rise of young entrants in the political sphere and young parties (like AAP in India), old stagers are now being challenged by millennials and/or generation X. The participation of young voters in India, owing to its demographic dividend would have a considerable effect on the outcomes of the results.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

As with the majority of studies, the design of the current study is subject to limitations. One is of the process itself. Sentiment analysis has challenges of its own, i.e., with the existence of acronyms, emoticons, irony, satire, it is difficult for a software to comprehend emotions. Multiple contexts and negations might lead to worse classification of sentiments.

Another limitation was of the language barrier. The party that tweeted the least in English was BJP, followed by AAP and then Congress. This made several tweets fall under the category of neutral.

Choosing tweets from only the most-used hashtags in order to filter out content made for a small sample size. However, the findings and the data analysis could form a basis for future studies, comprising larger datasets and sophisticated statistical software.

5. CONCLUSION

Voters who have more links, i.e., who have a larger social network may be better measures of group vote behaviour. Being a cost-effective medium, social media could be used to reach to a larger audience, thereby, strategizing the online political marketing strategy in a way that helps in altering the outcome of an election in a democratic fashion.

Online messages may influence a spectrum of offline behaviours, which affects our understanding of the social media's role in society. Experiments are expensive, with little empirical validation, but the growing availability of low-priced and large-scale social network data makes it easy to perform such experiments on the ground. If our culture, well-being and the environment are to be understood – and strengthened – in real life, we can use these strategies to recognise the real-world behaviours that are receptive to online interventions. Social media is therefore the perfect medium and knowledge source to gauge the opinion of the electorate on politics and government issues, as well as to generate collective backing for potential candidates.

For a wider application in elections, political leaders must first reinforce the online infrastructure. This is seen as imperative in political marketing. Managing enough time is seen as a constraint which impacts the level of engagement. Being extremely personal as well as social is the key to successfully exert influence from social media campaigning. However, the negative effects of it must be discouraged through awareness. Media could play a corrective function in order to mitigate the deficiencies of democracies using political marketing.

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5.2 Annexure

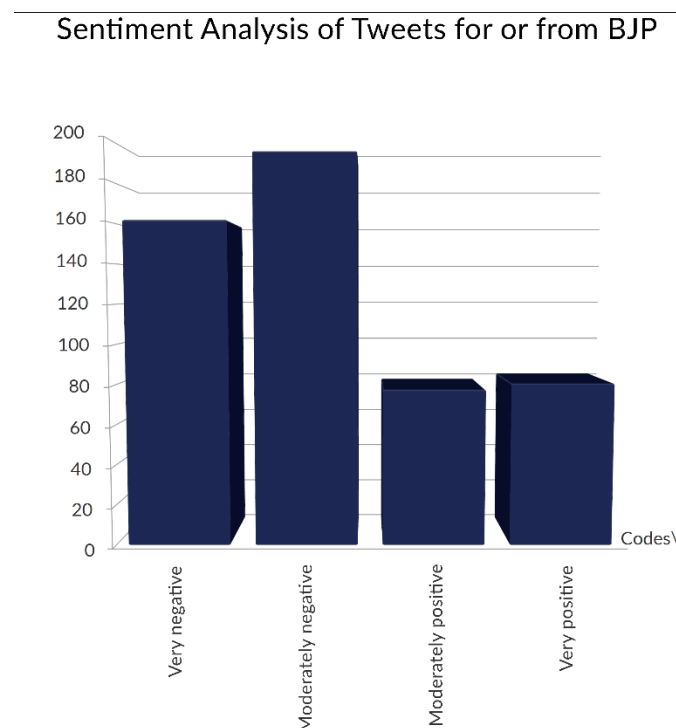


Figure 5.1: Sentiment Analysis of Tweets for or from BJP

Sentiment Analysis of Tweets from or for Congress

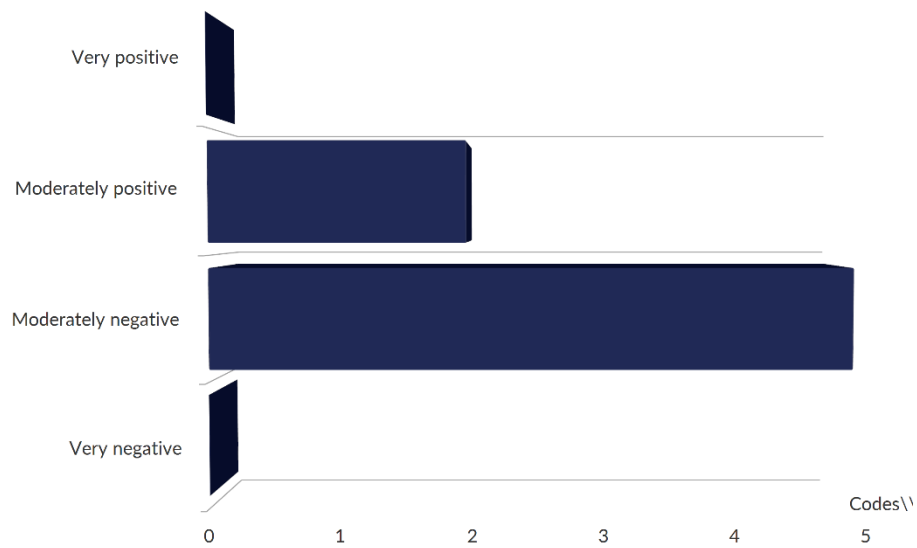


Figure 5.2: Sentiment Analysis of Tweets from or for Congress

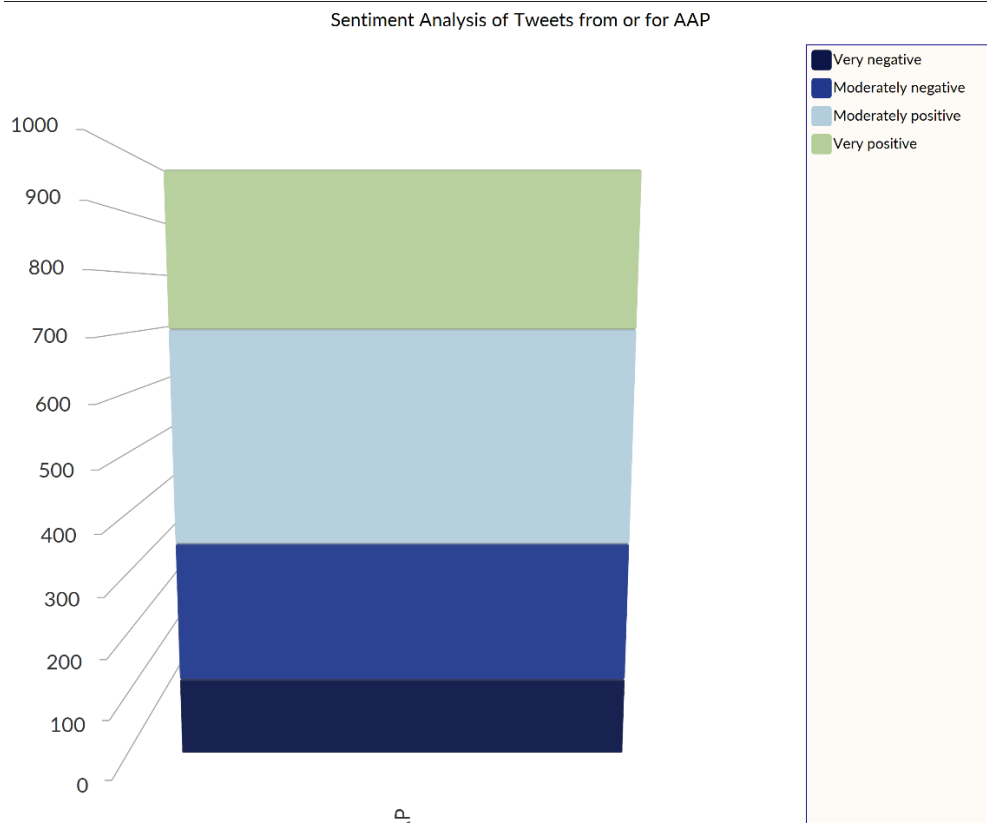


Figure 5.3: Sentiment Analysis of Tweets from or for AAP

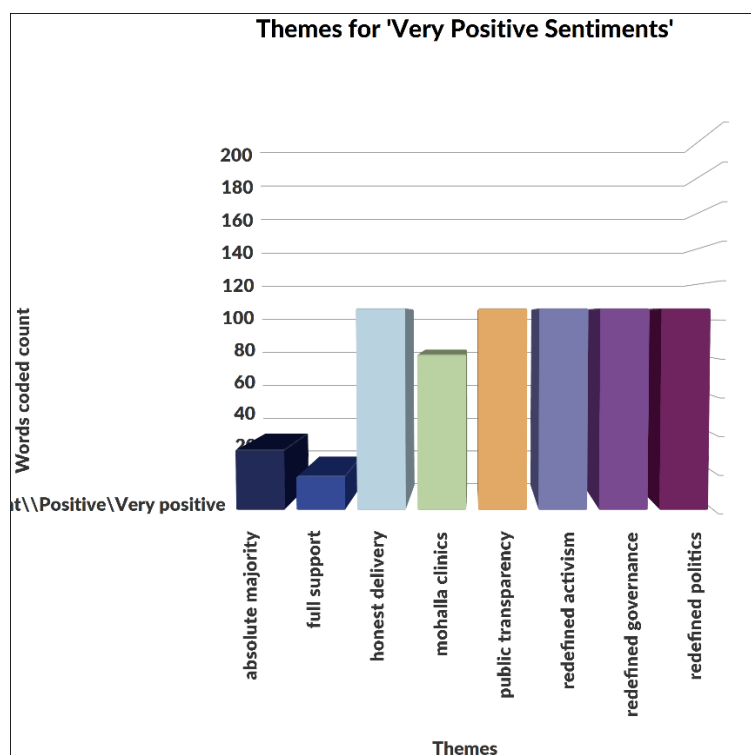


Figure 5.4: Themes for ‘very positive’ sentiments

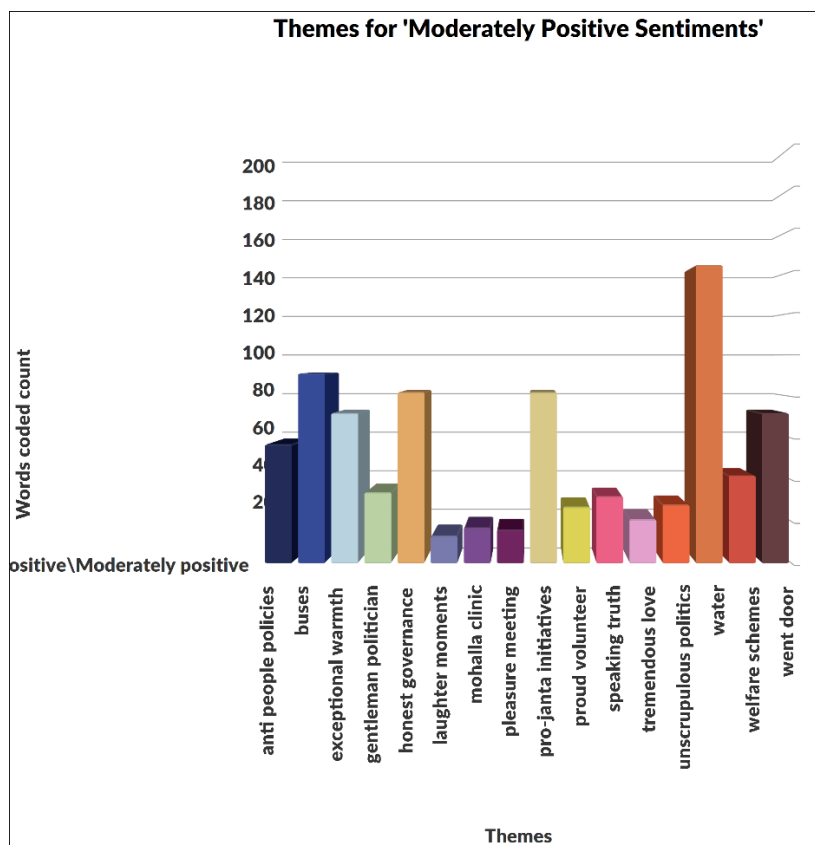


Figure 5.5: Themes for ‘moderately positive’ sentiments

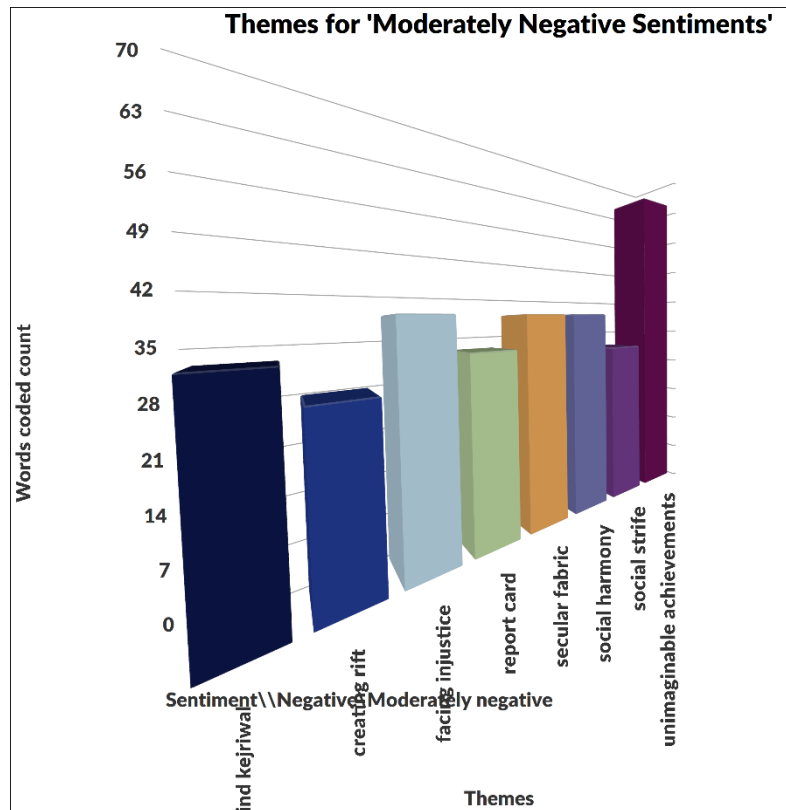


Figure 5.6: Themes for 'moderately negative' sentiments

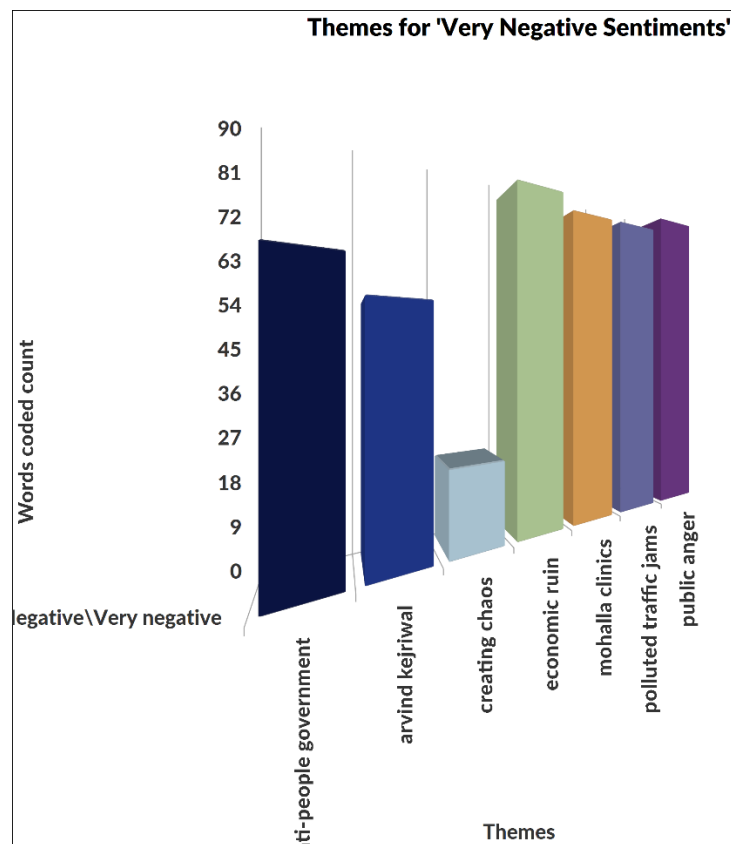


Figure 5.7: Themes for 'very negative' sentiments



Figure 5.8: Word Cloud for BJP



Figure 5.9: Word Cloud for Congress



Figure 5.10: Word Cloud for AAP

	A : Sentiment\PositiveModerately positive
1 : anti people policies	57
2 : buses	91
3 : exceptional warmth	72
4 : gentleman politician	34
5 : honest governance	82
6 : laughter moments	13
7 : mohalla clinic	17
8 : pleasure meeting	16
9 : pro-janta initiatives	82
10 : proud volunteer	27
11 : speaking truth	32
12 : tremendous love	21
13 : unscrupulous politics	28
14 : water	143
15 : welfare schemes	42
16 : went door	72

Table 5.1: Themes subjected to sentiment analysis. Here, themes under ‘moderately positive’

	A : Sentiment\NegativeModerately negative
1 : arvind kejriwal	33
2 : creating rift	28
3 : facing injustice	39
4 : report card	33
5 : secular fabric	39
6 : social harmony	39
7 : social strife	32
8 : unimaginable achievements	65

Table 5.2: Themes subjected to sentiment analysis. Here, themes under ‘moderately negative’

	A : Sentiment\\Negative\\Very negative
1 : anti-people government	64
2 : arvind kejriwal	56
3 : creating chaos	20
4 : economic ruin	86
5 : mohalla clinics	82
6 : polluted traffic jams	82
7 : public anger	86

Table 5.3: Themes subjected to sentiment analysis. Here, themes under ‘very negative’

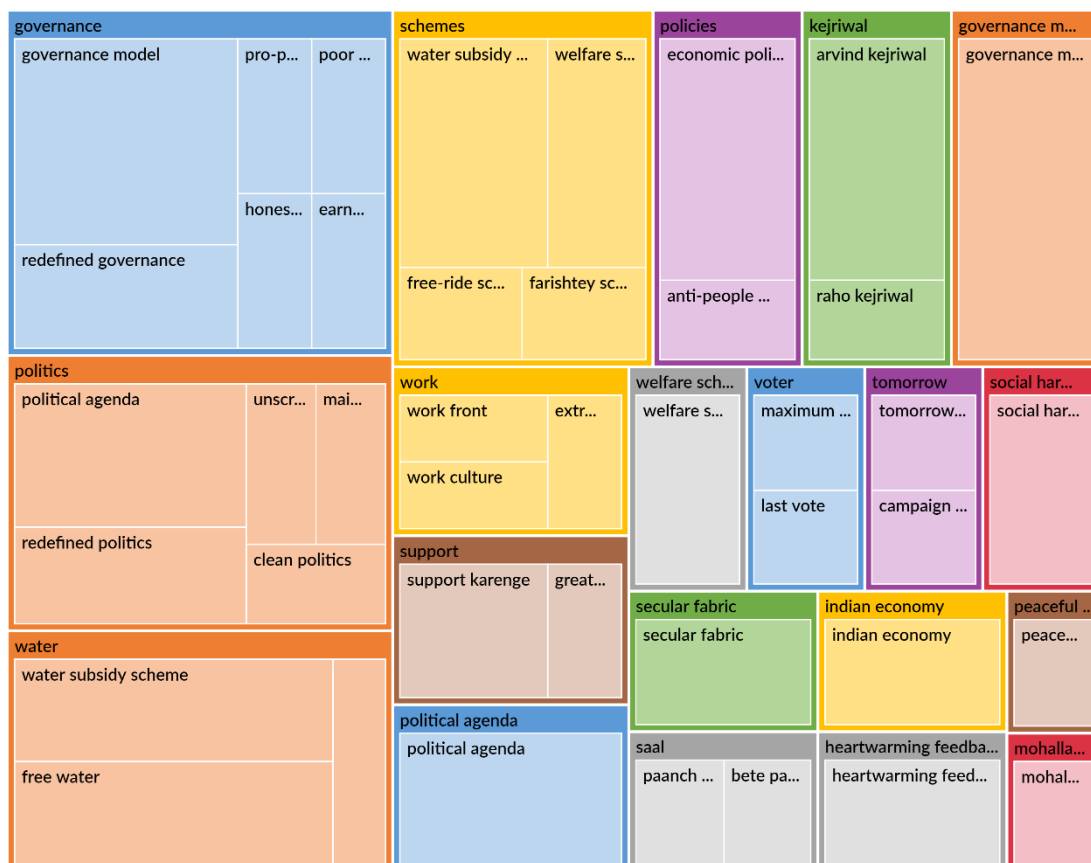


Figure 5.11(a): Matrix for themes(general) most used by AAP or for AAP

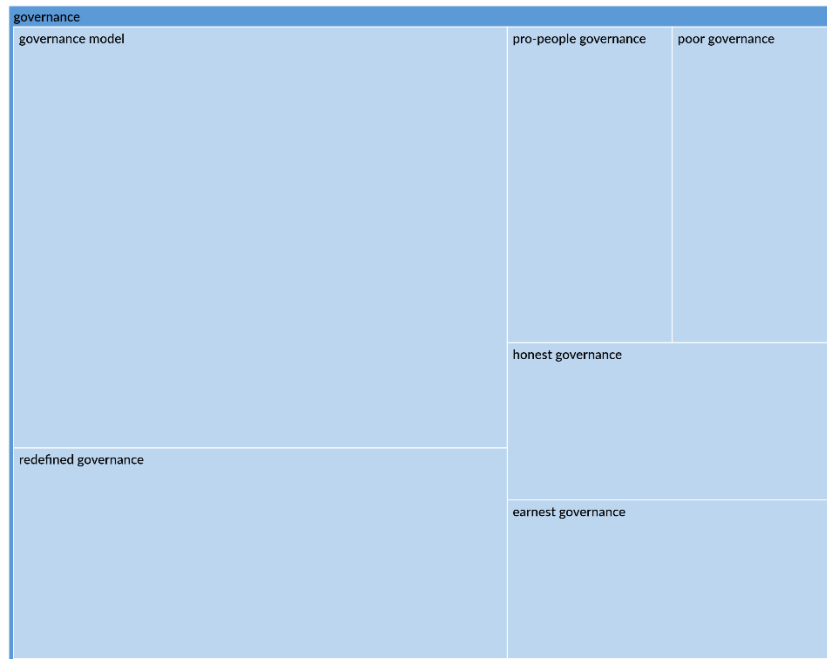


Figure 5.11(b): Matrix for themes most used by AAP or for AAP: Each theme has several sub-themes.

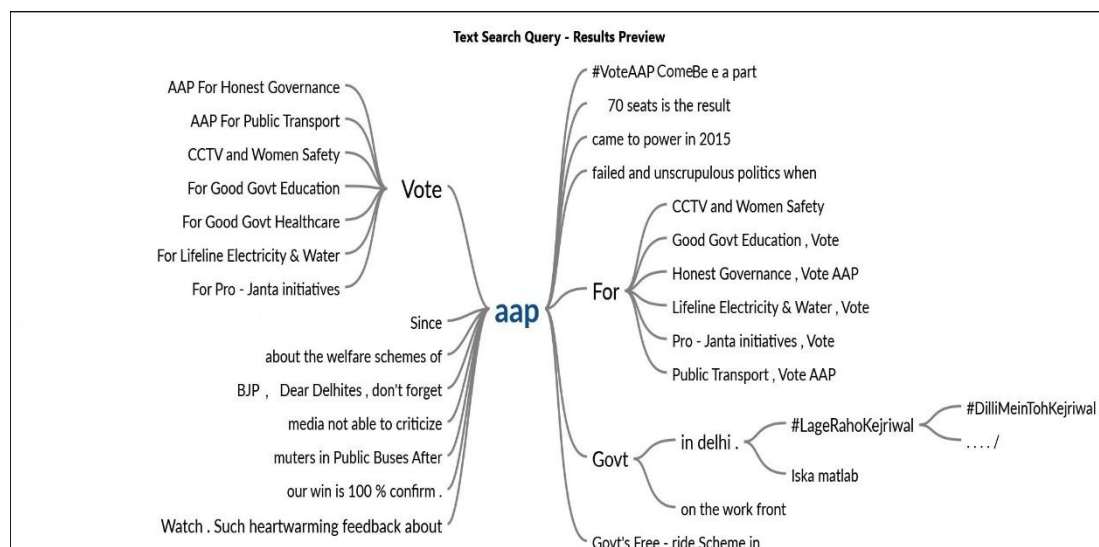


Figure 5.12: Tree Map from Text Search Query. Word: AAP