



Ask Prabhu

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Brain Wakes Up to Modi Wave Faster than RaGa

by D Suresh Kumar - CHENNAI | Published: 25th April 2014 07:47 AM Last Updated: 25th April 2014 07:50 AM

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While the last word on the Parliamentary elections has not been said yet, an IIT Madras study on cognitive analysis of the multimedia campaign undertaken by the BJP and Congress has shown that videos featuring Narendra Modi aroused both sides of brain activity of the audience. In contrast, Congress scion Rahul Gandhi's advertisements activated only the right side of the brain.

The Rehabilitation Bioengineering Group at the Department of Engineering Design, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, had studied the brain activity of 17 IITians aged between 20 and 24 years while they were exposed to the multimedia campaigns of the BJP and Congress. The videos shown included the Congress' Bharat Nirman series and Modi's Singham campaign, Statue of Unity and other videos produced by the Citizens for Accountable Governance, an organisation that worked for the BJP.

"All 17 participants — who did not have any major political leanings — were shown each of the videos with a 20-seconds break in between them. We showed them the commercials only for familiarity and did not have any discussion on its content. While they watched the commercials, we recorded the Electroencephalography (EEG — recording of electro activity around the scalp)," explained Venkatesh Balasubramanian, an Associate Professor, who conducted the study along with his research scholar Atul Singh.

The study was undertaken during February and early March much before the frenzied electioneering had begun. Monitoring of the beta waves of the EEG activity suggested that Modi's Singham campaign had the best response in terms of "right side" (creative) activity. Interestingly, BJP advertisements featuring Modi fetched better right side activity than those that did not feature him.

To substantiate this Venkatesh says that in the Statue of Unity video, which is dominated by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, when Modi is featured towards the end, both right and left brain were active. "This indicates that both creative and logical thinking of audience are aroused," says the study report.

In contrast, whenever Rahul Gandhi appeared in an advertisement it activated only the right beta waves and the left side had "low activity" during his presence. The Congress's Kattar Soch and Yuva Josh campaigns received the worst response among the 'participants.'

"These are our preliminary findings of the study undertaken primarily to understand the underlying brain process in decision making called neuro-marketing," said Venkatesh adding, the purpose was not to ascertain the political impact of media campaigns.

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