

Can Social Media Platforms Enable Co-Creation as a Tool in Political Marketing? The South Asian Context

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ABSTRACT

The role of social media as an enabling platform for co-creation in political marketing is a nascent terrain for the researchers nowadays. This study attempts to apply the proposed Political Co-Creation Framework through a convergent mixed method research design in the South Asian context that simultaneously gathers data through different modes. Based on the General Elections 2018 in Pakistan, the study provides a basis to examine how co-creation in political marketing through the platform of social media has revolutionized the way potential voters engage in the voting decision-making process. The findings of the study reveal that when citizens in a country confront with turmoil in the political system that tends to create social dissatisfaction and civil society integration that provides a basis for the actors (i.e., leaders and voters) to co-create through knowledge sharing and ultimately create a proactive system by promoting awareness and engagement among the citizens. Moreover, the findings also reveal that the co-creation process tends to create resilience from negative propaganda among the potential voters that strengthen their voting decision for their favored political party. It is noteworthy that up till now the political parties are indulged in the co-creation process unconsciously. So the most important implication of this study is to make the political parties aware of the potential to consciously use social media as an engaging platform to co-create that can prove to be a useful tool in political marketing.

Key Words: Social Media, Political Marketing, Co-Creation

Introduction

In recent years, there is a growing interest in the use of social media in the field of political marketing (Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Leclercq, Hammedi, & Poncin, 2016). Moreover, a plethora of literature is available that provides evidence relating to the power of social media in engaging, involving, and empowering voters (Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Harris & Lock, 2010). The best way to exemplify the adoption of social media in political marketing can be witnessed in Barak Obama's campaign in 2009 (Moufahim & Lim, 2009). Although in the past, the campaigners were already using such tools (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009; Seawright, 2005; Stanyer, 2005) however, the campaign in 2009 was incrementally better, that led Barak Obama to the White House. Still, to date, there is a lack of agreement as to whether the use of different social networking sites such as

Twitter, Facebook, and many more are effective means to draw voters attention and affect their decision-making process.

Interestingly, by considering voters as customers in the marketing perspective, the potential participation by such customers through social networks can work as powerful tools to create a closer relationship between the candidate and his supporters (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2010). Most importantly, Henneberg (1996) asserts that political marketing aims to 'establish, maintain, and enhance long-term voter relationships at a profit for society and political parties so that the objectives of the individual political actors and the organisations involved are met'.

Moreover, in order to attain long-term objectives, the political actors and organizations apply different marketing concepts and activities (Lees-Marshment, Conley, & Cosgrove, 2014). Such concepts include targeting, branding, internal political marketing, and many others (Kushwah, Shree, & Sagar, 2017). The marketing activities are further categorized into four main streams of political marketing. Such activities pertain to researching, strategising, organising, and communicating (Lees-Marshment et al., 2014). Most importantly, Langmaid (2012), and Lees-Marshment et al. (2014) proposed political co-creation framework as one of the researching technique in which voters identify, solve, and design the political product.

Furthermore, co-creation comprises of two-way communication between the political parties and the prospective voters (Kushwah et al., 2017). Such communication provides useful information to the political parties relating to the viewpoints held by the citizens not only on their current policies but also their expectations in the future.

Additionally, in the past, the concept of co-creation is studied in different disciplines such as branding (Hatch, 2012; Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010), retailing (Andreu, Sánchez, & Mele, 2010), innovation (Füller, Hutter, & Faullant, 2011; Füller & Matzler, 2007; Spohrer & Maglio, 2008), recovery management (Roggeveen, Tsiros, & Grewal, 2012), community (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), services (Vargo & Lusch, 2011), and many more. Moreover, co-creation has been studied with reference to various industries such as tourism (Cabiddu, Lui, & Piccoli, 2013; Eraqi, 2011), healthcare (Gill, White, & Cameron, 2011; McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, & Kasteren, 2012) and many more (co-creation article). However, most recently the significance of co-creation in political marketing or political science has been felt and is still underexplored (L. Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Kushwah et al., 2017; Leclercq et al., 2016). In their meta-analysis, Leclercq et al. (2016) suggest a research agenda that proposes to study the role of social media due to its current importance as an engagement platform for value co-creation in political marketing.

Therefore, this study tries to bridge the missing link by exploring how actors within a political ecosystem can co-create value using social media as an engagement platform.

Review of Literature

Politics and marketing

Politics and marketing are two distinct domains, and the link between the two fields is because the political parties desire to satisfy the needs and want of their potential voter's. Initially, Kelley (1956) and Rothschild (1978) used the concept of Political marketing. Fletcher (1997) claims that political marketing is the earliest form of marketing since inception and considered it as a domain of broader marketing discipline (Lees-Marshment, 2005; Newman & Sheth, 1985; O'Shaughnessy, 1990).

Political marketing refers to “the study of the processes of exchanges between political entities and their environment and among themselves, with particular reference to the positioning of those entities and their communications” (Lock & Harris, 1996, p. 28). Political science scholars and political parties have long had an interest in using marketing tools, and the use of marketing theories to examine non-commercial activities that provide a solid ground to political science scholars and politicians to achieve their political goals and connect with potential voters (L. Harris & Harrigan, 2015).

Moreover, in the past political parties and politicians used relationship marketing theories to establish, maintain, and enhance the enduring relationship with their potential voters, to generate profit for the whole society and political parties (Henneberg, 1996). That, in turn, supports to achieve the objectives of individual political actors and the organizations involved. Furthermore, political relationship marketing has the potential to stabilize the core support of the party by reducing the number of swing voters. While most interestingly now, the focus of relationship marketing is on the service-dominant logic (S-D). In the past, several theories attempt to explore the phenomena of relationship marketing such as goods-dominant logic. However, now the focus of relationship marketing has shifted from goods-dominant logic (G-D) to services-dominant logic (S-D) due to the inability of the former to explain the phenomena of relationship. For G-D logic, tangible output and discrete transactions were central, and completely ignored relationship. Whereas in the service-dominant view, “intangibility, exchange processes, and relationships are central” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2).

So to promote the exchange process and relationship between customer and company, S-D logic encourages customer participation in the creation process as a creator for co-creation. Endorsing co-creation in political relationship marketing would involve voters on an ongoing basis, not only during the election period; but by considering voters as stakeholders; and engaging voters in policies and thus creating ‘value’, thereby promoting a sense of political ownership (Dean & Croft, 2001; Henneberg & O'Shaughnessy, 2009).

Moreover, to ensure the ongoing involvement of potential voters with their respective political parties, it is essential to observe the connectivity through the popular engagement platforms. Nowadays the use of internet-based platforms has

grown substantially. For instance social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and many others serve as interaction and communication platforms. Such type of engagement platforms makes it easier to connect people across the globe.

Furthermore, in the past, various political parties used social media as the engagement platforms for political campaigns to assist in connecting with the voters (both existing and prospective) effectively. For instance the compelling campaign of Obama in 2009 that led him to the White House was facilitated by the use of social media as an engagement platform (Moufahim & Lim, 2009). Therefore, the use of social networking sites can be seen as essential tools for political marketing. Harris and Harrigan (2015) assert that social media can be used as an ideal tool to improve communication and collaboration among users such as voters and political parties. Moreover, Leclercq et al. (2016) argue that with the emergence of technologies in the form of social media platforms, new opportunities are available that can mobilize various actors in such platforms and assist in co-creation. However, there is a dearth in the literature that tries to examine co-creation processes through the social media platforms in political marketing (L. Harris & Harrigan, 2015; Kushwah et al., 2017; Leclercq et al., 2016).

Therefore, this study tries to bridge the gaps in the literature by linking value co-creation in political marketing through social media platforms. The next section provides the recent links available in the literature that poses further investigation.

Co-creation in Political Marketing

Leclercq et al. (2016, p. 5) define co-creation as

“A joint process during which value is reciprocally created for each actor (individuals, organizations, or networks). These actors engage in the process by interacting and exchanging their resources with one another. The interactions occur on an engagement interface where each actor share its resources, integrates the resources provided by others, and potentially develops new resources through a learning process”.

The definition above has three components, i.e., value, actors, and engagement platforms. The absence of any one of the three elements results in another concept such as co-destruction.

Most recently, co-creation has emerged as an increasing trend among political parties to connect and maintain long-term relationships with the public at a larger scale (Kushwah et al., 2017). The availability of information and communication technologies has paved the way for co-creation in politics. Moreover, political parties are practicing co-creation by generating values for all the actors involved;

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promote interaction and exchange of resources with the public through online engagement platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and many more. Furthermore, based upon the political co-creation framework proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017) the essential components of co-creation (i.e. value, actors and engagement platforms) are discussed below.

In order to establish the desired relationship, the political parties create experiential value for all the actors involved in the process. Experiential value covers all the aspects of value, i.e., the value in use, contextual value, and value-in-exchange. Political parties can create value-in-use by directly investing time, efforts, and money to resolve the problems of the general public (i.e., the potential voters). Moreover, political parties can also create contextual value through indirect investments, such as offering benefits to society. Both direct (value-in-use) and indirect (contextual value) investments, in turn, motivate individual electorates to vote for a particular party and reciprocally create value for all the actors (value-in-exchange). Therefore, in the domain of political marketing value-in-exchange is prevalent.

The primary objective of the political parties is to establish and maintain an enduring relationship with all the stakeholders such as individuals (potential voters), organizations (political party) or network (distribution channel of political party). In a marketing perspective, the researchers focus co-creation between the company and its customer. However, the proponents of political marketing consider voter and political parties as main stakeholders who co-create value. Both the voter and the political party might act as a lead user, full user or both. Lead users can interact and influence the other actors outside the engagement platforms without participating in the internal process. However, full users can communicate, act, and affect all the other actors inside and outside the process. So based upon the above discussion, it can be inferred that the actors in political marketing are full users.

Moreover, the Interactions to share knowledge or exchange resources occur through the engagement platforms that can be online or offline. The ease of communication technologies paves the way for online engagement platforms to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and many more. So political parties nowadays are social media as the engagement platforms to interact with potential voters and share information regarding party policies. Moreover, the online engagement platforms enable political parties to connect with a higher number of voters at once, maintain a long-distance relationship, and can quickly spread messages to people living apart cost-effectively. Therefore, the present study considers social media as an engagement platform for interaction and communication.

Adaption level of co-creation in political marketing

The voters' participation in political activities brings significant change to the existing political system of a country. The intensity of change in the political

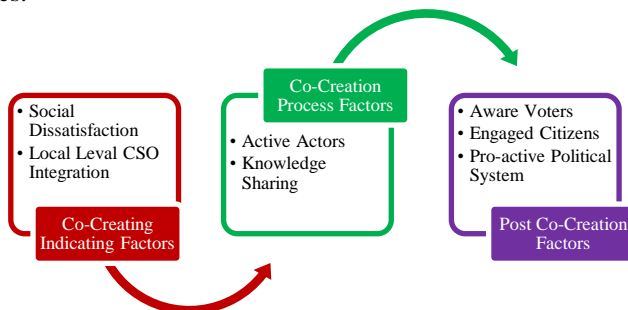
system can influence society, and the politics largely depend upon the level of co-creation adapted by the political parties. Kushwah et al. (2017) extracted four levels of co-creation from the conceptual framework of Kotler (2005) that are as follows:

- i. Slight participation of customers in any activity with the producer
- ii. Customer participation bring change in the existing practices of production and institutions
- iii. Customer participation change the prevailing methods of production and institutions altogether
- iv. The consumer takes the role of producer and gets involved in the economy.

In political marketing, four levels of co-creation (Kotler, 2005) were assessed based upon the voter's awareness and participation in the political system. The four levels of co-creation in political marketing are; (a) no co-creation, (b) co-creation forcing the existing parties to change, (c) co-creation by forming a new political party, and (d) co-creation changing the legislative framework (Kushwah et al., 2017).

Most recently, in their seminal study, Kushwah et al. (2017) assert that the first level voters are less likely to engage in the political framework due to a lack of awareness or inherent inflexibility of the existing political system. The second scenario is considered to be the most basic form of co-creation. In this level, voters are aware of their needs and have the freedom to voice their views and needs to the concerned authority. Political parties seriously take into account the voters' opinions in policy formulation.

The third level of co-creation takes place due to the enormous gap of trust between the existing political framework and voters. In this level, voters are not only aware of their needs but instead realize the importance to play the role of decision-makers to solve the current issues. The fourth and last level is known as the most extreme form of co-creation. Voters are not happy with the existing ruling method and demand a new governance system. In this situation, voters raise their voices using radical or violent movements against the prevailing ruling party. Such type of cases can be typically witnessed in anti-democratic, autocratic, and dictatorial rules.



Source: (Kushwah et al., 2017)
Figure 1 Process of political co-creation

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As in the past, political parties were using co-creation as a marketing tool unconsciously. However, most recently, co-creation has emerged as an essential marketing tool for political parties. Therefore, Kushwah et al. (2017) propose a conceptual framework of political co-creation. Figure 1 shows the proposed political co-creation model that illustrates the implementation of the co-creation process in politics.

However, the conscious implementation of this framework is still needed. So to further authenticate the political co-creation process, there is a need to apply the proposed framework in a different context. The reason for the absence of conscious application of the framework can be due to the lack of awareness among the political parties as to how fruitful political co-creation can be to attract potential voters. Therefore this study aims to apply the Framework of Political Co-creation in the context of the recent Elections 2018 held in Pakistan.

Framework of political co-creation

Kushwah et al. (2017) introduce a political co-creation framework that comprises of three phases, i.e., co-creation indicating factors, co-creation process, and post-co-creation factors.

Co-creation indicating factors

There are two co-creation indicating factors, i.e. Social dissatisfaction and local level Civil Society Organization (CSO) integration. These indicating factors drive the need for political co-creation. Proactive political organizations use these indicating factors as a signal and apply co-creation as a marketing tool.

Social dissatisfaction refers to the deprivation of resources either relative or absolute. In relative deprivation, citizens start comparing their living conditions with those who have better living standards that in turn creates negative behaviors such as aggression, disappointment and many such emotions. While, in absolute deprivation, citizens are dissatisfied due to their inability to meet their basic human requirements such as food, shelter. Absolute deprivation even leads the citizens to commit criminal offense so that to satisfy their primary needs. Empirical evidence suggests social dissatisfaction as one of the most significant reasons that lead to creating opposing behavior among the citizens and shift their expectations from political actors to another social actor. Proactive political organizations observe “shift in expectations” as a signal and should implement co-creation as a marketing tool.

Local level Civil Society Organization (CSO) Integration refers to the independent intermediaries between the state and general public. These intermediaries have no interest in politics and are instead fighting for a social cause, or justice. Due to social dissatisfaction, several CSO integrates to struggle for the rights of citizens. The emergence of social dissatisfaction among citizens,

and the integration of local level CSO to strive for the reduction of social discontent indicate the need for political parties to implement co-creation.

Co-creation process factors

The implementation of co-creation in politics as a marketing tool requires to recognize the active actors in the society, and continuous knowledge sharing or frequent interactions with citizens in a particular political context.

Actor actors are considered pivotal for the implementation of co-creation in a political framework. They act as leaders who can put forward their ideas, and generate enough support to shape and promote a particular agenda. Several communication tools are available that facilitate interaction between active actors and citizens for sharing ideas and gaining support for that specific idea such as social media or online communities like Facebook. Moreover, an active actor plays the role of a leader who shapes the agenda for a specific social campaign. However, in order to implement co-creation in politics in its real sense active actor and knowledge sharing should go hand in hand.

Knowledge sharing is the most critical element of the co-creation process as it facilitates dialogue. Dialogue refers to the connectivity or deep engagement of citizens with political actors. The continuous dialogues help to build trust among the actors that lead to transparency and openness among the parties. Moreover, the availability of communication technologies such as social networking sites acts as facilitators for knowledge sharing and dialogue among the citizens and active actors.

Post-co-creation factors

The successful identification and implementation of active actors, and continuous dialogue to interact and share information with the potential voters, in turn, creates aware citizens, engaged voters, and a pro-active political system.

Citizens are considered as the basic unit for the creation and success of a particular society. One of the most remarkable effects of the successful implementation of co-creation in a political context is the awareness of citizens. Enlightenment of the citizens makes them aware of the current issues in the society like health, education, poverty, inappropriate distribution of wealth and many more. Interestingly, aware citizens are not only informed about the current issues of society but can solve these issues using the existing legislation too. Resultantly, co-creation creates a positive impression among citizens about the existing political system due to their growing level of trust.

The frequent interaction between citizens and political parties through engagement platforms broaden the scope of the common good and turns potential voters into engaged voters. Committed voters are more concerned about the well-being of the whole society rather than mere individual benefits. Moreover,

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engaged/committed voters carefully review political parties manifesto and policies of various political parties.

An active political system comprises of aware citizens and engaged voters who mutually support each other to run an efficient political system. Evidence suggests that only those political parties sustain in a competitive political environment who implement the co-creation process (Cañas, 2014).

Kushwah et al. (2017) argue that political parties unconsciously employ co-creation. Moreover, they propose political co-creation framework to create awareness among citizens, and foster voters engagement. The proposed political co-creation framework is capable of being applied and observed in any context. Therefore, the current study attempts to confirm and endorse the political co-creation framework in the current political environment in Pakistan. The political system in Pakistan has always faced turmoil due to several military coups. These series of events created social dissatisfaction among the public.

Moreover, in the past, many incidents indicate the military interventions in the political systems and stern reprimands led the civil activists to fight back to bring the political system in its true democratic spirit (Society, 2004). However, even after the resumption of democracy, displeasure is still witnessed among the citizens and many social activists (Kronstadt & Kumar, 2014). Therefore, the present study fits best in the framework suggested by Kushwah et al. (2017) with the prevalence of social dissatisfaction and integration of civil society that leads to the indication of co-creation factors.

In their study, Kushwah, Shree, and Sagar (2017) examined the cases of three political parties from countries such as Spain, Philippines and West Germany. Similar inferences drawn by their study can be witnessed in the South Asian Context such as Pakistan. Since a decade the slogans (such as, are “Tabdeeli” which means “Change” and “Naya Pakistan” which means “New Pakistan”) introduced by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) that made the party popular and consequently led the party to win the General Elections 2018. Moreover, for many decades in Pakistan, there were only two leading parties who took turns by assuming power and forming governments. Therefore, this new party PTI propagated slogans of ‘change’ and ‘new Pakistan’ through social media and mobilized the citizens to break the status quo. Furthermore, such social media sites became a platform for the voters that allowed them to provide a voice to their aspirations and become critical actors in co-creation for bringing change in the existing political system of Pakistan. Interestingly, with the introduction of such platforms by PTI the other parties were also compelled to change, and as a response, they created their social media platforms.

Co-creation, resilience to negative information and intent to vote

While considering the applicability of the political co-creation framework, there is a need to explore the driving forces behind voter decision making (Dean & Croft, 2001). Therefore, the current study not only intends to apply the framework but

also tries to examine the impact of customer/voters participation as a co-creator using online engagement platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter) on their intention to vote for a particular political party. In marketing perspectives, customer participation in the creation process makes them more prone to dismiss any negative information relating to their preferred company or brand (Khan & Qazi, 2018; Qazi & Ali, 2017). Applying this concept in political marketing, we can infer that potential voters' who are involved in the creation process as co-creators tend to defend their preferred political party against any negative publicity that in turn influences their voting decision. Thus, we hypothesize;

H₁: Voters co-creation behavior affects intent to vote through the mediation of resilience to negative information.

Methods

Research design

The purpose of this mixed method approach is to explore the role of social media as an enabler of the co-creation process as a marketing tool used by political parties. This study will use one of the most popular mixed methods designs: Convergent design proposed by Creswell (2014), that consists of two distinct phases of data collection, i.e., qualitative and quantitative simultaneously.

Purpose

The reason to choose a mixed method is to observe the prevalence of co-creation in politics through social media platforms. The first phase of data collection involves the observation of the theoretical framework of co-creation in political marketing as suggested by Kushwah et al. (2017). Moreover, such observations are taken from a social networking site such as Facebook, as an engagement platform that political parties use to interact and co-create with the potential voters (Leclercq et al., 2016). Furthermore, in order to cross-validate the prevalence of co-creation in politics, the second phase collects data from potential voters to understand the role of engagement platform (such as Facebook) in voting decision using a close-ended questionnaire. The reason to use Facebook is due to its popularity as an engagement platform amongst the political parties and the potential users, i.e. voters.

First phase

Procedure

Observations of different posts shared on the official Facebook pages of three leading political parties along with their respective leaders/actors were taken. Facebook is the most popular social networking in Pakistan as compared to platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and many others. That is why political parties used Facebook pages to interact with the voters. Political parties used

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Facebook pages to share daily activities, press releases, party agenda, party perspectives about current political, societal, and economic issues. The current study aimed to observe the content shared by political parties on Facebook pages; frequency of daily posts; and the time taken by the party to show reaction towards the current issues.

Moreover, the present study observed the voters' reactions and response to the activities performed by political parties through their official Facebook pages of the three leading parties and their respective leaders. The observations include the reactions of the potential voters in the form of their comments and other reactions. So the first phase of data collection comprised of exploring and categorizing the voters' reactions on the posts shared; differentiated voters' actions and reactions on different posts and to evaluate whether the voters show more reaction towards a positive post or a negative perspective. Based on the categorization, voters' reactions were recorded in the form of, the number of counts that were further analyzed.

Furthermore, political parties share contents like documents, images, and videos that involve comparison with other parties, and with their performance during the ruling era. In response to such type of content shared by the political parties, voters also shared self-generated contents (co-create) to compare their preferred political parties with the other competing political parties. Therefore, the researchers observed the frequency with which political parties and their voters mutually share and react the contents on the official Facebook pages.

The period to observe contents on the Facebook page comprised of one month before the General Elections 2018 were due in Pakistan. The reason for observing before the elections were since the political campaigns by the parties was at their peak, and the parties were using their Facebook pages to share information. The observations include information generating through the interaction between the engagement platform of various political parties and their respective followers/voters. The reason for gathering such observations is to collect information shared by the actors (political parties and leaders) and users (voters) through the co-creation process. Such observations include posts, comments, videos, pictures and polls that have been created by the users/voters in response to the original posts shared by the political parties and their respective leaders/actors.

Second phase

Participants and procedures

The population of the study consists of 104,267,581 potential voters for General Election 2018 in Pakistan. Out of the total potential voters, 57.29% (59,740,095) belong from different provinces such as, Punjab, 21.16% (22,066,558) Sindh, 14.61% (15,239,571) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and only 4.02% (4,194,311) belong to Baluchistan. The remaining 2.52% of the potential voters belong to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (2.20%) and Federal Capital (0.07%).

Since the population of this study was known, so the sample size was calculated using the available online free calculator with a 95% confidence level, and 5% margin of error suggested by Hulley, Cummings, Browner, Grady, and Newman (2001). In light of this technique, a sample size of 384 respondents is appropriate for data collection in the second phase.

Three hundred eighty-four questionnaires were administered using a Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique. Out of 384 surveys, 219 (approx. 57%) delivered to potential voters' in Punjab, 81 (approx. 21%) in Sindh, 58 (approx. 15%) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 15 (4.02%) of Baluchistan, and only 11 (2.20%) were distributed in FATA (9) and Federal Capital (2). Out of the distributed questionnaires, only 250 were returned with a response rate of 65%. After initial screening, only 230 were considered usable for further analysis.

Measures

A 20-item scale was used to collect data in the second phase. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from different sources. For instance, potential voters' intention to vote was measured on a six-item scale developed by Sharma and Parma (2016). The respondents were required to rate their disagreement or agreement with the statement on a Five-point Likert scale. Moreover, a three-item scale was adapted to observe voters resilience against negative information from

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2007) on Five Point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used.

Furthermore, to observe voters' co-creation behavior using Facebook an 11-item scale is adapted. The instrument was designed using Yi and Gong (2013) 13-item customer value co-creation behavior scale. Respondents were requested to rate their responses using a Five-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always).

Data analysis

The data gathered in Phase I was summarized by using stacked clustered bar charts to display the number of times/counts the posts were co-created by the voters in response to the original posts shared by the political parties and their respective leaders/actors. While in Phase II, SPSS 22.0, and Smart PLS-SEM were used to perform the data analysis. Here SPSS 22.0 was used for the data entry, and Smart PLS-SEM 3.2 was employed to examine the proposed hypothesis.

Instrument reliability and validity in phase-II

The overall calculated value of Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha=0.930$) shows that reliability is established. Moreover, for assessing the convergent validity Algorithm technique is applied through Smart PLS. Algorithm procedure calculates Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The value of AVE and CR should be higher than 0.50, and 0.70 (Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Moreover, the value of AVE should not be less than 0.40 as recommended by Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000). Table 1 below

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indicates that the convergent validity is established as the value of AVE, and CR falls within the range of the acceptable region. After calculating convergent validity, discriminant validity was tested to confirm that each construct in the model measures a different concept. Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) and Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) recommend using a heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) for assessing discriminant validity rather than Fornell and Larcker (1981) technique. So Table 1 below also shows the discriminant validity.

Table 1
Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Sr. No	Constructs	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1	Co-Creation	0.859	0.400			
2	Intention to Vote	0.781	0.400	0.692		
3	Resilience to Negative Information	0.787	0.553	0.439	0.516	

Results
Phase I

The results of the observations relating to the various types of information shared by the political parties and their leaders and the nature of co-creation are displayed through the clustered stacked bar charts below.

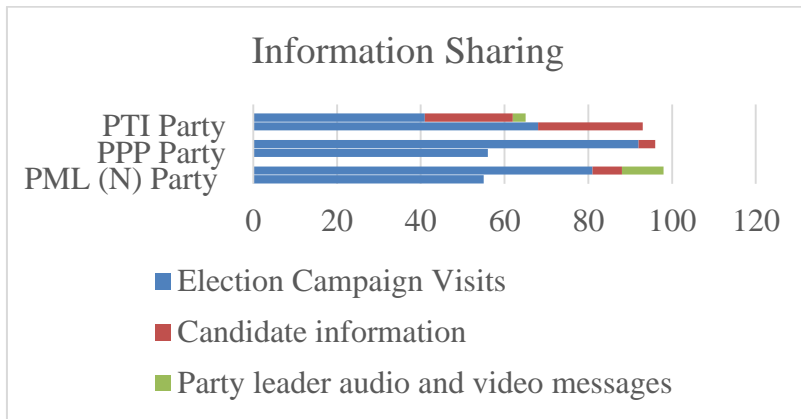


Figure 2 Information shared by Political parties and its actors/leader

Figure 2 above shows the information shared by the political parties and their respective leaders on their official Facebook pages. The pages of the political parties mostly share information relating to the visits of the leaders of the political parties during the elections campaign. Moreover, PTI Facebook pages shared more information about the contesting candidates as compared to PPP and PMLN parties. Lastly, only two parties, i.e. PTI and PMLN shared video and audio messages of their leaders.

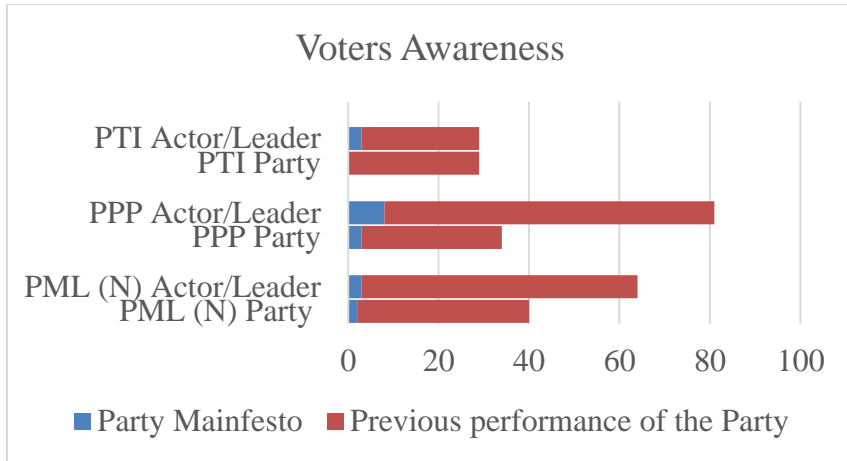


Figure 3 Voters Awareness

Figure 3 above shows the information shared by the political parties and their respective leaders through their official Facebook pages that relate to creating awareness among the voters relating to their future party manifesto and previous performance of the party in government. The results reveal that all the parties displayed their previous performance for making their voters aware.

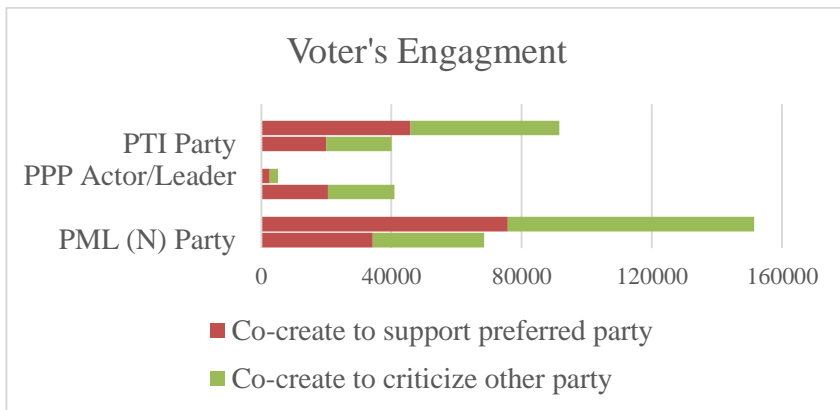


Figure 4 Voters Engagement

Figure 4 above shows that the voters were more engaged in the official pages of the leaders except for PPP party leader, by sharing posts, comments, videos and pictures etc. Moreover, the voters were mostly engaged in criticizing the other parties and were relatively less engaged in supporting the preferred party.

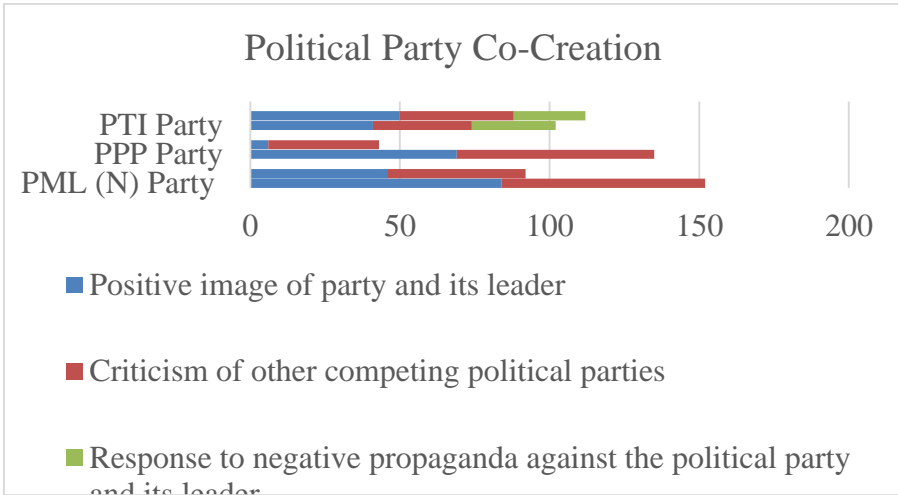


Figure 5 Political Party Co-Creation

Figure 5 above shows that followers of the two parties (PPP and PMLN) are engaged in sharing posts to highlight the positive image of the party and criticizing their opponent parties and their leaders. However, only the followers of one party, i.e. PTI apart from sharing posts about positive image and criticism of other parties are also engaged in sharing posts in response to negative propaganda against their favored political party and their respective leader. This engagement highlights how the followers/voters create resilience against negative information and show their loyalty to their respective party and leader. Such resilience is not observed in the posts shared by the followers/voters as a response by the followers of other parties.

The results of the above figures identify the active actors that are the political parties, leaders and the followers/voters that can be attributed to the co-creation process proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017). Moreover, the figures also identify the types of knowledge sharing by the parties and their leaders. The post-co-creation factors can also be observed from the above figures that identify posts relating to the awareness of followers/voters. Furthermore, the results also reveal that the followers/voters are engaged in sharing information by displaying a positive image, criticism against opposition parties and resilience to negative information. Therefore, through the results in Phase I, it can be inferred that the framework proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017) is applicable in the context of Pakistan's political system and has created a proactive political environment in the country.

Phase II
Model fitness

PLS-Algorithm procedure calculates Standardize Root Mean Square (SRMR) to assess model fitness. The value of SRMR ranges from zero to one, and less than

0.08 considered as perfect fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). The calculated value of *SRMR* for the current study is 0.08 that indicate ideal model fit.

Hypothesis testing

The current study applies *PLS-Bootstrapping* procedure to evaluate the proposed hypothesis. The *PLS-bootstrapping* procedure is a non-parametric procedure to calculate path coefficients, *t-value* and significance of direct and indirect effects. *Figure 6* below shows the model extracted through the *PLS-Bootstrapping* procedure to examine the proposed hypothesis.

The *PLS* model indicates that both voters co-creation behavior and resilience to negative information have a positive and highly significant impact on electorates intention to vote ($\beta=0.493, p=0.000<0.01$; $\beta=0.183, p=0.004<0.01$). Moreover, the positive and highly significant effect of voters' co-creation behavior on resilience to negative information confirms the findings of Khan and Qazi (2018); Qazi and Ali (2017). Resultantly, the potential voters' willingness to support the preferred political party against any negative publicity positively influence their intention to vote.

Furthermore, the calculated value of the indirect effect ($\beta=0.06, p=0.01<0.05$) shows that voters involvement in the co-creation process through Facebook positively influence their intention to vote through the mediation of resilience to negative information.

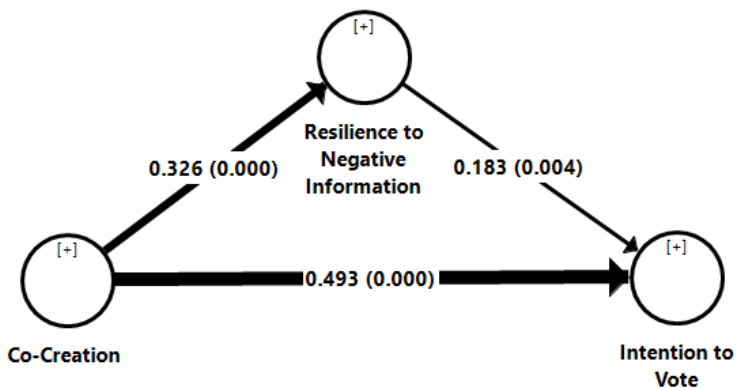


Figure 6 PLS-SEM Model

Predictive accuracy

Researchers suggest calculating the coefficient of determination, i.e., R^2 . The value of R^2 refers to the amount of combined variance as explained by exogenous variable into an endogenous variable. In the current study, endogenous variables, i.e., resilience to negative information and intent to vote have a value of R^2 0.106, and 0.335. In addition to the R^2 values, PLS-SEM also calculates the value of

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Stone-Geisser Q^2 to cross-validate the predictive relevance of individual endogenous variables (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Table 2 below discusses the predictive accuracy (R^2) and cross-validated predictive relevance (Q^2) for the structural model. The value of Q^2 for resilience to negative information and intent to vote is 0.053, and 0.111 respectively. Since the values of Q^2 are > 0 , so this establishes the predictive relevance of the structural model.

Table 2
Results of R^2 and Q^2

Constructs	R^2	Q^2	Effect Size*
Intention to Vote	0.335	0.111	Small
Resilience to Negative Information	0.106	0.053	Small

*Small Effect Size: $0.00 < Q^2$ effect size < 0.15 ;

Medium Effect Size: $0.15 < Q^2$ effect size < 0.35 ;

Large Effect Size: Q^2 effect size > 0.35

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to apply the Political co-creation framework proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017). Although, the concept of co-creation and its application in various industries (e.g., Hatch, 2012; Merz et al., 2009; Tynan et al., 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2011) and discipline (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Eraqi, 2011; Gill et al., 2011) are already available. There are few studies (Langmaid, 2012) that apply the concept of co-creation in political marketing. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study examines the role of social media platforms as enablers of the co-creation process as a tool in political marketing. The mixed method approach not only indicates the prevalence of co-creation factors and actors but also reveals the mechanism that can influence the voter's decision making.

The social dissatisfaction and civil society integration prevailing in the present political system of Pakistan (Kronstadt & Kumar, 2014) indicates as the factors of co-creation proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017) as the first stage. Moreover, the results of Phase I indicates the subsequent stages of both co-creation process factors and the post-co-creation factors. Furthermore, with the rapid increase in the use of social media, the potential voters become aware and participate more in the political system. At this stage, co-creation plays an active role. Such an active role leads to influence the existing political parties while taking a decision, forming a new political party or entirely transforming the political framework. Such a transformation in the political framework creates pro-active political organizations that involve the citizens and subsequently get popular. Therefore, this study can identify all the stages of political co-creation framework (Kushwah et al., 2017). We can infer from the findings that if a political party is pro-active, it can understand the signs of co-creation and can accordingly portray their

product/agenda as per the requirements of the citizens/voters thus can sustain the competition.

The current study is also able to identify the factors in the co-creation process that includes active actors (such as political parties, their respective leaders and followers/voters), and knowledge sharing (such as candidate information, election campaign visits and audio/video messages of political leaders). The results also reveal that the political parties cannot only determine the need for co-creation and are also able to function by involving active actors in the political parties, and knowledge sharing. Lastly, the results also identify the post-co-creation factors that include aware citizen, engaged voters, and pro-active political system. It is noteworthy that the results reveal 'resilience to negative information' as another post-co-creation factor that can be added in the existing political co-creation framework proposed by Kushwah et al. (2017).

To cross-validate, the findings of Phase I, a survey using a structured questionnaire was conducted in Phase II. The questionnaires were administered to the potential voters. The findings of the conceptual model reveal that the voters perceive social media as an engagement platform to share their political viewpoints that leads to co-creation. Moreover, this, in turn, creates resilience among them to keep on supporting their preferred political party and subsequently influence their voting decision making intentions.

Therefore, the findings of the mixed method approach not only helps to validate the application of the political co-creation framework (Kushwah et al., 2017) in the South Asian Context but also validates that co-creation can substantially affect the voter's decision making intentions.

Additionally, this study was able to apply the political co-creation framework in a situation where political parties are unconsciously involved in the co-creation. However, the present study implicates to consider co-creation as a conscious tool of marketing that can be adopted by the political parties. Moreover, the growing use of social media as an engagement platform can be considered as a powerful platform for political parties to design their official web pages that can induce potential voters to vote.

Limitations and future directions

Although this study can apply the political co-creation framework introduced by Kushwah et al. (2017), still it is not free from limitations. Firstly, the results of the study are limited to a South Asian context. Secondly, the second phase of data collection involved a small sample size. So the future studies can testify the relationships with a big sample.

The findings of the present study provide a basis to investigate the use of social media for political marketing further. Moreover, future studies should further validate the role of social media as an enabler of co-creation that can create resilience among the potential voters and resultantly trigger their voting intentions. Furthermore, the present study proposes to assess further the prevalence of

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resilience as an outcome of co-creation among the potential voters that tend to influence their voting decision. Additionally, such a study requires cross validations in other contexts and environments.

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