

From Emotion to Ballot: Using Your Emotional Intelligence to Vote Smarter

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Abstract

Emotional voting is when political decisions are made on sentiments rather than logical thinking and objective assessment of policies or candidates. Voting is often driven by personal values, identity, fears, or hopes rather than careful deliberation. Emotions such as anger, fear, optimism, or loyalty can significantly influence voting behavior. While emotional voting fosters passionate political involvement and strong attachment to candidates or causes, it has shortcomings. Decisions based on emotions can be uninformed, biased, and overly simplistic, potentially harming individuals and society.

This research paper explores the impact of emotions on voting and underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in democratic societies. Voters should critically evaluate political issues, seek reliable information, and consider the implications of their choices. While emotions can inform politics, they should be balanced with reason to make informed decisions at the ballot box.

Keywords: Emotions, Voting, Political Strategies, Emotional VoteBank, Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

The election season that kicked off on April 19, marking the start of the world's largest electoral exercise. About 970 million people will decide the leadership of the world's most populous nation. Hundreds of political parties and numerous independent candidates are vying for votes. Media is thriving, with people glued to podcasts, debates, and heated discussions. Social media, now a dominant force, heavily influences voters by emotional appeal.

“Mai Bharat Hoon” song inspires voters to be architects of modern India, emphasizing their duty and right to vote, regardless of status, class, religion, caste, location, language, or gender. The song features 18 celebrity singers performing in Hindi and regional languages, with lyrics and music by Subhash Ghai, in collaboration with Whistling Woods International School of Music.

The Election Commission of India proudly presents this video song to inspire every voter to exercise their right and duty to VOTE FOR INDIA.

In democratic societies, it is vital that citizens critically engage with political issues, search for credible facts and reflect upon the possible results of their decisions. Emotions can shape political views but this must be mixed with logic in order to make voting decisions. The effects of emotional voting are involved and cannot be easily characterized as purely positive or negative depending on a number of factors and viewpoints.

Psephology, a branch of political science, involves the statistical analysis of elections and polls using tools like historical voting data and opinion polls. Psephologists rely on scientific, data-driven methods to ensure

comprehensive and accurate analyses. The psephologist have time and again sense the effect of emotions on clicking the button on the ballot.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as emotional quotient (EQ), is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively.

This kind of intelligence has to do with the ability to recognize, understand, control or use one's emotions efficiently in oneself and others.

Emotional Vote Bank

Political parties often utilize emotions strategically to appeal to specific voter demographics and secure their support.

Fear-based messaging: Parties may leverage fear to mobilize support by highlighting potential threats or dangers posed by opposing parties or policies. For instance, emphasizing the risks of economic instability, national security threats, or social unrest can evoke fear and prompt voters to rally behind a party that promises safety and security.

Hope and optimism: Conversely, political parties may use messages of hope and optimism to inspire confidence and enthusiasm among voters. By promising positive change, progress, and a brighter future, parties aim to evoke feelings of optimism and motivate voters to support their agenda.

Identity politics: Parties often appeal to voters' identities, including factors such as ethnicity, religion, language, or cultural background, to forge emotional connections and secure their allegiance. By framing political issues in terms of identity-based grievances or aspirations, parties can rally support from specific demographic groups.

Anger and resentment: Parties may stoke feelings of anger or resentment among voters by highlighting perceived injustices, inequalities, or grievances. By tapping into public frustration or dissatisfaction with the status quo, parties can channel these emotions into support for their political agenda or candidates.

Empathy and compassion: Some parties emphasize empathy and compassion in their messaging to demonstrate understanding and concern for the struggles and hardships faced by ordinary citizens. By showcasing empathy for marginalized or disadvantaged groups, parties seek to build trust and solidarity with voters who feel marginalized or overlooked by mainstream politics.

Patriotism and national pride: Parties often appeal to voters' sense of patriotism and national pride by emphasizing themes of national unity, sovereignty, and pride in national achievements. By invoking symbols of patriotism and celebrating national identity, parties can foster emotional connections and rally support for their agenda.

Emotional Intelligence and Vote bank

Emotional intelligence and emotional vote banking are closely tied in terms of political behavior and electoral strategies.

Political decision-making involves using emotions intelligently. High EI enables individuals to manage emotions while voting, integrating rational analysis for informed decisions. By promoting reflective and deliberative political engagement, EI helps mitigate the drawbacks of emotional voting, making it invaluable for informed electoral choices.

Politicians and campaign strategists with high emotional intelligence can better understand the emotional drivers of their constituents. This understanding helps them craft messages that resonate on an emotional level, effectively building an emotional vote bank.

The Emotions That Make You Decide to Vote- Case Study

A very interesting study was conducted by **Costas Panagopoulos**, an American professor of political science at Northeastern University in Boston, PhD in politics from New York University in 2005, that yielded how emotions play a vital role in voting.

Voting is a philanthropical act where individuals invest their time for the collective good without guaranteed personal reward. Despite its perception as a civic duty many refrain to cast their vote

In a study, Panagopoulos sent postcards to voters before elections in New York and New Jersey, with messages either encouraging voting or thanking them for previous voting. The results showed that those receiving gratitude postcards voted 2-3% more than the control group, while those receiving reminders voted slightly more. This effect was consistent across all voter groups, including infrequent voters like Latinos and single women.

In the following Georgia primary, Panagopoulos found that voters who received a generic thank-you postcard were more likely to vote than those receiving specific thanks or simple reminders. This confirms that **gratitude boosts voter turnout**.

Studies show that guilt, shame, and social pressure can increase voting. One study found that people who received information about their past voting behavior were more likely to vote. Another showed that people are more likely to vote if they know others close to them are voting, with this behavior spreading through social networks.

HE cautions against using emotional tactics, especially negative ones, to manipulate voters for specific campaigns. His goal is to understand what stimulates political engagement, not to provide strategies for campaigns. While there's evidence that appealing to people's natures can boost voting, much research is needed, particularly on engaging habitual non-voters.

Panagopoulos stresses the importance of governments and organizations in promoting voter participation to strengthen democracy. "**Society must recognize and show gratitude for political engagement, as democracy thrives with higher citizen participation**," he says.

History of Emotional Voting in India

The history of emotional voting in India is rich and complex, intertwined with the country's diverse socio-cultural fabric, political landscape, and historical events.

Pre-Independence Era:

Subhash Chandra Bose urged India's youth to join the freedom struggle, using the emotional slogan, "Tum Mujhe Khoon Do, Mai Tumhe Azadi Dunga," inspiring thousands to sacrifice for the motherland

Nationalism and Independence Movement: Emotions such as patriotism, pride, and solidarity played a significant role in mobilizing the masses during India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule.

Leadership Cults: Emotional attachment to charismatic leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose influenced voting behavior and political affiliations.

Post-Independence Period:

Identity Politics: Emotions associated with caste, religion, and language often shaped voting patterns, leading to the emergence of identity-based political movements and parties.

Regionalism: Regional sentiments and grievances gave rise to regional political parties, reflecting local aspirations and emotional ties to linguistic or cultural identities.

Socio-economic Issues: Emotional responses to poverty, inequality, and social justice issues influenced support for political parties promising welfare policies and development initiatives.

Modern Era:

Personality Politics: Emotional connections to political leaders, their charisma, and promises often overshadow ideological considerations in voting decisions.

Media Influence: Emotional narratives and sensationalism in media coverage impact voter perceptions and choices, especially during elections.

Appeals: Politicians often exploit emotions like fear, anger, and hope to sway public opinion and garner electoral support.

Social media: Digital platforms amplify emotional messaging, enabling real-time interaction and mobilization of voters based on shared sentiments.

Recent Trends:

Increasingly, voters are considering policy issues, governance, and performance alongside emotional factors in their electoral decisions.

Urbanization and youth empowerment are reshaping voting patterns, with younger voters often prioritizing issues like employment, education, and environmental sustainability over traditional emotional appeals.

Global Emotional Votebank

Emotional voting, or the influence of emotions on electoral choices, is not unique to India but is observed across various countries worldwide. Here's a brief overview of its history in other nations:

United States:

Emotional factors have contributed to polls.

- **Loyalty :** Emotional appeals, such as patriotism and loyalty to revolutionary ideals, influenced early American elections.
- **Civil War:** Emotions related to regional identity, slavery, and Reconstruction policies shaped voting patterns.
- **Mass media and Celebrity Culture:** The rise of mass media and celebrity politicians further amplifies emotional appeals in American politics.

United Kingdom:

Emotional factors have influenced the polling activity.

- **Historical Context:** Emotional factors like loyalty to monarchy, nationalism, and colonialism influenced early British elections.
- **Labour Movement:** Emotional appeals to class solidarity and workers' rights played a significant role in the rise of the Labour Party.
- **Brexit:** The Brexit referendum highlighted divisions driven by emotions such as nationalism, immigration fears, and nostalgia for a bygone era.

Brazil:**Use of emotional appeal**

- Identity Politics: Emotional appeals to nationalism, social justice, and cultural identity have been central to Brazilian politics.
- Leadership Fads: Charismatic leaders like Getúlio Vargas and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva garnered emotional support from their followers.
- Economic Volatility: Emotions related to poverty, inequality, and corruption often influence voting choices.

France:**Use of emotions as loyalty**

- Revolutionary Period: Emotions like revolutionary activist and nationalism influenced voting during the French Revolution.
- Napoleonic Era: Loyalty to Napoleon and aspirations for glory influenced electoral outcomes.
- Modern Politics: Emotions surrounding issues like immigration, national identity, and economic inequality continue to shape voting behavior.

South Africa:**Emotions used to showcase anger and rebel nature**

- Apartheid Politics: Emotions related to racial identity, liberation struggle, and reconciliation influenced voting during and after apartheid.
- Post-Apartheid Politics: Emotional appeals to reconciliation, social justice, and empowerment have shaped voting patterns in democratic South Africa.

In summary, emotional voting is a global phenomenon shaped by historical legacies, cultural contexts, and contemporary issues, highlighting the complexities of democratic participation across different countries.

Challenges and Opportunities:

While emotional appeals are integral to democracy, there's a need to balance emotional appeal with rational address and critical decision-making. This requires head over heart and rational thinking rather than heart rolled on sleeves and blinded by emotions.

The need of the hour is to -

- Promote civic education and critical thinking can empower voters to make decision.
- Check on Mass media, social media, and celebrity culture amplify emotional messaging in politics as at it does on the expense of substantive debate.
- Leaders often exploit emotions like fear, anger, and resentment to mobilize support. Hence separation of emotions and influence while voting is critical.
- Encouraging informed and rational voting decisions alongside emotional engagement is crucial for healthy democracies.

Conclusion

When u need to make a decision don't let your emotions vote – Joyce Meyer

Using emotions in voting can effectively increase turnout. Positive emotions like gratitude and pride can motivate voters. Emotional appeals should promote participation for the greater good, not manipulate outcomes for specific campaigns.

Emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional voting are closely linked in political behavior and decision-making. Political leaders should harness the power of emotions with authenticity and empathy to build trust. Voters should cultivate emotional intelligence for clearer, more resilient, and critical engagement in politics.

While emotions are a natural part of human decision-making, relying solely on them in the voting process can lead to biased or uninformed choices. Emotional voting may overlook important policy issues or lead to support for candidates who may not have the best qualifications or intentions.

However, emotions can also play a positive role in the voting process by motivating individuals to engage with political issues, mobilize for social change, or advocate for causes they feel passionately about. Ultimately, striking a balance between emotional engagement and rational analysis can lead to more informed and meaningful voting decisions.

In conclusion, the interplay of emotional intelligence and emotional voting highlights the complexity of political behavior. Enhancing emotional intelligence is crucial for more informed and balanced democratic participation.

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