VOTING PATTERNS & BEHAVIOURS OF VOTERS DURING LOK SABHA ELECTIONS: A STUDY OF UTTAR PRADESH

Aman ¹, Dr. Areena Mirza²

ABSTRACT

Uttar Pradesh (UP), the most populous state in India is considered the heartland of Indian politics as it alone comprises approximately 15% of the Lok Sabha (LS) seats (80). Results of UP are considered game changing always.

If we look at the political landscape of UP, the major political parties thrived solely on Caste arithmetic and communal politics which made this state politically sensitive and volatile in every way. The major turnaround in the voting pattern and vote shares in the consecutive LS Elections of 2014 as well as 2019 in favor of BJP, cutting down or undermining the major caste-based parties in the state, has left enough scope for research studies. Based on the above terms of reference, the present study titled “Voting Patterns & Behaviors of People During LS Elections: A study of Uttar Pradesh” was carried out to assess the voting patterns and behaviors of people in the state.

In this study the main objective was to study the most important issues and factors responsible for the three-dimensional changes in voting pattern as well as voting behavior in the state in the 2019 LS elections.

The methodology adopted for this research is both qualitative and quantitative. The primary data was collected through survey using structured questionnaires and individual interviews of party representatives and journalists.

Besides, information from Census of India, Reports of ECI and various research articles and papers related to the study area and relevant books were used as secondary data. Internet resources also have been accessed extensively.

¹ MA(J&MC) Final Year Student, Amity School of Communication, AUUP, Lucknow
² Asst. Professor, Amity School of Communication, AUUP, Lucknow
Samples were drawn from 25 districts of UP. Convenience sampling was used due to complete lockdown in the state, ensuing the threat of corona pandemic. The responses of 650 participants were collected, collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The major findings/insights that came out from the present study are:

- In LS elections PM face has always been important for voters for deciding their vote.
- Caste influence has not gone down but only have sharpened.
- Influence of religion in voting is increasing.
- Importance of nationalistic issues has gone up.

Keywords: Voting, voting behavior, Voting Patterns, Lok Sabha Elections, election campaigns

INTRODUCTION

As per 2011 census, Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India, is home to the highest numbers of both Hindus and Muslims. By religion, the population as per 2011 census was Hindus 79.73%, Muslims 19.26%, All others 1%. The large population of Hindus is further divided in castes and sub castes.

UP is considered the heart of Indian politics with around 15 crore voters, voting in 80 constituencies in LS election, the results of UP are always game changing.

In Rajdeep Sardesai’s words, “With a population over 23 crore, UP’s sheer size is larger than every country in Africa, Europe and South America - makes predicting an election here hazardous.” (Book – 2019 How Modi Won India)³ Not only predicting results of elections in UP is difficult but also to understand the voting behavior of around 15 crore voters is almost an impossible task.

Over the years, voting behavior of voters of UP has changed dramatically. Post-independence, Congress being the strongest party having the legacy of national movement and charismatic

leadership of leaders like Nehru made the one side victory for congress; other factors were obscure. Issues at that time were different Britishers had just left India, democracy and elections were something new to voters, so different dynamics which are currently present had not come into play.

Slowly role of caste in elections started gaining significance, and it were the Upper castes like Brahmín, Thakur and Baniyas started gaining prominence. Congress was considered to be a party of upper castes and elites which make them popular among the “savarn” voters, along with that Congress had popular leaders like Jag Jeevan Ram and K. Kamaraj to woe the Dalits and backwards.

Then came the era of Indira Gandhi and it was due to her immense popularity among people and her pro-poor schemes, Congress won 73 and 50 seats in 1971 and 1980 LS elections.

Prannoy Roy in his book The Verdict - Decoding Indian Elections, says, ‘Every time Democracy comes under attack the Indian voter fights back at election time. The saga of Indian election is the story of triumph of freedom’ 4 This proved to be true when Indira Gandhi was defeated in elections after emergency.

In 1980’s, a new era in politics of northern India and specially in UP started. Backwards and Dalits who were overlooked since long, wanted to be the kingmakers and this led to the rise of leaders like Kanshi Ram, who emerged as a Dalit leader. On the other hand, Mulayam Singh and Kalyan Singh emerged as OBC leaders. The emergence of these players made politics of UP on caste lines to a large extent. Caste eclipsed other determinants to a large extent. Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) and Samajwadi party (SP) became the important players in UP politics.

In 1989 when VP Singh implemented the recommendations of Mandal commission, voting on the basis of caste became most important as it ever had been. While he was playing his Mandal card, in the backdrop another issue was brewing which not only had an impact on UP politics but on national politics. Ram Janm bhoomi case got a new impetus when in 1986 a District Judge gave the order for disputed site’s gate to be opened for Hindus to worship. This gave boost to the BJPs main issue since origin i.e. reclamation of Lord Ram’s birthplace.

---

Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992 which led to communal riots all over India. This became a major election plank and it was this incident which gave birth to politics of religion and division.

If we see the voting behavior of people during these years the most important issue for voters was the issue of Babri Masjid and religion, caste and other factors lost its importance. Consequently, society was polarized more than ever, and voters were divided into Hindus and Muslims. This is evident if we see the election results of that time.

Mulayam’s SP and Mayawati’s BSP also started gaining success in future LS elections. Religion as an issue in the next decade went down and several factors like Caste, Central Government, Local CM, Local candidates etc. mattered more for the voters. It is said that it was Mulayam's MY (Muslim- Yadav) factor and It was Mayawati’s social engineering where along with Dalits, she also got senior leaders from communities like Brahmin, backwards and Muslims, which made her successful.

There are some turning points in post-independence politics, the 2014 elections were one of them. This election changed the way people voted. Politics started revolving around one figure i.e. Modi. Analysis by different agencies during 2014 LS elections revealed that voters especially in UP voted on the PM face, his appeal, and his message of hope, evident by BJP’s slogan ‘Acche din aane vale hain’.

Other issues which affected the voter were anger against Congress, fatigue of Congress rule from so many years, issues like corruption, scams, price rise, petrol prices, etc.

This election happened just after the Muzaffarnagar communal riots, which was used by BJP to rake up its most successful tool i.e. religion. Once again it worked for them in the election of 2014, but this time it was combined with development promise, hope and a larger than life leader.

2019 LS elections were most fierce in UP, here fight was between BJP and an unformidable grand alliance of SP, BSP and RLD. The traditional voters of the alliance were Dalits, Backward and Muslim, they constitute 78 percent of the total voting population in UP. It was
mainly due to this reason this alliance seemed invincible but when results came it shook everybody. The grand alliance lost badly.

It has raised several questions in the mind of political pundits, whether influence of caste is decreasing, what were the reasons of BJP’s victory, how important is PM face for voters, on what basis people are voting, how much is the impact of social media especially in rural areas. In this paper titled “Voting patterns & behaviors of people during LS elections: a study of UP, the research tried to find answers to these questions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An article titled “BJPs 2019 victory: How caste based politics has been redefined and reinvented”, featured in LSE South Asia Centre’s online newsletter on June 26, 2019 by Christopher Finnigan, emphasizes on the influence of social engineering and the BJP’s election strategy and the author argues why the BJP’s victory must be attributed to its social coalitions and the political mobilization of less dominant castes and sub-castes not just its use of national security issues. He emphasized that the age-old tropes of political mobilization like caste are still alive and it played a significant role in the elections in UP.

BJP’s idea of ‘Samagra Hindutva’ integrated Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and scheduled castes within the Hindutva fold, which helped them in securing the support of these groups. The image makeover of Modi as a leader of the other backward classes and his projection of the BJP as the party of the OBCs has brought about a sea change in the BJP’s reach among different communities.

Another factor that he identified was the anger of the most backward castes and sub castes with the more dominant intermediaries such as the Yadavs among the OBCs and Jatavs among the Dalits has immensely helped BJP in creating a political space for itself among the Non Jatav Dalits and Non Yadav OBC’s.5

An article titled “Following the Karpoori Thakur model, OBC sub-categorization could be icing on BJP’s cake” featured in The Print, talks about how Karpoori Thakur model which was a model first followed in Bihar can be useful for BJP in winning LS election. The points made by the author are very useful in understanding the BJP’s strategy which revolved around this model only which got them such a massive mandate. She talks about the former Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur of Bihar, a socialist leader who had a huge backward base. He used a strategy called ‘positive discrimination’ to win over all backwards. The strategy guaranteed that extreme backwards not only get political positions, but they also enter bureaucracy. Mungeri Lal commission set up by him, submitted its report, which recommended that OBCs are divided in two categories that are Extremely backward classes (EBCs) and backward classes. This model ensured that sub castes within the OBC’S are also content.

The President of India recently appointed a panel to examine the sub-categorization of OBCs for a “more equitable distribution” of quota benefits and this proposal has also been cleared by the Union Cabinet.6

An article titled “Of Melas And Politics” featured in The Indian Express talks about the use of Kumbh Mela by BJP in the formation of “samagra Hindutva” a new strategy of the party to win the LS election. Samrasta Kumbh, an event organized by UP state government, aimed at including Dalits and other marginalized communities in Hindutva fold. UP’s CM emphasized during the event that most of the Vedic richas were composed by Dalit rishis and stopping Dalits from reciting Vedas was unjust, then talking about “samagra Hindutva”, he says BJP wants Dalits and OBCs see themselves as Hindus and not through caste mirrors.

If this strategy works then this will be quite deadly because in UP there are two main parties Bahujan Samajwadi Party and Samajwadi Party who thrive on caste politics, both of these

parties depends on votes of Dalits and OBCs and by trying to convert them into Hindutva fold
BJP is threatening the existence of these parties.\textsuperscript{7}

In another article featured on India Today website on May 31, 2019 written by Samarth Bansal,
contained important points of the post poll study of 2019 elections conducted by India Today-
Axis My India agency. The study which was based on a survey of more than 7 lakh respondents
across 543 parliamentary constituencies, revealed the following points:

- \textbf{54\%} of the respondent of UP says that it’s the PM face which matters the most while
  voting, while 17\% says it’s the party which matters the most and 13\% says it’s the local
  candidate which matters to them.

- When asked when they made up their mind to vote for this party/candidate, 43\% of the
  respondent of UP made up their mind close (few days ago/after community meeting/on
  day of voting) In addition to that 12\% of respondents, said they made up their mind
  after campaign began / candidate list out. 22\% of respondents said that they always
  voted for the same party.\textsuperscript{8}

\textit{Rajdeep Sardesai’s book} “2019, How Modi Won India, is a perfect guide to understand the
reasons behind the victory of BJP in LS elections of 2019. He talks in detail about the strategies,
campaigns and key issues of this election.

In the chapter The Rise Of 'Political' Hindu, the author talks about the beauty of UP elections
and considers elections in UP as the most fascinating. The author believes that it was Hindutva,
Balakot Air strike and Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's face which made the BJP win the election.

**Prime Ministerial Face and Balakot Air Strikes**

The Modi madness can be understood from two anecdotes shared by the author. One was about the lady in Rae Bareli who created a ruckus at the polling booth as she wanted to vote for Modi but there was no photo of him on the EVM and it took half an hour to make her understand why Modi’s picture is not there. Another incident is of Phulpur where Ajay Yadav a jobless man telling the author that though he doesn't have any money, he will still vote for Modi as he is the strongest leader who has taught Pakistan a lesson by killing 500 terrorists.

**Hindutva**

The author talks about his experience in village Dadri, same village where Mohhamad Akhlaq was lynched on suspicion of having beef. Author while having a discussion with group of villagers, found that most of them were unmoved by the lynching and one villager said that “Akhlaq committed the crime of killing a cow, so there was bound to be a reaction”. They shared that their entire village voted for BJP because Modi & Yogi are the only leaders who realize the importance and devotion for cows in Hindu religion. According to them, leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Mayawati and Akhilesh are all pro-Muslims and Anti Hindu. The author tells that this is not an isolated incident, similar voices were heard by the author throughout his campaign coverage.

*The author says “Nehruvian idea of plural, multi-faith India was under assault as never before, Muslims and minorities were routinely demonized, and the political vocabulary of hate was normalized.”*

In an Article featured in “The economic times” by Sudha Pai, she discussed the factors that played important role in helping BJP, having a sweeping victory in UP in 2019 LS Elections, which are:

---

The formation of the alliance, created a counter-mobilizations of lower OBCs and smaller Dalit groups which, unwilling to return to a Yadav-Jatav dominance, have moved towards the BJP.

The collapse of the Congress in UP, provided greater space to the BJP.

Three effective strategies used by Modi/BJP in mobilizing the electorate, were:

- A divisive and communal campaign, attempted to consolidate the Hindu vote by attracting the lower backwards and smaller Dalits into the saffron fold;
- Use of nationalism by constant reference to Balakot strike against Pakistan
- BJP ably marketed Ujjwala, PM Awas Yojana and Swachh Bharat schemes through a huge personal and digital outreach programmes.\(^\text{10}\)

The Hindu CSDS- Lokniti Post-Poll Survey clearly delineate why UP’s mahagathbandhan failed. According to the survey, 91% of Jats seem to have ended up backing the BJP. The consolidation of the SP’s core voters, behind the mahagathbandhan were not as strong as it should have been. The BSP failed to ensure the backing of non-Jatav Dalits for the alliance.

The consolidation of the upper castes, the Kurmis and Koeris, and the lower Other Backward Classes (OBCs) behind the BJP was far stronger than the consolidation of Jatavs, Muslims and Yadavs.

As per the findings, none of State or local issues mattered in the national election. When it came to vote in the LS election, most voters voted in Modi’s name.\(^\text{11}\)

---


METHODOLOGY

Research Design & Methodology:

For the present study, the description of the phenomenon is paramount and thus, descriptive research design is found as the most appropriate design.

The method of collection of data chosen in the present study is Mixed Method.

Mixed method study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study.

Sources of Data Collection

In this study, data has been collected from both the primary sources and the Secondary/documentary sources for obtaining required information. The field data is firsthand involving the direct reporting or recording of an experience which happened to the respondents.

The researcher conducted interviews with two journalists and with senior leaders of BSP, SP, Congress and BJP. Detailed survey (using structured questionnaires was carried out using a questionnaire/Interview schedule for voters in 25 districts of UP).

Apart from the data collected from field sources through quantitative methods, accurate and authentic documentary data were also used and analyzed to support the research.

Study Area:

The Study was carried out in 25 districts of UP which were Lucknow, Banda, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Sitapur, Deoria, Rae-Bareily, Aligarh, Basti, Barabanki, Ayodhya, Etawah, Unnao, Agra, Bulandshahar, Balrampur, Bahraich, Firozabad, Bareilly, Merrut, Muzzafarnagar, Rampur, Saharanpur, Azamgarh and Kanpur

Sampling:

650 Voters from 25 districts of UP were covered in this study. Non-probability sampling techniques was adopted due to complete lockdown in the state, ensuing the threat of corona pandemic. A combination of Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used for recruiting samples from the population under study.
Data Analysis:

In total the responses of 650 participants were collected through questionnaires, collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

(Survey - 650 Respondents, Interviews – 7 Respondents)

Political Participation

When the researcher asked the respondents how interested they were in the LS elections, (82.5%) respondents said they are interested in LS elections out of which 69.7% expressed keen interest, only a small percentage of 3.7% responded in negative and rest 13.8% were neutral.

When tried the gauge the participation level of voters during the LS elections, around 41.2% responded that they are very active while 31.1% said they were active and around 22.6% responded neutral. Only 3.7% people were said that they were not very active.
When asked which is the determining moment when they make up their mind or decide whom to vote for. The highest number of respondents i.e. 32.5% said they decided on the day of voting, while 31.7% made up their mind even before the campaign started. 18.6% of respondents decided during the campaign while 10.2% people were not sure.

This data shows that in election all factors like issues, PM face, policies of governments, important events are in play as 32.5% are making mind on them only, while along with that campaigns, taking voters to booth can also be important because around 32% people decide on last day whom to vote to.

When the researcher asked the respondents if they voted for a particular party even if they didn’t like that party and not voted for the one they really liked because they wanted the party
which they disliked to lose 48% of respondents said yes they voted for the strongest opposition party and not the one they really liked and 42.9% responded that No they voted for the party they liked the most. Which indicates that in LS elections, a lot of other factors becomes combined, determines the voting behavior as well as the pattern.

6. People have different considerations while deciding whom to vote for. What mattered to you more while deciding whom to vote for in the recent Lok Sabha election?

[Graph showing 36.4% Party, 60.6% Leader]

When the researcher asked the respondents that while voting what matters to them the most, 60.6% said it’s the party while 39.4% responded that it’s the leader. This data shows that party ideology also plays an important role for the voters.

7. In your locality/area did your community meet during the election to decide to vote for any particular party or candidate?

[Graph showing 51.4% Yes, 48.6% No]

When the researcher asked the respondents that whether in their area/locality their community met to decide to vote for a candidate/party, 49% of responded in affirmative which is almost
half of the voters. It illustrates that these community meetings are held across geographical areas and these meetings also influence voters to some extent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33.72</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66.28</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi urban</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>69.70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>52.01</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>47.99</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
<td>316</td>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the researcher segregated the data in geographical areas and responses were analyzed to understand the mindset of the voters across different demographics. The researcher in particular wanted to understand that whether community meeting is only a rural phenomenon, or it happens in urban and semi urban areas as well. It was found that 66.28% rural respondent’s responded had community meetings in their locality. The percentage was quite significant (48%) even in urban areas.

8. In deciding whom to vote for, whose opinion mattered to you the most?

- Local Political Leader: 32.8%
- Spouse: 33.7%
- Other family members: 1%
- Caste/community leaders: 1%
- Friends/Neighbours: 1%
- Coworkers/Colleagues: 1%
- No one, I voted on my own: 1%
- Can't say: 1%

650 responses
There are different influencers for different people in deciding whom to vote for. Majority of the respondents (52.6%) said that no one’s opinion mattered (48% of Hindus and 63% of Muslims), and they voted on their own. 33.7% said that it was the opinion of their local leader which mattered. This is an interesting response this shows that even if party had good central leadership, they have a good image but if they don’t have good local leaders they may not win, so good local leadership is important. A very small percentage of people (4%) said their spouse’s & other family members opinion mattered, while 1.5% said opinion of their cast/community leaders mattered. This data revealed an interesting fact regarding voter’s psychology that around 47% of people depend on someone’s opinion while deciding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Can't say</th>
<th>% Caste/community leaders</th>
<th>% Coworker/Colleague</th>
<th>% Friends/Neighbors</th>
<th>% Local Political Leader</th>
<th>% No one, I voted on my own</th>
<th>% Other family members</th>
<th>% Spouse</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further the data was analyzed on religion as a variable. It was found that out of 429 Hindu respondents, 42.42% said it was the opinion of local political leader that matters the most, While for Muslim respondents (198), only 18.18% said opinion of local candidate mattered.

When the researcher tried to gauge the interest of respondents in election campaign 54.2% respondents said they were interested, 19.1% were neutral and 16.8% said they were not interested at all.
All politicians in interview agreed that political campaigns have impact to a certain extent and specially on floating voters.

Senior Journalist Brijesh Shukla was of the contrary opinion, “In 2014, 2017 and 2019 elections had made up their mind from much before to vote for BJP and political campaigns had no impact.”

39.1% respondents told Candidate/Party worker coming to them or contacting them through phone call/ recorded voice or SMS and asking for vote influenced them, 3% said Party/candidate offering food/honorarium/drive to polling stations influenced their behavior. Majority of the candidates i.e. 51.8% said that none of the above influenced their behavior.

The latest factor that has been assessed is forwarding of political messages to family and friends. Around 69% of respondents said they forward political messages to family and friends and this is an interesting finding as even the forwarded message has lot of effect on the voters.
Further the researcher segregated the data in geographical areas and the responses were analyzed to understand the mindset of the voters across different demographics. The researcher in particular wanted to understand the usage of internet and social media in rural area and the results were surprising, the data showed that around 63% of people residing in rural area often or sometimes forward political messages. This data tells that social media has penetrated in rural areas as well. The % was more in rural areas as compared to 52% in urban areas.

### Information regarding use of Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26.74</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60.47</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi urban</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39.39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>31.33</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>51.61</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further the researcher segregated the data in geographical areas and the responses were analyzed to understand the mindset of the voters across different demographics. The researcher in particular wanted to understand the usage of internet and social media in rural area and the results were surprising, the data showed that around 63% of people residing in rural area often or sometimes forward political messages. This data tells that social media has penetrated in rural areas as well. The % was more in rural areas as compared to 52% in urban areas.

**Information regarding use of Internet**
During the interviews of the politicians across parties, it was shared that these days social media has the most impact on voters and especially in rural areas.

To know the ground reality, impact and usability of internet, the respondents were asked if they search for candidates on Internet, the responses revealed that around 85% of people living in rural areas likes to research political candidates on internet in comparison 59.24% residing in urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.28</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67.44</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi urban</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28.79</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53.03</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>20.88</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>19.88</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>59.24</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interviews of the politicians across parties, it was shared that these days social media has the most impact on voters and especially in rural areas.

To know the ground reality, impact and usability of internet, the respondents were asked if they search for candidates on Internet, the responses revealed that around 85% of people living in rural areas likes to research political candidates on internet in comparison 59.24% residing in urban areas.

13. When researching a political candidate on the Internet, availability of information on their beliefs is important to me
650 responses

62% of respondents feel that while researching candidates on internet availability of information on their beliefs is important to them.
Further the data was segregated in geographical areas to understand the mindset of the voters across different demographics, and it was quite surprising to see that there was no significant difference in the responses which implicates that a candidates belief has a direct correlation with the voting predisposition of the voters.

Data revealed that around 65% respondents follow their candidates on Facebook/Twitter. This is the reason that today major political parties have a good social media army so that they can influence the behavior of the voters.

When the data was segregated by geographical areas, 58.14% people in rural areas follow their candidates on Facebook/Twitter in comparison to 53.21% respondents in urban areas. The difference isn’t much but evident.
The researcher asked next that if respondents listen to news stories about political candidates before voting so 72.2% responded positively while 13.5% said sometimes and 14.3% answered in negative.

The number of people watching news is again quite high showing the importance of the medium.

To know the involvement of respondents on social sites, the researcher asked if respondents Like, comment, share/retweet posts of political party/candidate, around 66% of respondents said they often or sometimes Like, comment, share/retweet posts of political parties/candidates, while around 34% said they don’t. The data reflects direct involvement of people in political process has gone up due to internet.

With survey data and analysis of our interviews we can safely say that internet plays a major role in politics now and in voting behavior.

All politicians in the interview agreed that social media has massive influence on voters and it is the best new medium for political parties to promote themselves. They believe even in rural areas Facebook & WhatsApp are being used because of the easy affordability of low-priced Chinese phones.
“In my areas their lives a very poor Musahar community, they are so poor that they survive on rats even they have an Android phone” – Senior Congress leader telling that how there in no urban rural divide in usage of social media.

Former BBC Journalist Ram Dutt Tripathi says “Social media helps in reinforcement of voters and with the help of it the leadership of the party can directly reach to voters.”

**Voting Behavior**

When asked advertisement of parties/candidates on which medium effect their voting behavior, the responses that were elicited are as follows:

- Seeing advertisement on Television effects voting behavior of 35%
- Reading/Seeing advertisements in newspaper effects 6.8%
- Listening to advertisements on Radio effects their 1.7%
- Seeing advertisement on Internet effect 4%
- 3.5% said Seeing advertisement on roads affect them and
- 2.8% said seeing any text or WhatsApp message effects their behavior
- **Around 44.9% of respondents said that none of the above effect their behavior and 12% said all the above option effect their behavior.**

This data revealed the importance of Television as a medium, but it is contrary to what our politicians claim that social media is now even a bigger tool than traditional medium.
When asked what will be their most important consideration while voting in the next LS elections, 37.5% of people said local Candidate matters the most, 25.8% said political Party, 17.8% said the PM face, 5.2% said state leadership was important and 9.8% gave the don’t know/can’t say response.

This question’s results are quite peculiar because various studies have shown and even the interviews with journalists and politicians indicated that PM Face is the most important factor since 2014 LS elections. This data illustrates that for different people different factors are important and that is why political parties can’t compromise on any one of these.

Further the data was segregated based on religion to understand what important consideration for two major religions are (Hindus and Muslim) while voting. 45.22% of Hindu respondents said local candidates, 20.28% said party, while around 20% said Prime Ministerial candidate, 3.96% said state leadership matters the most.
In Muslim community numbers are little different, it was found that for only 24.75% local candidate is important, for 36.87% it is the party, 8.08 said the state leadership and for around 12% it is the Prime Ministerial candidate which matters the most.

The view of our interviewees was completely different, they believe that LS elections are becoming presidential style and importance of PM face has gone up.

*Senior Journalist Brijesh Shukla says, “Earlier people used to discuss they will vote for Kamal, Panja, Hathi but now they say they will vote for Modi or will not vote for Modi.”*

“2014 & 2019 elections were fought in the name of the PM candidate and image makeover of the PM was done constantly”- Senior Leader BJP

“Importance of PM face Depends on the on Acceptability & stature of the leader”- Senior Leader BSP

### 19. Leadership qualities/attributes which the Prime Minister should have:

In the next question researcher gave certain qualities/attributes and asked the respondents to rate them on a 3-point scale, on the basis how important these qualities/attributes for a PM are to have. With 1 being very important and 3 being Not at all important.

**Attributes**

1. **Youthfulness** - 44.8% of respondents feel that the PM should be Young, 32.5% were neutral, while 22.8% respondents felt that it is not important at all.
2. **Inclusive and Secular** - 68.5% respondents feel that it is a very important while 13.2% respondents feel it is not important at all.
3. **Decisive** - 63.7% rated decisiveness as 1, whereas 12% said it’s not at all important
4. **Experienced** - 59.1% respondents considered this as a very important attribute, while 24.3% were neutral and 16.6% said that it’s not important at all.
5. **Honesty** - 79.2% respondent consider Honesty as a very important attribute, while 10.8% respondents feel that it is not important at all.
6. **Consensus Builder** - 64.6% respondent said that it’s a very important quality/attribute, 23.7% rated 2 and 11.7 rated 3 in the 3 point scale saying the quality is not important at all.
7. Good Orator - **57.4%** respondents feel it is a very important attribute, while 27.1% were neutral and 15.5% feel’s not important at all. This shows that emotions for voters are the key.

8. Out of 650 respondents **235 felt that none of these are important.**

**20. Five most important issues for the respondents:**

- **Price rise/LPG hike/Diesel/Petrol** - **55.8%**
- **Economy/Economic growth (GDP, FDI, Foreign exchange)** - **51.8%**
- **Education, schools, colleges, teaching, teachers** - **39.1%**
- **Economic Policies (Demonetization, GST, etc.)** - **38.2%**

*Another important thing which this data shows is that 12.3% respondents have chosen Hindutva and 17.1% have chosen Terrorism.*
**Interviewees on Caste**

Journalists and politicians unanimously agreed that caste is still an important factor though with religion and nationalistic issues it is challenged.

“In 'identity politics' instead of caste identity, religion is more dominating.” Former BBC journalist Ram Dutt Tripathi

“Caste factor cannot be completely ignored it depends on how cleverly and effectively you use and manage it, where caste factor is sharpened, the influence of religion diminishes” – Senior Leader BSP

“BJP has been successful in creating a fight between Yadavs Vs Non-Yadav OBC’s and Jatavs VS Non Jatav Dalits.” – Senior Leader Congress.

**Interviewees on Religion**

All interviewees except BJP leader agreed that importance of religion has gone up and it is an important issue.

“Narendra Modi symbolizes 'Hindu pride'. BJP have given an explicit message that Hindu needs supremacy and apart from BJP other parties support Muslims.” – Former Journalist Ram Dutt Tripathi

“They have capitalized well on people's anti-Muslim feeling, there is a feeling that what if BJP has not done anything at least Muslims have been shown their place.” – Senior Leader BSP

“Religion is not as important an issue as nationalism is, For BJP time for religion is over.” – SP Leader

**Interviewees on Nationalism**

All interviewees unanimously agreed that Nationalism as an issue has become quite important and is game changing.

*Religion and nationalism are not separate issues, BJP have used a well-crafted strategy that created an environment that Hindu is a nationalist and if not a Hindu then you are anti-national* - Former BBC Journalist Ram Dutt Tripathi
“Napoleon, whenever he used to start failing and face protests, he used to initiate a war with another country and people used to become emotional and forgot all other things in the name of nationalism, same is done by our Prime Minister.” – Senior SP leader

21. There should be reservation for economically backward among religious minorities in govt. jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When given 38.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that there should be reservation for economically backward among religious minorities in govt. jobs, while 8.9% rated 2, 26% responded strongly agreed with the statement.

22. The main political parties should declare their prime ministerial candidates before the Lok Sabha elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the researcher gave a statement, ‘The main political parties should declare their PM candidate before LS elections’ and asked them to rate this on a 5-point scale. 32.6% strongly
disagreed with the statement, while 6.8% disagree and 36% of respondents strongly agreed and wanted that PM face should be declared before elections.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Indian elections have changed a lot over the years, change is an evolutionary process but from general elections of 2014, they have gone to another level. Elections are now modern, campaigns are more professional, professional backroom strategist teams are required and lots of money. The change is due to the emergence of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah led BJP. They have created an election machinery which have made them almost invincible, at least in LS elections. This is the reason that most of their opponents aren’t equipped to beat them because they haven’t changed over the years, they are using the same back old way of campaigning with only a pitch of newness, not realizing that what’s needed is drastic revamp of strategy. So now an Indian LS election in a state like UP can’t be won with one single factor. Some of the factors which are necessary to have the best election campaign strategy in UP, which researcher has identified in UP are as follows.

**Good - Prime Ministerial Face**

LS elections are national elections and over the years PM face has always been important for voters for deciding their vote. LS elections are becoming more presidential style and there is data to prove that.

- *In the survey conducted by researcher, 17.8% respondents said that it’s the PM face which matters to them while voting.*
- *In Axis My India study 54% of the respondents of UP said that it’s the PM face which matters the most.*
- *Even the journalist and politicians interviewed believed the same.*

**Caste Arithmetic**

Caste is deeply rooted in the functioning of the state UP. In politics of UP it has been considered the single most important factor for voters over the years. In recent years it has been the view of some political analysts that the importance of caste for UP voters is decreasing due to many
reasons like religious polarization and muscular nationalism. The researcher can conclude after careful analysis of the interviews taken and study of the literature available that importance of caste in election is not going down. Importance of caste in UP remains as strong as it ever was. The Narendra Modi led BJP understands the importance of caste and along with that they also play religion and nationalism card.

Majority of the people interviewed by the researcher believed caste influence has not gone down but only have sharpened.

One of the main reasons because of which analysts felt that caste issue was going down because BJP defeated the mighty grand alliance of BSP, SP and RLD which had caste arithmetic on their side in LS 2019. The traditional voters of BSP and SP have been Dalits, OBCs and Muslims which constitute 78% of the voting population but then also they lost. The reason of their defeat was not because caste as an issue failed but they failed because BJP was very shrewd in using caste more tactically after analyzing that Mayawati now only gets the votes of her caste Jatavs and Akhilesh of Yadavs. So, they made inroads in other 65 sub castes of Dalits and other sub castes of OBCs.

- **caste equation changed during 2014 & 2019 elections**

BJP won the support of Dalits and backwards to a certain extent by playing the "relative deprivation" card. Disenchantment among OBCs & Dalits with both Mayawati and Mulayam due to dominance of Jatavs & Yadavs over other backward castes. BJP divided castes into sub castes. And they have been successful in securing the support of Pals, Kushwahas among backwards and of Chamaar, Pasi, Dhobi among Dalits.

- **Data of CSDS post poll study reflects an increase in vote share of BJP among OBCs and Dalits by 10% and 7% respectively.**

The researchers found in this survey that in rural areas 66.28% respondents participated in meetings with their community in their area/locality to decide whom to vote. This shows how religion and caste plays an important role.

**Religion**

Religion has always been an important factor in UP elections but recently it has been observed that religious polarization has increased. The researcher can conclude that it is very evident
that influence of religion in voting is increasing. Following are some data which supports the same:

When the researcher asked in his survey, 5 most important issues for the respondents while voting in LS elections, data shows that 12.3% respondents have chosen Hindutva which is more than respondents who have chosen caste consideration that are 7.5% of respondents.

- **Data of CSDS post poll study of 2019 proves the same it shows that BJP vote increased amongst all Hindu castes and communities by 8 percent rising from 36% in 2014 to 44% in 2019. This was due to religious polarization created in the society.**

- **Senior journalist and politicians interviewed by the researcher feels the same, that there is a sharp divide in the society.**

- **According to them “When BJP could not capitalize on Mandir issue, changed the agenda to Anti-Muslim, Anti-Pakistan and nationalism”**.

### Nationalism

Nationalistic issues have become quite important. One of the reasons it became important was due to Balakot Air strikes against Pakistan. BJP was successful in creating a national security narrative through Balakot air strike and other issues, they created a feeling among people that BJP is the only nationalist party who is making the country’s image stronger. They tried to remove caste factor by raising patriotic feelings.

- When the researcher asked in his survey, 5 most important issues for the respondents while voting in LS elections, data shows that 17.1% of respondents chose Terrorism and 24.7% chose Nationalism (National security and Army)

- A pre poll survey done by CSDS in 2019 shows, 46 % of those who had heard of Balakot preferred Modi.

- **All the interviewee agreed that nationalism as an issue has become very important, they feel that BJP has used it along with religion and it becomes a deadly cocktail.**
Some other important findings:

Election Campaigns

Election Campaign are also quite important, because they are large chunk voters who decide whom to vote for during the campaign or few days before polling or one the day of voting.

- 41.1% respondents said they were Very Interested in political campaigns.
- 40% of respondents said that they decided whom to vote for, few days before the polling or the on day of voting.
- Axis My India Post poll study shows, 43% of the respondent of UP made up their mind on whom to vote for few days ago/after community meeting/on day of voting

Social media – The New Mass Influencer

Earlier television, newspapers and radio were used by political parties to promote themselves, but now Social media is becoming important as well. Researcher found out that it has huge impact on the voters. Survey data reveals:

- 84% of people Research candidates on internet in rural areas before voting.
- 66% respondents follow their candidates on Facebook/Twitter.
- 66% of respondents Like, comment, share/retweet posts of political parties/candidates.

All the politicians interviewed agreed that social media has massive impact.

There has been a tremendous change in Voting Behavior and voting pattern in last 8 years. These changes have not only happened in UP but in entire country. It is these factors which makes election in India eventful. It is yet to be seen what happens in the ever-changing political landscape of UP in future.

It was finally concluded based on the primary as well as the secondary data that no single factor alone can be responsible for winning or losing, many factors put together influences the decision making by the voters.