

A Study of Psephology and Election War Room Management

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ABSTRACT

Why people behave, the way they do? The term Psephology has emerged from Greek city states where two words, psephos meaning pebble and logy denoting a field of study were used (Indian today Magazine, July 2012). The aim of this research paper is to develop the theory and practice of psephology at both applied and academic levels. It will also inspire the scholars and practicers who chart the mainstream of electoral research, surveys, exit polls and strategies in the future. It has also been observed that the political culture of any country/group/community/individual might fundamentally differ from other one and another. There is no country in the world to-day which can boast of single uniform political culture. Almond and Verba have listed four ideal types of political culture namely, Parochial, Subject, Participant and Political Sub-culture.

*The modern history of academic voting research or psephology began in 1940 at Columbia University, where a team of social scientists assembled by **Paul Lazarsfeld** pioneered the application of survey research to the study of electoral behavior. Foreign scholars like David Elkins (1977), Myron Weiner (1965), Paul Brass (1993) and others have taken keen interest in studying electoral politics in India. B.D. Graham finds that Indian election studies have two kinds of theories:- (a) Enlightenment theory (b) Transactional theory (Graham:1975). This is measured through, Campaigning finance information and other related data, Public opinion poll, Election Campaign War Room management, Election Literature development and creation.*

Keywords: Psephology, Political Culture, Voting Bahviour, War Room, Election Management,

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Why people behave, the way they do? The term Psephology has emerged from Greek city states where two words, psephos meaning pebble and logy denoting a field of study were used (Indian today Magazine, July 2012). The aim of this research paper is to develop the theory and practice of psephology at both applied and academic levels. It will also inspire the scholars and practicers who chart the mainstream of electoral research, surveys, exit polls and strategies in the future. It has also been observed that the political culture of any country/group/community/individual might fundamentally differ from other one and another. There is no country in the world to-day which can boast of single uniform political culture. Almond and Verba have listed four ideal types of political culture namely, Parochial, Subject, Participant and Political Sub-culture.

The war room is a very important part of the election campaign. From war room the party and candidates in fray control all the activities of going on the constituency. They plan and review the strategy to carry out a successful campaign. An election war room contains of Computers, internet, data analyst, hardware and software engineers, along with well trained man power to operate it. They continuously monitor the activities of their clients as well as opponents. **There are three basic kinds of war rooms** in political campaigns. This is based on our experience, so it may differ for state or local races:

- i. Decision-making war room:** This is a set-up where you have the core decision-makers for a campaign working in one room or in close proximity. This allows the campaign to make decisions and act quickly when they see a threat or opportunity. This team monitors the election campaign very closely. The organization of man and material is main task that they handle. On the part of human resource, they coordinate with the team, assign daily task to volunteers, and receive direction from the senior leaders, coordinate with media, review the voter's mood etc. On part of material, this core team looks after fund raising, printing of banners, posters, handbills, press notes (prepared by media team), electronic and social media campaigns etc. The third major responsibility they can handle is preparing a list of candidates aspiring for the ticket (coordinate with the candidates if they have got the ticket).

- ii. Media-monitoring war room:** In a media-monitoring war room, you typically have a room of 8-12 intern-level staff watching, capturing and alerting to staff all media activity. This stream of information is typically followed by a dedicated member of the communications staff, often the Rapid Response team who then act to shape media coverage and the campaign message. This tram should be very efficient in handling of the media press releases, social media platforms like whatsapp, twitter, facebook etc. The

campaign information, manifesto and other publicity materials should reach to appropriate places and persons.

- iii. **Election-day war room:** On the day of voting, booth management is very important task. The action shifts to get-out-the-vote, and the center for monitoring this is the election-day war room. This is typically run by the Political Director of the campaign, and is composed of the regional political directors in charge of different swing regions. The goal here is to get an early sense of the votes and devote resources through Election Day in different directions as needed. Each constituency has vote targets, and meeting all targets is how you win. The commonality to all three is that they are essentially about information mobility. War rooms are catalysts for decision-making, and they do this by getting information to the people who need it in real time or by having the decision-makers convened to facilitate action.

There should be a very clear strategy to bring the voters to booth and cast the vote in their favour of their candidates. The volunteers should be placed in the residential area to request the voter to step out for polling station. Also there should be booth agents inside and outside the booth. However, during 'voters pull' to booth they should be very careful about the model code of conduct and electoral rules.

To run successful war rooms there are certain issues and technologies, that we need to adopt for election campaign. It means political engagement of the people and issues. Today more than 140 countries in the world are holding direct democratic elections. It has never been such a wide participation before. Therefore, sustaining the process of democratization is more challenging in the least developed and developing countries, which face pervasive poverty, multiethnic conflicts and social tensions between the powerful and powerless. Election managers thus continuously face formidable challenge to keep the electoral system functional and provide a level playing field for everyone and struggle to retain their autonomy and integrity. While the given political landscape is an important factor in any campaign, in many cases the most important factor- the difference between winning and losing – is what goes on inside the campaign

A. Loosing Campaign

Despite of making every efforts, there are some common mistakes that can make the election campaign a failure. They are as following:

- i. A campaign that does not have a persuasive message to deliver to voters and does not have a clear idea of which voters want to persuade. It worsens the campaign situation.

- ii. A campaign that has a concise, persuasive message and clear idea of which voters can persuade but lacks a reasonable plan of what to do between now and election day to persuade those voters. It results in to wastage of time, money and goes aimless.
- iii. That has a clear message; a clear idea of its voters and plan to get to Election Day but it fails to follow through on the plan, not doing the hard work day after day to get elected. Like lazy campaign and apathy towards the serious issues.
- iv. Unplanned election campaign causes loss of time, materials and money.

B. Winning Campaign

- i. Timing to target voters, through persuasive messages. There should be a clear plan to contact and reach out voters.
- ii. A political campaign is a communication process. Therefore, sending right message to right group of voters it necessary. We should keep sending the messages repeatedly. That is called campaign hammering.
- iii. Raising a well trained team of volunteers, who have a clear understanding of electoral rules, political conditions, constituency, demography, knowledge of ICT, Social Media campaigns etc.
- iv. Trying to outsmart the opposition in every way. Organize rally, road show, individual and community meetings, publicity materials should be used appropriately.
- v. Above all your candidate should be very hardworking, positive, enthusiastic and spontaneous. The candidate should be ready for every situation.

I. Steps of Campaign Planning

“More you Sweat in Preparation, less you bleed in war” (Sun – Tzu, The Art of War)

The campaign planning should be well organized and planned. There should be very clear roadmap to it:

- i. Conducting the research necessary to gather the required data, information, opinion and sources etc. The research survey helps to identify the issues, agenda, and 'political mood' of the voters and political proves of the ticket seeking individuals.
- ii. Setting a strategic campaign goal of how many votes are required to win. This calculation helps to have a realistic plan to reach to those voters, who are more likely vote for you.
- iii. Then we should analyze the voters, their characteristics and choices. After analyzing them thoroughly we can plan to target the voters for canvassing.
- iv. Next step is developing a campaign message. It should be unique, appealing and very clear.
- v. Develop a contact plan for the voters. It should be planned in such a way that maximum voters can be reached without troubling or bothering them. Use of multiple media ways are suggested for an effective reach out.
- vi. Once the above home work is done, it is the time to implement the plan. Here, we need to follow the idea of 'chain of command' and 'line of control' to assign the responsibilities amongst the volunteers. There should be no room for any confusion in functioning and hierarchical reporting within the team.
- vii. The campaign managers and all the key advisors should conduct a strategic planning meeting written campaign plan, agreed upon by the candidates.

Development of Strategy through Research

Every election campaign is different and unique. Therefore, we need to be careful of not repeating the same ideas, strategies, jargons and materials. However, certain basic principles can be applied to each campaign. It is important to have a complete understanding of the particular situation and condition in which a particular campaign war will be waged. Thus the pre preparation of strategy demands a great degree of research to develop a unique and unbeatable strategy. Some of the points to keep in mind while doing the strategy are as under:

- i. Understanding the type and gravity of election and its rules and procedures.

- ii. Gathering comprehensive knowledge of the Constituency, region, state or the nation. Here we need to focus upon the Actors, Factors, Issues, Dynamic as well as static factors.
- iii. Assessment of the Voters and their political culture (as suggested by Almond and Verba). It includes understanding the Identity, Economic, Cultural, Religious, Community dynamics etc.
- iv. A separate team should be assigned the job to study and analyse the past elections. It must focus upon the reasons of voting behaviour. Try to answer the question, 'Why the Voters cast or did not cast vote in your favour.'
- v. SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat) analysis of self and opponents must be done by a neutral person, agency or team.
- vi. Mobilization of Fund, Donours, Contributors for the campaign.

This job can be divided between the members of war room (core team). Who will complete their assigned task in a strictly time bound manner. The campaign research should be target based task. Without completion of this work, the team cannot go ahead to execute the campaign plan. For a smooth campaign research activity earlier laid down scientific methodologies should be adopted. Like political polling, focus group, interest groups, scientific survey etc. It is noticed that the Political Parties and Candidates are always apathetic in spending over the research activities. But it is sure that, spending thousands crores on a campaign strategy without research is like sailing the ship without direction. Hence, do not hesitate to spend on research based strategy generously.

A. Step wise Planning for Elections

1. Step One:

The DO's and Do NOT's rules of the research and development are elaborated in the following lines:

a. Rules :

Do not violate any of the electoral rules. Violation of any of the electoral or other rules like, Model Code of Conduct, Representation of People Act 1951, Indian Constitution, Civil Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code etc. your campaign might come to an abrupt end. Therefore, it is very important to know all the possible rule and guidelines. A good advisor can help you to follow the rules, while remaining politically correct.

b. Deadlines:

Missing the deadlines of violating some part of the law could end the campaign before it has ever begun. Thus always adhere to the time line. Even at the greatest cost.

c. Area:

Gather as much information as you can on the voters in a constituency. Prepare charts carefully. You can do a colour chart indicating Green, Yellow, Gray, Red sections of voters.

d. Voters information channels:

We have to understand that, how the voters get the information? You must find out the simple and widely accessible medium to the voters. We also need to develop a comprehensive Press strategy. For that detailed knowledge of media and behaviour in that area is required. Have a good and positive thinking media PR team.

Break the voters in a constituency into manageable groups. This will facilitate a better outreach. It should be noted that we must diligently obtain a certified copy of electoral roll from the office of election authorities only. Verify the accuracy of voter list. Find out the details of support systems of other parties/ opponents. Figure out the demographic composition of the voters on the lines of Income, Education, profession, Ethnic background, religious affiliations, age, gender and political personalities and dynamics of the constituency. Also look at the Urban – Semi Urban – Village profile of the voters.

A rational psephologist would always segregate and identify the party's loyal vote basket. Because, it's them who work as an established basic units during the election campaign. Likewise, the social characteristics (identities/caste) based vote baskets also have a fixed loyalty. Hence nothing can break them to the core. i.e. BSPs vote bank during its decline remaining intact.

Step 2: Setting a Goal:

- i. The second most important step is to set the goal. The war room team should figure out that, how many votes are required to win the election? And where from it will come? Following indicators may help them to do this: Population of the constituency, ii. Total number of voters in the constituency, iii. Expected voters turnout (based upon previous trends), iv. The number of votes required to win, v. Number of households/families in which these voters live.

i.e. if the voters turnout in last election was 62 percent in General Election and 65 per cent in regional elections; both combined will be 65 per cent in the upcoming election. (here the deaths, cancellations, out station and adding new names to list are to be considered) Since, elections are

complex in India; we need to consider it as a political referendum on the economic- social and administrative policies of the outgoing government. The voters check the accountability of the elected representatives. While contacting the voters, we must prefer contacting a member of household, rather than every member in family.

i.e. : Total population of the Constituency is : 100
Children population is : 25
Non registered/ dead/ out station : 5
Thus total number of voters to be contacted is : $100 - 25 - 5 = 70$

Polling percentage in last election : 62% (43.4 voted)
Winning Party received : 42 % (29.4 not voted)

Thus the actual targeted numbers of voters are : 43.4

Suppose each household in the constituency an average 3 votes:

$43.4/3 = 14.46$ (that's the exact number of households we need to target.)

If we persuade every 7 out of 10 voters, we will need to: $10/7 = 1.42$ voters should be assigned to each members of election team. Thus it is easier to talk to households than individuals.

Still one should not be under the impression that, every voter we talk with will be persuaded to vote for us. Therefore, while finalizing the list of our most possible and possible voters we need to keep at least 20 % extra households to materialize the target.

Step 3 - How to Target:

A. Classification of Voter:

Once it is decided how many votes we need to win, we start reasoning what makes the voters different from other voters who will not support your candidate. Break the votes in sub-sets:

- i. Your Voters
- ii. Reluctant voters
- iii. Fence Sitters
- iv. Opponents voters
- v. 'Spilt Vote' ' Shift Vote'

Mix the above groups into sub – sets and cross – sets. Along with the listing out the category of voters, we should also focus upon conservation of resources. The campaign resources can be utilized only if we have a clear plan about Time, Resources, People, and Money etc. Attempt to develop the campaign literature and message for everyone, is wastage. It results into persuading those people who will not vote for you. Rather we should try to identify those small groups that is likely to vote for your candidate, is a better strategy. This identification process should be balanced with the geographic and demographic considerations.

B. Manifesto and Promises:

Identify suitable message for each audience. The geographically as well as demographic factors must find a place in your manifestos. The party/ Candidate that promises everything to everybody has an empty message, which no voters will find credible or compelling. Thus the message needs to be focused on range of voters who can actually respond positively and vote. Thus, the list of promises and manifesto should give a practical image of your plan. It should have a concrete road map to materialize them, once voted to power.

STEP 4: DEVELOPING THE CAMPAIGN MESSAGE

Once you have decided who your target audience is, you need to decide what you will say to persuade them to vote for you. This is your campaign message. It tells the voters why you are running for this particular office and why they should choose you over your opponents for the same office. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well, once again, it is deceptively complicated.

For example, let us start off by saying what a message is not. A campaign message is not the candidate's program of what they will do if elected, it is not a list of the issues the candidate will address, and it is not a simple, catchy phrase or slogan. All of these things can be part of a campaign message, depending on whether or not they will persuade voters, but they should not be confused with the message, a simple statement that will be repeated over and over throughout the campaign to persuade your target voters.

II. Research Methodology (Survey Techniques)

Selection of sample is key to opinion poll accuracy. Therefore, this is one of the most important tool for a practicing psephologists. Renowned Mathematician and Psephologist Rajeeva Karandikar says that, '*Sampling technique known as 'Circular Systematic sampling is the best way to randomness of the sample'*' (Karandikar in Business line, 2014). In this method we first pick up the clusters (States in India).

We randomly pick up **every third state** from the list of states at any sequence. Then we can choose **every 5th constituency** from the list of constituencies in the state. This process is continued until we arrive at **a list of voters**. Indian society is a combined of identities and individualities. At times voting behavior is noticed to be the matter of the personal choice of the voter, in other cases they might act as a group/ community voters. The interplay of identity factors, such as the caste, religion, class, education, employment, rural, urban, governance, leadership; which influence the voting behavior pattern of the citizen.

As discussed above the set of predominant political culture of a community play vital role in determination of voters choice. Therefore, the researchers may also elicit cultural- moral reasoning experimentally by interviewing respondents in a public setting. As Chilton suggests, *'respondents could be asked to write persuasive appeals to other members of their culture. Or, respondents could be asked to study issues, meet in small groups, and decide as a group on the best argument for a course of action'* (**Chilton: 1984**). Respondents could be interviewed about the reasoning behind their choices in Prisoner's Dilemma games. Respondents could be interviewed about their moral reasoning in front of their peers. In general, political culture based reasoning is easier to study than private reasoning. After all, if a respondent alters his/her responses when in the company of others, this indicates something about the group's conduct of politics in other settings.

Survey research is used, *'to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context'* (Isaac & Michael, 1997, p. 136).

There are three main characteristics of survey research. First, survey research is used to quantitatively describe specific aspects of a given population. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for survey research are collected from people and are, therefore, subjective. Finally, survey research uses a selected portion of the population from which the findings can later be generalized back to the population (Kraemer, 1991: 1).

In survey research the dependent and independent variables are used to determine the scope of study. However, it cannot be completely controlled by researcher. Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) defined a survey as a *'means for gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people'* (p. 77). Surveys can also be used to assess needs, evaluate demand, and examine impact (Salant & Dillman, 1994: 2). The term survey instrument is often

used to distinguish the survey tool from the survey research that it is designed to support. Surveys are capable of gathering opinion based information from a large number of populations. Through the sample we can also know the demographic composition of the voters.

Here are some examples of documentary data that come from a wide range of sources including personal documents, oral histories, commentaries, diaries, letters, autobiographies, official published documents, state documents and records, official statistics, commercial or organizational documents, mass media outputs, newspapers and journals, maps, drawings, comics and photographs, fiction, non-fiction, academic output, journal articles and conference papers, lecture notes, critiques, research.

But the surveys can only provide a near estimation for the true voters, not the exact picture. Surveys also have limitations in the areas and matters where historical understanding is required. Lack of genuine response from the targeted respondent or accuracy (truthfulness) of the response can be a rational hurdle in generalization of the facts. Intentional misreporting, bias, hiding, over or underestimation of situation and political environment by respondents is also a great hurdle.

A. Survey Process

1. Survey Design

For an effective study, *'survey design a sampling plan must be developed'*. (Levy and Lemeshow, 1999: 6). It is a methodology that will be used to select the sample from the population. The sampling plan determines our approach to select the sample. Therefore, determination of adequate sample size and method of administration of survey along with time period are also important things to be considered. The survey can be administered through telephone, email, postal mail and face- to –face interviews.

Secondly, the method of accrue the sample data and reliability check must be established. It helps in identification of the required response rate and perfection. The survey design should have the inputs from those who will use the data and from those who are going to conduct it. *The data users should identify the variables to be measured, the estimates required, the reliability and validity needed to ensure the usefulness of the estimates, and any resource limitations that may exist pertaining to the conduct of the survey'* (Levy & Lemeshow, 1999: 6). If the surveyors come across any fact that requires to alter the plan, we should consider it positively. We should also take the help from statisticians to integrate the inputs, while developing a survey design within given resources. Following are the essential steps, that should be adhered to conduct a successful filed study:

i. Sample Selection

Sample selection depends on the population size, its homogeneity, the sample media and its cost of use, and the degree of precision required (Salant & Dillman, 199: 54). *The people*

selected to participate in the sample must be selected at random; they must have an equal (or known) chance of being selected (p. 13). It is necessary to select the sample of respondents as narrowly as possible. Still it remains a difficulty to identify the true population. This risk goes with the ability and knowledge of the scholar handling the survey.

ii. Sample Size

In such cases, Attewell and Rule suggested that *'a 2-1 theoretical sample may be used. Theoretical samples purposively select organizations that exhibit the desired features that are the focus of the researcher's study'* (Attewell and Rule, 199: 300). The sample size should be large enough to yield the desired results. Although the theoretical sample is not randomly selected, individual respondents from within that sample can be selected at random to achieve an approximate effect. Determination of sample size depends on five factors:

- Desired degree of precision
- Statistical power required
- Ability of the researcher to gain access to the study subjects
- Degree to which the population can be stratified
- Selection of the relevant units of analysis

iii. Degree of Precision

A survey is used to establish that a postulated effect exists in the sample. The significance level is the amount of *Type I* error that the researcher will allow in the study. Type I error occurs when the null hypothesis is rejected when it is, in fact, true. The second measure of precision is the confidence interval. A survey sample consists of data for which a mean and variance can be calculated. Confidence intervals can be constructed for each of these statistics, such that the researcher can state that he or she is, for example, *'95 percent confident'* that the corresponding statistic for the population falls within the specified range of the sample statistic. To gain an understanding of general attitude of the voters, a lower level of precision may be acceptable. In such case a smaller size of sample may be helpful. A smaller sample size may then be drawn. It is noted that, *'the researcher must ensure that the number of surveys distributed is sufficient to allow for no response and for unusable, illegible, and incomplete responses'* (Salant and Dillman, 1994: 57).

iv. Statistical Power

Statistical power is the probability that the researcher rejects the null hypothesis given that the alternate hypothesis is true (Attewell & Rule, 1991: 302). Where the null 2-2 hypothesis is erroneously accepted and the alternate hypothesis is true, a Type II error is said to exist. Statistical power is determined, in part, by effect size and sample size.

v. Effect Size as a Determinant of Power

As noted earlier, each random sample taken from a population has its own mean and variance. The distribution of means is the distribution of all possible means of samples that could be taken from the population. The distribution of means is the distribution given the null hypothesis. Effect size is a determinant of statistical power that helps us 'evaluate the overall importance of a result' (Aron & Aron, 1997: 137). In conducting a survey, a sample is taken from the population. The sample distribution, representing the alternate hypothesis, is compared to the distribution of means to determine whether the sample distribution differs significantly from that of the null hypothesis. The effect size is the extent to which the distributions of means for the null and alternate hypotheses do not overlap. A Determinant of Power distribution of means becomes narrower and the variance decreases. It reduces the overlap between the two distributions and increasing power.

vi. Access to Subjects

Reaching out to the desired subject depends upon the ability of the researcher. To mitigate the problem, we need to carefully look at the theoretical randomization of the stratified sample. The equilibrium of caste, religion, culture, issues, education, economic conditions, demography, technology etc. can help in for a better access to the subject.

vii. Stratification and Clustering

The fourth factor in determining sample size is whether the random sample can be stratified, for example, according to sector, size, or technology level (Attewell & Rule, 1991: 301). By using multiple levels to describe the technologies used in different organizations, for example, the researcher is able to statistically relate those differences in technology strata to differences (variances) in the impact of those technologies. Salant and Dillman (1994) noted, however, that the sample size must be increased when using stratified samples to maintain necessary precision (p. 57). Control and test groups are one example of stratified sampling.

viii. Units of Analysis

The last factor in sample size determination is the selection of appropriate units of analysis. The researcher must decide whether the respondents to a survey will be 2-3 individuals, offices, or entire firms (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993, p. 90). Attewell and Rule (1991) noted that workgroups may also be a useful unit of analysis.

After finalizing the research plan, we need to follow a mode of survey. It can be written, verbal or the mixed model survey. The questions for the survey should be good, ethical, comprehensive and well focused. The questions should not have any inherent bias.

B. Types of Survey Questions

Following can be the main types of questions:

- a. Open-ended Questions, Open-ended survey questions allow respondents to answer in their own words.
- b. Closed-ended Questions, Closed-ended questions may also be categorized as: (a) questions that describe and evaluate people, places, and events; (b) questions that measure responses to ideas, analyses, and proposals; and (c) questions that measure knowledge
- c. Multiple choice questions
- d. Questions that Describe and Evaluate People, Places and Events. This set of questions includes those that ask respondents to make self-assessments. The question should be carefully examined to ensure that it is not open to different interpretations (Fowler, 1995: 48).
- e. Questions that measures knowledge.

Biased Context

- a. General Characteristics bias
- b. Cognitive implications bias
- c. Facets of biased Context

Conclusion

Pephology is a very vast area of study. It is emerging as a theory that helps in making of elections strategy, understanding voter’s behaviour, war room management and public policy outcomes. Although the practice of independent psephology is a difficult task because it requires a huge amount of money and resources involved in its field studies. However, it has the potential to emerge as an independent discipline of study like Public Administration. On the other hand the war room management is a challenging team work. The data and strategy acquired through psephological studies should be used by the war room team to lead a winning election campaign. This paper did not cover some of the research methodologies, strategies and theoretical aspects due to the constraints of research paper. It shall be covered in detail with the upcoming book on this topic.

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