

Brand Personality Perceptions of Political Leaders Among Young Indian Voters: A Comparative Analysis

Rajeev Paripoornam^{1*}, Krishan Gopal²

¹*Lovely Professional University, India*

²*Lovely Professional University, India*

*Corresponding Author: Rajeev.paripoornam@gmail.com

Citation: Paripoornam, R., & Gopal, K. (2025). Brand Personality Perceptions of Political Leaders Among Young Indian Voters: A Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(4), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.2767>

Published: December 04, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines brand personality perceptions of three prominent Indian political leaders—Narendra Modi, Arvind Kejriwal, and Rahul Gandhi—among 425 young adults aged 18-30 in Bengaluru, using Aaker's Brand Personality Scale adapted for political context. The research explores how political leaders have evolved into individual brands beyond traditional party affiliations in India's digital age. Findings reveal distinct profiles: Modi dominates in competence (4.01) and ruggedness (3.50), positioning him as a decisive administrator. Kejriwal demonstrates the most balanced profile, leading in sophistication (3.59) and excitement (3.42), appealing to educated urban voters. Gandhi faces perception challenges, ranking lowest in competence (2.94) and ruggedness (2.66). The study confirms young voters rely on perceived personality traits as cognitive shortcuts when evaluating candidates. Social media platforms serve as crucial vehicles for political brand development, enabling leaders to craft curated personas. These findings contribute to understanding political branding in emerging democracies and voter behavior patterns among digitally native demographics.

Keywords: Political Branding, Brand Personality, Social Media, Voter Behavior, Indian Politics

INTRODUCTION

In today's world there seems to be no difference between a consumer and a voter. It is noticed that the way a consumer purveys a brand is the way a voter looks at a candidate (Reeves et al., 2006). Voters are actually consumers, it is just that their bundle of utilities which are different that drives them to their satisfaction (Palda, 1975; Swinyard & Coney, 1978). There exists a similarity between marketing a brand/service to marketing a political figure or a party since similar marketing and promotional tools are used both in consumer marketing and political marketing (Lock & Harris, 1996; Needham, 2006a; Shama, 1976).

Akin to commercial marketing, the political environment is quite heterogenous with voters belonging to different strata, thinking differently, having behaviours in groups and having different lifestyles (Egorov, 2015). So, like mainstream marketers, political parties and candidates need to streamline their campaigns make room for these predilections among different voter "segments" (Horowitz, 2016). To make their strategies more marketable the political parties and candidates make an effort to create a brand personality to bring their campaigns a proper narrative.

Researchers have long been interested in studies that show the connection between customers' identities and the goods they use (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich, 1969). By examining the connection between human personality and brand personality, literature is currently examining this relationship. According to Azoulay & Kapferer (2003), this association was established much earlier than most people realize. Since its inception in 1955, the idea of brand personality has been developed with input from a variety of industries, including retail, advertising, and

entertainment (Avis & Aitken, 2015). Advertisers are thought to have created the term "brand personality" themselves. Since then, there have been ongoing initiatives, but academics have not shown a great level of interest in brand personality.

The ground breaking research however, on brand personality was undertaken by Aaker, (1997). She worked to make brand relatable by using human characteristics to define a brand, where human personality dimensions were given to a brand (Heine, 2010).

While some voters focus their choices on ideological and policy considerations, most voters typically use shortcuts to aid in their decision-making (Caprara et al., 1997; Lock & Harris, 1996; Schneider, 2004). Sometimes voters just don't give a damn about the policies.

Others claim that the candidate's policies are unclear or hard to comprehend. As a result, they want to make decisions quickly by assessing a candidate primarily on how they come across.

Voters can predict the candidate's behavior in government by concentrating on personal traits. Indeed, according to a number of scholars (Caprara et al., 2002; Peacock et al., 2021), opinions about candidates and plans to vote are more frequently centred on their personalities and public personas than on their partisanship or policy concerns.

As a result, the media devotes more time to covering the candidates' personalities than to their stances on matters of policy (Peacock et al., 2021).

The idea of analysing political contenders as brands is not new, although the fact that it is not commonly studied in academic literature.

Harrison et al., (2023) view candidates as brands in their attempt to forecast voting patterns.

Political candidates, like any other brand, use a range of communication channels to establish their own image. These include conventional advertising, grassroots initiatives (such as visiting people in their community to meet them in person), and more cutting-edge channels like blogs, websites, social networking sites, and email.

Negative comparative political marketing has received a lot of attention as a typical campaign strategy in the more conventional realm of political advertising. Evaluations of the targeted candidates seem to suffer as a result of hostile political advertising campaigns (Fernandes, 2013).

However, the negativity impact only matters when people are evaluating candidates they don't like, and negative attack ads aren't more likely to sway the minds of undecided voters than favourable ones (Nai & Maier, 2021). Nowadays, it's more common to spread unfavourable information about a specific opponent rather than launch pure attacks. The success of American political marketing strategies has impacted political marketing globally, and as a result, negative political advertising seems to be becoming more common outside of the US (Yoon et al., 2005).

Nonetheless, subsequent research has persisted in assessing and contrasting the characteristics and dimensions of party brand personality in terms of published sources (Gorbaniuk et al., 2015; Smith, 2009). The research on political marketing has not yet helped to define the connection between voter behaviour and decision-making and the party-accredited brand personality features. From the standpoint of consumer learning, Smith (2009) created a model that theoretically indicated the various elements—such as events, endorsers, and advertising—that influence the personality of the political party image and how that influences voting intention. In a conceptual investigation, In an empirical study, Needham (2006) described how political brands have been successful in promoting favourable voter choices and actions. The various elements influencing party brand personality plus the concurrent impact of party brand personality on how voters behave, however, have not yet been experimentally investigated in any published research.

Can political candidates be considered a brand?

The reason for this question is to explore if Political parties can be view as brands and political candidates as products of the brand (Lock & Harris, 1996; Needham, 2006a; Shama, 1976). Voters generally use cognitive strategies relying on the amount of data presented to figure out a criterion to vote (Caprara et al., 2018; Feldman & Conover, 1983), view political entities as brands which helps them simplify their decision to vote.

This question is pertinent since political candidates and political parties have frequently been compared to products and brands, respectively, in traditional political marketing theory (Lock & Harris, 1996; Needham, 2006b; Shama, 1976). This rationale is based on the idea that voters, who typically employ cognitively efficient techniques to code large amounts of complex data to provide shortcuts that aid in their voting decisions (Caprara et al., 1997; Lock & Harris, 1996; Needham, 2006b) see political parties as brands to make their choices easier. However, we think that this viewpoint is no longer relevant and that voters' simplification processes have caused them to turn their attention from the parties to the candidates. However, we think that this viewpoint is no longer relevant and that voters' simplification processes have caused them to turn their attention from the parties to the candidates. Although a political party is a significant brand attribute, a politician has risen above their party affiliation or thought to become a brand that voters follow. A brand with unique characteristics and values that, like all brands, competes for consumers' attention.

A brand whose image is based on three main elements: the candidate's personality, physical characteristics, and the advantages they promise the electorate.

Little study is currently done on candidates as brands, according on a thorough review of the literature. Nonetheless, in the popular press and blogosphere during the last few years, a number of political and marketing analysts have referred to political candidates as brands.

A candidate has transcended their own philosophy or party affiliation to become a brand that people follow, even if political parties are a significant brand attribute. A brand with unique characteristics and ideals that, like all brands, vies for consumers' attention. The candidate's physical characteristics, personality, and the benefits they promise the voters are the three pillars that support this brand's image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Branding in India

Political branding in India has seen a steep evolution over decades. This evolution is shaped by the uniqueness of the country's social, cultural and historical contexts. This is reflected in the dynamic interplay between tradition and modern communication arising due to rapid industrialisation and globalisation and shifting demographics of the voter base.

In the early 20th century, when nationalistic movements governed the cultural and social fabric of India, leaders like Aurobindo Ghosh propagated hindu symbols to be used against the colonial leaders. This strategy of invoking myths and stories from the rich culture brought the Indians together in a forged national identity. Hindu nationalism gained political clout in India in the early 20th century, particularly as a result of the Hindu Sabha movement. By highlighting the need for increased participation in legislative bodies, this movement aimed to unite Hindus under a single identity. Modernist interpretations of Hindu philosophy, which were utilized to support nationalist goals, had an impact on the movement's discourse (Zavos, 1999). Identifying with this ideology, the BJP gained political mileage. This led to the development of BJP's political brand using the Hindu narratives (Lauer, 1996).

A major shift in political branding occurred in India with the introduction of television. In addition to captivating audiences, the late 1980s broadcast of the Hindu epic Ramayana gave Hindu nationalist organizations a forum to spread their beliefs. The Ram Janmabhumi campaign aimed to build a temple on the grounds of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This was revived by the BJP by taking advantage of the Ramayana's popularity. With the BJP portraying itself as the defender of Hindu interests, this movement emerged as a major political issue in India (Rajagopal, 2005).

The year 1991 saw the professionalisation of the national campaigns, the Congress(I), used testimonial based campaigning where they used children to convey that they were the most stable to form the government. The BJP was basking in the afterglow of their Ram Janmabhumi protests managed to get a 20% vote share but eventually lost to a coalition headed by the Congress party (Karan, 1997).

The BJP brand strategy which saw remarkable success in the 1990's owed its performance to its interlaced components of Hindu nationalism with a professional and modern campaign. The campaign used historical and mythical flavours creating a story of a Hindu nation under threat from external ideas and forces. This strategy was employed only to woo Hindu voters with the Rath Yatra which helped cement its support among the target audience (Corbridge, 1999; Roy & Rowland, 2003).

The Indian National Congress, a party that held the seat of power the longest in India's history has to take a back foot to BJP's juggernaut by re-branding itself. The Indian National Congress used secularism and inclusivity as its plank. The party positioned itself as the upholder the Indian constitution and its values and sought to be the unifying force in a derelict society. However, against the clever use of symbolism and media by the BJP, the Indian National Congress lost its sheen in the 1990s (Austin & Lyon, 1993; Shani, 2004).

The BJP's prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, was largely credited with the party's resounding victory in the 2014 and 2019 elections, and the election campaign's use of new media was also cited as a key factor. With catchphrases and hashtags like "Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkaar" and "Har haat shakti, har haat tarakki" for Rahul Gandhi, Facebook, Twitter, and blogging platforms showcased advertisements and campaigns for Narendra Modi. These ads were shared, posted, retweeted, discussed, examined, scrutinized, and even ridiculed, but they somehow forged a strong bond with voters. Furthermore, candidates and political parties created individual websites and social networking profiles, particularly on X (Twitter), on which they engaged in public conversation (Lama, 2014).

The NDA led by Narendra Modi have been able to modify the national election backdrop in order to align the electoral struggle with their own ideological underpinnings, which an increasing number of voters connect

with. The electoral success of political parties that actively support Hindutva is positively connected with its impact on political and social realities (Đogatović, 2025).

On the other hand Rahul Gandhi is seen as a relatable person who feels for the common man. This helps him be both one of the masses and the hero (Shavit & Konrádová, 2025).

While the focus has been on National Democratic Alliance led by BJP and INDIA alliance led by the Indian National Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, the latest entrant to the Political stage over the last decade and a half should not be written off.

Delhi residents were captivated by the modest, unassuming individual driving about in a hatchback while sporting a signature half-sleeve shirt, pants, and sandals. His monkey-cap-wearing winter persona is a timeless representation of Kejriwal. Kejriwal skilfully catered to the middle-class demands and ambitions of the typical Delhiite during a period when the city was a battleground for the Congress and the BJP. He has had to refute the BJP's national narrative, which is dominated by local authorities and based in Delhi (Gulf News, 2020).

Taking on the voters' issues head-on and making a direct connection with their goals is his top focus. Kejriwal could not identify with ideology and ideological aspirations, which are doctrinaire in the sense that they motivate political endeavours (Jayaramu, 2020).

Every brand must elicit an emotional response from its target audience. It displays the brand's strategy's vision. It demonstrates that the business intends to win over the hearts of the public and the market with it rather than attempting to complete a deal quickly. And the AamAadmi Party appears to have that as its main strategy. Arvind Kejriwal has distinguished himself from his contemporaries in the modern era. The leader's personal branding is what strengthens the AAP's image (Dhillon & Vohra, 2014). A powerful personality cult centred around a single leader is another characteristic that the AAP has developed that is crucial for startups and occasionally also contributes to their self-destruction (Gupta, 2020).

Social Media and Brand personality of Political Leaders

Social media's widespread effect has drastically changed how political leaders communicate and how their brand personalities are seen as a result (Kharb, 2023). Political leaders can now interact directly with voters, get over gatekeepers in traditional media, and develop carefully manicured online identities (Fatema et al., 2020). As a result, the way political brands are created, shared, and viewed by the general public has changed (Effing et al., 2011). Political marketing has greatly benefited from social media, especially when it comes to voter surveys and political leaders (Jain & Ganesh., 2020).

Thanks to new media platforms, politicians can now instantly share information and opinions with potential voters (Hamid & Ismail, 2020). It is crucial to assess how the digital revolution has affected political leaders' brand identities, looking at both the strategic choices they make and how they affect public opinion (Kannasto, 2020).

Building a political leader's brand through social media marketing has become a crucial part of contemporary campaigns (Zuhdi et al., 2023). Political leaders have an unmatched opportunity to interact with people worldwide through social media platforms at a much lower cost than they could through more conventional means (Meti et al., 2015). To sway public opinion, political figures may use social media to share their beliefs, stances on policies, and personal characteristics (Rachmandani et al., 2020). Social media's accessibility and interaction have made it easier for political leaders to build stronger bonds with their supporters. One important trend in marketing is the quick rise of digital influencers (Rani et al., 2022). Businesses now have to market their products and services through social media influencers (Ilieva et al., 2024; Rani et al., 2022). Another significant benefit of social media is its capacity to personalize communications. Political leaders can modify their messaging to appeal to particular interest groups, demographic groups, or people with particular opinions. According to McElwee & Yasserli, (2017), social media facilitates affordable, straightforward, and focused communication that is ideal for expressing succinct concepts and highlighting accomplishments. By creating persuasive, customized policy announcements across a variety of digital marketing platforms, politicians can engage with key demographic groups (Chester and Montgomery, 2017). Leaders may build a relationship with followers, improve their brand's reputation, and encourage loyalty with this customised approach.

Today's political campaigns heavily rely on the calculated abuse of social network computations and platform affordances (Park et al., 2020). Online social networks are used by political parties to interact with the public, share ideas, assess public opinion, track trends, and obtain swift input (Arifin et al., 2019). Political leaders are getting better at maximizing the visibility and impact of their content. This entails using graphic components, hashtags, and keywords intelligently to improve social media sharing and search engine optimization (Chester & Montgomery, 2019). In order to improve their messaging and target particular voter categories with customized material, political actors also use data analytics to learn more about audience behaviour (Chester & Montgomery, 2017). These days, trending issue research and data analytics are crucial for political campaigns. Thanks to social media's persuasive power and the rapid advancement of technology, there has never been a greater ability to sway

public opinion, rally support, and spread propaganda. Concerns about deceit, "echo chambers", and a decline of informed public discourse are raised by these capabilities (Arifin et al., 2019).

A unique framework for examining how social media affects political leaders' brand identities is provided by the Indian political landscape. In India, social media has become an essential tool for political communication and mobilization. Parties and leaders use sites like Facebook and Twitter to interact with voters, disseminate information, and sway public sentiment (Meti et al., 2015; Moinuddin, 2021). India's internet has developed into a virtual forum for the discussion and contestation of important political issues (Kanungo, 2015). Political parties in India have been using digital tactics to reach voters since 2004. After the 2014 national election, these tactics were more successful because they were easier to access (Basavaraj, 2022). By switching from TV to social media, the Bharatiya Janata Party became a pioneer in the use of modern technology in political communication (Basavaraj, 2022). Social media's rise has given political activists the capacity to mobilize people and advance change (Sepaha, 2019). Investigating the structure of digital political discourse and its impact on leadership perception is made possible by India's multicultural population and high internet usage (Jafri et al., 2023).

The nature of political shifts in India have changed as a result of the combination of online platforms and political campaigning (Kapoor & Dwivedi, 2015). Social network platforms, which enable interactive forms of communication, are more engaged with the public than mainstream media outlets. Women's political participation is greatly increased by social media platforms, which helps explain why there are more female parliamentarians now (Kumar & Srivastava, 2024). State engagement on social media is more coordinated and appears to be more effective during election seasons. Although Facebook and Twitter are seen as reliable channels for information sharing, they can occasionally exacerbate the erratic nature of online conflicts (Bade, 2021; Moinuddin, 2021).

By encouraging young people, who are generally less politically active, to participate in the electoral process, new media plays a critical role in Indian politics (Hamid & Ismail, 2020).

To understand how social media affects how the public views political leaders, it is essential to examine the impact of online misinformation, especially during election seasons. Respondents have expressed worries about the rise in religious extremism and have developed strategies to avoid being misled by information shared on social media (Das & Schroeder, 2021). Concern was raised by the interviewees about the growing impact of online religious extremism. They created strategies to deal with the false information spread on social media since they were well aware of the effects of misinformation operations (Das & Schroeder, 2021).

The spread of false information and fake news has the ability to seriously affect how the public views political leaders, undermining credibility and confidence. Social media is turning into a vital instrument for undermining conventional channels of communication and mainstream media discourse (Tapsell, 2021). Accordingly, more research is needed to understand how political actors disseminate misinformation and how people distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources (Bajpai, 2024).

For Indian politicians to develop their brand personalities and engage with voters, social media has emerged as a crucial platform (Kapoor & Dwivedi, 2015). Arvind Kejriwal, Rahul Gandhi, and Narendra Modi provide unique examples of how to use these platforms.

Narendra Modi's effective use of social media was a major factor in his victories in the 2014 and 2019 elections. In order to create a sense of national pride and present him as an untouchable leader, the BJP's digital media team meticulously developed the "Brand Modi" image around his foreign policy (Sawshilya, 2021). In order to effectively engage voters and further his vision, Modi's campaign plastered his image on social media and mainstream media (Jaffrelot & Verniers, 2020). His public relationship was further cemented by his "Mann Ki Baat" radio show, which was widely disseminated on social media (Sawshilya, 2021).

Other leaders, on the other hand, have had varied degrees of success. Rahul Gandhi has not been as popular on social media as Arvind Kejriwal, who temporarily topped popularity rankings during the Delhi elections (2023). This discrepancy might result from the BJP's early and advanced use of technology for political communication, which established a high standard for other parties to meet. Social media makes it possible to communicate in low-cost, unmediated, and highly targeted ways, which makes it perfect for developing brief themes and showcasing successes. As the editorial content emphasizes, politicians can reach key demographic groups by creating engaging, customized policy announcements on a variety of digital marketing platforms.

As the editorial text emphasizes, it is critical to address issues of deceit and the erosion of informed public discourse.

Knowing the demographics of Indian social media users is essential to comprehending the opportunities and challenges that social media presents in the country's political arena. Since a large portion of the populace is active on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, politicians have the potential to reach a diverse range of people, outperforming more conventional communication methods (Jayant, 2021). Recognizing the importance of social media in interacting with the public and mobilizing votes, political parties such as the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have established advanced digital campaigning operations (Basavaraj, 2022).

In conclusion, social media has a big and complex impact on Indian political leaders' brand personalities.

Research Objectives

1. To examine and compare the brand personality perceptions of Narendra Modi, Arvind Kejriwal, and Rahul Gandhi across five dimensions (sincerity, competence, sophistication, excitement, and ruggedness) among young adults aged 18-30 in Bengaluru using Aaker's Brand Personality Scale.
2. To analyze the competitive positioning and relative strengths of each political leader's brand personality profile and identify the dominant traits that distinguish them in the political marketplace.
3. To investigate the role of social media in shaping political brand personality perceptions and understand how young voters use personality traits as cognitive shortcuts when evaluating political candidates.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional research design to examine perceptions of political leaders among young adults in Bengaluru.

Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing a survey method to collect primary data from respondents.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on Aaker's 42-item brand personality scale, which was adapted to fit a political context, allowing for the assessment of personality dimensions as perceived in political leaders.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

- Sample Size: 425 respondents
- Sampling Technique: Multi-stage sampling was used, combining purposive sampling (to specifically target the 18–30 age cohort in Bengaluru) and stratified random sampling (to ensure representation across relevant subgroups such as gender, education, and locality).
- Demographics:
 - Age: 18–30 years old
 - Location: Bengaluru, India
 - Political Leaders Studied:
 - Narendra Modi
 - Rahul Gandhi
 - Arvind Kejriwal

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through an online survey, administered via Google Forms. Respondents were invited to participate through university networks and social media platforms, ensuring a broad and diverse pool of participants within the defined demographic.

Measurement

Responses to each item were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale:

- 1: Strongly Disagree.
- 2: Disagree.
- 3: Neutral.
- 4: Agree.
- 5: Strongly Agree.

Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data underwent the following analyses:

- Comparative Analysis:
- Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare brand personality perceptions among the selected political leaders, identifying any statistically significant differences.

- Correlation and Regression Analysis:
- Where applicable, correlation and regression techniques assessed the influence of perceived brand personality on dependent variables such as trust and likability.

RESULTS

The mean assessment scores for Arvind Kejriwal, Narendra Modi, and Rahul Gandhi are presented across the five brand personality dimensions.

Table 1. Scores on Brand Personality Dimensions.

Brand Personality Dimensions	Scores		
	Arvind Kejriwal	Narendra Modi	Rahul Gandhi
Sincerity	2.82	3.28	2.98
Competence	3.46	4.01	2.94
Sophistication	3.59	2.90	3.31
Excitement	3.42	3.21	2.79
Ruggedness	3.06	3.50	2.66

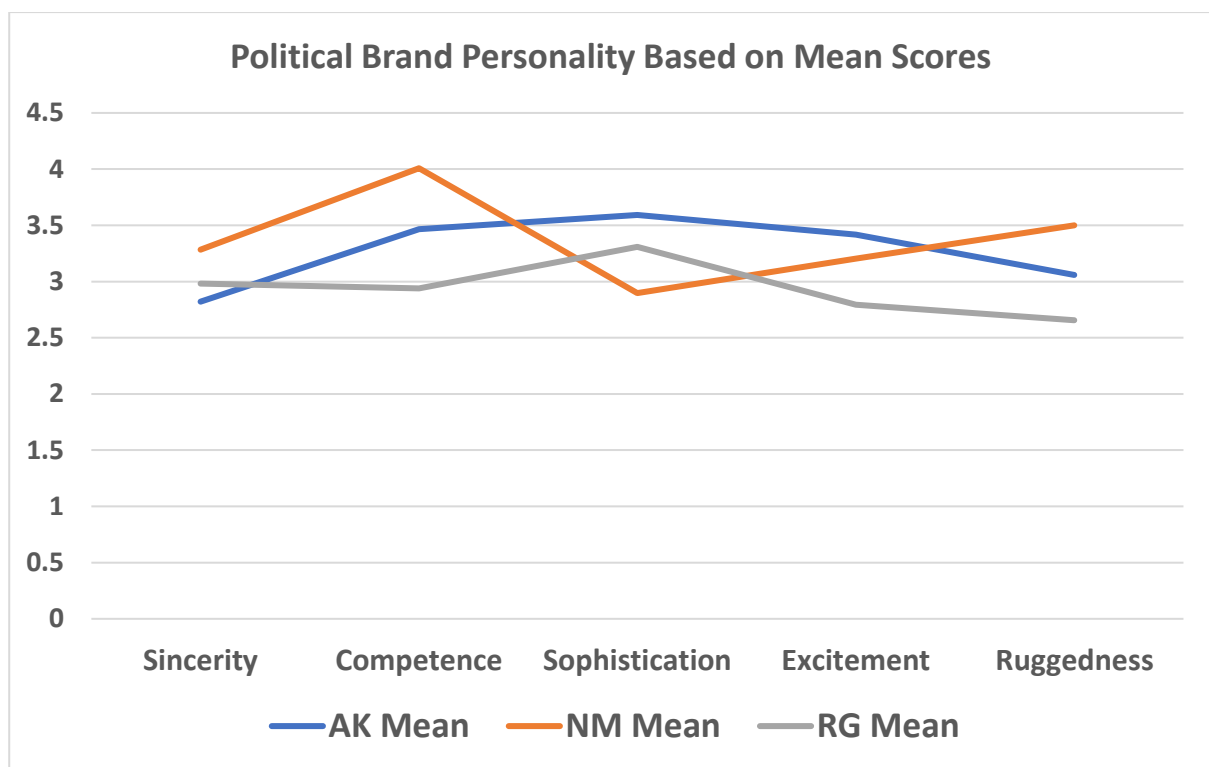


Figure 1. Political Brand Personality Dimensions Based on Mean Scores.

The scale for scores likely extends from 1 to 5 where higher values demonstrate a stronger connection to the trait.

Arvind Kejriwal: The Pragmatic Reformer

Sincerity (Mean: 2.82, Rank: 5)

Kejriwal maintains a moderate sincerity rating but remains the leader with the lowest score in this category. His image as somewhat honest and grounded does not distinguish him in this trait compared to Modi or Gandhi. His move from challenging corruption to adopting a practical political approach results in some seeing him as compromising or engaging in political tactics.

Competence (Mean: 3.46, Rank: 2)

Among political leaders, Kejriwal achieves high competence ratings and ranks directly behind Modi. His past experience as a civil servant together with his dedication to governance reforms in education and healthcare within Delhi shapes this public perception. Through social media posts he actively showcases his policy successes and data-driven governance work to strengthen his reputation as a competent administrator.

Sophistication (Mean: 3.59, Rank: 1)

Interestingly, Kejriwal leads in sophistication. Kejriwal's position as a leader with high sophistication seems contradictory to his "common man" persona yet demonstrates his strategic communication skills and his party's professionalized social media approach. He maintains polished communications which reflect his modern and forward-thinking persona.

Excitement (Mean: 3.42, Rank: 3)

Kejriwal displays a comparatively high excitement score which reflects his dynamic and energetic image. This perception stems from his confrontational approach together with his readiness to question existing norms and his active social media engagement with controversial subjects.

Ruggedness (Mean: 3.06, Rank: 4)

Kejriwal's ruggedness score is moderate. Despite his lack of traditional toughness or outdoor characteristics his ability to withstand political challenges and his fighter image provide him with some ruggedness.

Social Media Brand Personality Summary

Kejriwal presents his social media brand as a sophisticated and efficient reformer who shows energy and moderate sincerity while lacking the ruggedness seen in some of his competitors. His brand attracts voters living in cities who possess higher education levels and who prioritize current governance systems and modern approaches.

Narendra Modi: The Charismatic Leader

Sincerity (Mean: 3.28, Rank: 3)

Among the three leaders Modi stands out for sincerity which indicates his widespread reputation for honesty and authenticity. Through social media he emphasizes his modest roots and personal stories while maintaining direct citizen engagement which strengthens public trust and makes him more relatable.

Competence (Mean: 4.01, Rank: 1)

The leader Narendra Modi receives his highest evaluation in competence which showcases his reputation as both decisive and effective. His social media updates consistently showcase his accomplishments and national projects along with support from world leaders to strengthen his reputation for effectiveness.

Sophistication (Mean: 2.90, Rank: 5)

Modi ranks lowest in sophistication when compared to the other two categories. His public persona intentionally shows him as a people's leader who embraces traditional simplicity instead of elite urban sophistication. His communication consistently showcases Indian cultural roots along with local connections.

Excitement (Mean: 3.21, Rank: 4)

Modi's excitement score is moderate. His social media content maintains a balanced tone that highlights his accomplishments and national pride instead of using flashy or daring methods.

Ruggedness (Mean: 3.50, Rank: 2)

The highest ruggedness score for Modi indicates that people perceive him as both tough and resilient. He tells stories where he conquers adversity through relentless work and steadfastness when facing obstacles. His images practicing yoga and outdoor activities alongside physical fitness campaigns support this public perception.

Social Media Brand Personality Summary

The public image of Modi represents him as a dedicated and highly skilled leader who exhibits rugged strength. His reputation doesn't include sophistication or excitement yet his genuine character and resilient strength attract a large following. His social media strategy utilizes his unique traits to create trustworthiness alongside feelings of stability and national pride.

Rahul Gandhi: The Relatable Underdog

Sincerity (Mean: 2.98, Rank: 2)

Rahul Gandhi achieves a higher sincerity score compared to Kejriwal yet falls short when compared to Modi. People view him as dedicated and sincere yet he faces criticism for perceived inconsistency and weak conviction. Through his social media presence he tries to establish personal connections by posting genuine moments along with heartfelt messages.

Competence (Mean: 2.94, Rank: 3)

Out of the three candidates Rahul Gandhi has the lowest competency rating. Indian media and public discussions frequently cast doubt on his leadership skills and political intelligence. He uses social media to criticize opponents instead of highlighting personal achievements which strengthens this viewpoint.

Sophistication (Mean: 3.31, Rank: 1)

Gandhi maintains a high sophistication score which ranks below only Kejriwal's. His high sophistication score likely results from his elite upbringing and polished international education. The creator of his social media content produces polished videos and insightful analysis which attracts cosmopolitan viewers.

Excitement (Mean: 2.79, Rank: 4)

Gandhi's excitement score is the lowest. Observers do not normally consider him to be a bold or energetic leader. His online presence occasionally tries to use humour or spontaneous content yet falls short in delivering the energy and boldness seen in accounts with higher excitement ratings.

Ruggedness (Mean: 2.66, Rank: 5)

Gandhi's ruggedness score is also the lowest. Observers do not typically view him as resilient and instead recognize him as a sensitive thinker rather than a fighter.

Social Media Brand Personality Summary

Rahul Gandhi's image portrays him as a sophisticated leader who appears sincere but faces challenges with public perceptions of his competence and excitement levels while lacking a rugged persona. His social media strategy focuses

My analysis will include a detailed comparison of Arvind Kejriwal, Narendra Modi, and Rahul Gandhi through each dimension of Aaker's Brand Personality Model to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

Comparative Analysis Across Dimensions**1. Competence**

Rankings and Scores:

- Modi: 4.01 (Rank 1).
- Kejriwal: 3.46 (Rank 2).
- Gandhi: 2.94 (Rank 3).

Modi holds the top spot in competence perception with a score of 4.01 and this high score showcases his effectiveness as an administrator. The notable difference of 1.07 between Modi and Gandhi stands out. Kejriwal holds a respectable second place because of his technocratic governance methods and delivery-focused leadership. Gandhi's position at the bottom of the rankings indicates he faces obstacles in demonstrating his leadership skills and administrative effectiveness.

2. Sophistication

Rankings and Scores:

- Kejriwal: 3.59 (Rank 1).
- Gandhi: 3.31 (Rank 1).
- Modi: 2.90 (Rank 5).

Sophistication demonstrates an opposite correlation to competence according to the results. Kejriwal stands at the top of this dimension followed by Gandhi while Modi remains at the bottom position. The findings indicate that Kejriwal and Gandhi project more polished and refined approaches while Modi's brand personality focuses on grassroots appeal and straightforward communication.

3. Sincerity

Rankings and Scores:

- Modi: 3.28 (Rank 3).
- Gandhi: 2.98 (Rank 2).
- Kejriwal: 2.82 (Rank 5).

Modi receives the highest ranking for sincerity perception but the margin between him and others remains narrower compared to other dimensions. Gandhi's second-place ranking demonstrates that his efforts to appear genuine have achieved a degree of success. Kejriwal's ranking stands lower because voters may doubt his political promises and notice inconsistencies in his public messages.

4. Excitement

Rankings and Scores:

- Kejriwal: 3.42 (Rank 3).
- Modi: 3.21 (Rank 4).
- Gandhi: 2.79 (Rank 4).

Kejriwal secures the top spot in excitement rankings because of his revolutionary stance and anti-establishment messaging. Modi maintains a close ranking behind Kejriwal while Gandhi shows much lower performance. Each leader displays different levels of capability when it comes to inspiring enthusiasm and projecting energy.

5. Ruggedness

Rankings and Scores:

- Modi: 3.50 (Rank 2).
- Kejriwal: 3.06 (Rank 4).
- Gandhi: 2.66 (Rank 5).

Modi shows exceptional ruggedness which fits his persona of strong and decisive leadership. The public personas of Modi and Gandhi show stark differences which the 0.84 gap clearly indicates through Modi's image as a strong leader and Gandhi's intellectual demeanor.

Key Comparative Insights

Strength Profiles

1. Narendra Modi

- Dominant in Competence and Ruggedness
- Shows balanced scores across dimensions
- Lowest in Sophistication
- Demonstrates the most extreme profile by achieving both top and bottom rankings.

2. Arvind Kejriwal

- Leads in Sophistication and Excitement
- Consistent mid-range performer
- Most balanced profile among the three
- Shows strength in administrative capability (Competence)

3. Rahul Gandhi

- Strongest in Sophistication
- Consistently lower scores across other dimensions
- Significant gaps in Competence and Ruggedness
- Most challenged profile overall

Standard Deviation Analysis

The standard deviations reveal interesting patterns:

- Modi displays significant variation in Excitement levels but demonstrates uniformity in Sincerity measurements.
- Gandhi displays high variation in Competence (SD: 1.00) while maintaining more stable performance in Ruggedness (SD: 0.55).
- Kejriwal presents the lowest standard deviation in Sophistication (SD: 0.54) but the highest standard deviation in Ruggedness (SD: 0.87).

Competitive Positioning

1. Direct Competition:

- In terms of competence both Modi and Kejriwal demonstrate strong competitive performance.
- The Sophistication dimension is the battleground between Kejriwal and Gandhi.
- Modi stands relatively unchallenged in Ruggedness.

2. Complementary Strengths:

- Modi: Competence and Ruggedness.
- Kejriwal: Sophistication and Excitement.
- Gandhi demonstrates sophistication while requiring improvement in multiple other dimensions.

Strategic Implications

1. Modi's Position:

- Strongest overall position.

- Clear leadership in key dimensions.
- Could improve sophistication to round out profile.

2. Kejriwal's Position:

- Most balanced profile.
- Strong second position in most dimensions.
- Opportunity to strengthen sincerity perception.

3. Gandhi's Position:

- Most challenged position.
- Needs significant strengthening across dimensions.
- Could leverage sophistication strength while building others.

The competitive landscape analysis demonstrates that each leader has successfully established their unique brand identities. The brand strength hierarchy emerges from Modi's Competence and Ruggedness dominance, Kejriwal's balanced profile with Sophistication strength, and Gandhi's widespread perception challenges. The analysis indicates that each leader requires unique strategic approaches to sustain or advance their standing in the political sphere of India.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Conclusions

This study provides compelling evidence that political leaders in India have successfully established distinct brand personalities that resonate differently with young voters aged 18-30 in Bengaluru. The application of Aaker's Brand Personality Scale to the political context reveals that Narendra Modi has positioned himself as the dominant leader across key dimensions, particularly excelling in competence (4.01) and ruggedness (3.50), which aligns with his image as a decisive and strong administrator. His brand strategy successfully leverages authenticity and traditional values while maintaining high perceived effectiveness. Arvind Kejriwal emerges as the most balanced performer, leading in sophistication (3.59) and excitement (3.42), reflecting his technocratic approach and anti-establishment messaging that appeals to educated urban voters seeking modern governance solutions. His brand personality effectively combines administrative competence with dynamic reformist energy. In contrast, Rahul Gandhi faces significant brand perception challenges, ranking lowest in competence (2.94), excitement (2.79), and ruggedness (2.66), though he maintains strength in sophistication (3.31). The findings demonstrate that political branding in contemporary India has evolved beyond traditional party affiliations, with individual leaders becoming brands in their own right. Social media platforms have become crucial vehicles for brand personality development, allowing leaders to craft carefully curated personas that connect with specific voter segments. The research confirms that young voters employ cognitive shortcuts when evaluating political candidates, relying heavily on perceived personality traits rather than detailed policy analysis. This suggests that successful political communication in India's digital age requires a strategic approach to brand personality development that considers the unique cultural, social, and technological contexts of the Indian electorate. The distinct positioning of each leader indicates that there is space for different brand personalities to coexist and compete effectively, provided they align with voter expectations and deliver consistent messaging across all communication channels.

Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the generalizability and depth of findings. The research focuses exclusively on young adults aged 18-30 in Bengaluru, which represents a specific demographic and geographic segment that may not reflect the broader Indian electorate's perceptions. The urban, educated sample may exhibit different political preferences and media consumption patterns compared to rural voters or older demographics, potentially limiting the applicability of findings to national-level political dynamics. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, missing the dynamic nature of political brand personalities that evolve through campaigns, policy decisions, and public events. The study relies solely on quantitative methods through structured questionnaires, which may not capture the nuanced emotional and cultural factors that influence political brand perceptions. Additionally, the research examines only three political leaders, excluding other significant figures who may represent different brand personality profiles. The adaptation of Aaker's commercial Brand Personality Scale to the political context, while theoretically justified, may not fully capture the unique dimensions of political leadership that differ from commercial brands. Social desirability bias could influence responses, particularly given the politically sensitive nature of the topic. The study also does not account for the impact of recent political events, media coverage, or campaign activities that might temporarily

influence brand perceptions, nor does it examine how these perceptions translate into actual voting behavior or political engagement.

Future Directions for Research

Future research should expand the geographical and demographic scope to include rural populations, older age groups, and diverse socioeconomic segments across multiple Indian states to develop a more comprehensive understanding of political brand personality perceptions. Longitudinal studies tracking brand personality evolution over electoral cycles would provide valuable insights into how political events, policy outcomes, and campaign strategies influence public perceptions over time. Mixed-methods approaches incorporating qualitative interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic studies could reveal deeper cultural and emotional factors that quantitative measures alone cannot capture. Research should explore the relationship between perceived brand personality dimensions and actual voting behavior, political engagement, and civic participation to establish causal linkages. Investigation into gender differences in political brand perception, particularly given the increasing participation of women in Indian politics, represents an important avenue for future study. Cross-cultural comparative studies examining political brand personality in different democratic contexts could reveal universal versus culture-specific patterns in political branding. The impact of emerging social media platforms, artificial intelligence in political communication, and changing media consumption habits on brand personality formation requires ongoing investigation. Future research should also examine how political brand personalities influence policy preferences, trust in institutions, and democratic participation among different voter segments. Studies focusing on regional political leaders and parties beyond the national level could provide insights into how local contexts shape political branding strategies. Finally, research investigating the effectiveness of different brand personality strategies in crisis communication, coalition building, and long-term political sustainability would offer practical insights for political practitioners and democratic governance.

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