

An Enquiry into the Election Narratives and Strategic Placement of Narratives for Persuasion: A Case Study of Indian General Election

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Abstract

General elections in India have served as a core of democratic engagement in the post-independence political history. Unlike the previous elections, the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 witnessed competing election narratives throughout the campaign by the ruling political party and the opposition parties. The political leaders were pitching heavy on narratives, and the narrative construction kept on shifting during the campaign in different states. Generally, in election campaign speeches, speakers usually use rhetoric to persuade voters. This paper concentrates on the political narratives that were highlighted during the campaign for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in India. Persuasion levels of communication in each narrative (subject) of the three selected political leaders who were the main campaigners in the elections and belonged to three major political parties were examined. Through a content analysis, identification of narratives of the campaign were achieved and the levels of persuasion elements of the narratives was measured through an opinion survey.

Keywords

Election Narratives, Campaign, Persuasion, Persuasion index, Constructed narratives

Introduction

Narrative is the key to communication, and political narratives have a significant impact, particularly in a democratic country like India. Election narratives attempt to communicate the subjects that political actors and media have constructed over time, concentrating on a wide range of concerns that have an impact on voters. The purpose of most campaign communication is to convince the electorates to accept their constructed narrative (Kreiss,2012). Election narratives or the discourse of the campaign are built, controlled, reinforced and shaped by the political leaders. Political campaigns are

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powerful engines of the narratives that facilitated the voters to resist, overturn or confirm that particular narrative. The exposure of a composition of messages and ideas can procure influence to many people (Zaller, 1992).

Persuasion can be defined as a communicative activity that is intended to shape, reinforce or change the responses of another or others in a given communication context (Miller, 1980). It is a communication process in which the communicator pursues to draw a positive response from the receiver. Fischer (2003), explained that the narrative mode is not only understood as a basic form of communication, but also as a "mode of thoughts" that "furnishes communication with the particular details out of which social meaning is constructed". The presence of narratives in the political arena can, therefore, have a dominant impact on the way people perceive their political reality.

Wilson (1990) in his book noted that language of politicians not only conveys the message to the public but also contains elements of manipulation, deception, and persuasion. The rudimentary aim of persuasion lies in regulating the environment so as to comprehend certain physical, social or economic rewards from it (Miller, 1975). Persuasion may occur in diverse circumstances subject to the number of persons involved in the communication process, the matter to be persuaded, the social practices and background of the recipients and it too rest on the medium of communication.

Persuasion transpires if the speaker encourages the participant to generate positive cognitive replies concerning the communicator or message. The cognitive response approach states that the audience has an active role in the persuasion process. It pressures on the thoughts of audience regarding the particular message that matters persuasion than the message arguments (Perloff and Brock, 1980).

Persuasion is a fundamental aspect in election communication. It is aimed at changing the subjective views that the public holds towards a political party, ideology, political issue or a policy (Nelson, 2004). During the election campaigns the speeches of the political leaders must be tempted to change the existing mind set of the public to perform with the veracities of new situations. Ever since the days of freedom struggle in India the political campaigns and speeches of the leaders excited to change the attitude and are liable to social changes.

This paper discusses the general discourse that highlighted during the campaign of 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The narratives of the campaign in the national level (pan India) and state level (Kerala state) were identified

separately by content analysis method. The persuasion levels of communication in each issue (subjects) of the three political leaders, who were the main campaigners of the elections and belonged to three major political parties, were analysed in detail to comprehend the purpose of the study. The researcher has selected purposively three major leaders (campaigners) of the Political alliances namely, Narendra Modi of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Rahul Gandhi of Indian National Congress (INC) and Pinarayi Vijayan of Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Early studies on election narratives and persuasion

Beyer, Nuetsun and Rasch (2014) examined whether changes in issue and message focus in election campaigns affect voting intentions. The study was conducted in Norway during the 2009 parliamentary elections and highlights the importance of the focus of election campaign and the choice of voting. The mass media can influence election results by highlighting some narratives and discarding some other. Parting such studies that hints other different factors which were responsible for voting choice, this empirical study proves that campaign can impact the choice of voting merely due to their emphasize on certain issues or narratives which in turns paved way to political message perception.

Sanders and Norris (1998) investigated to understand how and under what conditions the people learn political messages from the news media and party election broadcasts. The impact of different types of media on political learning for different types of voters was also studied. It employed experimental study to measure the exposure of news media and its direct effect on political learning and persuasion.

Combined groups had tried cross national comparison of media messages but there were only a few efforts to equate the content of election communication in different societies (Blumler 1983; Dalton 1998). Content analysis researches among different media were common and diverse qualitative techniques for analysing textual and visual images were also used in many studies (Shoemaker and Reese, 1993). The comparison of the election news content of competing television channels and the biased nature of channels in the content of news etc exposes whose campaign agenda has struck the chord (Lichter, 2001).

Fischer (2003), explained that the narrative mode is not only understood as a basic form of communication, but also as a "mode of thoughts" that "furnishes communication with the particular details out of which social meaning is

constructed." Moreover, "it is through storytelling that people assess social positions in their communities, understand the goals and values of different social groups, and internalize social conventions". The presence of narratives in the political arena can, therefore, have a dominant impact on the way people perceive their political reality.

The purpose of a political campaign is to address a persuasive appeal to every registered voter to support the candidates at the polls (Shadegg, 1964). Persuasion is the central and fundamental aspect in election communication. It is aimed at changing the subjective views that the public holds towards a political party, ideology, political issue or a policy (Nelson, 2004).

Elementary Theoretical framework of persuasion

Carl Hovland of Yale University and his colleagues conducted experimental research to find out the result of persuasive communication and highlighted that an attitude change due to persuasion will materialize only after certain series of stages. The source of a persuasive message, the content of the message, and the characteristics of the audience will influence the persuasiveness of a message (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, 1953). To be persuaded, individual had to attend to, comprehend, learn, accept and retain the message.

There is substantial indication that learning is a component of persuasion. The more people learn and comprehend message arguments, the more likely they are to accept the advocated positions (Chaiken, Wood, & Eagly, 1996). It mainly stresses on the intake process of listeners and underlines the fact that the audience are passive receivers of information and are persuaded by the messages.

But Leon Festinger and Nathan Maccoby (1964) have a different view point. An audience member simply does not imbibe what the communicator conveys; in fact, the audience has counter action on the delivered messages, has the capability to counter argue the points the communicator makes and to derogate the communicator himself. Hovland's Cognitive Response Approach to Persuasion emphasises that audience own rational responses to a message play a critical role in the persuasion process, more significant than the communicator's message.

Present Study

The study set out to 'identify the election narratives and to understand how they persuade the voters of Kerala (south most state in India) in the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections of India. To achieve the first half of the target i.e., ‘to identify the election narratives’ the researcher did the content analysis of two leading Malayalam newspapers, ‘*Malayala Manorama*’ and ‘*Mathrubhumi*’. The narratives were selected by scrutinizing the overall news stories of the newspapers which had the highest frequency during the period of the one-month long election campaign. The second part was accomplished by conducting an opinion survey among the voters.

Study Method

Content analysis was employed to identify the subjects (issues) which received more importance during the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign. Two leading Malayalam dailies (*Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*) were selected to identify the subjects and they were quantified manually using the coding system. These projected issues were considered as the election narratives based on the number of times each issue appeared in these newspapers during the period of one-month long campaign. Narratives on national issues and state issues were identified separately. The general election was held in Kerala on April 23rd, 2019 in all the 20 Lok Sabha constituencies in a single phase. The time frame selected for the content study was one month’s issues of newspapers, i.e., from March 21st to April 21st, which was just before the day of the polling.

Field survey was conducted in the four geographical zones of the state of Kerala – Northern Zone, Central Zone, Southern Zone and High range Zone by selecting four Lok Sabha constituencies- each representing one zone. Field survey was conducted to gather data based on the persuasion levels of the three political leaders selected for the study. Taking into consideration of the sample chosen, a multi stage purposive sampling population was selected from the four zones of Kerala. From each of these four zones one Lok Sabha constituency was randomly chosen for the locale of the study.

The Southern zone of Kerala was represented by the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha constituency, the central zone by Ernakulam Lok Sabha constituency, the North zone by Kozhikode Lok Sabha constituency and the High range zone was represented by the Idukki Lok Sabha constituency. In the next phase, from each of the selected Lok Sabha constituency three Assembly constituencies were selected. It was based on the voting results of the 2016 assembly elections. Those were the constituencies where each political front secured the maximum vote share.

Inter-coder reliability

In statistics, inter-coder reliability or inter-coder agreement or concordance is the degree of agreement among coders or raters. It contributes the score of similarity existent in the ratings given by judges. Intra class coefficient (ICC) is a descriptive statistic that can be used when quantitative measurements are made on units that are organised into groups. It describes how strongly units in the same group resemble each other. ICC is used to assess the consistency or conformity of measurement made by multiple observers measuring the same quantity

Two raters were employed for quantifying the number of times each narrative appeared in the above said newspapers. Out of the four sets of ratings, the first set showed the ratings of two raters on general election narratives appeared in *Malayala Manorama* daily. The second set showed the ratings of two raters on general election narratives appeared in *Mathrubhumi* daily. The third set provided the rating of two raters on state election narratives appeared in *Malayala Manorama* daily. Finally, the fourth set indicated the ratings of two raters on state election appeared in *Mathrubhumi* daily. The ratings were continuous in the measurement and hence the Intra class correlation (ICC) coefficient is used for inter coder reliability.

The results are shown in the table 1.

Table 1. Inter coder reliability test

Inter coder reliability sets	Intra class correlation coefficient	F-value with true value=0	Degree of freedom	Significance
Ratings on national election narrative appeared in <i>Malayala Manorama</i>	0.997	825.143	(8 and 8)	0.00
Ratings on national election narrative appeared in <i>Mathrubhumi</i>	0.997	632.422	(8 and 8)	0.00
Ratings on state election narrative appeared in <i>Malayala Manorama</i>	0.971	251.333	(6 and 6)	0.00
Ratings on state election narrative appeared in <i>Mathrubhumi</i>	0.988	286.265	(6 and 6)	0.00

The result in the above Table (1) showed that the intra class correlation coefficient between raters on various narratives for national and state election for both newspapers were very high and statistically significant. Hence it can be inferred that there is a high agreement or concordance existed between raters on various election narratives. It implied that there was a high inter coder reliability in identifying the election narratives by the two coders.

Expert Interviews

Researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with political analysts who are much familiar with the political and election scenario of the state of Kerala to enhance the depth of understanding of the field under study.

The panel members interviewed for the study had come up with a concrete consensus on the significance of political communication and they agreed that political communication in the state is at a highly established stage and it undergoes tremendous transformation during the election process. Citing varied examples regarding political literacy and knowledge, they opined that Kerala is one of the most highly politicised states in India and noted the role of mass media as a major agent of political sophistication and persuasion.

High literacy rate, highly developed communication network and new media, highest rate of media consumption, popularity of political party-owned media, existence of a number of national and local political parties, and trade unions are some of the major factors responsible for the politicisation of the people in the state, remarked J Prabhash, a political analyst and a noted academician. He also added that the advent of digital platforms have changed the formal nature of political affairs and communication to a participatory level, and the rhetoric of political leaders were well received like fictional narratives.

N.J Nair (late), senior journalist had a different viewpoint regarding the perception of political narratives. He stated that the voters, especially the swing voters form rational illustrations when they read or watch the political narratives delivered from different sources. They comprehend these multiple messages and construct a cognitive picture and act on what they learn from the exposed political events.

Election campaigners often have the ability to highlight issues based on their political will. At the same time, the media set agendas to divert attention away from certain issues and highlight certain political events. The 2019 general election in India was the first to be held in a country with a genuinely digital

consumer culture, with about half of the electorate having access to digital routes and another third to social media. As a result, the power of message dissemination from major political campaigners has a greater and wider impact, and election narratives dominated this election more than any other that we have seen, opined K.Kunjikannan, a senior Political correspondent with a regional daily.

Field Survey

The selected narratives were divided on the basis of the national stories and the state stories. As it was a general election, both the state and the national stories had equal importance. The persuasion process of the election narratives was studied through the political discourse of three political leaders of three different political fronts who were the main campaigners in the general election and this was studied through opinion survey. Persuasion involves the use of argumentation to convince another person to perform an act or accept the point of view desired by the persuader (Nippold, 2007).

Study Population of the field survey

Due to the nature and scope of the study purposive sampling method was employed. Thus, the population of the study consisted of enumerated voters in Kerala who had cast their votes in the 2019 general election. From each of the family unit one member was designated after confirming the above stated criteria. Attention was given to include adequate number of both male and female respondents in the sample population. Care was taken to include samples from different socio-economic backgrounds too. Overall, 640 responses were collected from the constituencies. After eliminating the incomplete questionnaires, a sample of 600 responses were finally arrived at.

Identified Election Narratives

The national election narratives were identified as 'Demonetisation and GST', 'National Security and Nationalism', 'Development and Growth', 'Narendra Modi as PM', 'Farm distress', 'Job crisis', 'Corruption', 'Secularism' and 'Failed to deliver the promises of 2014 general elections'.

The state level narratives were identified as 'Political murders', 'Sabarimala issue', 'Development narrative and performance of LDF government', 'Post flood issues', 'Sensational and sensitive issues in respective constituencies', 'Rahul Gandhi's candidature in Wayanad' and 'Communalism'.

The persuasion process was gauged through the speeches of the main leaders and the leading campaigners of the general election such as Narendra Modi of NDA, Rahul Gandhi of UDF and Pinarayi Vijayan of LDF. The communication persuasion levels were categorized into five groups as 'Nil', 'Less', 'Moderate', 'High', 'Very high'.

Table 2. National Narratives and persuasion levels of three political leaders:

National Level Narratives	Persuasion levels	Political leaders			Chi Square results
		Narendra Modi	Rahul Gandhi	Pinarayi Vijayan	
GST and demonetisation	Nil	18.2%	14.0%	21.7%	X ² = 73.904 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	31.3%	25.7%	40.0%	
	Moderate	22.5%	19.2%	16.3%	
	High	16.0%	24.8%	12.3%	
	Very high	12.0%	16.3%	9.7%	
National security and Nationalism	Nil	14.5%	16.7%	24.7%	X ² = 96.513 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	29.5%	24.7%	40.2%	
	Moderate	24.5%	19.5%	16.2%	
	High	17.8%	24.2%	10.5%	
	Very high	13.7%	15.0%	8.5%	
Development and Growth	Nil	15.3%	14.8%	23.7%	X ² =102.869 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	32.5%	23.5%	40.3%	
	Moderate	24.7%	20.5%	15.5%	
	High	14.8%	25.2%	11.3%	
	Very high	12.7%	16.0%	9.2%	
Narendra Modi as PM	Nil	15.5%	15.5%	23.4%	X ² =88.696 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	34.0%	25.2%	42.1%	
	Moderate	22.0%	19.8%	14.7%	
	High	15.7%	23.0%	10.5%	
	Very high	12.8%	16.5%	9.3%	
Farm distress	Nil	22.5%	14.7%	24.0%	X ² =109.738 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	33.3%	24.5%	39.7%	
	Moderate	22.0%	18.2%	15.8%	
	High	14.3%	25.5%	12.0%	
	Very high	7.8%	17.2%	8.5%	
Job Crisis	Nil	21.7%	14.8%	24.2%	X ² =123.377 df= 8
	Less	35.0%	24.5%	41.5%	
	Moderate	20.7%	17.5%	15.3%	

	High	16.0%	25.3%	10.3%	Sig = .000
	Very high	6.7%	17.8%	8.7%	
Corruption	Nil	20.0%	15.0%	23.8%	X ² =107.567 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	34.2%	25.5%	41.2%	
	Moderate	23.7%	18.0%	15.5%	
	High	13.2%	25.0%	11.3%	
	Very high	9.0%	16.5%	8.2%	
Secularism	Nil	21.5%	15.5%	23.5%	X ² =104.083 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	34.3%	24.7%	40.5%	
	Moderate	22.2%	17.2%	13.5%	
	High	13.8%	26.7%	13.3%	
	Very high	8.2%	16.0%	9.2%	
Failed to deliver the promises of the 2014 general election	Nil	21.2%	14.8%	24.3%	X ² =101.057 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	36.3%	24.8%	40.7%	
	Moderate	20.0%	19.0%	15.0%	
	High	14.0%	25.8%	11.8%	
	Very high	8.5%	15.5%	8.2%	

From the table, it is evident that as far as the election narratives ‘GST and demonetisation’ was concerned, the speeches of Rahul Gandhi achieved more on ‘high’ or ‘very high’ persuasion levels in comparison with other two leaders. With regard to the persuasion process of ‘National Security and Nationalism’, the speeches of Rahul Gandhi secured the highest levels. As far as the other election narratives such as ‘Development and Growth’, ‘Narendra Modi as PM’, ‘Farm distress’, ‘Job crisis’, ‘Corruption’, ‘Secularism’ and ‘Failed to deliver the promises of 2014 general elections’ were concerned, the persuasion levels achieved were ‘high’ and ‘very high’ for the communication of the narratives by Rahul Gandhi when compared to the persuasion levels of Narendra Modi and Pinarayi Vijayan. The chi square result showed all the narratives had significance with the political leaders.

4.5.3 Persuasion Index of the narratives

The following table (in the next page) indicated the mean of persuasion index of Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi and Pinarayi Vijayan by all the socio-economic variables under study. To determine whether the differences in the mean value were statistically significant the data were subjected to ANOVA. The significance of the result was calculated at the .05 confidence level. The total mean score of the leaders were as: Narendra Modi (0.4103), Rahul Gandhi (0.5068), Pinarayi Vijayan (0.3526).

Table 3. Persuasion Index of three leaders:

Socio Variables Categories	Economic and	Mean of Persuasion Index			ANOVA Results					
		Narendra Modi	Rahul Gandhi	Pinarayi Vijayan	Narendra Modi		Rahul Gandhi		Pinarayi Vijayan	
					F Value	P-Value	F Value	P-Value	F Value	P-Value
Age										
18-30 years		0.4241	0.4628	0.3063	2.618	0.050	2.553	0.055	2.831	0.038
31-40 years		0.4392	0.5147	0.3488						
41-50 years		0.4390	0.4928	0.3989						
Above 51 years		0.3644	0.5504	0.3721						
Total		0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						
Gender										
Male		0.4174	0.5026	0.3371	0.396	0.530	0.116	0.733	1.900	0.169
Female		0.4027	0.5113	0.3694						
Total		0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						
Religion										
Hindu		0.5107	0.3991	0.3236	30.377	0.000	26.139	0.000	1.952	0.120
Muslim		0.2789	0.6227	0.3822						
Christian		0.3321	0.6097	0.3758						
Others		0.4775	0.4854	0.3902						
Total		0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						
Caste										
General		0.4512	0.4870	0.3617	7.795	0.000	2.633	0.033	1.764	0.135
SC		0.4206	0.5337	0.3389						
ST		0.5265	0.3941	0.2468						
OBC		0.3337	0.5429	0.3659						
Others		0.4896	0.4664	0.3831						
Total		0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						

Education									
Up to SSLC	0.3278	0.5382	0.3649	6.205	0.000	0.956	0.413	0.420	0.739
+2/pre-degree	0.4374	0.4978	0.3568						
Graduation	0.4228	0.4857	0.3362						
PG and above	0.4743	0.5247	0.3679						
Total	0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						
Employment									
Employed	0.4181	0.4829	0.3588	0.424	0.655	3.906	0.021	0.267	0.766
Unemployed	0.3972	0.5653	0.3429						
Student	0.3916	0.5101	0.336						
Total	0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						
Income									
Less than 10000	0.3989	0.4885	0.2993	1.420	0.215	0.503	0.774	1.586	0.162
10000-20000	0.4295	0.4863	0.3692						
20000-30000	0.4418	0.5171	0.3389						
30000-40000	0.4146	0.4933	0.3716						
Above 40001	0.4294	0.5467	0.4228						
No income	0.3536	0.5278	0.3584						
Total	0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						

When the mean of persuasion index was calculated, the persuasion levels of different age groups unvaryingly preferred Rahul Gandhi. However, ANOVA indicated that the communication level of Narendra Modi (.050) is equal to the significant level and it indicated statistical significance with the variable. The communication persuasion levels for Rahul Gandhi had no significance and Pinarayi Vijayan had significance with the variable age.

Gender wise analysis showed that both the female and male respondents preferred Rahul Gandhi, when the mean of the persuasion level was calculated. The statistical significance test pointed out no significance for the gender-based examination for the three leaders.

The religious wise data presented in the table revealed that the 'Hindus' chose Narendra Modi, 'Christians' 'Muslims' and 'Others' preferred Rahul Gandhi for the high persuasion levels in communicating the election narratives. Except Pinarayi Vijayan, the other two leaders had statistical significance with the variable religion.

On analysing the variable 'caste' it was showed that 'ST' and 'Others' had supported Narendra Modi, the 'General', 'SC' and 'OBC' had chosen Rahul Gandhi. The communication persuasion levels of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi had significance with the variable caste when the data were subjected to one way analysis of variance.

It was understood from the table that irrespective of education differences, all the respondents selected Rahul Gandhi. But, when one- way analysis of variance was carried out only Narendra Modi had statistical significance with the variable education.

The mean of the communication persuasion levels of three leaders in all the three groups of 'employment' clearly provided advantage to Rahul Gandhi. The variable 'employment' had statistical significance only with Rahul Gandhi.

The mean of the persuasion index was analysed in the income group and all the groups unvaryingly preferred Rahul Gandhi. However, the statistical test indicated no significance for Pinarayi Vijayan, Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi.

Thus, the analysis revealed that there were variations in the persuasion levels of election narratives for three leaders. The variables religion, caste and employment were statistically significant for Rahul Gandhi while the variables age, religion, caste and education were significant for Narendra Modi and the variable 'age' only indicated significance for Pinarayi Vijayan.

State level narratives and persuasion level

The state level narratives and the persuasion levels of Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi and Pinarayi Vijayan are given in the table below. The significance tests were also carried out to identify the significance of the narratives with the leaders.

Table 4. State level narratives and persuasion levels of three political leaders:

Election Narratives	Persuasion levels	Political leaders			Chi Square results
		Pinarayi Vijayan	Rahul Gandhi	NarendraModi	
Political murder	Nil	25.3%	14.5%	18.0%	X ² =108.623 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	41.2%	25.0%	35.0%	
	Moderate	17.2%	22.5%	23.5%	
	High	9.8%	24.0%	12.8%	
	Very high	6.5%	14.0%	10.7%	
Sabarimala	Nil	30.7%	14.7%	17.7%	X ² =125.174 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	37.0%	22.7%	32.8%	
	Moderate	15.7%	24.8%	20.8%	
	High	9.7%	20.2%	14.2%	
	Very high	7.0%	17.7%	14.5%	
Development narrative and performance of LDF government	Nil	25.5%	15.8%	20.7%	X ² =71.004 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	36.5%	25.7%	35.0%	
	Moderate	19.5%	21.8%	21.5%	
	High	9.8%	22.5%	13.0%	
	Very high	8.7%	14.2%	9.8%	
Sensational issues in respective constituencies	Nil	26.5%	16.3%	21.0%	X ² =76.686 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	36.8%	25.7%	36.7%	
	Moderate	18.2%	21.3%	19.8%	
	High	11.3%	21.8%	11.3%	
	Very high	7.2%	14.8%	11.2%	
Post flood issues	Nil	28.0%	16.0%	20.0%	X ² =96.815 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	36.2%	25.3%	34.2%	
	Moderate	18.5%	21.0%	24.0%	
	High	9.3%	24.5%	12.2%	
	Very high	8.0%	13.2%	9.7%	
Rahul Gandhi's candidature in Wayanad	Nil	25.7%	17.3%	23.3%	X ² =97.754 df= 8 Sig = .000
	Less	38.0%	21.7%	34.7%	
	Moderate	18.3%	22.0%	19.7%	
	High	10.0%	23.0%	11.8%	
	Very high	8.0%	16.0%	10.5%	
Communalism	Nil	24.8%	16.2%	21.7%	X ² = 82.284 df = 8 Sig = .000
	Less	35.2%	23.3%	34.8%	
	Moderate	18.8%	21.2%	22.0%	
	High	12.7%	25.5%	11.5%	
	Very high	8.5%	13.8%	10.0%	

With regard to the persuasion of all the state level narratives, the speeches of Rahul Gandhi secured the highest score. As far as the election narratives such as 'Political murders', 'Sabarimala issue', 'Development narrative and performance of LDF government', 'Post flood issues', 'Sensational and sensitive issues in respective constituencies', 'Rahul Gandhi's candidature in Wayanad' and 'Communalism'. were concerned the persuasion levels achieved were 'high' and 'very high' for Rahul Gandhi when compared to the persuasion levels of other leaders like Narendra Modi and Pinarayi Vijayan.

To verify whether all these political narratives had association with the political leaders the chi square tests was carried out and it showed statistical significance

Persuasion Index of three leaders

Below table (5) point out the mean of persuasion index of state election narratives of Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi and Pinarayi Vijayan by all the socio-economic variables under study. To determine whether the differences in the mean value were statistically significant the data were subjected to one way significance test. The significance of the result was calculated at the .05 significant level. The total mean score of the leaders were as: Narendra Modi (0.3970), Rahul Gandhi (0.4921), Pinarayi Vijayan (0.3380).

Table 5. Persuasion Index of three leaders

Socio Economic Variables and Categories	Mean of Persuasion Index			ANOVA Results					
	Narendra Modi	Rahul Gandhi	Pinarayi Vijayan	Narendra Modi		Rahul Gandhi		Pinarayi Vijayan	
				F Value	P-Value	F Value	P-Value	F Value	P-Value
Age									
18- 30 years	0.4252	0.4794	0.3119	1.941	.122	2.428	.064	.952	.415
31-40 years	0.4197	0.4805	0.3373						
41-50 years	0.3915	0.4464	0.3595						
Above 51 years	0.3604	0.5361	0.3507						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Gender									
Male	0.3995	0.5075	0.3280	.050	.824	1.708	.192	.916	.339
Female	0.3943	0.4755	0.3489						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Religion									
Hindu	0.5010	0.3974	0.3149	32.226	.000	22.041	.000	1.833	.140
Muslim	0.2598	0.6000	0.3706						
Christian	0.3224	0.5770	0.3423						
Others	0.4320	0.4677	0.3980						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Caste									

General	0.4287	0.4714	0.3412	8.404	.000	1.931	.104	.359	.838
SC	0.4071	0.5118	0.3101						
ST	0.5598	0.4128	0.3223						
OBC	0.3246	0.5254	0.3483						
Others	0.4405	0.4509	0.3408						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Education									
Up to SSLC	0.3310	0.5440	0.3520	3.740	.011	2.001	.113	0.394	.757
+2 / Pre-degree	0.4128	0.4830	0.3399						
Graduation	0.4137	0.4704	0.3237						
PG and above	0.4408	0.4752	0.3489						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Employment									
Employed	0.4043	0.4653	0.3469	0.424	.655	3.906	.021	0.267	.766
Unemployed	0.3851	0.5569	0.3289						
Student	0.3784	0.4979	0.2988						
Total	0.3970	0.4921	0.3380						
Income									
Less than 10000	0.3989	0.4885	0.2993	1.420	.215	0.503	.774	1.586	.162
10000-20000	0.4295	0.4863	0.3692						
20000-30000	0.4418	0.5171	0.3389						
30000-40000	0.4146	0.4933	0.3716						
Above 40000	0.4294	0.5467	0.4228						
No income	0.3536	0.5278	0.3584						
Total	0.4103	0.5068	0.3526						

As has been reported in the table, when the mean of persuasion index was calculated by the 'age' groups all of them unvaryingly preferred Rahul Gandhi. However, the ANOVA test was applied to indicate whether these were statistically significant and proved that the age groups had no significance with the communication persuasion levels of the three leaders.

The analysis in the gender category showed high mean value to Rahul Gandhi. Analysis of variance test showed that results of the three leaders were not statistically significant as the values were greater than the significant level at .05. So, it became evident that the variable gender had no bearing with the persuasion levels of communication with the three leaders.

The data presented in the variable 'religion' in the table revealed that the 'Hindus' decided on to choose Narendra Modi, 'Christians' 'Muslims' and 'Others' preferred Rahul Gandhi for the high persuasion levels in communicating the election narratives. Except Pinarayi Vijayan, the other two leaders had statistical significance with the variable religion when the one-way analysis of variance was tested.

On analysing the variable 'caste' it was showed that 'ST' supported Narendra Modi, the 'General', 'SC' and 'OBC' had chosen Rahul Gandhi. The communication persuasion levels of Narendra Modi (.000) only had statistical significance with the variable caste when the data were subjected to one way analysis of variance.

To identify the mean of the communication persuasion levels of three leaders with the variable 'education', it was implicit from the table that irrespective of the education status all the respondents selected Rahul Gandhi. But, when one way analysis of variance was carried out, only Narendra Modi had statistical significance with the variable education.

The mean of the communication persuasion levels of three leaders in all the three groups of 'employment' clearly provided an edge to Rahul Gandhi. Result of one- way analysis of variance also indicated that the variable 'employment' had statistical significance only with Rahul Gandhi.

The mean of the persuasion index was analysed in the 'income' group and all the groups unvaryingly preferred Rahul Gandhi. However, it was found that the income groups had no significance for Pinarayi Vijayan, Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi when the data were subjected to ANOVA.

Based on the findings it could be inferred that there were variations in the persuasion levels of election narratives of three leaders. The variables religion and caste were statistically significant for Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi while the variable age was significant for Narendra Modi and Pinarayi Vijayan. The variables gender and income had no significance to any of the three leaders. The variable education and employment indicated significance to Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi respectively.

Conclusion

Media messages are received differently by different audiences depending on their prior socialisation and their relation to the text (Fiske, 1987). The voters' perception of the election narratives influences the probability to vote in the

general elections and the political messages really influence the voters' thought and decision-making process in choosing the candidate.

When the persuasion mean was calculated, the persuasion levels of different age groups unvaryingly preferred Rahul Gandhi. When the persuasion level of national issues was calculated gender wise, it also showed that both the male and female respondents preferred Rahul Gandhi.

Contrasting the above findings, the religion wise data showed a different perspective. The religion 'Hindus' preferred Narendra Modi, 'Christians', Muslims' and 'Others' category chose Rahul Gandhi for the high persuasion levels in communicating the election narratives. These two leaders had statistical bearing on the variable religion. The analysis of the variable caste showed that 'ST' and 'Others' had supported Narendra Modi, the 'General', 'SC', and 'OBC' had preferred Rahul Gandhi. The ANOVA results showed the communication persuasion levels of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi had significance with the variable caste.

When the mean of persuasion index was calculated irrespective of the educational differences all the respondents selected Rahul Gandhi. But the ANOVA results showed that the variable education had statistical significance with Narendra Modi. But the variable 'employment' had statistical significance only with Rahul Gandhi. When the variable, income was analysed all the groups preferred Rahul Gandhi but the statistical test specified no significance to any of the leaders.

However, when the data were subjected to ANOVA the variables religion, caste and employment were statistically significant for Rahul Gandhi though the variables age, religion, caste and education were significant for Narendra Modi and the only variable age indicated significance for Pinarayi Vijayan.

In the case of the persuasion levels of all the state level narratives, the speeches of Rahul Gandhi attained the highest score. When the persuasion index was calculated by the 'age' and the 'gender' variable all the groups chose Rahul Gandhi. But both the variables had no significance bearing with the persuasion levels of communication with the three leaders.

For the persuasion levels in communicating the State election narratives for the variable 'religion', Hindus preferred Narendra Modi, 'Christians', 'Muslims' and 'Others' chose Rahul Gandhi. Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi had statistical significance with the variable 'religion' when the data were subjected to ANOVA. The variable 'caste' had statistical significance with only Narendra Modi. But the persuasion index of the variable 'caste'

showed that the categories 'General', 'SC' and 'OBC' preferred Rahul Gandhi and 'ST' had supported Narendra Modi. The variables 'gender' and 'income' had no statistical significance to the three leaders while the variable 'education' and 'employment' pointed out significance to Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi.

The Lok Sabha elections of 2019 has been about an array of narratives that are contending each other. Probably this kind of narrative culture has not been accustomed in previous general elections. The fact is that, especially in India, rhetoric and discourse analysis studies are occasional in Political communication research studies. From the systematic interaction with the respondents of the survey, the researcher like to put forth certain points. Unlike before, the voters at present are definitely attentive to politics and the political statements of the party leaders. Majority of the voters are keen in political leaders' public rhetoric, the repercussions and counter statements and remain conscious about the political contexts. To a certain extent, social media occupy a decisive role in the developments ensued in political communication and dissemination of messages.

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