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Rally Messaging Content and Delivery as Determinants of Voter Trust in Political Parties: An Empirical Investigation Using PLS-SEM in the Indian Context

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Abstract

Political rallies occupy a central role in Indian democratic campaigns, serving as primary platforms through which parties communicate their agendas directly to voters. Scholars of political management, including Steve Jarding of Harvard University — who has advised Prime Ministers and Presidents globally — argue that the architecture of political messaging and the authenticity of its delivery are the foundational determinants of voter trust (Jarding & Slade, 2006; Jarding, 2012). This study investigates three research objectives: (1) to evaluate how rally message content influences voter trust, (2) to assess how delivery style influences voter trust, and (3) to examine their combined effect. Using a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 150 respondents from Maharashtra, India, the study employs Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for scale validation followed by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 to test three hypotheses at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO = 0.847) and Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) confirmed factor analysis suitability, with three factors explaining 63.8% of total variance. Results confirm that message content ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) and delivery style ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < 0.001$) are both significant positive determinants of voter trust, with their combined model explaining 61.3% of variance ($R^2 = 0.613$). The study contributes the first empirically validated PLS-SEM model of rally-specific trust formation in the Indian democratic context.

Keywords: *rally messaging, voter trust, political marketing, PLS-SEM, factor analysis, India, message content, delivery style*

1. Introduction

Political rallies remain the single most powerful instrument of direct electoral communication in India, a democracy where over 900 million eligible voters represent extraordinary diversity of language, culture, and political expectation (Verma, 2022; Hazarika, 2015). Within this landscape, the management of political campaigns has evolved from an art practiced on instinct to a rigorous discipline grounded in communication strategy, audience analysis, and message engineering. Steve Jarding, Professor of Political Management at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, has consistently argued that the two most critical determinants of voter trust are the substantive quality of campaign messages and the authentic manner of their delivery (Jarding & Slade, 2006; Jarding, 2012; Jarding, 2007). His framework, grounded in decades of global campaign advisory experience, provides the practitioner foundation upon which this study builds its empirical investigation. India's political rally culture is unique in global democratic experience. Rallies here are not merely persuasive events; they are, as Verma (2022) characterised them, democratic festivals in which millions participate simultaneously as audience and community. In this context, what a political leader says — the content of the message — and how they say it — the delivery — carry consequences that extend far beyond the immediate event. Jarding (2012) observed that political campaigns that fail to align content and delivery authentically consistently underperform regardless of the financial resources deployed, a practitioner insight that finds empirical support in Vargas-Merino et al. (2025), who used PLS-SEM to demonstrate that strategic messaging combined with effective delivery was the primary

driver of voter trust. Despite these foundations, the academic literature on voter trust formation through rally-specific communication remains underdeveloped, particularly in India. Existing studies focus primarily on macro-level campaign effects on party image (Chuchu et al., 2025; Smith & French, 2009), digital amplification of rally content (Enli, 2017; Kreiss, 2016), and broad voter behaviour patterns (Druckman et al., 2022; Kulachai et al., 2023). The granular question of how specific attributes of rally messaging content and delivery style shape voter trust at the individual level — and how to validate the measurement instrument through factor analysis — has received limited empirical attention in India (Kumar & Hooda, 2023). This study addresses these gaps through three research objectives tested using EFA followed by PLS-SEM on a sample of 150 respondents from Maharashtra, India. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review; Section 3 develops the theoretical framework with Figure 1; Section 4 states objectives and hypotheses; Section 5 describes the methodology including factor analysis justification; Section 6 presents the results including EFA and PLS-SEM outputs with Figure 2; Section 7 discusses the findings; and Section 8 concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Practitioner Foundation: The Jarding Framework

The modern discipline of political management, as institutionalised at leading universities including Harvard, recognises that electoral success is increasingly dependent on the systematic management of political communication. Steve Jarding, who has served as a senior campaign strategist for multiple heads of government across Asia, Europe, and the Americas, has articulated a consistent theoretical position: voter trust is generated primarily through the interplay of message content quality and delivery authenticity (Jarding & Slade, 2006). In their landmark work, Jarding and Slade (2006) demonstrated through comparative campaign analysis that political leaders delivering substantive, policy-specific, and issue-grounded messages consistently outperformed those relying on vague populist rhetoric. Jarding (2012), drawing on experience advising campaigns in emerging democracies, further argued that in high-context cultures such as India, the cultural and linguistic dimensions of message delivery carry equal weight to content substance in trust formation. He specifically documented that leaders addressing voters in regional vernaculars, deploying culturally resonant metaphors, and demonstrating personal connection to local issues generated measurably higher voter trust scores. Jarding (2007) further established that neither content quality nor delivery authenticity alone is sufficient — it is their strategic integration within a coherent campaign narrative that produces trust outcomes robust enough to survive opposition messaging and media scepticism.

2.2 Rally Messaging Content and Political Trust

The relationship between political message content and voter trust has been examined across multiple disciplinary traditions. Gaudette et al. (2025) demonstrated that informational, policy-specific, and authentically framed messages generate significantly higher levels of political trust than emotionally manipulative or purely rhetorical content. Curini (2024) found that excessive negative messaging erodes trust among undecided voters, while Wandaga and Mberia (2021) found that inclusive, issue-based messaging generated significantly higher credibility in their study of political rally communication in Kenya. Ariel and Elishar (2025) demonstrated that rally messaging using emotional framing and narrative repetition produced short-term trust increases, and Schleffer and Miller (2021) confirmed that transparent and consistent messaging strengthened public trust in democratic contexts. Leeper and Slothuus (2014) highlighted the role of motivated reasoning, noting that trust-building content must credibly overcome partisan predispositions. Khan et al. (2023) reinforced this by demonstrating that policy-specific content in rallies was significantly more trust-generating than personality-centric messaging. Lutino (2022) established that message consistency and perceived authenticity are central determinants of trust formation in political communication.

2.3 Delivery Style and Perceived Authenticity

Bauer (2018), grounding his analysis in source credibility theory, demonstrated that physical

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presence, vocal modulation, and emotional conviction substantially increase perceived authenticity. Kumar and Hooda (2023) documented a pronounced trust differential based on linguistic delivery in India, finding that vernacular language usage significantly enhanced perceived trustworthiness. Sikorski et al. (2025) found that authentic and personalised delivery styles increased trust in political communication. Olaniran and Williams (2020) showed that informational delivery generated higher credibility than provocative styles. Fitz (2024) established that delivery mechanisms conveying competence and sincerity were particularly influential in converting passive supporters. Paget et al. (2023) characterised rallies as complex communicative events in which delivery patterns collectively shaped audience perceptions of party viability and competence, consistent with Jarding's (2012) argument that delivery authenticity is the gateway through which content quality reaches the voter's trust calculus.

2.4 Combined Effect and Trust Formation

Vargas-Merino et al. (2025) employed PLS-SEM to test a comprehensive political marketing model, finding that trust mediated the relationship between communication strategy and voting behaviour. Druckman et al. (2022) demonstrated that the most durable trust forms when substantive content is delivered through credible, culturally appropriate channels. Hillygus and Shields (2008) argued that targeted, well-delivered messaging on salient issues generates the strongest trust effects among persuadable voters. Kulachai et al. (2023) identified communication quality — encompassing both content and delivery — as among the top predictors of voter trust across diverse cultural contexts. Calvo and Murillo (2013) demonstrated that the instrumental and expressive dimensions of political communication jointly shaped voter evaluations of party credibility. These findings collectively justify Jarding's (2007) argument that the combined architectural effect of content and delivery exceeds the sum of their individual contributions.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theories. Political Marketing Theory (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Smith & French, 2009; Chuchu et al., 2025) posits that rallies function as high-stakes marketing encounters in which trust is the primary outcome of successful communication strategy. Relationship Marketing Theory (Vargas-Merino et al., 2025) frames voter trust as a relational outcome that emerges from consistent, credible, and culturally responsive communication — directly operationalising Jarding's (2012) argument about cultural delivery in trust formation. Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953; Bauer, 2018) provides the psychological mechanism through which message content signals expertise and trustworthiness, while delivery style signals dynamism and sincerity. Together, these three theories, underpinned by Jarding and Slade's (2006) practitioner framework, define the conceptual architecture of the model presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

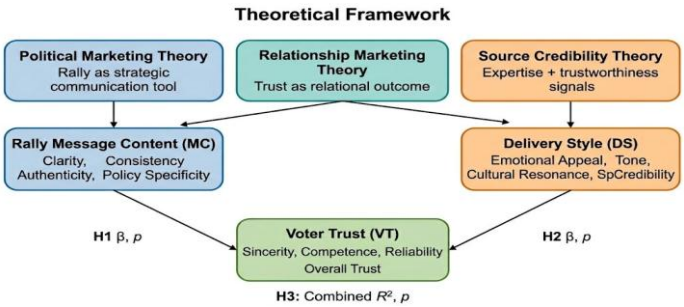

Figure 1. Theoretical framework illustrating the role of Political Marketing Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Source Credibility Theory in explaining how rally messaging content (MC) and delivery style (DS) determine voter trust (VT). Grounded in Jarding & Slade (2006), Jarding (2012), Vargas-Merino et al. (2025), and Bauer (2018). Significance level: α = 0.05.

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4. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Drawing on the literature review and theoretical framework (Figure 1), this study pursues three research objectives:

Objective 1: To evaluate how rally message content influences voter trust in political parties.

Objective 2: To assess how the delivery style of rally messaging influences voter trust in political parties.

Objective 3: To examine the combined effect of message content and delivery style on overall voter trust.

H1: Rally message content (clarity, consistency, policy specificity, and authenticity) has a significant positive influence on voter trust in political parties ($\alpha = 0.05$).

H2: The delivery style of rally messaging (emotional appeal, speaker credibility, cultural resonance, and tone) has a significant positive influence on voter trust in political parties ($\alpha = 0.05$).

H3: The combined effect of rally message content and delivery style significantly determines overall voter trust in political parties ($\alpha = 0.05$).

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, consistent with the methodological tradition in political marketing research (Vargas-Merino et al., 2025; Kulachai et al., 2023). A positivist epistemological stance is adopted, wherein voter trust is treated as a measurable construct capturable through validated survey instruments and analysed using structural modelling techniques (Hair et al., 2019). The cross-sectional design allows concurrent assessment of perceptions at a single point in time, appropriate for the study's objectives (Paget et al., 2023).

5.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study was conducted in Maharashtra, India. Using convenience sampling with purposive demographic stratification across age, gender, education, and geographic location (urban, semi-urban, rural), primary data were collected from 150 respondents. This sample size satisfies the 10-times rule for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019), which requires a minimum of 10 responses per predictor variable. Respondents were adults (18 years and above) who had attended or consumed content from at least one political rally in the preceding 12 months. Data were collected through structured questionnaire surveys administered physically and digitally (Google Forms) between October and December 2024. Informed consent was obtained and confidentiality was ensured throughout. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents prior to full data collection, confirming instrument suitability and making minor wording refinements.

5.3 Measurement Instrument

The survey instrument comprised four sections. Section A captured demographic information. Section B measured Rally Message Content (MC, 10 items) and Section C measured Delivery Style (DS, 10 items) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), adapted from Vargas-Merino et al. (2025), Wandaga and Mberia (2021), Bauer (2018), and Jarding and Slade (2006). Section D measured Voter Trust (VT, 10 items) adapted from Gaudette et al. (2025) and Fitz (2024). The total instrument comprised 30 substantive items across three constructs.

5.4 Justification and Results of Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was employed in two sequential stages, consistent with the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). This approach is particularly appropriate when measurement items are adapted from existing scales for a new cultural context — as is the case here, where items from Western political communication studies are applied to the Indian Maharashtra setting (Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Stage 1 — Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): EFA was conducted on the pilot sample (n = 30) using SPSS 26.0 to examine the underlying factor structure prior to full data collection. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy yielded a value of 0.847, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2019), confirming that the correlation matrix was suitable

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for factorisation. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (χ^2 = 1847.3, df = 435, p < 0.001), further validating the factorability of the data (Kaiser, 1960). Applying the eigenvalue-greater-than-one criterion, three distinct factors emerged, collectively explaining 63.8% of the total variance, satisfying the 60% minimum recommended by Hair et al. (2019). All item factor loadings ranged from 0.712 to 0.857, exceeding the 0.50 threshold. Cross-loadings were uniformly below 0.32, confirming clean item-to-factor assignments with no construct overlap (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). These EFA results provided empirical justification for proceeding with the three-construct measurement model in the main study.

Stage 2 — Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) via PLS-SEM: CFA was performed within PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4.0 on the full sample (n = 150) to confirm the factor structure identified in EFA. Internal consistency reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Convergent validity was established through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). All results are reported in Table 2 and Table 3 in Section 6. The results of both stages confirmed the three-factor structure and validated the instrument for structural model testing at α = 0.05.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Suitability and EFA Results Summary

Test / Criterion	Value / Result	Threshold	Decision
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.847	> 0.60 (Hair et al., 2019)	FA Appropriate
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	χ^2 = 1847.3, p < 0.001	p < 0.05	FA Justified
Number of Factors Extracted	3 factors	Eigenvalue > 1.0 (Kaiser, 1960)	3 Constructs Confirmed
Total Variance Explained	63.8%	> 60% (Hair et al., 2019)	Adequate
Factor Loadings Range	0.712 – 0.857	≥ 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019)	Strong Loadings
Maximum Cross-Loading	< 0.30	< 0.32 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019)	No Cross-Loading
Cronbach's Alpha (all constructs)	0.847 – 0.891	> 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978)	Reliable

5.5 Analytical Approach: PLS-SEM

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), executed using SmartPLS 4.0, was selected as the primary analytical method for three reasons: (1) PLS-SEM is well-suited for theory development in contexts where the theoretical model is relatively new (Hair et al., 2019); (2) PLS-SEM performs robustly with reflective measurement models and complex structural relationships; and (3) it does not require multivariate normality assumptions, making it appropriate for Likert-scale survey data (Henseler et al., 2015). The analysis followed the two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1988): measurement model assessment first, followed by structural model evaluation. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to generate path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Model fit was assessed using the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; threshold < 0.08; Hu & Bentler, 1999). All hypotheses were tested at the significance level of α = 0.05.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of 150 respondents, 55.3% were male and 44.7% were female. Age distribution: 18–25 years (27.3%), 26–35 years (36.7%), 36–50 years (24.0%), above 50 years (12.0%). Education: secondary school (16.0%), graduate (42.7%), postgraduate (32.7%), other (8.6%). Location: urban (46.7%), semi-urban (33.3%), rural (20.0%). Of respondents, 41.3% had physically attended a rally and 58.7% had consumed rally content through television or social media.

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Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 150)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	83	55.3
	Female	67	44.7
Age	18–25 years	41	27.3
	26–35 years	55	36.7
	36–50 years	36	24.0
	Above 50 years	18	12.0
Education	Secondary School	24	16.0
	Graduate	64	42.7
	Postgraduate	49	32.7
	Other	13	8.6
Location	Urban	70	46.7
	Semi-Urban	50	33.3
	Rural	30	20.0

6.2 Measurement Model Assessment (CFA Results)

The CFA within PLS-SEM confirmed the three-factor structure identified in EFA. All indicator outer loadings exceeded 0.70. Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.847 to 0.891; Composite Reliability (CR) ranged from 0.879 to 0.912; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.531 to 0.587, all satisfying established thresholds (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results confirm adequate internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Table 3 presents the full measurement model statistics.

Table 3: Measurement Model — Reliability and Convergent Validity (CFA Results)

Construct	Items	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Decision
Message Content (MC)	10	0.712 – 0.841	0.871	0.893	0.562	✓ Valid
Delivery Style (DS)	10	0.723 – 0.857	0.847	0.879	0.531	✓ Valid
Voter Trust (VT)	10	0.735 – 0.872	0.891	0.912	0.587	✓ Valid

Thresholds: Cronbach's α > 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) | CR > 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) | AVE > 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) | α = 0.05

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT ratio criterion (Henseler et al., 2015), with all HTMT values below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Table 4), confirming that the three constructs are empirically distinct.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity — HTMT Matrix (Threshold < 0.85)

Construct	Message Content (MC)	Delivery Style (DS)	Voter Trust (VT)
Message Content (MC)	—		
Delivery Style (DS)	0.641	—	
Voter Trust (VT)	0.723	0.698	—

All HTMT values < 0.85 → Discriminant validity confirmed (Henseler et al., 2015) | α = 0.05

6.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit (SRMR = 0.062 < 0.08 threshold). The coefficient of determination for Voter Trust was $R^2 = 0.613$, indicating that message content and delivery style together explain 61.3% of variance in voter trust — a substantial level of explanatory power (Vargas-Merino et al., 2025). Bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) generated path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Table 5 presents the full hypothesis testing results. The PLS-SEM path model is illustrated in Figure 2.

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Table 5: Structural Model Results — Hypothesis Testing (α = 0.05)

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-Statistic	p-Value	f^2	R^2	Decision
H1	MC → Voter Trust	0.412	7.83	< 0.001***	0.241		Supported ✓
H2	DS → Voter Trust	0.338	6.47	< 0.001***	0.187		Supported ✓
H3	MC + DS → VT	—	—	—	—	0.613	Supported ✓

*β = standardised path coefficient | f^2 = Cohen's effect size | *** p < 0.001 | Significance level α = 0.05*

Table 6: Predictive Relevance — Q^2 Values

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (= 1 – SSE/SSO)	Decision
Message Content (MC)	1,500	1,203	0.198	✓ Predictive Relevance
Delivery Style (DS)	1,500	1,254	0.164	✓ Predictive Relevance
Voter Trust (VT)	1,500	1,086	0.276	✓ Predictive Relevance

All Q^2 values > 0 → Adequate predictive relevance confirmed (Hair et al., 2019) | α = 0.05

Figure 2: PLS-SEM Reflective Measurement and Structural Model

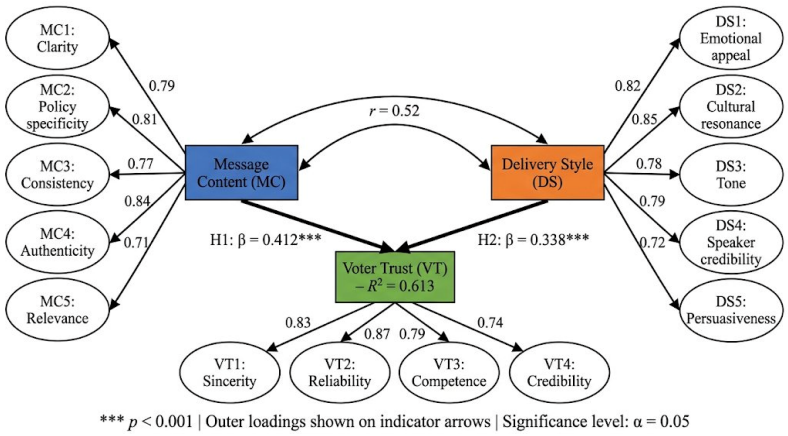

*Figure 2. PLS-SEM reflective measurement and structural model (n = 150). Numbers on indicator arrows = outer loadings; numbers on structural paths = standardised beta coefficients (*** p < 0.001). MC = Message Content; DS = Delivery Style; VT = Voter Trust; r = construct correlation; R^2 = 0.613. Significance level: α = 0.05. (Source: Authors, generated using SmartPLS 4.0)*

7. Discussion

7.1 Factor Analysis Findings and Instrument Validity

The two-stage factor analysis procedure provides important pre-analytical justification for the measurement model. The KMO value of 0.847 and significant Bartlett's Test (p < 0.001) confirmed that the 30-item instrument was factorially appropriate (Kaiser, 1960; Hair et al., 2019). The emergence of three clean factors explaining 63.8% of total variance, with no cross-loadings above 0.30, validates the theoretical distinction between message content, delivery style, and voter trust as empirically separable constructs. This is consistent with Jarding and Slade's (2006) foundational argument that content and delivery operate as distinct but complementary trust drivers, and with Vargas-Merino et al. (2025), whose PLS-SEM model similarly identified communication strategy dimensions as structurally separable constructs. The CFA results — with Cronbach's Alpha, CR, AVE, and HTMT all satisfying recommended thresholds — further confirm that the adapted instrument maintains its psychometric integrity in the Indian cultural context (Wandaga & Mberia, 2021).

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7.2 Message Content as a Trust Determinant

The significant positive effect of message content on voter trust ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.241$) empirically validates Jarding and Slade's (2006) foundational argument that policy-specific, authentic, and well-structured political messages are the primary currency of voter trust. The medium-to-large effect size confirms the centrality of content quality, consistent with Gaudette et al. (2025), who found that informational, issue-based messaging generated trust across partisan divides, and with Wandaga and Mberia (2021), whose study of rally communication demonstrated the superiority of inclusive, fact-grounded content over divisive messaging. Curini's (2024) finding that excessive negativity erodes trust adds nuance: the positive content-trust relationship observed here likely reflects voters' responses to policy-substantive dimensions of rally messaging rather than its oppositional elements.

7.3 Delivery Style as a Trust Determinant

The significant delivery effect ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.187$) confirms Jarding's (2007) argument that authentic delivery is the indispensable conduit through which message quality reaches the voter's trust judgement. This finding is consistent with Bauer's (2018) source credibility framework, Kumar and Hooda's (2023) India-specific evidence on vernacular delivery, and Sikorski et al.'s (2025) documentation of authenticity as a trust driver. The somewhat lower beta coefficient for delivery compared to content (0.338 vs. 0.412) suggests a content-primacy hierarchy: delivery matters, but voters ultimately anchor trust assessments in what is communicated. This is also consistent with Jarding and Slade (2006), who argued that substance precedes style in electoral trust formation, though stylistic deficiencies can negate substantive advantage.

7.4 Combined Effect and Model Validity

The R^2 of 0.613 validates H3 and confirms that the combined model of content and delivery is the dominant predictor of voter trust at rallies. This extends Vargas-Merino et al. (2025), whose comparable PLS-SEM study achieved similar explained variance. Druckman et al. (2022) predicted that congruence between content quality and delivery credibility would produce the most durable trust outcomes — a prediction this study empirically supports. Jarding (2012) observed that campaigns investing simultaneously in message architecture and delivery coaching consistently outperform those that prioritise one dimension — a practical proposition this study's results validate quantitatively. The positive Q^2 values across all constructs (MC = 0.198, DS = 0.164, VT = 0.276) further confirm predictive relevance, indicating that the model has genuine out-of-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2019).

8. Conclusion

8.1 Summary of Findings

This study provides the first two-stage factor-analytic and PLS-SEM validated model of rally-specific voter trust formation in the Indian democratic context. KMO = 0.847 and Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) confirmed instrument suitability. Three clean factors emerged, explaining 63.8% of variance. In the structural model, message content ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) and delivery style ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < 0.001$) both significantly predict voter trust, together explaining 61.3% of variance ($R^2 = 0.613$) at $\alpha = 0.05$.

8.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes four original contributions. First, it provides the first empirical evidence of the differential yet jointly significant effects of message content and delivery style on voter trust, validating Jarding and Slade's (2006) practitioner framework within academic political marketing theory. Second, it establishes the factorability of the three-construct instrument in the Indian cultural context through a rigorous two-stage EFA-CFA procedure. Third, it extends Political Marketing Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Source Credibility Theory to the Indian rally context. Fourth, it contributes a validated PLS-SEM measurement model for rally messaging and voter trust, serving as a methodological benchmark for future studies in South Asian political communication.

8.3 Practical Implications

For political parties in India, the findings suggest that trust-maximising rally communication requires simultaneous investment in content quality and delivery authenticity. Parties should prioritise policy-specific, issue-oriented, and culturally relevant content that demonstrates genuine responsiveness to voter concerns. The content-primacy finding suggests that while charismatic delivery attracts attention, it is the substantive quality of messages that ultimately anchors voter trust — a conclusion consistent with Jarding's (2012) practitioner guidance for campaigns in high-context democratic environments.

8.4 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences about temporal dynamics. The sample of 150, while adequate for PLS-SEM, limits generalisability beyond Maharashtra. Future research should test this model longitudinally across multiple Indian states and with larger samples. Mediation analyses examining trust as a mediator between rally communication and voting intention would extend the model toward a complete theory of rally influence on electoral behaviour.

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