Campaign Contact, Media Exposure, and Voter Perceptions of the ‘Gujarat Model of Development’ in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

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Abstract

The BJP’s campaign message during the 2014 elections to the Lok Sabha focused exclusively on the twin themes of development and governance showcasing Gujarat as the exemplar. This study poses two questions: (a) did the campaign message of the “Gujarat Model of Development” find purchase among voters? and, (b) what were some factors associated with a voter’s opinion about Gujarat being the state performing best on development indicators? Using the Lokniti National Pre Poll (2014) survey, I examine the relationship between BJP campaign contact with voters, the level of media exposure, and voter uptake of the campaign message. I attempt to situate these questions within the broader research on campaign effects and public opinion in India, at the same time drawing from extant theorizing about American voter behavior. I find that voters contacted by the BJP campaign were more likely to hold a positive opinion about Gujarat. The likelihood of this opinion is highest for those voters frequently exposed to the media and lowest for those with no exposure. A number of other factors such as partisanship, satisfaction with incumbent government, the perception of a media bias toward the BJP, culture, and education are also statistically associated with the campaign message.
Motivation

“In your opinion which State in India is doing best on development indicators?” (Lokniti National pre-poll survey conducted between 18\textsuperscript{th} and 25\textsuperscript{th} March 2014)

Campaign Effects and Public Opinion Research on the Indian Voter
“In your opinion which State in India is doing best on development indicators?”
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[Bar charts showing percentages of respondents for each state, with states listed from 01 to 35 in a grid with 5 rows and 7 columns. Each bar represents the percentage of respondents, with labels indicating the state and color-coded bars showing different responses.]
Voter Opinion and Party (Vote) Choice in 2014

- **Gujarat**: 66
- **Other State/Don't Know**: 28, 30, 42
- **Vote Choice (Party)**:
  - **BJP**: 66
  - **INC**: 10
  - **Other Party**: 24
Voter Opinion and Decision to Change Vote

**BJP Voters**
- Yes:  
- No: 

**Congress (INC) Voters**
- Yes:  
- No: 

**Other Party Voters**
- Yes:  
- No: 

Research Question

Are election campaign efforts to contact voters correlated with their opinions?

Was the Bharatiya Janata Party’s campaign effort (or BJP’s efforts to contact voters) in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections (positively) associated with voters’ opinion of “Gujarat” as the state performing best on development indicators?

Who are these voters? What individual level characteristics are likely associated with this opinion?
Public Opinion Research on the Indian Voter

Questions: Elections and Vote Choice
Key Themes: Caste, Class, and Religion

What do we know about Campaign Effects in Indian Elections?
Empirical Strategy

- Lokniti National Election Pre Poll Survey March 2014 (21 States & \( n = 20957 \))

- Logit regression model:

\[
\text{LN} \ \frac{P(G_i=1)}{1-P(G_i=1)} = b_0 + b_1 C_{C_i} + b_2 M_{E_i} + V_{A_i} + S_{E_i} + \epsilon_i
\]
Dependent Variable ($G_i$):

“In your opinion which State in India is doing best on development indicators?”

- Voters who answered “Gujarat” = 1
- Voters who picked a state other than Gujarat or answered “Don’t Know/Can’t Say” = 0
Hypotheses

Partisanship and Voter Attitudes ($VA_i$)

- Self-Identified BJP (traditional) supporters: +
- Voters satisfied with Incumbent performance: -
- Voters indicating “development” and “corruption” as the two main election issues: +
- Voters who say the media is biased in favor of BJP: -
- Voters with cultural/linguistic ties (Gujarati): +
Hypotheses

Social and Economic Attributes ($SE_i$)

- Urban Voter: +
- Muslim Voter: -
- Self-identified OBC: +/-
- Self-Identified SC: +/-
- Self-Identified ST: +/-
- Owns Mobile Phone: +
- Education: +
Hypotheses

Campaign Effort ($CC_i$) and Media Exposure ($ME_i$)

- Voter Contacted by BJP Campaign (via SMS): +
- Voter Exposure to Media (TV, Newspapers, Radio, Internet): +
- Magnitude of Association expected to increase with frequency of exposure (High, Occasional, None)
Results
Partisanship and Voter Attitudes

(Δ Predicted Probabilities)
Social and Economic Attributes
(Δ Predicted Probabilities)

- Caste:SC
  -0.04

- Muslim
  -0.13

- Urban
  -0.03

Caste:SC  Muslim  Urban
Campaign Effort

(Predicted Probabilities)

- Campaign Contact: Yes
  - Probability: 0.32

- Campaign Contact: No
  - Probability: 0.18
Media Exposure
(Predicted Probabilities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Exposure: High</th>
<th>0.23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Exposure: Occasional</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Exposure: None</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

- We know very little about how voters form opinions across political, social, and economic issues (aside from vote choices). And not much about how party campaign strategies influence public opinion and voter uptake of campaign messages either.

- Systematic attempt to identify the relationship between campaign contact, media exposure, and campaign message.
Discussion

- Campaign contact appears to be positively (and significantly) correlated voter opinion on the state that performs best on development indicators (Gujarat).

- Level of Media exposure is also positively (and significantly) associated with the campaign message.

- Is this result unique to the 2014 Lok Sabha election? Pooling data across surveys is a useful approach to examine spatial and temporal variation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship (BJP Supporter: Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>1.1 (0.05)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency (Satisfied=1, Dissatisfied=0)</td>
<td>-0.51 (0.04)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (Language-Gujarati: Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>1.5 (0.35)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Issue in Campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Development &amp; Corruption = 1, Other Issue=0)</td>
<td>0.33 (0.05)***</td>
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<tr>
<td>BJP Media Bias (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>-0.43 (0.07)***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>-0.16 (0.05)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SC (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>-0.31 (0.07)***</td>
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<td>ST (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>0.11 (0.10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.05)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>-1.12 (0.10)***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (Reference Category)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary/Middle</td>
<td>0.25 (0.08)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation</td>
<td>0.49 (0.08)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College &amp; Above</td>
<td>0.67 (0.08)***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owns Mobile Phone (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campaign Contact (via SMS) (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Exposure</td>
<td></td>
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<td>High (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
<td>0.73 (0.08)***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasional (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>None (Reference Category)</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-5867.82</td>
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<td>Wald X² (17)</td>
<td>1420.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BJP’s Campaign

Campaign Effort

Public Rallies, Meetings, and Geography

Media: Traditional and Electronic

Campaign Message

Good Governance

Development

“Gujarat Model”