Title: The Power of Public Relations in Politics: An Analysis of PM Modi's Communication Strategy

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Abstract

This article analyses PR's impact on politics via the lens of Narendra Modi's time in office as India's prime minister. Modi's use of communication methods including social media, personal branding, image management, and crisis management has profoundly affected the public's view of him and his government. In this study, the pros and cons of using such strategies are carefully weighed. At the study's conclusion, the repercussions of Modi's communication strategies on democratic accountability and leadership are explored.

Introduction

The importance of public relations (PR) in modern politics cannot be overstated. Public relations methods are being used by political leaders and parties to cultivate and sustain support, strengthen links to constituents, and shape public perception. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a shining example of the rise of political PR in the country. Modi's political success may be attributed in large part to his communication strategy, which revolves on his personal brand and his usage of social media. This study examines Modi's communication strategy in depth, looking into how it affected public opinion and what it meant for democratic government.

Modi's use of social media

Since becoming Prime Minister of India in 2014, Modi's usage of social media has been an integral part of his communication strategy. He is a leader among politicians in terms of his use of social media like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to communicate with voters (Rai, 2019). As of 2021, Modi has more Twitter followers than any other current global leader (Only behind Barack Obama), according to data compiled by social media analytics company SEMrush (Garanko, 2020). Modi also has more than 50 million followers on Instagram and over 50 million people have liked his Facebook page.

A team of experts' curates Modi's postings, interacts with his fans, and keeps tabs on the comments he receives on his many social media platforms. Modi's social media strategy is developed in close collaboration with a team of content developers, graphic designers, and social media managers (Banerjee & Xavier, n.d.). The social media team for Modi is well-known for its innovative content, use of hot subjects, and ability to propel online discussions.

Modi has been quite vocal on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms about his opinions and the policies of his administration. He has utilised the social media platform to discuss policy with foreign leaders, share his sympathies after national tragedies, and announce important policy shifts. For instance, Modi's team used the hashtag #IndiaFightsCorona to raise awareness of the COVID-19 epidemic and urge people to follow rules for preventing the spread of the virus (GUPTA, n.d.). The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) and the Digital India campaign are two of Modi's government's signature projects, and he utilised social media to promote them.

The public has a favourable impression of Modi thanks in part to his usage of social media. Visually attractive graphics, movies, and photographs characterise his social media profiles and demonstrate his individuality, public connection, and vision for India's growth. To illustrate his commitment to safeguarding India's interests, Modi's social media team produced a series of films under the hashtag #MainBhiChowkidar during his 2019 election campaign (Kalyan, 2020). The hashtag became popular, and it gave Modi's fans a way to show their support for one another online.

Many believe that Modi's victory in the polls may be attributed to his use of social media to build support and establish rapport with voters. However, there are concerns that there might be detrimental outcomes from social media usage. For instance, Modi's detractors claim that he uses social media to advocate for an intolerant and divisive ideal of India that ignores the needs of India's minorities (Mitra, 2021). In addition, Modi's communication approach has aroused concerns because of the way it uses social media to sidestep established mechanisms of accountability and inspection.

Social media has played a vital role in Modi's communication strategy, allowing him to build trust with the people, rally support, and advocate for his administration's objectives. However, the discriminatory and divisive character of this technique, among other possible drawbacks, must be carefully evaluated (Palit, 2019). More research is needed to fully understand the effects of Modi's communication tactics on democratic accountability and government.

Personal branding and its impact on public opinion

Modi's communication approach, which includes his personal brand, has been vital in building a large and devoted fan following. He has portrayed himself as a leader who is powerful and determined, and who is dedicated to the progress of the country. His public appearances, social media presence, and policymaking all reflect this persona

(Mitra, 2021). For instance, Modi has stressed his administration's dedication to the "Make in India" programme, which supports local manufacturing and generates employment opportunities. Since Modi wants India to become an economic superpower, this programme is considered as an integral component of his personal brand.
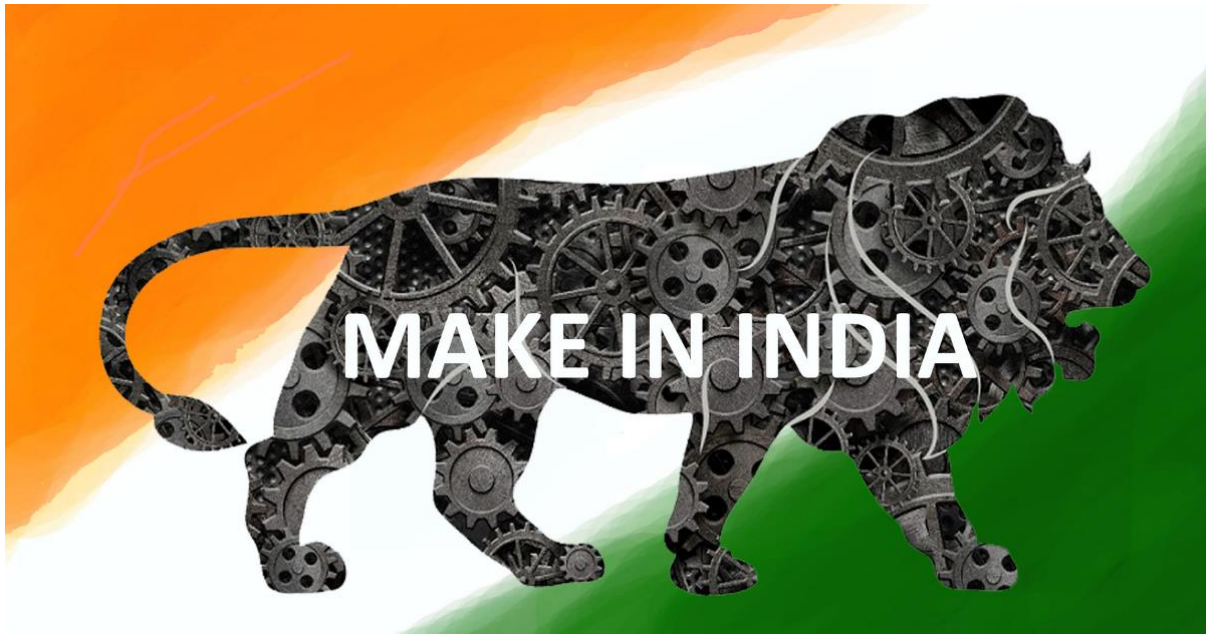
Modi's reputation as a leader rest in large part on his Hindu nationalist ideology, which places premium on India's Hindu heritage. Modi's political platform has relied heavily on this philosophy, which has helped him garner support from India's Hindu majority (Kalyan, 2020). The Citizenship Amendment Act, which provides a road to citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from neighbouring countries, is only one example of a policy that Modi's administration has enacted that is perceived as advancing a Hindu nationalist agenda.

The Modi brand, on the other hand, has been attacked for being divisive and exclusive. His reputation rests on the Hindu nationalist philosophy that has been used to accuse him of discriminating against religious minorities in India. The administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been accused of encouraging intolerance and violence towards members of religious minorities. In 2019, for instance, a crowd in the state of Jharkhand assaulted a Muslim man and made him recite Hindu chants. Concerns were voiced about the effects of Modi's personal branding on communal unity in India, and the episode was universally denounced (Banerjee, S., & Xavier, n.d.).

The autocratic and cult-like qualities of Modi's personal brand have also been criticised. People who disagree with Modi say he is isolating himself in a cult of personality that is harmful to democracy. The administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticised for a number of reasons, including its use of the sedition statute to silence critics and its efforts to silence the media and civil society groups.

Modi's personal brand has been an integral part of his communication strategy, allowing him to build a dedicated following and galvanise public support for his administration's initiatives. Modi's personal branding has important ramifications for communal peace, democratic standards, and human rights in India, but these issues need to be examined cautiously. Modi's branding might have divisive and excluding effects, as seen by his employment of Hindu nationalist rhetoric and his treatment of marginalised populations.

Communication strategy and its effectiveness

Modi's approach to public relations has always emphasised building personal relationships. He has made it a point to talk to the public and hear them out often. He has done this in part by often touring the nation to address large crowds of supporters. At these events, Modi is able to hear the people of India's thoughts and feelings first-hand. Attendance at Modi rallies has been high, and the energy and excitement they have generated among his followers has been palpable.

Modi has also begun a number of projects to improve communication with the general populace. As an example, Modi has a radio show called "Mann Ki Baat" in which he discusses issues of importance to the general population. The show airs nationally so that people from all walks of life may share their thoughts and feelings (Rai, 2019). Modi's reputation as a leader who is approachable and attentive to public opinion has been bolstered thanks to the program's effectiveness in inspiring more citizen involvement and participation.
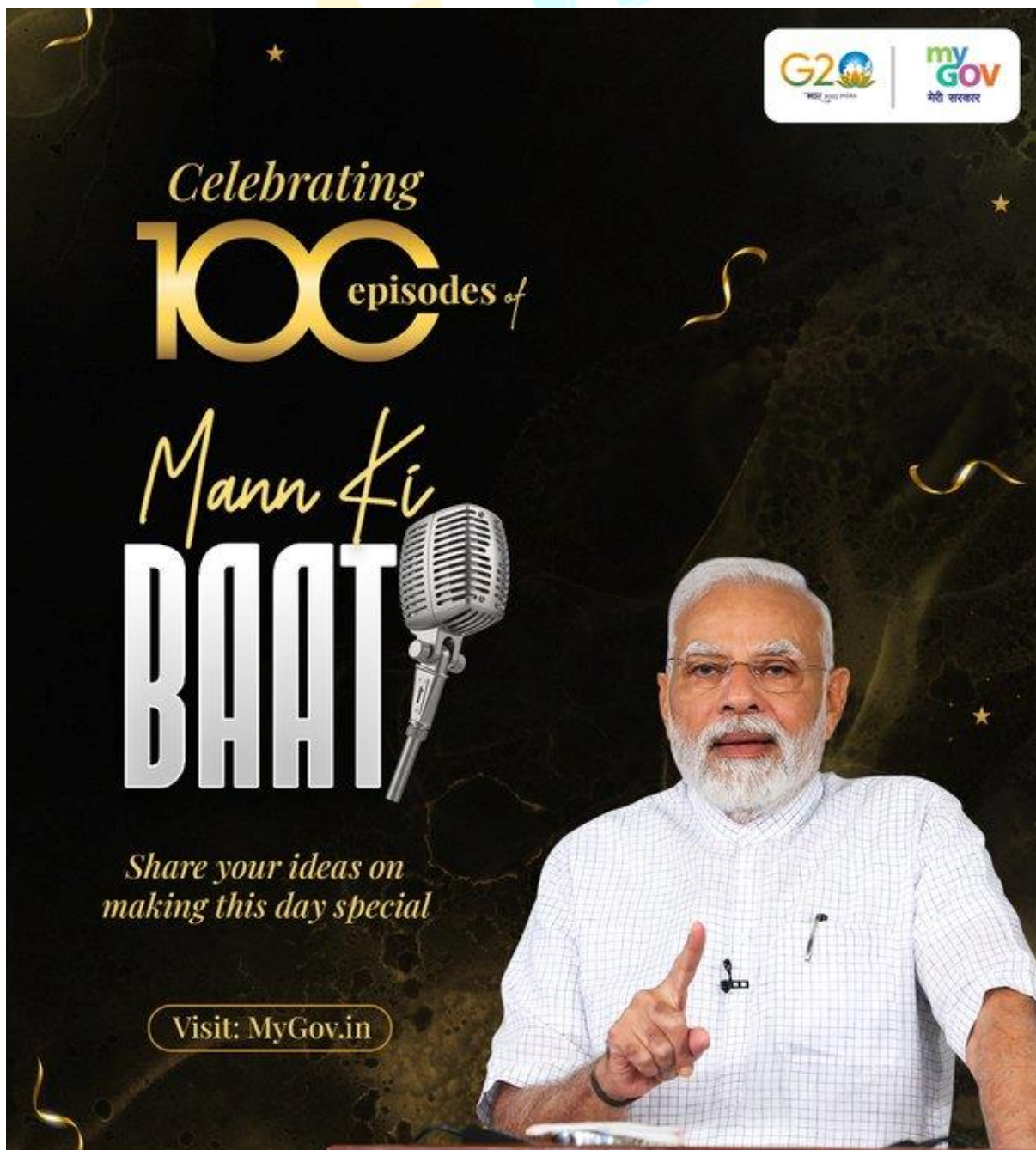
Modi has successfully built a dedicated following of followers who regard him as a leader who shares their issues thanks to his straightforward manner of communicating with them. It has been argued, however, that this method

avoids responsibility and scrutiny by cutting to the chase. Some people believe that Modi's manner of direct contact weakens the media's and civil society's ability to keep the administration responsible.

For instance, Modi's administration has been criticised for allegedly silencing dissenting voices and the media. The World Press Freedom Index placed India at number 142 out of 180 nations in 2020, demonstrating a dramatic deterioration in media freedom during Modi's rule (Kaushik, 2022). Modi's critics say he is to blame for the deterioration in media freedom because of the climate he has created in which dissident voices are marginalised and stifled via his blunt manner of communication.

Modi's approach to public relations emphasises establishing honest relationships with constituents. This strategy has been successful in building a dedicated following, but it has been criticised for evading more conventional channels of oversight. Modi's method of direct communication has the potential to undermine the function of institutions that play a critical part in promoting openness and accountability in government, hence the ramifications for democratic norms and institutions need to be carefully evaluated.

Image management and its impact on public opinion

Modi has made managing his public image a central part of his political strategy, using a wide range of strategies to influence people's perceptions of him and his administration. The promotion of his signature initiatives has been a significant strategy. One shining example of this is the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" (Clean India Mission). Shortly after Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, the project was started with the goal of eliminating open defecation in India. Modi has taken an active role in publicising the programme and has even joined clean-up efforts to demonstrate his support. Modi's reputation has been boosted thanks to this programme, which presents him as an environmentally conscious leader.

Modi has also made use of visuals and symbols to establish rapport with the audience. For instance, Modi has effectively linked himself to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by associating himself with the party's symbol—a lotus flower. The lotus is a symbol of enlightenment and purity in Indian culture, and Modi has utilised this association to promote an image of himself as a leader who embodies these ideals. Modi has also utilised the tricolour (the Indian flag) to show solidarity with the people and promote his image as a patriotic leader (GUPTA, n.d.). He has bolstered his reputation as a nationalistic leader by often donning apparel in the colours of the Indian flag.

Modi has utilised his own brand, in addition to these strategies, to control his public character. As mentioned earlier, Modi's reputation is tied to his Hindu nationalist ideology, which has been blamed for the exclusion of India's minorities. But Modi has been successful in using this brand to appeal to his core followers, who regard

him as a leader who would safeguard Hindu interests. This has strengthened his standing as the head of the Hindu nationalist movement and improved his reputation among his followers.

Modi's efforts to regulate the public's perception of him and his administration have proven successful. The Pew Research Centre found in 2021 that 82% of Indians had faith in Modi, maintaining strong approval ratings (Stokes, 2020). On the other hand, Modi's public relations efforts have been called deceptive and divisive. Social and political tensions in India have been exacerbated, according to some who accuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi of utilising symbols and iconography to promote a limited and exclusive vision of India.

Modi has made managing the public's perception of him and his administration a central part of his political strategy. Modi has cultivated an image of himself as a powerful and decisive leader dedicated to national development via the promotion of his flagship programmes, the use of symbols and images, and the creation of a personal brand. His admirers have found meaning in this picture, but it has also been criticised for fostering division.

Nationalistic appeal

Modi's continuous communication strategy component is a focus on nationalism. He has positioned himself as India's leader who would work tirelessly to advance the country's interests at home and abroad. Modi's foreign policy, in which he has worked to establish India as a regional and global force, is a prime example of the prominence he has given to nationalism. Modi's "Act East" strategy, for instance, has prioritised improving connections with Southeast Asian nations and advancing India's interests in the area (Kalyan, 2020).

Modi has also promoted his government's policies by appealing to national pride. For instance, the "Make in India" project has been touted as a strategy to aid in India's economic growth and foster a sense of national self-sufficiency by encouraging domestic production and investment. Modi has also stressed the need of India being a digital and technology leader, citing its importance to the country's growth and safety.

Modi's emphasis on nationalism has won him widespread support among Indians who believe he is committed to pursuing India's interests and protecting the country's sovereignty. Modi has successfully used national pride as a political tool, presenting himself as the leader who can restore India's once-proud worldwide stature (Rai, 2019). The young urban Indians who are ready for a strong and resolute leader to help their country reach its full potential have been won over by his appeal to nationalism.

Critics of Modi's brand of nationalism say it poses a danger to India's minority communities because of its narrow focus and intolerance. The Modi government has been accused of trying to impose a uniform Hindu nationalist view of India's past, present, and future on the country. There are now concerns that marginalised groups like Muslims and Dalits may continue to be excluded.

Some Indians are worried that Modi's emphasis on nationalism is straining ties with its neighbours. It has been claimed that the Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pursuing an aggressive foreign policy in an effort to impose India's will on its neighbours, particularly Pakistan and China. The dispute over Kashmir is only one example of the rise in conflict and tension that has resulted from this.

Modi's approach to communication is notable for its emphasis on nationalism. He's managed to appeal to Indians' feeling of national pride and present himself as a leader who would advance India's interests and revive the country's standing in the international community. It has been said that Modi's focus on nationalism is harmful to India's relationships with its neighbours and that it promotes a limited and exclusive picture of India by excluding certain groups.

Crisis management and response to the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 outbreak, Modi has used a multi-pronged approach to communicating with the public. His interactions with the general populace have been particularly noteworthy. For instance, he has utilised social media to inform the public of the government's reaction to the situation and to advocate for safety measures such as mask usage and social isolation. The "PM CARES" fund is one among the efforts Modi has introduced to help individuals who have been impacted financially by the outbreak (Kalyan, 2020).

Modi's administration has utilised a variety of media tools to highlight its response to the epidemic, in addition to these direct engagement approaches. For instance, the government has promoted its efforts to provide medical aid, oxygen, and vaccinations to individuals afflicted by the epidemic via ads and public service announcements. Images of Modi have been featured in these campaigns, which he has exploited to present himself as a compassionate leader concerned about the misery of those affected by the problem.

Despite these efforts, the Modi government has been lambasted for its handling of the disease. Indian officials have come under fire for their alleged lack of preparedness for and reaction to the epidemic (Banerjee & Xavier, n.d.). Complaints about mismanagement and a lack of transparency have also been voiced, as have allegations that the government has neglected the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the country.

The administration has made great strides in projecting an image of leadership and compassion; nevertheless, detractors maintain that these efforts are insufficient to address the underlying problems. During the COVID-19 epidemic, Modi has used a number of different communication initiatives, although the success of these measures has been called into doubt. Some have also noted that the administration's communication strategy encounters been inconsistent, with contradictory statements about the seriousness of the pandemic and the suitable response. The administration has received criticism for its handling of the epidemic despite his attempts to directly involve the people and highlight the government's reaction to the problem. It remains to be seen how this issue will affect Modi's reputation and the efficacy of his communication strategy in the long run.

Impact of foreign tours on international relations

Modi's trips abroad have had a major impact on India's ties with other countries. Modi has made a number of travels abroad as prime minister since assuming office in 2014. Economic diplomacy, strategic collaborations, and the projection of soft power have all been hallmarks of these visits.

India's ties to other world powers have been bolstered thanks in large part to Modi's travels abroad. Modi, for instance, has visited the United States on many occasions, where he has met with Obama and Trump. These meetings have strengthened ties between the two nations and contributed to India's rise to prominence on the international scene (Mitra, 2021). They have also opened up new avenues of collaboration in the fields of defence, energy, and commerce.

Commercial ties between India and other countries have been another focus of Modi's worldwide travels. For instance, he has made several visits to Japan to cultivate commercial relationships and drum up interest from outside investors. Modi's visits to China and Russia have centred on strengthening India's economic and geopolitical ties with those countries.

The development of India's soft power has also been greatly aided by Modi's worldwide travels. Modi has used his international travels to promote Indian culture, including cuisine, fashion, and scientific and technological achievements (Palit, 2019). This has contributed to elevating India's profile internationally and expanding the country's sphere of influence.

However, others have criticised Modi's international trips for being superficial and empty. Some have said that the focus on photo ops and public relations at the cost of substantial policy accomplishments is to blame for the lack of actual advantages to India from Modi's frequent trips.

Conclusion

Politicians and political parties are realising the value of public relations in their efforts to influence public opinion and build support among voters. Modi's political success may be attributed in large part to his communication strategy, which includes the use of social media, personal branding, image management, patriotic appeal, and crisis management. However, it is important to think about the possible drawbacks of these techniques, such as their exclusivist and divisive character and the fact that they circumvent established channels of responsibility and oversight. Modi's communication methods have far-reaching ramifications for democratic accountability and governance that need more examination.

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