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Research Article

Media Technologies and Celebrity Culture: The Personalization of Political Communication

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Abstract

The growing visibility of celebrity culture in contemporary politics has changed the way political leadership is presented, communicated and understood. In an environment shaped by continuous media exposure and increasingly powerful digital platforms, politicians are no longer represented only through formal speeches, party programmes, parliamentary work or conventional news coverage. They are also presented through carefully designed images, personal narratives, visual performances, social-media posts, interviews and other forms of popular communication. This study examines this wider process as the celebrityization of politics. It focuses particularly on the relationship between mediatization, digital media, celebrity culture and the personalization of political leadership.

The study distinguishes celebrityization from the simple entry of celebrities into politics. Its concern is with politicians who adopt the styles, techniques and communicative resources associated with celebrity culture in order to build recognition, popularity and political influence. The discussion brings together the concepts of mediation, mediatization, media logic, political logic, deep mediatization, network media logic and mediated political persona. It also examines the major artefacts of celebrity culture, including branding, visual style, emotional communication, controlled self-disclosure, and the public-private divide and audience identification.

Using a qualitative case-study approach, the study examines Narendra Modi in the Indian context. Particular attention is given to his use of visual symbolism, rhetoric, social media, public interactions, personal narratives and carefully managed performances. The study argues that contemporary politics increasingly operates through a combination of political substance and mediated performance. Digital media have not simply increased political visibility, but they have also changed the conditions under which political personas are produced, circulated and interpreted. The result is a form of politics in which leadership is increasingly experienced through the language of personality, popularity, intimacy, branding and spectacle.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper studies this process through the concept of the celebritization of politics. The central argument is not that politicians simply become famous. Rather, celebritization describes a broader transformation in which political communication begins to draw upon the techniques and expectations of celebrity culture. A politician may deliberately cultivate an image, develop a recognizable style, use emotionally powerful narratives, reveal selected aspects of private life, interact directly with followers and encourage the circulation of highly visual content. These practices can make political leaders appear simultaneously exceptional and familiar.

The distinction between celebritization and celebrity in politics is therefore important. John Street's influential distinction between CP1 and CP2 provides a useful starting point. CP1 refers to politicians who use the resources and conventions of popular culture to strengthen their political careers, while CP2 refers to well-known figures from popular culture who enter formal politics. This dissertation is primarily concerned with the first category. The focus is on political actors who use celebrity culture rather than on entertainers who become politicians.

The phenomenon has developed alongside the changing media environment. Television played an important role in bringing political leaders into people's homes and increasing the importance of appearance and performance. The internet and digital media intensified this process by allowing political actors to communicate directly with audiences. Social media has taken the development even further by making political communication more immediate, visual, interactive and personal. The politician can now function as both political actor and media producer.

The significance of this development becomes clearer when viewed through the concept of mediatization. Mediation describes a condition in which media become major channels of communication between political actors and citizens. Mediatization, by contrast, describes a longer and more dynamic process in which media increasingly influence the organization of social and political life. In this sense, politics does not simply pass through media; political actors gradually adapt their behaviour, presentation and routines to the conditions created by media.

The literature on celebrity politics has developed across political science, media studies, cultural studies, political communication and celebrity studies. Scholars such as Street, Corner, Pels, Marsh, Wheeler, Wood, Couldry, Drake, Higgins and others have examined celebrity politicians, political style, representation, performance and audience responses. Yet these areas of scholarship often remain divided into separate conversations. The present study attempts to connect them through the broader idea of celebritization.

A further concern is the democratic significance of celebrity politics. Critics argue that celebrity culture may encourage style over substance, reduce political discussion to personalities and marginalize expertise. Others argue that celebrity

communication can make politics more accessible, mobilize people who are otherwise disengaged, and allow political issues to reach audiences beyond traditional political circles. The consequences are therefore not automatically positive or negative. They depend on political context, media structure, audience response and the specific form of celebrity culture being used.

The study consequently focuses on Narendra Modi as a case through which these processes can be examined. The purpose is not simply to describe his popularity. Instead, the case study asks how his political persona is mediated and how elements associated with celebrity culture contribute to that persona. John Corner's model of mediated persona is particularly useful because it directs attention to iconic, vocal and kinetic dimensions of political performance as well as to the relationship between political, public and private spheres.

Research problem

Existing scholarship provides important classifications of celebrity politicians, discussions of celebrity and democracy, analyses of audience responses, and explanations for the increasing personalization of political communication. However, the literature remains somewhat dispersed across the study of mediatization, celebrity culture, political branding, digital communication, populism and political performance. The concept of celebritization can provide a broader framework through which these connected developments can be understood.

A second problem concerns the frequent use of terms such as celebrity, celebrification and celebritization without always maintaining a clear distinction between them. There is a difference between an already famous person entering politics, a politician becoming famous, and the transformation of political communication through the adoption of celebrity practices. Clarifying these distinctions is essential for a precise analysis.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim is to explain the celebritization of politics by connecting the concepts of celebrity culture, mediatization, digital media and political personalization, with particular attention to the Indian context and the case of Narendra Modi.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the meaning and major dimensions of mediatization and examine its relationship with the celebritization of politics.
2. To examine the contribution of digital and social media to the construction of celebrity-like political personae.
3. To identify the principal practices and artefacts of celebrity culture that are adopted in political communication.
4. To apply these ideas to the Indian context through a qualitative case study of Narendra Modi.

Research Questions

1. How does mediatization influence the construction of a celebrity-like political persona?
2. What role do digital and social media play in the personalization and celebritization of political communication?
3. Which practices of celebrity culture are adopted by political actors to construct popularity, intimacy and symbolic authority?

3. METHODOLOGY

The study follows a qualitative research approach. A case-study method is used to examine the process of celebritization through the political persona of Narendra Modi. The analysis draws primarily on secondary academic literature, books, journal articles and relevant media material. Publicly available content from social-media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, is considered in relation to the construction of political imagery and communication.

The social-media material includes photographs, short videos, reels and textual posts. These materials are read through qualitative content analysis, with attention to recurring symbols, narratives, styles, forms of self-presentation and interactions. Digital sources such as podcasts, online news reports and political interviews are also considered where they illuminate the research questions.

The study is interpretive rather than statistical. It does not claim that every citizen receives or interprets political messages in the same way. Instead, it identifies recurring patterns in political presentation and considers how those patterns can be understood through the theoretical concepts developed in the dissertation.

Significance

The study is situated at the intersection of Political Science, Usage of the Media technologies, Political Communication and Celebrity Studies. Its contribution lies in bringing together concepts that are often examined separately. By connecting mediatization with celebrity culture and political personalization, the study offers a more integrated understanding of why contemporary political leadership is increasingly communicated through images, emotions, performance and branding.

Limitations

The study is limited by time, access to academic literature and the nature of qualitative interpretation. It examines one political leader and therefore cannot claim universal generalization. The study also does not cover all related questions, such as voter psychology, post-truth politics, digital democracy or fandom in a systematic manner. Interpretive analysis can involve researcher bias, and the meaning of social-media content may differ across audiences.

Mediation, Mediatization and the Role of Digital Media Technologies in Transforming Politics

The relationship between media and politics has become one of the central questions in contemporary political communication. Political parties need media to circulate programmes, policies and campaign messages, while media organizations require political information to sustain their news cycles. This mutual dependence creates a relationship that can be cooperative at one moment and conflictual at another. The concepts of mediation and mediatization help explain this relationship.

Mediation and Mediatization

Mediation refers to a condition in which media function as major channels through which political information and communication travel. Citizens depend on media for knowledge about political events, while politicians use media to communicate with citizens and to understand public demands. Mediation therefore describes the centrality of media within a communication environment.

The common point in these approaches is that mediatization cannot be reduced to individual media effects. It is a systemic transformation. Media become embedded in the everyday practices of institutions and individuals. Politics therefore changes not simply because people receive different messages, but because political actors increasingly organize their activities with media visibility in mind.

Schulz's Four Processes

Schulz (2004) identifies four processes that help explain the transformative character of mediatization: extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation.

Extension refers to the ability of media to expand human communicative capacities. Digital platforms allow messages to cross geographical boundaries almost instantly. Livestreaming, video calls, messaging services and social media can connect people who are physically distant. In politics, this means that a political leader can address citizens far beyond the location of a meeting.

Substitution occurs when media replace or alter activities that were previously conducted through other forms. Political meetings, for example, can be supplemented or partly replaced by online events. Traditional campaign communication can be accompanied by digital broadcasts, online advertising and social-media interaction.

Amalgamation describes the growing overlap between media activity and everyday life. Media are no longer experienced as a separate sphere. Political information may appear while a person is travelling, eating, working or communicating with friends. Social media especially blur the distinction between private conversation, entertainment, news and political communication.

Accommodation refers to the adaptation of non-media institutions to the requirements of media. Political actors increasingly consider timing, visual presentation, newsworthiness, shareability and audience attention when designing their activities. Politics therefore becomes more responsive to the organizational requirements of media systems.

Media logic and Political logic

The concept of media logic is central to understanding mediatization. Altheide and Snow's formulation, discussed by Stromback (2008), directs attention to the forms and formats through which media organize communication. Presentation style, narrative structure, visualization and selection all influence what becomes visible.

Political communication may therefore be shaped by techniques such as personalization, polarization, dramatization, visualization and intensification. These techniques are useful for capturing attention, but they can also shift attention away from institutions and policies toward individuals and events.

Political logic refers to the requirements of political decision-making and representation. It involves both policy and process: political actors must formulate responses to collective problems and obtain legitimate support for those responses. Mediatization creates tension because political logic may require complexity, deliberation and continuity, while media logic often rewards immediacy, conflict, simplicity and novelty.

Stromback's Four Phases of Mediatization

Stromback's four-phase model provides a useful framework for understanding the increasing influence of media on politics.

The first phase begins when media become the most important channels connecting citizens with political actors and institutions. Political actors begin to recognize that media representations can affect public perceptions and therefore take media into account when communicating.

In the second phase, media gain greater autonomy. Journalistic professionalization and commercialization increase, and media organizations exercise greater control over which messages become news. Political actors consequently develop public-relations and news-management skills.

The third phase is characterized by an even stronger position for media. Political actors become highly dependent on media visibility and increasingly adapt their activities to media formats and expectations. Political communication becomes more personalized and conflict-oriented because these forms are particularly suitable for media storytelling.

In the fourth phase, media logic becomes deeply internalized within politics. Political actors do not merely adapt to media requirements; they incorporate them into their own routines. Campaigning can become permanent, and the distinction between governing and campaigning becomes less clear. Political communication is organized around continuous public visibility and attention.

Critiques of a Single-Media logic

The four-phase model is influential, but it should not be treated as a complete description of every media environment. Downey and Neyazi (2014) challenge the idea that media and political logic exist in a simple zero-sum relationship. They argue that political, commercial and professional interests can operate simultaneously.

Digital media and Deep Mediatization

The internet has changed the conditions of political communication. Hepp (2020) identifies three broad waves of mediatization: mechanization, electrification and digitalization. Printing technologies represent the first wave; radio and television characterize the second; digitalization represents the current phase.

Digitalization is particularly significant because media have become increasingly data-driven and software-based. Couldry and Hepp's concept of deep mediatization describes a situation in which social life is deeply connected with digital media and their infrastructures. People no longer live with one dominant medium. Instead, they operate within a media manifold consisting of multiple interconnected platforms.

Digital media provide political actors with new possibilities for networking, collaboration, message production and direct communication. They also allow audiences to select content according to their preferences. Broadcasting becomes increasingly narrowcast as people choose what to follow and share. The old idea of a single mass audience becomes less useful because audiences are fragmented into networks and communities.

Network Media logic

Klinger and Svensson's concept of network media logic is useful here. Network media logic includes user-generated content, decentralized distribution, interactivity, personalized exposure, virality and the connection between traditional and digital media. Users can consume, modify, comment upon and reproduce political messages.

The idea of "producible" captures this dual role. Users are simultaneously producers and consumers of content. Political communication can therefore move through networks in unpredictable ways. A speech may be transformed into a meme; a photograph may become a short video; a political statement may be edited and circulated by supporters or opponents.

Social media and the informalization of politics

Social media have contributed strongly to the informalization of political communication. Features such as commenting, sharing, livestreaming, direct messaging and personal profiles create the possibility of a more conversational political style. Politicians can appear less formal and more accessible.

The resulting relationship can be described as parasocial quasi-intimacy. Followers may feel close to a political leader because they see personal photographs, receive frequent updates and observe apparently spontaneous interactions. Yet the relationship remains structurally unequal: the audience sees only what is made visible, and the politician remains a public figure.

This creates an important paradox. The political leader is expected to appear extraordinary enough to command authority while also being ordinary enough to appear relatable. John Street's idea of "cool politics" captures part of this movement toward informality and style. The political actor attempts to appear contemporary, accessible and culturally familiar.

From Mediatization to the Mediated Political Persona

Mediatization changes the political persona because public visibility increasingly depends on performance. Political leaders are judged not only by policies but also by how they look, speak, move, interact and present themselves.

Corner (2003) provides a useful model of mediated persona. He identifies three components: iconic, vocal and kinetic mediation. The iconic dimension involves images and symbolic presentation. The vocal dimension concerns speech, language, rhetoric and the style of political address. The kinetic dimension concerns action and interaction: what political leaders do and how they appear to interact with others.

Corner's three spheres of action further develop this argument. The first is the sphere of political institutions and processes, where political careers and official responsibilities are located. The second is the public and popular sphere, where visibility, reputation and public support are constructed. The third is the private sphere, including family, biography, leisure and personal life.

The key point is that political celebrity is not created through one isolated event. It is produced through repeated mediation, continuous visibility and the interaction of political activity with media practices. This provides the conceptual bridge between mediatization and celebritization.

The Artefacts of Celebrity Culture and Political Performance

The transformation of politics into a more personalized and celebrity-oriented activity cannot be understood without examining the cultural practices that make celebrity recognizable. Celebrity culture is not simply about fame. It involves recognizable forms of presentation, emotional connection, branding, visibility and audience identification. Political actors increasingly use these forms to make themselves distinctive.

Politics as Marketing and Performance

John Street (2003) connects the language of political marketing to economic theories of democracy. Schumpeter's model of democracy draws an analogy between political competition and market competition. Politicians compete for votes in a manner that can resemble businesses competing for consumers. Political parties therefore increasingly use research, advertising, branding and image management.

The more revealing comparison may be with show business. Political communication involves not only the promotion of policies but also the presentation of people and performances. P. David Marshall's work on celebrity and power is useful here because celebrity relationships are strongly affective. Political parties also attempt to give shape to the feelings and aspirations of large groups of people.

Major Artefacts of Celebrity Culture

Celebrity culture contains several recurring features that become politically useful.

First is the relationship between immanence and transcendence. Celebrities are presented as exceptional people, but they must also remain recognizable to ordinary audiences. Political celebrities similarly need to demonstrate distinction while maintaining a connection with everyday life.

Second is the public-private duality. Audiences often want access to the personal side of public figures. Political leaders can use carefully selected private information to humanize themselves. Family photographs, informal conversations and personal stories can make the leader appear more approachable.

Third is split identity. A politician may simultaneously perform the roles of national leader, ordinary citizen, family member, cultural personality and social-media personality. These identities do not necessarily conflict; they can reinforce each other.

Fourth is emotional and affective engagement. Celebrity culture depends heavily on admiration, identification and emotional attachment. Political communication can similarly seek to create feelings of pride, trust, affection or belonging.

Fifth is technological mediation. Celebrity exists through media circulation. In contemporary politics, digital platforms have multiplied the number of spaces through which political identity can be performed and repeated.

Seventh is identification. Audiences may support a political leader because they feel that the leader represents something about themselves, their community or their aspirations. The leader therefore becomes a symbolic point around which collective emotions can be organized.

Driessens: Celebritization and Celebrification

Driessens makes an important distinction between celebritization and celebrification. Celebritization refers to broader changes in society and institutions produced by the influence of celebrity culture. Celebrification refers more specifically to the transformation of an individual into a celebrity-like figure.

Celebrity Politics and Democracy

The democratic meaning of celebrity politics remains contested. One argument is that celebrity culture weakens democratic representation because it privileges style over substance. Neil Postman and other critics have warned about the tendency of political communication to become entertainment. If political competition is reduced to popularity, appearance and personality, complex questions of policy and institutional responsibility may receive less attention.

Another perspective is more positive. Corner and Pels argue that the restyling of politics need not automatically mean the disappearance of civic values. Street similarly suggests that celebrity politicians can be understood as part of the changing nature of political representation. Marsh and colleagues point to the possibility that celebrities can reach people who are otherwise disengaged and can provide visibility to marginalized concerns.

These competing arguments suggest that celebrity politics should not be evaluated through a simple binary. The important

questions concern who gains visibility, what kind of issues are communicated, how audiences respond, and whether celebrity attention complements or replaces substantive political engagement.

Citizens and Audiences

The role of audiences is central. Couldry and Markham (2007) caution against treating public reactions to celebrity politics as uniform. Their research found positive, negative and mixed responses to celebrity culture. Their findings also challenged the assumption that celebrity narratives automatically mobilize politically disengaged people.

Inthorn and Street (2011), studying young first-time voters, found that some respondents considered celebrities more authentic or trustworthy than conventional politicians because media exposure gave them a sense of familiarity. Yet traditional ideas about political leadership continued to influence perceptions of who was suitable for office.

Style, Branding and Authenticity

The growing importance of style is central to political celebrity. Street (2019) emphasizes the need to examine not only the political role of a celebrity politician but also the kind of celebrity being performed. Media narratives shape how this performance is understood.

Political branding similarly involves the active management of identity. Surya and Jha (2021) emphasize attributes such as credibility, impression management, positive identity and issue ownership. Digital media allow political actors to maintain direct and continuous relationships with audiences beyond formal party organizations.

The concept of authenticity is particularly interesting. Celebrity politicians may deliberately present themselves as ordinary. They may appear in informal clothing, use conversational language, share personal stories or interact with ordinary citizens. These performances are not necessarily spontaneous. They may be carefully designed precisely because appearing spontaneous has become politically valuable.

Celebrity Style and the Political Body

Political celebrity also draws attention to the body. Clothing, gestures, facial expressions, physical presence and speech delivery become meaningful elements of political communication. This is especially visible in visual media, where a political leader's appearance may circulate independently of the original political event.

This performative dimension helps explain why celebrity culture has become relevant to politics. Political leadership is not only a matter of making decisions; it is also a matter of appearing as the kind of person who should make those decisions.

The Indian Context

These themes become particularly visible in India, where politics has increasingly incorporated social-media campaigns, memes, livestreams, celebrity endorsements, podcasts and

personalized political branding. The overlap between political and entertainment culture can be seen in politicians' interactions with film personalities, their participation in informal media programmes and the attention given to their personal styles.

The significance of these developments is not merely cosmetic. They show that the political field is increasingly organized around visibility and personality. In a media environment where attention is scarce, a distinctive personal image can become a political asset.

Celebritization of Indian Politics — A Case Study of Narendra Modi

Indian politics provides a particularly rich context for studying celebritization. Political communication has always contained symbolic and performative elements, but the contemporary media environment has expanded their reach. Television, twenty-four-hour news, internet platforms and social media have created a political environment in which leaders are continuously visible.

Trends in Indian Political Celebritization

One visible trend is the widespread use of official social-media accounts by political leaders and political parties. MPs, MLAs and party organizations maintain profiles across major platforms. National parties also operate multiple accounts designed for particular states and audiences. Political communication is therefore no longer concentrated in a few central channels.

A second trend is the transformation of election campaigning. Since the 2010s, election communication has increasingly involved social-media campaigns, memes, narrative competition, celebrity endorsements, large-scale visual advertising and continuous coverage of major campaigners. Political leaders can become larger-than-life figures through repeated exposure across multiple platforms.

The third trend is the growth of podcasts and informal political conversations. Politicians increasingly appear on programmes that combine politics with discussions of culture, technology, sport, business and everyday life. Such formats encourage a more conversational presentation and can make political leaders appear less distant.

The fourth trend concerns political fashion and style. Newspapers and digital publications increasingly report on the clothing and appearance of political leaders in ways similar to coverage of film celebrities. Clothing can become part of a leader's public identity and can communicate ideas about tradition, modernity, regional culture or global sophistication.

The fifth and particularly important trend is the circulation of short videos, reels, memes and fan-created content. Social-media algorithms encourage repeated exposure to highly engaging material. Political leaders may therefore become recognizable through particular gestures, speeches, styles, jokes or symbolic moments that circulate independently of the original event.

Digital Advertising and Political Communication: Political-Celebrity Relations

Another significant development is the interaction between politicians and celebrities. Research cited in the dissertation indicates a substantial volume of interaction between politicians and celebrities on social media. Such relationships can benefit political actors by connecting them with established fan communities and extending their visibility beyond conventional political audiences.

Narendra Modi: The Mediated Celebrity-like Persona

Narendra Modi provides a particularly useful case for examining these processes. The purpose of the case study is not to measure his popularity or make a general judgment about his leadership. Rather, it is to identify how his political persona is constructed through the forms of mediation described by Corner.

Iconic Mediation

Corner's iconic dimension concerns symbolic and visual presentation. Modi's political communication contains extensive use of carefully composed images, large public events, national symbols, development projects and visually striking settings.

The dissertation's source material discusses his 2023 visit to Lakshadweep as an example of a highly choreographed visual performance that combined political leadership with tourism promotion. The G20 presidency and related public imagery similarly generated opportunities for visual branding. Large displays, photographs and social-media circulation helped associate national achievement with the political persona of the Prime Minister.

Images of infrastructure and development also contribute to this symbolic construction. Photographs of the Prime Minister at major infrastructure sites can communicate competence, strength, technological progress and national ambition without requiring a long explanation. Visual framing therefore becomes a political language in itself.

At the same time, iconic mediation is not limited to images of strength. Modi's communication also includes scenes of interaction with ordinary citizens, children, workers and members of the armed forces. These images create a different but complementary dimension: the leader appears powerful but approachable.

The Vocal Dimension

The second component of Corner's model is vocal mediation. Political speeches are not only collections of policy statements; the language, rhythm, repetition and manner of address also construct political identity.

The dissertation examines Modi's Independence Day address of 2024 as an example. The repeated invocation of "Bharat Mata ki Jai" connects political communication with nationalist symbolism. The use of terms such as "deshvasiyan" and "mitron" allows the speech to move between two positions: that

of a national leader addressing citizens and that of an ordinary person addressing friends.

The speech also connects policy initiatives with a personal narrative of national transformation. References to programmes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission and Vocal for Local present the leader as a reformer and development-oriented figure. The language of "Viksit Bharat" and "Nation First" reinforces the image of a leader whose political identity is tied to national transformation.

The Kinetic Dimension

The third component is kinetic mediation, which concerns political action and interaction. A leader's movement between major official duties and ordinary public encounters can create a powerful sense of accessibility.

Modi's public communication frequently moves between high politics and low politics. High politics includes international summits, diplomatic meetings and major governmental events. Low politics includes interactions with children, workers, ordinary citizens and members of the armed forces.

This is particularly visible in social-media content because photographs and short videos can isolate small interactions and circulate them independently. A handshake, a conversation with a child or a moment of humour can become a symbolic representation of the leader's personality.

Parasocial Quasi-intimacy

The repeated circulation of such moments can create what Corner and Pels describe as parasocial quasi-intimacy. Followers may feel that they know the political leader because they regularly see personal or informal images. The leader appears accessible, even though the relationship remains mediated and one-directional in important respects.

Initiatives such as Chai Pe Charcha and Pariksha Pe Charcha can also be read through this framework. They create spaces in which political communication is presented as conversation. Chai Pe Charcha connects political discussion with an everyday cultural practice, while Pariksha Pe Charcha creates a setting in which the Prime Minister addresses school students in a relatively informal manner.

Spheres of Action

Corner's three spheres of action help bring the case together.

The institutional sphere includes Modi's formal political career and achievements. His tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat and later as Prime Minister forms the institutional background of the persona. Political achievements provide the substantive foundation from which the public image is constructed.

The public and popular sphere is where the persona is most visibly performed. Here, slogans, visual symbols, social-media posts, public events, clothing, speeches and interactions all contribute to the image. The use of the name "NaMo", distinctive clothing and recognizable visual styles can be understood as elements of political branding.

The private sphere supplies biographical information that can be incorporated into the public narrative. The story of Modi's

early life and his association with a humble background can support a narrative of self-made political success. At the same time, private information can become a source of controversy when it enters public circulation.

Branding and Style

Political branding is particularly important in understanding the Modi case. The persona is associated with recognizable symbols, slogans, clothing styles, visual compositions and narratives of development and national strength.

The clothing discussed in the source material—such as kurtas, jackets and shawls—has often been treated by media as part of the leader's recognizable style. Such attention demonstrates how political appearance can become part of popular culture. Style is no longer merely an incidental feature of political communication; it can become a resource through which identity is communicated.

Celebrity Culture and the Strongman Image

The case-study also illustrates how celebrity culture can overlap with strongman politics. Reels and fan-created videos may emphasize crowd reactions, dramatic entrances, international encounters and highly symbolic moments. Repetition can intensify the image of exceptional leadership.

The role of algorithms is important here. Social-media platforms reward content that attracts attention and engagement. Dramatic, emotional or visually striking political moments may therefore circulate more easily than complex policy discussions. This can reinforce personalization because the individual leader is often easier to package into short visual content than an institution or policy process.

The Modi case consequently illustrates the wider argument of the dissertation: celebritization is not simply about a politician becoming famous. It is about the transformation of political communication into a continuous process of image production, performance, emotional connection and symbolic circulation.

4. CONCLUSION

The study began with a simple but important observation: contemporary political communication is increasingly inseparable from media. Over the course of the dissertation, this observation was developed through the concepts of mediation, mediatization, media logic, digitalization, celebrity culture and mediated political persona.

Mediation describes the condition in which media become central channels between citizens and political actors. Mediatization goes further by describing a continuing transformation in which media increasingly shape political institutions, practices and understandings. Schulz's processes of extension, substitution, amalgamation and accommodation demonstrate the different ways in which media become embedded in social life. Stromback's four phases further explain how political systems may move from dependence on mediated communication toward deeper internalization of media logic.

At the same time, the study has shown that media logic should not be treated as a single, universal force. Downey and Neyazi's critique are useful because media institutions contain competing political, commercial and professional interests. Digital media make this complexity even more visible. Social-media platforms allow decentralized communication, user-generated content and direct interaction, but algorithms, engagement metrics and platform infrastructures create new forms of organization and control.

Deep mediatization has therefore changed the conditions under which political personas are produced. The political actor is no longer simply represented by journalists. Politicians can create and distribute their own images, while supporters and opponents can reproduce, remix and reinterpret those images. The resulting political persona is constructed through a continuous cycle of production and circulation.

Celebrity culture provides an important language for this new political environment. Branding, visual style, emotional communication, personal storytelling, controlled disclosure and audience identification are increasingly relevant to political communication. These practices can make political figures appear more accessible and can help them reach audiences beyond traditional political spaces. At the same time, they may encourage an excessive focus on personalities, appearance and spectacle.

The distinction between celebritization and celebrification is therefore especially useful. Celebrification concerns the transformation of an individual into a celebrity-like figure, while celebritization refers to the wider transformation of political and social life under the influence of celebrity culture. The former can be observed in a political leader's branding and performance; the latter can be seen in the broader restyling of political communication.

The Indian context demonstrates how these processes operate in a particularly vivid manner. Political communication increasingly involves social-media accounts, digital advertising, memes, reels, podcasts, celebrity associations, personal branding and attention to political style. Elections are no longer confined to physical rallies, newspaper advertisements and television debates. They are also fought through digital narratives and continuous image production.

The case study of Narendra Modi illustrates the process through Corner's framework of iconic, vocal and kinetic mediation and the three spheres of political, public and private action. Visual representations can associate the leader with development, national achievement and strength. Speeches can combine formal authority with conversational language. Public interactions can produce an image of accessibility and ordinariness. Biographical narratives can be incorporated into a story of personal achievement.

The broader lesson is that contemporary political leadership is increasingly performed as well as exercised. Political leaders must govern, but they must also communicate, appear, narrate and maintain visibility. In a media-saturated environment, political authority is partly experienced through mediated images and performances.

This transformation should not be understood as automatically destroying democracy. Celebrity-style communication can sometimes make political issues easier to understand, bring attention to concerns that might otherwise remain invisible, and create new forms of connection between leaders and citizens. Yet the risks are equally significant. When political competition becomes too dependent on visibility and popularity, policy complexity can be overshadowed by personality. The democratic challenge is therefore not to reject media or celebrity culture altogether but to understand their growing power and to ensure that mediated performance does not completely replace substantive political accountability. Ultimately, the celebritization of politics is best understood as a structural feature of contemporary political communication. It emerges from the interaction of media technologies, political institutions, commercial interests, cultural expectations and audience practices. The rise of social media has accelerated the process, but it has not created it from nothing. Instead, it has extended and transformed earlier tendencies toward personalization, spectacularization and political branding. The contemporary politician increasingly operates as both office-holder and public personality. This dual role explains why political communication today can resemble entertainment without becoming identical to it. Politics remains concerned with power, representation and collective decision-making, but these activities are increasingly communicated through the language of personality, emotion, style and spectacle. Understanding this tension is essential for understanding political communication in the twenty-first century.

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