Green Marketing Strategy Adoption by Indian Political Party Brands with Special Emphasis on Marketing Mix

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Abstract

Purpose : The goal of this paper was to provide an overview of the green marketing mix of political party brands and to explain how Indian political brands are implementing green marketing strategies along with the marketing mix consisting of the seven Ps for political party brands.

Methodology : The paper is theoretically positioned and qualitative in nature.

Findings : We discovered that very few papers have investigated this topic. Neither green marketing nor political marketing researchers have identified the green marketing positioning strategy of political brands, nor have political marketing researchers focused on the seven Ps of a political brand. Political parties are implementing green marketing strategies in practice, but academics provide no evidence of this.

Practical Implications : Following a thorough literature review, we concluded that political marketers or managers should continue exploring new voter segments, such as green voters. We advise researchers to focus on this area of marketing so that voter behavior can be studied more scientifically. Our study has limitations and leaves room for future researchers. More examples of green initiatives can be found while broadening the scope of research to include other countries.

Originality : Unlike prior research in the green and political marketing domain, the current work has paid attention to non-conventional political marketing strategies. Development of the seven Ps concept is also undertaken for the first time.

Keywords : political party brands, green marketing, political marketing, marketing mix, environment

Globally, large-scale industrialization has resulted in the exploitation of natural resources, resulting in environmental deterioration (Kaur & Kaul, 2018). Not only industries have adopted greener ways, but every section of society is working to safeguard the environment (Tara et al., 2019), and political parties or 'political brands' are no exception to this. To combat environmental damages, the government enacts a variety of environmental legislations and undertakes various green initiatives (Yadav & Pathak, 2013). Some examples of political brands taking green actions have been explained in the paragraphs below.

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In June 2014, the BJP-led central Government launched an integrated conservation mission, the 'Namami Gange Program,' which was promised during the elections, with a budget of ₹ 20,000 crore to attain the objectives of effective reduction of pollution, conservation, and rejuvenation of the river Ganga. This river impacts the lives of more than 400 million people who live in the river basin. Due to water pollution, it has become dangerous for many plants and animals that have their habitat in this region. With this much of the population relying on and connected to the river, doing something to protect it was undoubtedly supported by voters. The Bharatiya Janata Party identified this need of voters during the 2014 election period.

Another popular green project of the Bhartiya Janata Party is the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was started in October 2014 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation. The Indian government initiated this Mission, also known as "The Clean India Campaign," with a budget of ₹ 62,000 crore Indian rupees (INR) to make India clean by October 2, 2019. The project aimed to remove people defecating in the open and littering, contributing to harmful situations and a polluted environment. Both are the major and popular examples of green initiatives taken by the national-level party BJP.

Similarly, before the arrival of winter, a predictable sequence of events unfolds in the National Capital Region. Pollution from construction, industry, road transport, and smoke from stubble burning in neighboring states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, which remains concealed throughout the year, becomes more visible. All these become a problem for the air quality of Delhi, pushing air quality meters into the 'very poor' and 'severe' categories. Every year, it leads to a public outcry and concerns from India's Supreme Court ("End the blame game," 2021). During these months, the whole politics of New Delhi revolves around the blame game of 'who led to this air pollution' among political parties. When the city became a gas chamber in 2016 and was given a ranking amongst the most highly polluted cities in the world, the Delhi government led by Aam Aadmi Party started the 'Odd-Even Scheme' to reduce pollution levels. It was a transportation rationing method in which some of the population's access to a resource was restricted on any given day. Cars were classified into odd and even categories depending on the last digit of their license plates, according to the method. On odd-numbered dates, only vehicles with odd-numbered license plates could drive ; whereas, on even-numbered dates, only vehicles with even-numbered plates could drive (Thakur & Qamar, 2020). The Aam Aadmi Party has taken several other initiatives also, including developing the country's largest network of e-rickshaws — promoting clean last-mile connectivity by providing ₹ 30,000 subsidies; imposing heavy fines for construction during peak pollution season; increasing green cover by 1,100 hectares; introducing an E-vehicle policy; and planting three lakh tree samplings (Aam Aadmi Party, 2019).

With the above examples, it is evident that due to the bad natural environment of the major Indian cities (Chandra, 2015; D'ambrogio, 2019), Indian political brands are taking measures to safeguard it. These green initiatives or promises are the products of the political brand (Gopal et al., 2019; Widagdo et al., 2014). Political brands have been continuously designing, creating, and promoting these products (Guha & Joe, 2019; Madalitso et al., 2020), and the importance of developing them was emphasized by Acee – Eke and Ikegwuru (2020) in their article on sustainable development by local governments. Governments attempt to promote pro-environmental behavior through political marketing strategies, as depicted by Falkowski et al. (2000), but they do so by developing green products has not been well-researched by scholars, which has led to the identification of a research gap for this article.

We are aware that India has a population of over 1.4 billion people (making it a sizable market for political brands), a few cities listed among the world's most populous and polluted cities (Broom, 2020), and significant amounts of money spent on elections by both the government and candidates (Observer Research Foundation, 2019; Sircar, 2018), and it becomes important for researchers to escalate their research in the political marketing domain.

Literature Review

Political Marketing : An Integral Part of Marketing

Political marketing can be described as the strategy of attracting voters with political candidates and ideas to meet their political needs, and so win their support for the candidate and ideas in question (Maryani, 2015). In the ever-expanding scope of marketing research, political brands have become a highly researched topic of interest (Irshaidat, 2022) and are assessed in the same manner as commercial products. Kotler and Levy (1969) stated that political candidates are marketed like soap. Shama (1975) provided a summary of common concepts and tools that denote similarities between marketing and political marketing. He also suggested that marketing and political marketing have a similar history and concepts; hence, it becomes logical to say that political marketing is an integral part of marketing.

Since political marketing is an integral part of marketing, various marketing strategies are used by political brands to gain the support of the electorate. Lovett (2019) provided an empirical research review on political marketing. The author identified the key areas in which most researchers conduct research, such as the effects of political advertising (Coppock et al., 2020) and their heterogeneity, the impact of grassroots efforts (Baruah, 2022), campaign messaging (Bischof & Senninger, 2018), and targeting decisions (Nai, 2020), the importance of digital and social media (Chester & Montgomery, 2017; Trivedi & Dikshit, 2020), and disentangling turnout from candidate preference (Gordon et al., 2019). Research on the adoption of a green marketing strategy by political brands is still scarce.

Importance of Green Initiatives for Political Party Brands

Green or environmental marketing includes all practices aimed at creating and promoting any exchanges designed to fulfill human needs (Choudhary & Agarwal, 2021) or wishes in a way that has the least possible negative effect on the natural environment (Tezer & Bodur, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). The consumers and the marketers have identified the benefits of adopting green consumerism (Ghose & Chandra, 2018) and green practices (Ekins & Zenghelis, 2021), but they both also think that governments too have a big role to play in safeguarding the environment (Kulin & Johansson Sevä, 2019) as it will have more impact than common people taking initiatives (Tyson & Kennedy, 2020). Many citizens may be concerned about the environment, but they believe that environmental protection is the government's primary duty (Onofrei et al., 2020). All of these factors point toward the need for government intervention to protect the environment.

Bigi (2017) proposed that influencing power in democratic endeavors occurs in a bidirectional way in which all parties profit. Politicians are motivated by public opinion, and voters control politicians through their needs. Using a thorough investigation of changing environments, political brands may benefit by managing this relationship (Baines et al., 2002). By protecting nature, political brands may influence voter decisions (Freestone & McGoldrick, 2007), improve the attitude of voters toward a political brand (Gallego, 2018), spread positive word of mouth, and also generate positive feelings among them (Anand & Gaur, 2019). All these benefits give reasons to escalate initiatives by political marketers in this sector.

Green Marketing : Strategy Adopted by Indian Political Brands

Governments should produce environmentally friendly products (Acee-Eke & Ikegwuru, 2020) and use political marketing strategies (Gopal & Verma, 2018) to influence voters' pro-environmental behavior (Falkowski et al., 2000). In green marketing articles, the authors have mentioned the Indian government's green initiatives

(Yadav & Pathak, 2013), but articles identifying them as green products are scarce. Green initiatives are products (Widagdo et al., 2014) of these political brands that are promoted through manifestos (Madalitso Anastanzio Nahuku et al., 2020) and mass media communication tools (Park & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). Guha and Joe (2019), in their article, mentioned how climate change and environmental problems have been presented and discussed in the past by India's political parties in their election manifestos. Further, they analyzed the 2014 parliamentary election manifestos of eight major political parties — Indian National Congress (INC), Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI(M), Communist Party of India (CPI), Samajwadi Party, All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), and Shiv Sena in terms of the strategies and commitments made about the environment and climate, with the advantage of retrospect on the ground realities in terms of execution and responses to environmental crises. Pollution is an urban problem. As India was predominantly rural, "urban" issues received little attention in the past. However, as more voters have started living in urban areas as a result of increased urbanization, issues such as environmental pollution and measures to safeguard it are receiving increased attention in the manifestos of political brands (Verma, 2022).

Green Marketing Mix for Political Party Brands

The origin of the marketing mix concept came from the single P (price) of the theory of microeconomics. The marketing mix can be defined as a mixture of controllable marketing factors used by the company to reach the optimal level of revenue in the target market. The marketing mix for tangible products (product, price, place, and promotion) and services is the same, except those services have more P's in them, that are (people, processes, and physical evidence). When the seven components are properly combined, they result in customer satisfaction (Srivastava, 2019), which is an indicator of how well consumers' wishes and desires are fulfilled. Therefore, political marketers should properly use this combination to cater to the needs of voters. The marketing mix for political brands that adopt green marketing strategies has been explained in this paper, the summary of which has been provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *Comparison Table*

Elements of the Marketing Mix	Normally Branded Green Products	Green Products of the Indian Political Party Brands
Product	Electric vehicles, paper or jute bags, Stainless steel bottles, erasable notebooks, reusable diapers, CNG and Electric buses of Delhi Transport Corporation, paperless teaching in higher education institutions, Hollywood movies producing zero waste, etc.	Clean water, clean air, clean soil (Namami Gange Programme, Odd Even Scheme)
Price	Amount of money customers pay in exchange for product	Vote
Place	The location where a product is available	The place from where a political party or candidate fights election or gets elected
Promotion	Elements of promotion mix	A mix of mass media advertising
People	Employees	Political party workers, politicians
Process	Identification of need-product development-promotion-follow up	Identification of need-product development-promotion-follow up
Physical Evidence	Solar lights, plastic free furniture in classrooms, etc.	Polluted environment

Product

The product is the first P of the marketing mix (Anusha, 2016) and influences the other three elements because of its design and qualities. It includes goods, such as furniture, clothing, and groceries, as well as intangible products, such as services, that users purchase (Singh, 2012). Political advertisers' offering or product is a dynamic combination of multiple possible advantages people think would occur if the nominee is elected (Bigi, 2017). In green marketing literature, environmentally correct or environmentally friendly goods are those that will have long-term advantages, mitigate client tension, and alleviate clients of their environmental responsibilities while maintaining the product's fulfilling qualities (Sharma et al., 2019; Wijekoon & Sabri, 2021). Examples of these are electric vehicles, paper or jute bags, stainless steel bottles, erasable notebooks, reusable diapers, etc. In the case of the adoption of a green marketing strategy by a political brand, an offering or a product will be clean water, clean air, and clean soil. For example, BJP, in its 2014 manifesto, promised to clean the holy river Ganga. A clean river is a product here being offered by a known political brand, that is, BJP. The manifesto also mentioned promoting cleaner manufacturing, cleaner energy, and the concepts of proactive carbon credits (Guha & Joe, 2019). The product from Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was pollution-free air for people living in Delhi. These green initiatives are products of political brands.

Price

Price is the second component in the marketing mix. Price is the amount charged by the consumer for the brand's product (Al-Fadly, 2020). It is influenced by the customer's purchasing power and is seen as a key factor in the purchasing decision (Zhao et al., 2021). In political marketing, there is a price 'vote' for a consumer, which he/she has to give to make his favorite candidate win (Widagdo, 2015). In the political arena, voting is a transaction between political parties and the electorate in which voters cast their vote in exchange for anticipation of good governance from the political party brand (Kumar, 2019). When a political brand adopts a green marketing strategy, it promotes a green product for which either the voter has to give a vote in favor or has to obey the decisions made by the political brand when in power. For example, The Clean Ganga mission and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are the products offered by the BJP in 2014, for which a voter had to vote in favor of that specific brand in order to obtain the 'clean river' and 'clean environment' products. When air pollution in Delhi increased, voters were obligated to 'follow' the odd-even rule, which is a price for obtaining a product or service from the brand, the Aam Aadmi Party.

Place

Place in the marketing mix is making available the product from the producer to the intended user (Istiqomah, 2015). If put in another way, it refers to how and from where the product is purchased (Al Badi, 2018). This transfer of goods from producer to consumer could be through a combination of intermediaries such as distributors, wholesalers, and retailers (Efanny et al., 2018). In political marketing, a green product can be made available at village, town, city, and country levels through various candidates working as intermediaries, such as sarpanch at the village level, MLAs and CMs at the state level, or Prime minister and MPs at the national level (Gopal et al., 2019). The Odd-Even Scheme by AAP is limited to Delhi state as it is a state-level government, and the Namami Gange Project is available at the country level because it is an initiative by the Central government and Air purifiers installed by BJP MP Gautam Gambhir in Delhi's Krishna Nagar Market, Lajpat Nagar, and Gandhi Nagar markets are benefiting the citizens of the said market areas.

Promotion

All forms of communication that may be used to communicate a message to a target audience in order to inform, remind, encourage, motivate, and convince them to buy a product or service are known as promotion (Tariq Khan, 2014). Knowledge, persuasion, and influence are all aspects of promotion (Karunanithy & Sivesan, 2013). A company's main communication program is the promotion mix which primarily consists of a complex mixture of advertising tools, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations in order to meet its marketing and advertising objectives (Alexandrescu & Milandru, 2018). In political marketing, political ads as well as all other types of communication provided by the party or candidate, should aim to influence voters' perceptions and be effective (Baines et al., 2002). Political leaders should try to make their political brand stand out by effectively defining the unique features of their political brand as well as understanding, recognizing, and employing the most appropriate strategies (Schweidel & Bendle, 2019) to build an accurate view of their political image in the market (Bigi, 2017). Political marketers use mass media tools and print media to promote their ideas. The green initiatives of the political brands were also promoted using manifestoes, print media, television, social media, and radio (Karwa et al., 2022).

People

The success of a service company is dependent on the people who produce and execute the service. As a result, service organizations place a strong emphasis on the people who offer the service (Tajeddini et al., 2020). People include the person, members, or employees involved in the provision of the service to the general public by service-providing commercial brands (Fan et al., 2015). In political marketing, the candidate's brand image; the party and its philosophy; leadership quality; the candidate's repute; easy access to the media; and competence to deliver a political message by using common and local language in the campaign come under people's part of the marketing mix. In this case, these are politicians and party workers as they are the face of the party and promote the service that they either promise to provide or are providing during their regime. In the service sector, 'people' are the face of the brand, and they are the first ones with whom the current or potential customers communicate. If this representation by these people goes wrong, then the product also fails. Political brands give the task of representation to famous politicians and their spokespersons. PM Modi was the face of the BJP in 2014 and 2019, promoted the Ganga project, and gave updates regarding it to the general public himself. AAP's face is Arvind Kejriwal. Whenever strict measures are taken to combat pollution, he urges the general public to follow the instructions by coming on television and sending messages on the radio.

Physical Evidence

The environment in which the service is delivered when the company and the customer communicate, as well as any visible components that enhance service, has been defined as physical evidence (Yusuf et al., 2020). Everything your consumers see while dealing with your company is referred to as physical evidence (Mukherjee & Shivani, 2013). This includes the following: the actual setting in which you deliver your product or service, the interior design or arrangement, your product packing, and your personal brand (Išoraitė, 2021). Customers utilize concrete hints to evaluate the level of service delivered, hence physical evidence is vital. Therefore, we can say that green products perform well when there is an environmental problem as well as when they are promoted well during an environmental crisis. If a political brand wants to deliver a clean environment, it must first identify the polluted areas, such as the condition of Delhi and Ghaziabad's air, Yamuna's water quality, Bengaluru's Bellandur lake, Haryana's Aravali range, and many more, where substantial actions must be taken to eliminate various sorts of pollution so that voters can feel and see the difference in the area before and after the provision of the service

promised to the electorate. Green physical evidence for a political brand can be the polluted environment or area in the form of polluted water, air, or land.

Process

The last P of the Seven Ps of the service marketing mix is the 'Process.' It is the methodology or the manner in which a service is given or made available to the customer. The process is a step-by-step description of how the service is delivered. The actual methods, mechanisms, and flow of activities through which the service is developed and supplied are referred to as the process (Kwok et al., 2020). The steps followed in politics for delivering the service to customers are first to identify the prospective customer or the electorate to which they will be able to cater in a better manner (people of Delhi for AAP and residents of Varanasi and Allahabad for BJP). Second, identifying their environmental needs, which are clear air in the case of Delhi and clean water in Uttar Pradesh's case, third step is developing a green product, which is 'The Odd-Even Rule,' 'Air Purifiers at public places,' 'The Namami Gange project,' and 'Swachh Bharat Mission.' Fourth is to identify the place where the product will be made available, which in this case is Delhi and India. The fifth step is a promotion which is done in full phase only after the date of the election gets decided by the Election Commission of India, which includes arranging party workers and advertising the green product on offer in rallies or on mass media platforms that are newspapers, television, radio, and posters. The sixth step is to set the price of the product on offer, in this case, it is a 'Vote.'

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The research has several theoretical and practical significance. This article examines the government's green actions as green products. It investigates the marketing mix mechanisms that strengthen the green positioning strategy of political parties, which has not been studied before. Both the areas of green and political marketing lack literature on this topic. As a result, it adds to the literature on green marketing as well as political marketing. Political party leaders can capitalize on this green demand by identifying and addressing it. A huge amount of money and effort can be saved by political marketers if they identify and apply the right marketing strategy by using the right marketing mix components at the right time.

Limitations of the Study and the Scope for Further Research

This paper has examples limited to India. More examples can be identified. Future studies could include instances of foreign governments' green initiatives to demonstrate the same.

Authors' Contribution

Parul Yadav conceived the idea and developed the research gap of the study. Dr. Bhawna Agarwal extracted research papers and provided the path to write the paper. Dr. Jones Mathew reviewed the paper for mistakes, supervised the study, and added the three Ps to the marketing mix for political brands. Parul Yadav wrote the final manuscript in consultation with both authors.

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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