Political Branding: Making of Political Leaders

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Abstract

Political Branding has always been prevalent in politics but in recent time it has evolved and become more visible and effective by the use of advanced technology and social media. The candidate’s political success is based on the ability to connect with the audience and create a succinct commercial identity. In doing this it is very important to understand the consumer behavior. Political Branding is strategically using the consumer branding tactics in building a political image. These are the techniques of political party or an individual used to gain popularity and connect with the consumer. In doing this along with traditional advertising, advance technology and social media are used effectively.

While using all these modern technologies political parties and political leaders builds their image as super hero. They try to control the thinking process of common man in such a way that the vote can be brought very easily. This image building process sometimes starts at a very early stage like it can take three to four years or it can be created within few months.

Introduction

Creating a brand distinction is especially important for challengers and minority-party candidates. It’s not enough to just be a better candidate or a hard worker. The fact is, if everything between two candidates is essentially equal -- issues, charisma, funds -- the incumbent or majority-party candidate will win. A candidate must project a clear and distinct image of being better or at least different. Mediocrity of message will not prevail.

A political campaign will develop its own personality. It can either be directed or managed or it can just happen either way, it is a certain fact that a campaign personality will emerge and on Election Day voters will respond.

Branding is about communicating a message that is rooted in emotion. Every successful brand has some kind of emotional appeal. Emotion is the human element that gets our attention. Most of what we encounter every day is routine, predictable and, worst of all, boring. Remember: A candidate is asking a lot when he asks people to vote for him. He must give them a reason -- a reason grounded in some emotional appeal. This unique emotional component is the foundation of the candidate’s brand.

Political Branding is basically image building, the political brand developers not only develop image but they also do research on voters need and public wants. On the basis of voters needs these developers develop leader’s persona so that public can connect themselves with the leader or see their future in the hands of that leader. As the need of the consumer differs from the one locality to another or from one community to another depending upon their different needs, politicians project themselves in different taste and flavors. The basic idea is to develop a connection with each individual in order to convince him and get the vote.
Traditional methods of political branding

It is not that marketing or branding has played a major role in election campaign in the recent time but this has always been the backbone of any and every election campaign. In the past methods like handshake, baby kissing, nukkad baithak (colony gathering), oatla baithak (house lawn gathering) were the preferred methods used to make connection with the voter. Rally, yatras, posters, banners, speeches and car pool are also used by the leaders to impress the voters. Depending upon the memory and name recalling capacity of an individual politician, calling the voters by their name is also a highly rated branding and connecting methodology.

New methods of political branding

The new marketing methods also uses all this orthodox methodology but in a more organized and sophisticated manner. Along with all these old methods new marketing strategies like wide use of social media (Whatsup, twitter and face book), discussion, presentation on electronic media and developmental project based campaigns are the most popular methods. To attract major crowd leaders organized high scale road shows. Film actors or actresses are also called to gather public in rallies and road shows. To target voters individually scripted massages and recorded voice massages are also sent by the politicians. Letters are dispatched on the name of the voters in which leaders express their vision and mission and also show their gratitude to the voters.

Generally in business market entrepreneur sells product and to increase sell of the product he uses different marketing policies. Creating brand is one of the most fruitful and successful method. Once brand is created, automatically market of the brand raised up. In society people like to use branded things to maintain their status. In created brand few things are observed like quality of the product, consistency, advertisement and reliability for product.

In the same way today political markets are generated. In these markets political parties, local and national leaders play gamble of their future. In new type of political branding promoters try to make leader’s image entirely in a new format. To create this new image many stages are there, through which they write the story of the leader in such a way so that this can touch the heart of people.

Self searching:

The first step is a matter of self-searching. Before the campaign start, a candidate should catalogue his assets. This catalogue should include every positive thing he is ever done that may seem compelling, everything good anyone has ever said about him, every unique experience in his life -- anything that sets him apart from the rest of the world. What is his story? What makes him different, and why should people listen to and, most of all, vote for him? He must lose the modesty, get rid of the limitations. If he doesn’t think he’s the best person for the job, he shouldn’t be running in the first place. When a candidate analyzes himself, he is able to give some substance to the image developers so that they can draw such type of tale which is close to common man.

Realistic approach:

Ideally it is expected from the candidates that they should present their self as they are in real life. Candidates shouldn’t be something they aren’t. Successful businesses have messages that are consistent with who they are and what they do best. Similarly, all Political consultants too often fail to consider the personality and skills, or lack of them, when advising a candidate. If a candidate is not believable, people will not vote. But now a day’s scenario has changed. Candidates, political parties and political consultants are not enough responsible. They show all those features of their personality which are not real. Their aim is victory and to achieve it they are losing their morals. Today’s voters
are very much intelligent. They have capacity to analyse the talent and skill of the candidates. For the long time survival candidates should connect their selves with their ground reality.

Effective communication:

Effective communication is the main feature of any kind of marketing skill. To create identity candidates has to make clear and loud communication. In the market of politics many leaders are there who are trying to fix their foot in this disordered world. Poor communication makes candidate unnoticed. Every person is unique. The candidate’s task is to prove it. It’s not enough to just go through the motions of a campaign, mailing flyers and shaking hands. In order to have impact, a candidate must stand out. There is need to communicate their new ideas, future plans and better future to the masses so that candidate can come in the notice and chances of victory can be enhanced.

Emotional appeal:

A candidate’s emotional appeal – his or her unique story and personality – must be a thread that runs through the whole campaign. There must be some level of emotional appeal in every move. Credibility on issues is rooted in a human element. This emotional component will be different in each campaign, because each candidate is different. This different emotional appeal will hit the emotions of voters and result will come in the form of votes. A candidate must think about the words. Words matter. If candidates pay attention to the voter’s reaction, they know if their message is working. When they are speaking, is the room quiet? Are people listening? Are heads nodding? These are the hints which show that people are making a connection.

Last two days of campaign

In modern technique of political branding there is a need assess voter’s choice. This is the general phenomena that out of total voters only 70 to 80 percent are registered voters and only 60 to 70 percent voters vote on the date of polling. Out of these 60 to 70 percent 40 percent voters vote is fixed because these voters are traditional voters. They vote for the political party not for candidate. They are least bothered about the candidate’s capability. Now the battle is for remaining 20 percent voters. Candidates must remember that the battle is for these 20 percent voters who are the middle voters, the voters that are most unpredictable. So, incredibly, candidates fight over that thin slice in the middle – those who often make a decision based on intangibles such as how likable, believable and unique the candidate is? Last two days campaign should be for these voters so that candidate can attract their votes.

Suggestions:

Suggestions to make successful political career-
• Candidate must join a political organization and become known. He should develop a political style that will earn respect and leadership in his party. This will increase the position of the candidate within the party.
• Candidate must show his interest in becoming his party's candidate in an upcoming election. He must associate with the leaders and attempt to get their backing. He must enter a primary election and win the support of the party's voters.
• If candidate wins the primary, he will have to go before the voters in the general election. He will have to make important decisions on campaign strategy, including issues, advertising, appearances, and funding. He will face a problem in voter analysis, choosing targets, allocating resources, and timing them for maximum impact. Candidate must consider all these aspects.
• Fourthly, if he is elected, he must do the kind of job in office that will get him reelected. This will be a function of the organization he builds, the positions he takes, and the style he uses.
At each stage, the political aspirant must have a good understanding of his market's needs, perceptions, and preferences. He must be guided by reliable and valid models of consumer behavior.

Conclusion:
In a market every product faces competition with other products. Product which uses proper marketing strategies and maintains quality, win the heart of consumers. Same way in political market candidate is a product. At the beginning, Candidate is an unknown product for all. The office seeker must put him in the voter’s market. He has to go through many of the steps that occur in product marketing: develop a personality (brand image), get the approval of an organization (company image), enter a primary election (market test), carry out a vigorous campaign (advertising and distribution), get elected (market share) and stay in office (repeat sales). Election of American President and Indian Lok Sabha 2014 election are the best example of political branding. Political branding has become the fastest growing and globally accepted mean of contesting elections and existence.

References:
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