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An empirical analysis of voter's satisfaction using political sensitivity scale and voter satisfaction model

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Abstract: The fate of India's politics is decided by the rural population, as 82% of the electorate and 454 out of 543 seats of Lok Sabha are rural. For this reason, rural population remains the central point when political parties frame strategies to win elections. Now the question in front of political parties is how the rural voters value their framed policies. One such measurement is voter satisfaction. The present study aims to revalidate the political sensitivity scale by Kirmani et al. (2020) and voter satisfaction model by Kirmani et al. (2019) on Indian rural voters. Through this study an attempt has been made to find out factors that are being considered relevant by Indian rural voters. The data has been collected from 619 rural voters and empirical analysis has been done by applying SEM in AMOS Software. The findings provide useful insights to the researchers and political parties in India.

Keywords: election; political marketing; political parties; rural voters; voter satisfaction.

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1 Introduction

Whether India is a land of cities or villages? The question is quite relevant seeing the level of urbanisation in today's time. Still, as per the available data, the majority of the India's population lives in rural areas and because of this fact, rural population is the focal point while framing policies by the government. Parallel to this, rural population is always at the centre when political parties frame strategies to win the elections. Political parties pay due attention in rural areas to fascinate the voters that, in turn, will guarantee the party's success. As 82% of the electorate and 454 out of 543 seats of Lok Sabha are rural. Only 16.4% seats of Lok Sabha are truly urban (Election Commission GoI). Also talking about the voter turnout, it's much higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas (see Table 1). As per the latest available data of Election Commission of India, the rural voter's turnout in 2019 general election was 2.35% higher than that of national average of 67.36%. Historically urban voters' turnout has been even lower than national turnout (see Table 1).

Table 1 Voters turnout in various general election in India

	2009	2014	2019
Urban	53%	62%	64.58%
Rural	63.48	70.80	70.14
National	58.24%	66.4%	67.36%

Source: Election Commission of India

In India, the disadvantaged and the poor ones cast votes proportionally more as compared to the rich and the upper caste. The most reliable answer as to why rural areas have higher turnout is that the even if not all political parties have pro-poor policies in the manifesto, still rural voters have high expectations with the political parties as compared to rich urban voters. Rural voters have faith in the democratic process that fair opportunities will be provided to them also.

The challenge in front of political parties how they will fascinate the rural voters or in other words, how the parties will approach rural voters that will guarantee their success. In today's time, political parties are adopting various means to approach and reach their target electoral base. Practices in India are not an exception to it.

Political parties are in the race to adopt the concepts of marketing discipline in their approaches which has given the birth of new construct called Political marketing. Thus, when the action of electoral and political parties is scrutinised from the marketing point of view, it gives new insights into democratic processes led by political parties via incorporating marketing concepts. Kotler and Levy (1969) argued that similar to the products and services, ideas and persons can also be marketed and thus, expanded the scope of marketing to include non-business organisations, persons and ideas.

Political marketing also moves the politics towards customer-orientation or more precisely, voter-orientation. The concept says that the political parties also do market research first to identify the needs of the electorates and promises to deliver when in power. Voters show their support in terms of votes in return for the services being offered by the candidate once in power, and by doing so, they are involved in a transaction process. Therefore, the concept of marketing process allows political parties to design and implement political campaigns effectively and efficiently. It is a marketing concept

that helps political parties to identify the needs of diverse voters and address their concerns.

Political marketing adapts the marketing tools and techniques and it is unquestionable that the central role has been played by marketing tools and techniques in practicing politics. The entities such as political parties, interest groups conduct market intelligence to identify their citizen concerns and their behaviour and also communicate their offerings to the citizens. One such concept of marketing is customer satisfaction.

A famous tagline of marketing is 'Customer is the King'. The tagline shows that the marketing field revolves around customer and satisfying customer. Therefore, the philosophical base for marketing concept says that achieving customer satisfaction is social as well as the economic justification behind the existence of every organisation. On similar grounds, the political parties try to achieve political consumer, that is, voter's satisfaction and in doing so, the party must be in a position to adjust to the needs of the voter.

Customer satisfaction in relation to product/service means the pleasure derived from consuming product/service (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Wong et al., 2020; Deepika et al., Forthcoming; Giese and Cote, 2000; O'Cass and Pecotich, 2005). In a study done by Hadjar and Beck (2010), the authors have suggested that greater level of voter satisfaction increases participation in voting during elections. Having a deep knowledge of the factors that contribute in building voter satisfaction becomes need of the hour for politicians which in turn enhance voter participation (Banerjee and Chaudhuri, 2016; Ehrenberg, 1997; Henn et al., 2005; O'Cass and Pecotich, 2005; Winchester et al., 2015).

A proper market analyses of what the voters need is required else all the efforts by political parties would go in vain. As it has already been established that political marketing has borrowed something from marketing field and that the political marketing firms uses the concepts of marketing in politics. One such famous concept of marketing is Satisfaction which has lured many researchers of marketing. In politics also, when one talks about identifying the needs of voters and providing services to accomplish the identified needs, the political parties try to satisfy their political consumers, i.e., voters. Various researches have suggested that when voters need to make a voting decision, their decision is based on their basic needs (Burton and Netemeyer, 1992; Harris and Lock, 2010; Winchester et al., 2015).

1.1 Contribution of the study

It is pertinent to find out the factors determining voter satisfaction, particularly in an Indian context. Such study is very much needed in an Indian Political System because looking at the results of Indian elections one can say that now voters are knowledgeable voters who are involved in the political discussions. Satisfying such voters is an uphill task in front of political parties in India and hence a study on the factors determining the voter satisfaction will give direction to political parties in India. One such study was done by Kirmani et al. (2019). In their study, the authors have identified factors that sensitise voters and whether these factors increase voter satisfaction in an Indian context. But the study has limited applicability since the authors have collected data only from urban voters but almost 82% of the electorate and 454 out of 543 seats of Lok Sabha are rural therefore, rural voters are the real deciders of election results. Through present study an attempt has been made to overcome this limitation by applying the political sensitivity

scale on rural voters and also to validate the voter satisfaction model suggested by Kirmani et al. (2019) on rural voters.

But before moving to voter satisfaction, we have first briefly discussed about the concept of political marketing. Discussion on the concept of political marketing is relevant because voter satisfaction is one of the outcomes of political marketing. Therefore, in the next section, a brief review of literature on political marketing is presented.

2 Literature review

2.1 Political marketing

The concept of Political Marketing can be defined as a synthesis of two disciplines, namely, political science and marketing. This statement implies that the concept of political marketing has taken some of the constructs from the field of marketing and political science (Lees-Marshment, 2001).

It is critical for parties to understand the fundamental concept of marketing in order to be successful in the long run. Marketing is a process that allows political parties to design and implement effective and efficient political campaigns. It is a marketing concept that enables political parties to identify and address the needs of diverse voters. All of this can be accomplished by analysing, planning, implementing, and controlling election campaigns. Political marketing is concerned with political preferences and electoral offers that correspond to those preferences (Pawelczyk and Jakubowski, 2017).

Promotion in marketing refers to many sorts of marketing communication used by a firm to offer its products or services to its target audiences. A promotional campaign is designed to promote attention and awareness, as well as create sales and brand loyalty. Similarly, a political campaign seeks to generate attention, awareness, and votes (Antoniades, 2020).

Political parties can improve their chances of winning general elections by implementing political marketing strategies. They modify aspects of their behaviour, such as policy, membership, leadership, and organisational structure, to meet the needs of their market. They can accomplish this by focusing on the product, sales, or market. Depending on the goals and market, each orientation may be an appropriate approach to take. The impact of marketing on a party's overall behaviour is explained via product-oriented party (voters recognise party's ideas): sales-oriented party (persuading voters to accept its arguments) and market-oriented party (such party ensures voter satisfaction).

Market-oriented party ensures voter satisfaction. Voter demands are identified using market intelligence and thereafter, product is created to fulfil the identified demands. Instead of changing people's minds, it gives them what they want. Such party ensures whether the product is deliverable or not rather than simply following opinion polls or offer voters what they demand. Reason for the same is very simple and logical, if the party fails to deliver the product, voters will be dissatisfied which results in losing electoral support in the long run. It also needs to ensure that it will be accepted within the party, so it must carefully adjust its product to account for this. The party designs a product that will actually satisfy voters' demands: that meets their needs and wants, is

supported and implemented by the internal organisation, and is deliverable in government (Lees-Marshment, 2001).

However, a question arises here: “How do we define political marketing?” Through academic writings many attempts have been made to define and conceptualised the concept of political marketing. Kelley (1956) is credited with coining the term ‘political marketing’ for the first time. According to the author, the primary goal of political marketing is persuasion, and the concept is nearly synonymous with propaganda. Following that, many authors defined the term based on their conceptual understandings.

Shama (1976) stated that “the process by which political candidates and their ideas are directed at voters in order to satisfy their potential needs and thus gain their support for the candidate and ideas in question” (p.766). The definition reflects political marketing as a process where the main objective is on achieving voter satisfaction. In this reference Butler and Collins (1994, p.19) viewed that “in general, political marketing is designed to influence people’s votes in elections”. Clemente (2002) also recognised the fact while describing political marketing as, “the marketing of ideas and opinions which relate to public or political issues or to specific candidates. In general, political marketing is designed to influence people’s votes in elections. It is different from conventional marketing in that concepts are being sole as opposed to products or services. Political marketing, however, employs many of the same techniques used in product marketing, such as paid advertising, direct mail and publicity” (p.308).

On the basis of American Marketing Association’s (AMA’s) larger conception of marketing, Hughes and Dann (2012) proposed that “political marketing is a set of activities, processes or political institutions used by political organizations, candidates and individuals to create, communicate, deliver and exchange promises of value with voter-consumers, political party stakeholders and society at large” (p.244). Therefore, it is the employment of a marketing technique in the field of politics (Ahmad and Popa, 2014; Kartini and Sulaeman 2018; Jamil and Hesti 2019; Briandana, 2019; Budianto and Erlita, 2020) and hence, encompasses wide political operations in the framework of delivering political party and candidate programs as political goods in the context of establishing images, symbols, and programs connected to the public (Vitak et al., 2011; Aspinall and Mietzner 2019). Contrary to it, Harmes (2020) distinguishes political marketing from commercial marketing. The author stated that it (political marketing) is not a notion that seeks to ‘sell’ political parties or politicians to voters, but rather a concept that outlines how a political party or candidate might develop policies that address real-world issues. In this reference, Pratama et al. (2021) mentioned that political marketing is a strategy for maintaining a two-way interaction with the public.

The purpose of political marketing other than developing a work program to meet the expectations of community is to assist political parties or candidates in getting to know the people they serve (Hervinal and Nurjaman, 2022). Essentially, it is a planned political campaign strategy for disseminating political meaning to voters. The expected voter behaviour is an expression of voters supporting and opposing a particular political party or candidate. Political parties can use this political marketing strategy to market political ideas and ideas to the public in order to gain support (Hervinal and Nurjaman, 2022). Therefore, political marketing, in general, provides a systematic order in which the desires and needs of a larger audience are evaluated and certain instruments are used to influence the larger audience and target market. A political campaigner faces the same issues that a marketing manager does. The marketing field revolves around customer satisfaction and, as a result, achieving the loyalty of the target population; similarly,

voters as political consumers. After the brief discussion on political marketing the following paragraph will explain voter satisfaction.

2.2 Voter satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a marketing concept that has been well defined in the literature [see for example Oliver (1980), Suaib et al. (2017) and Churchill and Surprenant (1982)]. Customer satisfaction occurs when the customer's expectations exceed or meet the performance of the product (or service) (Oliver, 1980; Suaib et al., 2017). Satisfaction can refer to either pleasure or disappointment with a product or service. In a nutshell, customer satisfaction is the pleasure derived from the use of a product or service (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982). Satisfaction is explained by referring to fulfilment. As a result, judging fulfilment necessitates the application of some standards that serve as the foundation for comparison. As a result, satisfaction includes both outcome and comparison factors. The comparison with the outcome will determine the level of satisfaction a customer received from the offerings.

In political context, voters are the political customers who evaluate the performance of the political party. As suggested in previous researches also, voter satisfaction must be considered crucial by the political parties (Firmansyah, 2007). Life satisfaction of people as explained by Veenhoven (2012) is the overall evaluation of one's life's quality. On the similar note, voter satisfaction occurs when the voter's overall assessment gets influenced by the political parties' vision, mission and programmes (Firmansyah, 2007; Suaib et al., 2017). When voters feel that life quality enhances or improves because of policies implementation relating to employment generation, implementation of human rights etc., it leads in the enhancement of their life satisfaction (Suaib et al., 2017). Political parties communicate their mission and vision which creates a desired image which are evaluated by the voters and in turn, leading towards voter's satisfaction (Bigi and Bonera, 2015; Suaib et al., 2017). Therefore, voter satisfaction, in a political context, is defined as the comparison between the actual performance of the political party and the expectations (O'Cass et al., 2002).

3 Conceptual framework

Initially, the identified factors leading towards voter satisfaction were voter preferences and concerns (Rothschild, 1978; Winchester et al., 2015). After that, researchers argued that voter preferences and concerns are dependent on the enduring involvement and situation involvement. Hence, the next section deals with the factors leading towards voter satisfaction.

3.1 Voter involvement and voter satisfaction

It is common knowledge that consumer involvement influences consumer decision making (Smith and Carsky, 1996). Consumer involvement has piqued the interest of many academics, and political scientists are not immune to this trend. They also recognised the significance of understanding voter participation in relation to elections, politicians, and political parties (Rothschild and Houston, 1980; Burton and Netemeyer, 1992). Involvement, according to Zaichkowsky (1985), is "the personal relevance of an

object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (p.342). Involvement, in particular, is more important in voting decisions and participation. According to previous research, involvement may act as a moderating or outcome variable (Yoon et al., 1999). Individual involvement is important in the purposeful information hunt (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973). Involvement is associated with the voter’s perception of superior information source convenience and subject knowledge (Pinkleton et al., 1997). Researchers have argued that involvement is linked to a greater interest in politics, and more specifically, the outcome of an election campaign (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). Further studies on the subject reveal that involvement is a psychological trait of a person that is reflected in a person’s concern about specific election results and is associated with a sense of political efficacy (Kanihan and Chaffee, 1996).

According to Zaichkowsky (1985, 1986), there are two types of involvement: enduring involvement and situational involvement. Enduring involvement is defined as intrinsic interest, or long-term interest in a product category, whereas situational involvement is defined as a short-term increase in interest. The term ‘involvement’ refers to an object’s expressed interest, attachment, motivation, and (or) importance (Laroche et al., 2003). Low involvement is associated with a lack of political knowledge, whereas high involvement is associated with a high level of political knowledge (Henn and Foard, 2012). In this reference Barber and Venkatraman (1986) wrote that a product with high level of involvement makes voter satisfaction an even more crucial factor. However, authors’ usage of the nomenclature of high or low involvement items is not universally accepted but their point of view has been accepted on the ground of significance of satisfaction of voters in the context of voter involvement (O’Cass, 2002a).

Richins and Bloch (1991) also argued that highly involved consumers have a strong incentive to prevent post-purchase discontent since a product is a significant part of their lives. In the case of a purchase, they have more at stake and are under more pressure to choose well. Furthermore, highly engaged customers are regularly requested for guidance (concerns of opinion leadership). Consumption blunders are likely to be humiliating for such informed customers. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that politically active voters, who are also thought leaders, would be particularly eager to enjoy political pleasure through their participation in politics and voting decisions. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that those customers who report greater political participation would also express greater happiness with politics, politicians, and their decisions. Voters’ proclivity for high involvement will ensure that they make wise political decisions. The impact of such wise political decisions can be seen in election results, where voters elect an efficient government as a result of their high involvement (Richins and Bloch, 1991).

Furthermore, when voters are actively involved in politics, governments are under pressure to improve their performance (Geys et al., 2010). Positive knowledge influences voter knowledge and increases confidence in the preferred candidate (Burton and Netemeyer, 1992). Many researchers have argued that consumer involvement is an important factor in determining their decision-making process (Celsi and Olson, 1988; O’Cass, 2002a; Petty et al. 1983).

Hence, high voter involvement enhances voter satisfaction and the two factors are positively related with each other (O’Cass, 2002a; O’Cass and Natarajan, 2003). Based on discussion, the framed hypothesis is:

H₁ Voter involvement is positively related with voter satisfaction.

3.1.1 Perceived knowledge and voter involvement

Political knowledge is defined by McAllister (1998) (p.7) as “factual knowledge of actors, history and institutions; and conceptual knowledge of theories and belief systems”. Perceived knowledge is a critical factor influencing voter participation in the election process. A knowledgeable voter is aware of both national and international political issues. A voter who is well-informed and knowledgeable is more sensitive to political discourse (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). As per Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) political knowledge is required in order to be an effective and a constructive citizen. Authors opined that a politically knowledgeable will take more informed decision and apart from this the person will be “more attentive to politics, engaged in various forms of participation, committed to democratic principles, opinionated, and [feel] efficacious” (p.6). A knowledgeable voter voted in terms of utility maximisation (Sheppard, 2015). A politically informed voter has a better idea of how to gather information (Sniderman et al., 1991).

The level of political knowledge in the electorate is a crucial problem for political parties, politicians, and voters, just as it is for marketers of goods and services. Voters' perceived election knowledge is important since it affects how they gather information and make decisions. Political knowledge has been related with the media exposure; awareness and expertise. The factor has been considered as a most powerful factor in voter turnout.

Voters who are well-informed and knowledgeable participate actively in a variety of political activities (Banwart, 2007; O'Cass and Pecotich, 2005). This is due to two straightforward factors. First, having an understanding of politics encourages other democratic behaviours such as political involvement and effectiveness. This is due to the ability of individuals to identify concerns and problems that are politically significant. Second, knowledge empowers people to spot possibilities and relate them to their political requirements. These choices are influenced by data gleaned from the news media. In this sense, so-called ‘mobilising information’ leads to political participation (Lemert, 1981). If one is interested in politics and has some basic information, they may choose where, when, and how to vote. Political knowledge encourages individuals to embrace democratic ideals, fosters faith in the political system, and encourages political engagement. It also helps citizens achieve their own goals and make decisions that are congruent with their attitudes and preferences.

Previous research treats political knowledge as the most crucial factor in political engagement (Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006) and concludes that more politically informed voters are more likely to vote in elections (Stockemer and Rocher, 2017), so the framed hypothesis in this regard is:

H₂ Perceived knowledge positively and significantly related with voter involvement in the election process.

3.1.2 Religious and caste considerations and voter involvement

There is a widespread belief in India that people ‘vote their caste’ rather than ‘cast their vote’. There are numerous studies that support the argument that voters prefer candidates who are similar to them (Blalock, 1967; Chandra, 2009; Cook, 1994; Dolan, 1998; Heath et al., 2015; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Tate, 1993; Desai, 1967). Voters are more likely to support a candidate who is similar to them, particularly in terms of caste and

religion. Members of a particular caste may band together and decide who to vote for, or they may decide not to vote at all because members of that caste have decided to do so (Desai, 1967).

In India, caste is still a factor in voting patterns. It is deeply ingrained in society and serves as the cornerstone of all social interactions. Caste still influences political behaviour (Huber and Suryanarayan, 2016) despite the enactment of various laws that forbid actions and discrimination based on it. The political system in India is widely recognised for the politicisation of caste and casteism. The caste element is constantly taken into consideration by all political parties in India while developing their policies, programs, and election plans (Beg, 2017; Harriss, 2015). Caste is taken into consideration when choosing candidates from a constituency to run in an election (Beg, 2017; Bhalotra et al., 2014). The primary language of voters in rural India is caste. Caste still dominates Indian politics despite the acceptance of democratic ideals that envision a society devoid of casteism. In fact, it has emerged as one of the primary methods for involving the Indian people in the democratic political system (Beg, 2017).

In an Indian political system, religion and caste are always at the top of the list when voters make their decision (Beg, 2017; Bhalotra et al., 2014; Harriss, 2015; Heath et al., 2015; Huber and Suryanarayan, 2016; Pande, 2003). Religious concerns can increase voter involvement (Beg, 2017; Harriss, 2015). Aside from religious concerns, several studies have found that caste concerns increase voter involvement (Banerjee et al., 2014; Huber and Suryanarayan, 2016). Hence, following is the formulated hypothesis:

H₃ Religious and caste considerations positively affect voter involvement in the election process.

3.2 *Economic and global consideration and voter satisfaction*

Economic and global consideration refers to how concerned voters are, about current economic policies and how these policies affect the country's global reputation (Acs and Szerb, 2009; Bengoa and Sanchez-Robles, 2003; Hazelkorn, 2014). Voters conduct in-depth analyses of economic policies before making any election decisions, implying that economic policies lead to their satisfaction. By using a reward and punishment system, the electorates as a whole hold incumbent responsible for the state of the economy. Voters are presumptively more likely to support the incumbent party while the economy is doing well and less likely to do so when the economy is struggling (Hazelkorn, 2014). Economic considerations are critical in influencing outcomes (Anderson, 2007; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Vaishnav and Swanson, 2015). Several studies have argued that sustained economic growth is a critical factor in improving the country's global ranking (Acs and Szerb, 2009; Bengoa and Sanchez-Robles, 2003; Hazelkorn, 2014). The two factors, namely global reputation and economic policies, are interconnected and contribute to voter satisfaction (Ezrow and Xezonakis, 2016). The formulated hypothesis is:

H₄ Economic and global considerations positively affect voter satisfaction.

3.2.1 *Perceived risk and economic and global considerations*

Perceived risk is a well-studied topic in marketing and is regarded as an important factor in explaining consumer purchasing behaviour (Mitchell, 1999). Perceived risk is made up

of two parts: uncertainty and the seriousness of the consequences of the purchase (Cases, 2002; Bauer, 1967). Perceived risk is defined as “the consumer’s belief about the potential uncertain negative outcomes from online transactions” [Kim et al., (2008), p.547]. Sweeney et al. (1999, p.81) define perceived risk as “the subjective expectation of a loss”. Simply defined, perceived risk is the unreliability felt by the consumers (or political consumers in paper’s context) regarding possible unfavourable consequences from the purchase of product or in this context, making a wrong decision that affects the global reputation of the country and also serve as an obstacle in the economic stability.

Perceived risk is related with the anxiety and uncertainty (Slovic, 2015). Election process is perceived to be highly risky by the voters as one wrong decision, that is, selecting inefficient and incompetent government, disrupts economic stability and jeopardises global reputation (Bauer, 1960; Dowling and Satelin, 1994; O’Cass, 2002b, 2003; O’Cass and Pecotich, 2005). Hence, the formulated hypothesis is:

H₅ Perceived risk is positively related with economic and global considerations of voters.

3.2.2 Social considerations and economic and global considerations

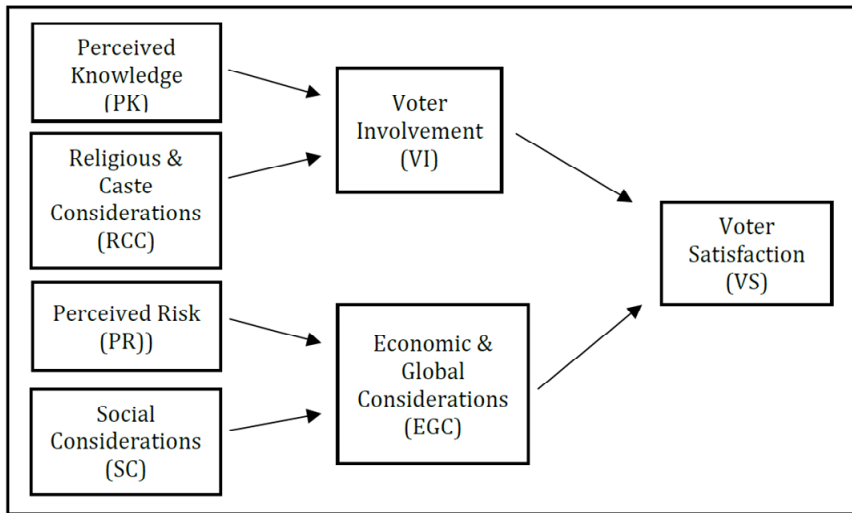
Social considerations are associated with the voter’s concerns for the underprivileged sections of the country. The two important sections covered are farmers of the country and women. These remain the burning topics during elections. When talking about women, cases such as rape, domestic violence etc have increased drastically (Kalokhe et al., 2017; Menon and Allen, 2018). The government receives great criticism from public on cases against women, like rape and many others. For example, Nirbhaya Case in 2012. The entire nation stood for demanding justice and criticised government for lenient rules against such cases. The criticism from public was shown in the election results too where the voters swept the then government power (congress) in 2014 elections and gave chance to other political party (BJP) with more than majority marks in 2014 general elections.

Recent example is of Hathras rape case in UP where every person stood up with the victim’s family. The case and its subsequent handling drew widespread media attention and condemnation across the country, and activists and opposition parties protested against the Yogi Adityanath government.

Farmers’ concerns also have an impact on voter decisions. Agriculture is the main occupation in India because the majority of the population lives in rural areas where agriculture is still the primary source of income. Farmers’ concerns are also valued by the Indian public, who consider them as one of the factors in their voting decisions. Farmers’ dissatisfaction with the current government has grown in recent days. Also, the rate of farmer suicide has increased; possible reasons include low income or crop failure, among others (Basu et al., 2016; Desai and Mehta, 2017). According to voters, the status of underprivileged groups has an impact on the country’s reputation. Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H₆ Social considerations positively affect economic and global concern of the voters.

Based on the above discussed factors, the proposed model as developed by Kirmani et al. (2019) is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Proposed model

Source: Adopted from Kirmani et al. (2019)

4 Methodology

4.1 Survey characteristics

The present study finds out the factors determining the satisfaction of the Indian Rural Voters. A study was done by Kirmani et al. (2019). In their study, the authors have identified factors that sensitise urban youth voters and whether these factors increase voter satisfaction in an Indian Context. Political Sensitivity Measurement scale has been developed by Kirmani et al. (2020). The scale has been used in the measurement of economic and global consideration (three items); social considerations (three items) and perceived risk (three items). Rest of the variables in the questionnaire is based on the measurement scale used by Kirmani et al. (2019).

All the statements in the questionnaire are measured on a 5-point likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

4.2 Data collection and sampling procedure

After designing the questionnaire, it was circulated among Indian Rural Voters of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Personal Interviews were also conducted initially to record the responses. The final structured questionnaire consisted of 29 statements. The respondents were guided to give responses based on their previous voting experiences as well as their voting perceptions.

Prior to the commencement of the survey, participants were briefed about the study's goal, data collection procedure, and privacy protection. Confidentiality and privacy were promised to encourage participation in the survey and assure that all replies would be kept secret and only provided in aggregate form. The items' phrasing has remained precise, easy to understand, and straightforward.

This research empirically investigates the factors leading towards the satisfaction of the rural voters in the Indian Political System. The study's population was Indian electorates. Considering the nature of data required and heterogeneity in Indian Rural population, we formed group of young educated college going students for collecting data from rural population across India's state. A self-administered survey was conducted to measure the satisfaction of the electorate.

Respondents were asked to give responses based on their prior voting experience so that their satisfaction could be measured. A satisfied voter is the one who evaluates the performance of the voter with the prior expectations. We used the statistical and procedural remedies during data collection as indicated by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to reduce the possibility of common method bias. Maximum possible efforts were made to reduce the possibility of sampling biases by controlling the circulation of questionnaires. Questionnaires was circulated systematically taking into account, rural or urban set up, young or old population, male or female etc.

A total of 619 responses were collected using Ferber (1977) convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling requires survey items relevant to the participants, representing the entire population, and serving sample sufficiency. The collected data was empirically analysed using SPSS and IBM AMOS Software.

4.3 Methods

Structural equation modelling in AMOS is used for performing empirical analysis. SEM consists of two steps: in the first stance, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been performed to run the measurement model. After achieving the model fit indices and establishing the reliability and validity, we moved towards second step which deals with running the final structural model.

5 Data analysis

5.1 Descriptive analysis

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of respondents. Male respondents, female respondents and others were 361, 247 and 11. Coming to the age group, the age group 18–28 got maximum response with 242 responses, followed by 29–38 age group with 171 responses, 39–48 and 49–58 age groups received 94 and 91 responses whereas only 21 responses were received from Above 58 age group. In terms of educational qualifications, majority of the responses were received from Graduation (271 responses) followed by upto 12th with 156 responses, others got 122 responses and 70 responses from upto 10th. 195 respondents were students, 94 were government servant, 57 respondents were private employee, and 156 respondents chose agriculture as profession.

5.2 Measurement model

The first step of structural equation modelling is CFA. So, we began analysis by running CFA in AMOS Software. CFA is used to assess the overall fit of the model as well as establishing the reliability and Validity. Reliability has been established by looking at the values of composite reliability, i.e., CR. The stated value of CR is 0.7 or greater than 0.7.

The CR value must exceed the stated one so as to establish the internal reliability. As can be seen from the table, the value of all the variables is greater than 0.7 which means the data meets the internal reliability. AVE is used for establishing convergent validity and the minimum acceptable value is 0.5. For establishing discriminant validity, the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlations of other constructs. As can be seen from the Table 3, the data meets all the stated requirements and hence, no issues of reliability and validity. The AVE values are greater than MSV, hence, establishing discriminant validity. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Demographic profile

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	361	58.4
	Female	247	39.9
	Others	11	1.7
Age	18–28	242	39.1
	29–38	171	27.7
	39–48	94	15.1
	49–58	91	14.7
	Above 58	21	3.4
Educational qualification	Upto 10th	70	11.3
	Upto 12th	156	25.2
	Graduation	271	43.7
	Others	122	19.8
Profession	Student	195	31.5
	Government servant	94	15.1
	Private employee	57	9.2
	Agriculture	156	25.3
	Others	117	18.9

Table 3 Reliability and validity

	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>	<i>MaxR(H)</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>PK</i>	<i>RCC</i>	<i>PR</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>EGC</i>	<i>VS</i>
SC	0.839	0.637	0.137	0.856	0.798						
PK	0.926	0.641	0.464	0.930	0.229	0.801					
RCC	0.940	0.724	0.221	0.944	0.283	0.405	0.851				
PR	0.830	0.621	0.049	0.849	0.145	-0.181	-0.221	0.788			
VI	0.821	0.605	0.464	0.824	0.370	0.681	0.470	0.134	0.778		
EGC	0.757	0.512	0.054	0.780	0.233	-0.006	-0.103	0.169	0.078	0.716	
VS	0.792	0.503	0.307	0.862	0.074	0.554	0.391	-0.142	0.398	0.097	0.709

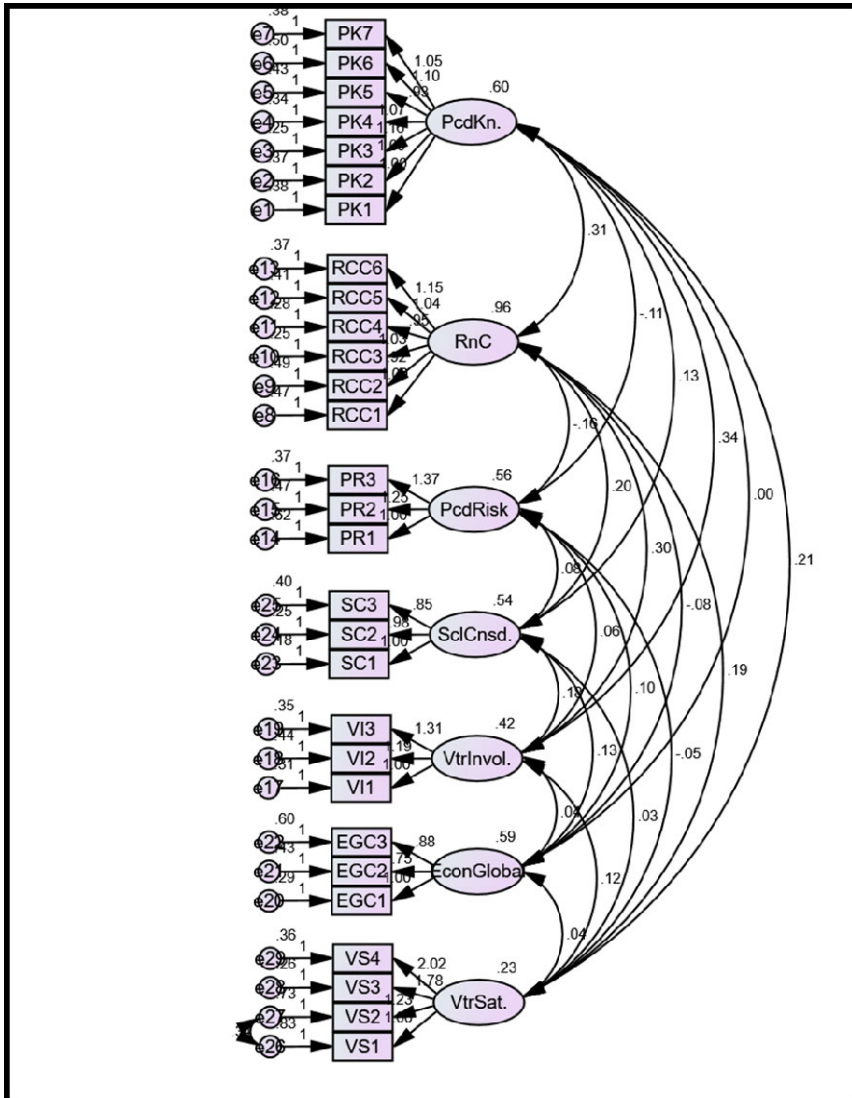
Notes: SC: Social considerations; PK: Perceived knowledge; RCC: Religious and caste considerations; PR: Perceived risk; VI: Voter involvement; EGC: Economic and global considerations; VS: Voter satisfaction.

To assess the overall fit of the model, the goodness of fit indices is used. The model fit indices are calculated by CFA only. The CMIN value is 842.843 and DF value is 355. The overall chi-square value, i.e., CMIN/DF is 2.374. The value is below 3 as suggested

by Hu and Bentler (1999). Other fit indices such as RMR, CFI and RMSEA meets the threshold limit as suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). The value for RMR is .090; CFI is .864 and for RMSEA is .085.

The results suggest that the model has an overall good fit. Also, there are no issues with the reliability and validity. Hence, the data is appropriate for further analysis. Therefore, after establishing the measurement model, we can move further for path analysis which is second step in SEM. The measurement model has been presented in Figure 2.

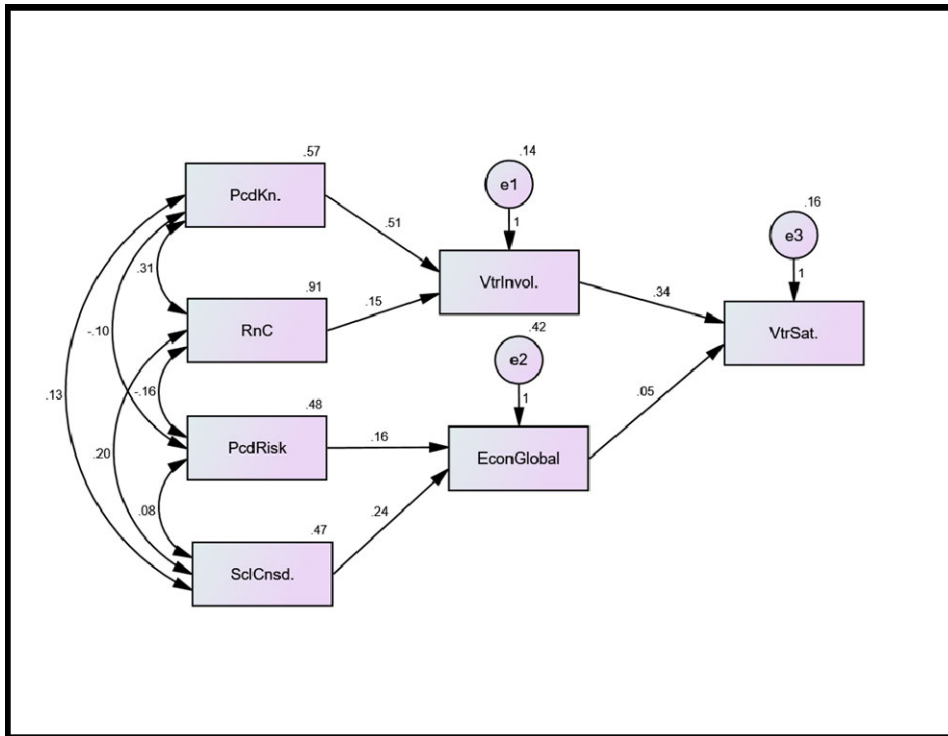
Figure 2 Measurement model (see online version for colours)



5.3 Structural model

The next step after CFA in SEM is to run regression analysis as a part of Path Analysis. To do so, data imputation technique has been used and the result of the structural model has been presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Structural model (see online version for colours)



The path analysis result has been shown in the Table 4.

Table 4 Path analysis result

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>
Voter involvement ← Perceived knowledge	.510	.040	12.624	.000***
Voter involvement ← Religious and caste considerations	.151	.032	4.720	.000***
Economic and global considerations ← Perceived risk	.159	.069	2.307	.021
Economic and global considerations ← Social considerations	.244	.070	3.501	.001***
Voter satisfaction ← Voter involvement	.342	.049	7.024	.004***
Voter satisfaction ← Economic and global considerations	.045	.043	1.053	.292

Note ***Significance level.

The research findings reveal that economic and global considerations is insignificant in determining the voter satisfaction as p-value exceeds 0.5, thereby rejecting fourth

hypothesis (H₄). However, voter involvement is observed to be significant in determining voter satisfaction as the p-value is less than 0.5. Hence, we do not reject first hypothesis (H₁).

The value of R is the multiple correlation coefficients between the independent variables and dependent variables indicating the association strength between the two and R square explains the variance proportion of the outcome about its mean which is explained by the predictors. The value of R comes out to be 0.465 and the value of R square is 0.216 which means that the independent variables account for 21.6% of the variation in the dependent variable. The adjusted R square is 0.208.

Both the findings are in direct contradiction with the findings of Kirmani et al. (2019), where the authors found economic and global considerations as a significant determinant of voter satisfaction and voter involvement as an insignificant determinant of voter satisfaction. Perceived knowledge and religious and caste considerations are both coming out to be significant determinant of voter involvement with p-value less than 0.5. Therefore, second and third hypotheses (H₂ and H₃) are not rejected. Talking about the determinants of economic and global considerations, perceived risk is observed to be significant with p-value .021 which is less than 0.5 and social considerations is also coming out to be significant with p-value less than 0.5 and hence, we do not reject fifth and sixth hypotheses (H₅ and H₆).

6 Discussion and conclusions

Politicians everywhere are trying to figure out what voters care about in order to craft more persuasive election campaigns (Fyfe, 2009; Henn et al., 2005; Jasperson and Yun, 2007; Manning, 2010; Vaishnav, 2015; Winchester et al., 2015). Specifically, prior research has demonstrated that voters employ critical and rational thought when making electoral choices (Falkowski and Cwalina, 2012; Peng and Hackley, 2009). According to numerous studies (Banerjee and Chaudhuri, 2016; Burton and Netemeyer, 1992; Harris and Lock, 2010; O'Cass and Pecotich, 2005; Palda, 1975; Winchester et al., 2015), voters' choices of political parties and leaders are a direct reflection of their fundamental wants and desires.

However, there is scant research accessible to help us comprehend the aspects vital for voter satisfaction and their worries with critical political issues including the country's global reputation, its economic situation, the prevailing condition of impoverished sectors of society, religious and caste considerations, social consideration etc. Rural Indian voters are an important demographic, but scholars have paid them little attention in the Indian context (Joshi and Kunduri, 2017). Most of the prior research has concentrated on broad topics such party performance, election campaigns, media participation, and election outcomes and many others (Beg, 2017; Harriss, 2015; Kapur and Nangia, 2015; Vaishnav and Swanson, 2015). Most previous research relies on historical election data conducted on urban population to draw conclusions (Kirmani et al., 2019; Bhalotra et al., 2014; Harriss, 2015; Heath et al., 2015; Kapur and Nangia, 2015; Vaishnav and Swanson, 2015; Beg, 2017). In light of this, surveys and polls that actually ask rural voters for their input are essential seeing the share of rural electorates. Furthermore, it is important to determine whether constituents of the electorate are satisfied with the current political system. As a result, the purpose of this research was to

determine what elements in the electoral process most influence voters' attitudes and motivations.

The present research is predicated on the hypothesis that understanding the nuances of the Indian rural electorate's decision-making process is essential for political parties and leaders to build effective campaign strategies and win elections in the country. With that in mind, the study makes two significant contributions. To begin with, the study has established a scale for gauging the characteristics vital for voters' active participation in the political process especially rural voters. Academics and policymakers alike will benefit from the 29 item scale since it will help them better grasp the factors that really matter to rural voters when it comes to people casting ballots in elections. Additionally, a model was proposed and validated that looks at the relationships between the variables that make up 29 item scale. Academics and researchers will be aided significantly by this model in their pursuit of a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to rural voters' satisfaction and their motivation to engage in politics. If politicians can better comprehend the electorate, they can craft more effective policies. Perhaps policymakers should prioritise voter concerns by paying attention to the results of this survey.

More specifically, economic and global consideration is not significant in determining the level of voter satisfaction among rural voters which is in contradiction with the finding of Kirmani et al. (2019). Data from 2019 election result reveals a similar result on the economic front. GDP growth rate had fallen just before the election months from 8% in 2016–2017 to 4% in 2019–20. Apart from this, the unemployment level reached a 45-year high and the promise for creation of millions of jobs in 2014 actually did not materialise. Small business and informal economy which employs considerably the large majority of the population, badly impacted due to implementation of GST and demonetisation. Modi's first term also witnessed the farmers protest on a large scale indicating widespread rural distress (Maiorano, 2019). Despite such economic crisis, Modi led BJP alone managed to get 303 seats out of 543 and 37.76% vote share (the highest since 1984) in 2019 general election compared to 282 seats and 31.34% vote share in 2014 election (Election Commission of India). Hence, the data clearly shows that economic and global consideration is not a significant factor for voter's satisfaction specially among rural voters.

However, voter involvement is observed to be significant in determining voter's satisfaction and again the finding is contradictory with the finding of Kirmani et al. (2019). The finding of this paper suggests that higher the voter is involved in the politics, it would be difficult for the political parties to satisfy them with their policies. A study was done by O'Cass (2003) where the author also found the similar result and supported the fact that high/low involvement will have an impact on voter's feeling and the level of satisfaction they derive.

The variables of voter involvement, both the variables, i.e., perceived knowledge and religious and caste considerations are found to be the significant determinant of voter involvement. The findings suggest that the knowledge level of voter makes them highly involved in the election process and the finding is in line with the previous studies (Kirmani et al., 2019; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Stockemer and Rocher, 2017). In India, there is a conception saying people 'vote their caste' rather than 'cast their vote' and the data findings support this conception. So, based on the research findings, we support the fact that voters do prefer candidates who are similar to them. The finding is parallel to various previous studies (see, Blalock, 1967; Chandra, 2009; Cook, 1994;

Heath et al., 2015). Both the variables, namely, perceived risk and social considerations are observed to significant in determining the economic and global considerations. The data supports the view that if high risk is perceived by voters in their decision, they will be highly concerned about the economic and global reputation of the country. The findings also confirm that the political parties must pay due attention on the underprivileged section of the society and frame policies for that section. This will improve the voter's perceptions in relation with economic and global reputation.

The present research provides useful insights to the political parties and the work can be used by the politicians in identifying what all factors derive rural voter's satisfaction. Since, rural voters can greatly influence the election results, the present paper is helpful for politicians in framing strategies focusing the rural voters. Also, the present paper supports the view that political parties now need to have realistic approach to satisfy the rural voters. The results of hypotheses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Results

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Result</i>
H ₁ : Voter involvement is positively related with voter satisfaction	Supported
H ₂ : Perceived knowledge positively and significantly related with voter involvement in the election process	Supported
H ₃ : Religious and caste considerations positively affect voter involvement in the election process	Supported
H ₄ : Economic and global considerations positively affect voter satisfaction	Not supported
H ₅ : Perceived risk is positively related economic and global considerations of voters	Supported
H ₆ : Social considerations positively affect economic and global concern of the voters	Supported

7 Limitations and future scope of the present study

The present study is not free from limitations. One such limitation is that the present study does not focus on gender specification. A study could be done to find out the voting patterns of male and female differs or not. Earlier, women were not interested in politics and considered that it is a matter of male members in the house. Women voted for the same candidate and political parties which is being referred by the male member of the house but with changing time, the situation is also changing and women are taking active participation in politics these days. More particularly, a study finding out the gender differences must focus on rural areas and try to find out how voting patterns of men and women differs or still women are voting as referred by the male member.

Also, this study is a cross-sectional study, but the items taken under this study to measure the variables keeps on changing with the changing times. There is nothing stable in politics. So, a longitudinal study is the need which will record the changes over a period of time.

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