Analysis on Repositioning of Party Switcher Politicians and Approach of Restoration of Image

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Abstract

Objective / Purpose – The study examines how politicians reposition and restore the image themselves after switching to a new political party in the state of Odisha. This paper also aims to take on academicians, senior journalists, and voters behaviour perspectives, and investigate to the know repositioning of politicians themselves as elected representatives i.e., members of Parliament or Member Legislative Assembly.

Design/methodology – After the review of the literature and thirty qualitative interviews of academicians, senior journalists and voters, the study illustrate show a new political party helps politicians to successfully reposition themselves at a given time of their political career. The paper builds up a conceptual framework and offers repositioning strategies of politicians on respondents' perceptions.

Findings – The literature review establishes politicians as brands. The study finding reveals that the politician's brand substantial repositioning was perceived sometimes by the voters and sometimes the voters moved away from the politicians. Furthermore seen, the politician occupying a high-level party position in a party may not bring the constituency in winning the election.

Research Limitation/approach – The research was conducted in the regional context. The switching of the party and repositioning of the politicians could be studied in a national context.

Originality / Value – The study provides a useful framework to understand politicians repositioning through party switching and restoring an image. The framework can be used to understand the repositioning of various types of personalities of other walks of life.

Keywords: Politicians, Party Switching, Repositioning, Odisha Election

Paper type: Research paper

1. Introduction:

The Indian Express in its article (March 16, 2019) mentioned, with just a month closing to the imminent Lok Sabha elections the political campaigning intensifies, many politicians have either resigned or joined new parties mentioning different motives. The article also highlighted the long list of the politicians who switched parties and loyalty right before the Lok Sabha and assembly election mostly over fight concerning a party ticket.

Interestingly, party hoppers or switchers' politicians in national politics are very high.

Among them to cite a few of party hoppers; Arjun Singh, Trinamool Congress leader joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shatrughan Sinha quit the BJP to join Congress, Dr Ramkrishna Kusmaria, BJP joined Indian National Congress (INC) and celebrity politician, Jaya Prada, from Samajwadi Party joined BJP. Representation and welfare goals aside, we all know that most of, if not everyone, who aspires to make it big in Politics works with the agenda of acquiring more and more power. The struggle for power sometimes even convinces them to change their allegiance and switch parties. Political leaders of the state of Odisha also switched their party right before the

2019 upcoming general elections, mostly over battling for a party ticket. There were many sitting MLAs and MPs not given party tickets. To name a few; Jacob Pradhan, (G. Udaygiri), Sadhu Nepak (Bargarh), Jogesh Singh (Sundergarh), Krushna Chandra Sagaria (Koraput), Rajkishore Das (Morada), Nabakishore Das (Jharsuguda) Prakash Chandra Behera (Salipur), Sukant Kumar Nayk (Nilagiri) Damodar Rout (Paradip) Arka Kershri (Kalahandi) and Baijayant Panda (Kendrapara).

The present study elucidates through qualitative method, how the politicians use the new political party as the platform to change their image by performing in order to aggrandize themselves as brands. This research also examines how rebranding and repositioning has become a forward-looking marketing tool for politicians in the twenty-first century.

More expressly, this research paper discusses how politicians in the current times use the new political parties as a platform to restore their image amongst their voters. The new political parties stand as their platform to reaffirm the post, position, image than the previous party. The paper takes up the exercise to investigate the changing political image and trajectory in political career to provide a possible direction towards a future political career. There are a number of politicians in the past who have switched over to other parties. In this paper, we discussed those who switched parties in Odisha before the 2019 election.

These politicians form a representative sample as highly positioned members, elected representatives of a constituency and respected by the voters in the state for several years. In this paper those politicians selected were senior party workers, party portfolio holders and members of the Parliament or Member of Legislative Assembly.

The objective of the research is to explore the status of repositioning of the politician through the insight of the academicians, senior journalists and voters. The research examines the image of the politicians who changed the party. The compelling factors of party switching and factors that help the politicians to reposition will be studied in this research. The findings of the paper establish broader implications of political party repositioning.

1.2. Literature Review

Renu Sud Sinha, (Retrieved date 25 January 2022) of The Tribune India wrote with headline 'Poll season and party hopping: Why self-gain is the ideology of choice', on the findings of Association for Democratic Reforms that the party switchers who recontested from 2014 to 2021 are insightful and eye-opening. The ADR from the election affidavits of 500 MPs and MLAs, the congress with 177 defecting candidates was biggest looser while the BJP with 173 joining the party, emerged as the biggest gainer. The research does not study which party is winner or loser rather concentrate on the behavior of party switching and that leads to party positioning.

In a democracy party-switching by legislators is a common factor. Countries like Italy, the Philippines, Nepal, Pakistan, Japan, Ecuador, and India experience party switching in electoral politics. Why would a legislator abandon one party and enter another during a legislative term or during an election? The basic observed views and assumptions are personal marketing agenda, the ambition, the cost-benefit, ideology, forced to quit, lack of respect, hoping for the post, fear of disciplinary action, conspiracy, mental torture by party and party members, caste and tribe, insult on region, fear of injury, neglected by party, denial of ticket and expulsion are some are the driving factors of party switching, but in the case of India, it has been observed that the majority switched party because of denial of the party ticket. An example to cite, in Italy, according to Mershon and Heller (2004a) the frequent switching is discipline, electoral rules and party size, moreover, the communication of discipline and policy disagreements leads parliamentarians to leave their parties. Switching in Ecuador Mejia (1999) explores, highlights differences of a function of district magnitude, party ideology and party size. Reed and Scheiner (2002) strongly take on the behavior of legislators alone.

Willim B. Heller and Carol Mershon (2005) explain how apparently party switching is pinned with an empirical, theoretical and normative area of concern. Empirically it is

puzzling those politicians might not win from the party with which he is aligned with seats. Scholars through studies explored, theoretically how party competition for votes bound up with a competition for control of bridle in the government as Laver, (1997) calls 'the big prize') absolutely assume a fair and stable membership in legislative parties. Normatively, accountability in democracy is at risk at a given time a politician elected as a candidate of one party switches to another during tenure without consulting his/her constituents at the polls. The most argued point on switching seems it is a great tool to ambitious politicians in their pursuit to accomplish their purpose (Desposato 2002; Turan 1985; Aldrich and Bianco 1992; Laver and Benoit 2003; see also Sanchez de Dios 1999; Agh 1999). William B. Heller (2005) sums up two complementary hypotheses and assumptions on the electoral reason behind switching; politicians with ambitions and political parties enforce discipline on the party members.

However, Cox and Gray. W. (1987), Cox and McCubinns (1994) express that each politician, in any party surrenders a segment of her or his rights and freedom as the cost of membership for electoral stability. Given the opportunities by parties to democratic political life, it appears logical to expect a politician to fasten to the party ideology and policy under which he or she has won an election. Nevertheless, for ambitious politicians, occasionally it might infuriate to subordinate personal objectives to party dictates. When it does, party-switching can be a very attractive alternative.

Furthermore, it raises a question that without any legal bound for repositioning in the election with the new party the politicians would have an inducement to campaign honestly. Politicians can speak anything they like to during any political campaigning, foreseeing that voters would appreciate reneging on commitments. There would be cheap talk, speeches, advertisement and policy manifesto rather than reliable cues. Thus, to run a representative democracy function well voters need to apply proper penalties against politicians who move away from their election promises.

The Indian Express Beauro, Chakshu Roy (October 6, 2021), highlights that in India the anti-defection law punishes those individuals whether they are MPs or MLAs for switching one party for another party. But the legal system permits a group of MP or MLAs to join another political party without appealing the penalty for defection. The paper also mentioned that parliament supplemented in 1958 to the Constitution in the Tenth Schedule that the penalties to bring stability in the smooth running of governments.

Then the next question comes how do the voters respond when politicians switch parties over time? If voters act in response negatively to party switching and repositioning, they could put off leaders from adapting to shifts in public opinion or the arrival of new policy-relevant information. For decades, scholars consistently have argued that in every election voters evaluate politicians in two areas: character (personality which includes image and reputation) and policy. More so, the issues of repositioning are ubiquitous in Indian political campaigns. When politicians switch parties the opposition often exposes the instability and inconsistency and tries to get mileage in the electoral process.

The repositioning of politicians in the US as observed by (Adams, Clark, Ezrow, and Glasgow 2006; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011) is always issues centred. The extensive review of literature also marks out that the politicians in democracies with bi-parties and multi-parties position themselves switching into a party.

Evidently, there is no literature on the regional party switching, repositioning and restoration of image in the context of Odisha. In Indian electoral politics, the number of politicians who switched parties has got tickets to contest in an election from another party. The literature review brought a close observation that an attempt has been made to understand the trend, legal constraints and detrimental nature of party switching. This study gets into a regional perspective of repositioning of the politicians during the 2019 general election of Lok Sabha (Lower house of Parliament) and VidhanSabha (State Legislative Assembly) in the state of Odisha.

The reviews of literature draw several questions i) whether the party switchers are able to

reposition themselves in new a party? ii) to what extent do the voters change their perception of the image of the party switchers?

1.3. Research Objectives:
i) to study the repositioning of party switchers in 2019 general election in Odisha.
ii) to examine the voters' perception on the image of party switchers in the state.

1.4. The Research Framework
In India since the 2014 general election, the brand concept in politics has played a major role. Politicians as brand has emerged as a new dimension in the Indian political system after the entry of the then Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi in the national politics. Some politicians are considered as brands. The current Prime Minister, Shri. Narendra Modi has tried to establish himself as a brand more significantly during and after the 2014 general election. Narendra Modi isn't just a political party's prime ministerial candidate then. 'NaMo' (Modi) is a brand that has been carefully built and painstakingly marketed (Devina Joshi & Masoom Gupte, Business Standard, May 12, 2014).

The loaded body of literature equating politicians with the brand in past two decades, Smith and French, 2009; O' Shaughnessy and Henneberg, 2007; Spiller and Bergner, 2011; Scammell, 2007; Schneider, 2004; Kotler and Kotler, 1999 as politicians create a distinct position as an individual in the society and become a role model thus establishing themselves as a brand. Branding moreover is seen as multifaceted component in Indian politics today.

The review of literature broadens that branding obtain various frameworks on the brand repositioning (Nundkumar and Singh, 2016; Illia and van Rekom, 2012) but the most important kinds of literature are of John Saunders and David Jobber (1994) and EM Tauber (1981).

The study intended to analyze political repositioning with best fit framework from Simms and Trott (2007) where the prospect of consumer behavior and consumer's (*in the study consumers are the voters*) interpretation of brand positioning.

As required in this study, the framework works best with consumers' behaviors point of view, through symbolic versus functional brand characteristics of '2 X 2 matrix'. The framework observes from two important levels of repositioning: the X-axis of (emotional) symbolic and the Y-axis of (rational) functional. The two by two matrix is a great tool that helps to sort out initial qualitative data into categories and is reduced to two simple variables, basically when quantitative data is unavailable therefore qualitative judgments are ascertained. The two by two matrix is particularly useful in groups as a way of plotting out a consortium understanding or an agreement of a subject.

These two characters extensively executed in the study is borrowed from the brand repositioning kinds of literature where repositioning is based on the perceptions consumers hold about an image of a particular brand (Bhat and Reddy, 1998) in relation to the competitors. The politicians are brands and voters as consumers discussed in the research paper. The politician as brand repositioning can be understood either at the level of rational or emotional. Moreover, it can be reflected in four quadrants of rational, emotional maintained brand repositioning or complete repositioning.

This framework is applied to two interesting rationales. Firstly, the framework is built upon the traditional point of view of repositioning which examines how a brand is positioned as against the original positioning of the consumers' mind. Secondly, the framework constructs the elusive sides that exist with brand repositioning which assists brand managers in their decision-making process. The repositioning of regional politicians who has switched off to another party will be studied and evaluated through a qualitative approach by telephonic interviews of academicians, senior journalists, party workers, voters about the image and repositioning of politicians.

2. Methodology
Eight selected politicians for the research were from three major political parties of Odisha, the BJD (regional party of Odisha, in power for last 21 years),BJP (incumbent in the center since2014) and the grand old party of the country, the Indian National Congress, (table1).

The politicians of three major parties are studied for the purpose of research as there rest of the parties has a negligible presence. One of the common reasons for switching parties before an election is the apprehension of denial of party tickets. These politicians in various ways try to reposition themselves through the new party they have switched.

The selection criteria for choosing these politicians were those having long and influential political career, holding party portfolios, sitting MLAs or MPs; possessing financial and muscle power. The list of the important politicians who switched parties before or during the 2019 election in Odisha is mentioned in the table1. These three parties have a large percentage of vote shares in the state.

Table 1: The list of the politician who switched parties during the 2019 election

Sl. No	Name of Politician	Constituency	MLA / MP	Previous Party	Present Party	Result
1	Baijayant Panda	Kendrapara (Lok Sabha)	MP	BJD	BJP	Lost
2	BalabhadraMajhi	Nabarangapur (Lok Sabha)	MP	BJD	BJP	Lost
3	PratyushaRajeswari Singh	Kandhamal (Lok Sabha)	MP	BJD	BJP	Lost
4	Damodar Rout	Balikuda(Assembly)	MLA	BJD	BJP	Lost
5	SoumyaranjanPattnaik	Khandapada(Assembly)	MP	Ama Odisha	BJD	won
6	Nabakishore Das	Jharsuguda(Assembly)	MLA	Congress	BJD	Won
7	Rajkishore Das	Morada(Assembly)	MLA	BJP	BJD	Won

The research followed an exploratory qualitative approach which is considered to be the most suitable. Semi-structured, telephonic in-depth interviews (N = 30) methods were used for collecting qualitative data. The participants included 26 men and 4 women within the age group of 24 to 70 (See Table 2). The convenient sampling methods were used to select the respondents based on their reputation as media persons, academicians and through the random sampling of the voters in the city of Bhubaneswar.

The primary criterion for selection was that the respondents should have an interest in politics and the electoral system. They must have an interest in sharing their thoughts and ideas on state politics. The respondents were through interviews allowed to express their perceptions on switcher politicians' image and repositioning which resulted in a deeper understanding and give vast insights to the study.

The respondents interviewed were mainly from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha but originally they hailed from other districts of Odisha. The respondents initially moved to Bhubaneswar either to pursue education or in search of a job and now have settled in Bhubaneswar. Here, the respondents are selected from three categories i.e., academics, media persons and voters. The academicians were selected mainly from institutions of repute providing education and training in the stream of political science and journalism who keep abreast of the political issues of the state regularly. The senior journalists who keep a track of political developments of the state regularly and work for national and regional media organizations were the key respondents for the research. The voters as valuable respondents were selected around the city that was willing to answer during the telephonic interview. The residents of Bhubaneswar represent diversity in Odisha, in terms of culture, tradition, practice and language. In this study, the researcher has captured the perception of the

respondents on repositioning and restoration of

the brand image of the switcher politicians.

Table 2: Respondents' list

Respondents number	Domicile	Gender	Occupation
1.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
2.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
3.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Domestic Help
4.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Special Correspondent
5.	Bhubaneswar	Female	Senior Journalist
6.	Bhubaneswar	Male	School Teacher
7.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
8.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
9.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
10.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
11.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
12.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
13.	Bhubaneswar	Female	Academician
14.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
15.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Senior Journalist
16.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
17.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
18.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Vegetable Vendor
19.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
20.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
21.	Bhubaneswar	Female	School Teacher
22.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Academician
23.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Social Activist
24.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Social Activist
25.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Hawker
26.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Vegetable Vendor
27.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Hawker
28.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Security Personnel
29.	Bhubaneswar	Female	Homemaker
30.	Bhubaneswar	Male	Grocery Shop Owner

The interviews were conducted through telephonic calls from the office of the authors. The interviews for the study lasted between 30 and 40 min (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The authors used "saturation" as a criterion for stopping interviews (Silverman, 2016) as "no new data" or "no new codes" could be generated (Fusch et al., 2018).

The authors followed during the interviews, a guideline that helped respondents to answer the research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The interview questions were prepared based on the early literature review (Patton, 2015).

The questions asked in the interview, ranged from taking respondents' opinion about the promotional techniques(visiting personally to voters, *padyatra* (rallies) , social media campaign, alluring financially, freebies, capitalizing caste and religious sentiments, etc)used by the party switcher politicians to reposition themselves and restoration process of their image. The respondents were also asked to ascertain if they find any change in the politicians' trajectory time over the years and if that affected their outlook towards politicians.

Questions were also asked about respondents' personal choices to understand if they followed

any preferred politicians and social media engagements with them. In the interview, the respondents were motivated to speak out the responsibility undertaken by the politicians and allowed to deviate in order to garner more information.

The academicians and the senior journalist responded in English while some of the respondents (voters) responded in Odia. The responses in Odia were recorded, transcribed and translated into English following the methods of Kothari and Snell, (2011).Based on the research question a pre-coding scheme was prepared. The interviews were analyzed on basis of four-quadrant of brand repositioning. While transcripts were coded cautiously, codes having inter-relationship were categorized with the responses (Boyatizis, 1998). As per the literature review and (Neuman, 2006), the research framework three major aspects were drawn i.e., emotional repositioning, rational repositioning and complete repositioning of politicians. In the next section, the compilation analysis from the interviews and the four specific themes are mentioned.

The common perception is that it happens when the political arena is unsettled (Agh 1999) when politicians' ambitions go unchecked (Mejia Acosta 1999; Sanchez de Dios, 1999; Turan 1985), or, as journalists reported when Senator Jeffords abandoned the Republican Party in 2002 when politicians find themselves frozen out of favour by their own parties. We agree, but we also see switching as integral to Democratic Party systems. The level of switching varies across countries and over time, but, at whatever level, switching should not be seen as pathological.

Switching results from ambition, broadly studied, see, e.g., (Aldric and Bianco 1992; Canon and Sousa1992; Castle and Fett, 2000; Desposato 2002; McElroy 2003). Switching especially is more likely under conditions of heightened uncertainty. Thus, we embrace, but generalize and extend the assertion that ambitious politicians are likely to switch when party systems are in flux (Aldric and Bianco 1992; Canon and Sousa1992). Party switching equated with brand extension by authors. Brand extension, Tauber's (1981) matrix categorizes a firm's growth opportunities using two different

dimensions: product category and brand name used.

Furthermore, it had developed into a niche appeal, which according to Laverics and Johnson (1997) is at an "iconically" intangible level. This they argue is largely based on the brand's history. The study (Simms, C. and Trott, P. (2007) on repositioning of the 'BMW Mini' brand", examined that provided with update features the product brings change into the brand. In this study of repositioning of party switcher the researcher tried to bring the politicians' approach into account through the perception of academicians, journalists and voters.

3. Results

3.1. Views of Respondents

3.1.1 In the interview the researchers asked whether a switch in political parties affects the politicians repositioning themselves as MPs or MLAs in Odisha. R. 1, R. 3, R. 5, R.15, R. 19. R 27, R. 30 opined that politicians switch parties seeing the chances of repositioning themselves. While R.2 a senior journalist observes that repositioning is difficult and there are examples in plenty in the state of Odisha. R.1 another senior journalist highlighted that the politician who switches sides usually loses a bit of credibility, but it doesn't necessarily lower his/her winning prospects. In the line of R. 7 an academician of a reputed university and R. 11, R, 18, R 20, R. 28 and R 26 are of the opinion that the increasing trend of switching political parties among politicians has become a common practice. Quite a few cases, it's seen that, for excelling in political career politician switch party but many reach into scratches in a political career. According to R. 20, a senior academician party switching is like going for career advancement into another party but according to other academicians (R. 8, R 16, R. 17, and R. 26), a party switcher loses their dignity and people's acceptance. R. 3 a special correspondent clued politician's identity remains the same but public perception of voters differs. According to R. 14 & R. 27 scaling the trust among the voters is key for repositioning so also reputation and loyalty.

3.1.2 The researcher examined the important factors of repositioning party switchers. According to R.7 an academician the past

performance and previously held position to continue. According to R. 2, R. 22, R. 16, R. 30, R. 29, R. 23, R. 11 and R. 13) party switching is to earn respect but (R. 14 & R. 17) more often than not, it's the denial - or apprehension of denial - of a party ticket to contest elections. R. 6 & R. 10 interprets that over-ambitious politicians switch parties to be in power for a long period. R. 3, R. 8, R. 9, R. 18 and R.28 say that credibility, values, personality and ideology affect the repositioning of party switchers. R. 22, R. 20 & R. 23 commented that commitment towards the voters, party image and public support also affect repositioning.

3.1.3 Responding to the question of whether the supporters of a particular political party cast a vote infavour of a party switcher, R. 2, R. 3, R. 16 and R. 7 aptly said that the supporters show loyalty towards their own party though may not support the individual. They favour the party switcher not on the basis of the candidate's personality but if there is a higher degree of likeness or belief in party ideology. R. 3 added that supporters of a particular political party cast votes in favour of a party switcher because he or she follows new party ideology. R. 13 a senior academician was of a critical view that individuals in India worship idols but do not worship ideology. Speaking in the context of Mahatama Gandhi, he added that politician appreciate the ideology of Gandhi but never practice. So, the politicians who talk about ideology should not be taken seriously. R. 8, another academician narrated a few cases where individuals with people's mandate have voted a party switcher.

3.1.4 Party ideology increases the probability of winning an election by a party switcher.

- Denial of Ticket
- Hoping for the post
- Insult on caste and religion
- Fear of disciplinary action

3.2. 2X 2 Matrix Analysis

3.2.1*Emotional repositioning of politician brand*

The political marketers use emotional branding tactics for repositioning a product i.e., politicians. The voter's emotional attachments towards a politician such as his or her feelings of sadness, pride, sympathy and anger result in a

Academicians R. 20, R, 16, R. 7 R. 22 and R. 3 aPR professional were of the view that party ideology immensely helps politicians to win an election. For a party switcher, the overall strength depends on party ideology which is put forward in winning the confidence of the voters. Commitment, reputation and brand image of the party leader is the catch said R. 20. R. 1 a senior journalist clearly said not only party ideology but the credibility of a politician is instrumental to win an election. R. 8an academician from social work appraised that appealing personality while R. 24 a social scientist categorized the capability and relationships with voters are important factors. R. 1 critically said, 'I don't think party ideology increases or decreases the win-ability of a party switcher'.

3.1.5R.1 a senior journalist said that party switching is very frequent and a common phenomenon in Odisha politics. The common perception according to R. 7, R. 2, R. 16, R. 17 and R. 30is that the positioning has been maintained by politicians. The perception of R. 14, R. 18, R. 22, R. 23, R 25, R. 27, R 29 is that repositioning is retained through rational repositioning as a politician. R.3, R. 5, R. 8, R. 9, R. 10 and R. 11 believe in complete repositioning while emotional repositioning is important for R. 4, R. 6, R. 12, R. 13, R. 15, R. 24, R. 26 and R. 28. R. 20explainspolitics as a complete package. Politics is both art and science where branding works on rational as well as an emotional matrix.

3.1.6 Major reasons for switching party

As per the literature review, respondents opinion and the analysis of published news reportsof newspapers followings are the major reasons for party switching:

- Conspiracy among party
- Neglected by the party
- Regional bias
- Fear of expulsion

critical meaning with the consumption of political content from traditional and social media.

Introducing the result in the context of repositioning and restoration of image, the key findings bring sentiments of the respondents that aid in understanding the emotional repositioning of politicians as brands through the new party

affiliation with regard to the research framework (Simms and Tortt, 2007). Respondents (R. 1, R. 6, R. 9, R. 11, R. 14, R. 16, R. 18, R. 19, R. 21 & R.30) expressed that they have different views on Pratyusha Rajeswari Singh, Nabokishore Das and Damodar Rout in the context emotional repositioning.

Table 3. Emotional repositioning of the politician brand

Emotional Repositioning	Old perception	New Party	New perception
Pratyusha Rajeswari Singh	Widow of former MP (2014), Affiliation to royal family	BJP	Failed to connect to common people / voters
Nabokishore Das	Senior congress leader, many time legislator, grassroots level leader	BJD	Rich politician, grassroots level leader
Damodar Rout	Charismatic leader, Out spoken, follower of Biju Legacy	BJP	Controversial, waning politician

R. 1, a senior journalist says, the party makes omission and commission of candidates before and during an election period. So also the voters make preferences during an election. There is always a fatigue factor in politics hence there is a need to bring a fresh and new face to appeal to voters. On the other hand R. 22, a senior faculty observed that party like BJD does not bother about the switching of their party leaders as Naveen, the face of the party which encash the votes.

3.2.1.1 According to R. 12 Pratyusha Rajeshwari Singh known as 'Rani Maa of Nayagarh'elected to the Lok Sabha in the by-election held in October 2014 with a BJD ticket from Kandhamal constituency. Though she was new into politics she got the advantage of winning the by election through an emotional appeal as the widow of the sitting MP, her husband Hemendra Chandra Singh. R. 17 says by 2019 Pratyusha could not capitalize on the sentiment and emotion of the people of her constituency which marked a decline in her popularity. She could not become a symbol of a true leader though she pressed her aspiration to serve the people of Nayagrah. R. 19 remarked that the BJD made an interesting gambit by fielding Rajya Sabha member Achyuta Samantaan educationist-turned-politician.

3.2.1.2R.1, a senior journalist said he was not astonished about senior congress leader, Nabakishore Das joining the BJD. A long time Congress leader Nabakishore Das tried to emotionally woo the voters after joining the BJD in 2019. (R. 2, R. 5, R. 10, R. 23 & R. 6) hinted that Nabkishore Das made a propaganda that "soil first, party next" to justify quitting Congress. Thus through this campaign and engagement with people during public meetings and interaction with the media, he tried to represent himself as the torchbearer of the development of his constituency and Jharshuguda district.

3.2.1.3 R. 7 an academician talked about Damodar Rout, the seven-time MLA and former minister, who was expelled from the BJD fought the election from Balikuda-Erasama constituency on a BJP ticket and was defeated. A close aide of former chief minister Biju Patanaik, Damodar Rout claimed to be a confidant of Naveen Pattnaik till all was well between him and the party.

R. 3, R. 9, R. 13, R. 14, R. 18, R. 23 spoke in a similar manner about Damodar Rout's lack of patience and controversial remarks. R. 24 and R. 30 said, Rout tried to play an emotional card by propagating that the BJD which was established to fulfill the visions of late Biju Pattnaik's 'Dream Odisha" but the current government had deviated from the rationale of the party ideology.

3.2.2 Rational repositioning of politician brand
The sample of politically engaged respondents and politicians being studied for the research, the respondents affirmed that Baijayant Panda and Rajkishore Das have continued their services as a party cadre and showed the true characteristics of a leader over time even in the new party. Therefore, it suits the research framework that Baijayant Panda, Rajkishore Das and Balabhadra Majhi have rationally

repositioned themselves largely through joining   a new party.

Table 4. Rational repositioning of the politician brand

Rational Repositioning	Old perception	New Party	New perception
Baijayant Panda	Rajya sabha and Lok Sabha leader of BJD	BJP	National Vice President BJP, prominent leader, state assembly election in-charge
Rajkishore Das	BJP State Vice President, practical, spontaneous	BJD	Elected MLA, Pro people leader, influential personality, good organizer, practical, spontaneous
Balabhdra Majhi	Technocrat, Dynamic, Representative of community, practical, spontaneous	BJP	Technocrat, Development oriented, local affiliation,

3.2.2.1 Before venturing into electoral politics in 2002 Baijayanat Panda was nominated to Rajya Sabha by the BJD Supremo Naveen Pattanaik. The son of a well-known industrialist Mr. Banshidahra Panda, Baijayant represented the BJD in the upper house of the parliament till 2009. He was also BJD Parliamentary Party leader in Rajya Sabha from 2002-2009. His good oratory skill, loyalty to Naveen and media-friendly interaction soon made him the blue-eyed boy of the state chief minister. After completing his Rajya Sabha tenure Panda fought the Loka Sabha election from Kendrapara in 2009 and won with a good margin. All was not well between Panda and BJD by December 2017. Panda was suspended from the Biju Janata Dal for alleged anti-party activities on 24 January 2018 and he resigned from BJD on 28 May 2018. He also alleged there was a conspiracy within the party to expel him.

Panda, who switched from BJD to BJP though lost the 2019 parliamentary election, has been able to reposition himself as the national vice president BJP and state in charge of assembly election in Assam where the party retained power. R16 recalls he used to turn to the Lok Sabha channel to listen to J Panda's participation in parliament procedures. According to him, Panda is a statesman with logic and boldness who questioned the opponents. R. 8 liked about Panda's progressive ideas and pro people work he carried out in his constituency.

R. 11 who is a social worker prefers to follow Baijayanat panda over Anubhav Mohanty, actor-politician and the sitting from Kendrapara. He said, 'I like Baijayant Panda any day because of

his reasonable and rational thinking. He writes in media and debated in the parliament well with enthusiasm and logic on a given issue." R. 6 and R. 25 who peep through the political activities in the state said that BJP seemed unprecedented, with great expectation to his ability that made him the party vice president and grounded him as state election in charge of Assam. "I know Baijayant Panda has lost in the 2019 Lok Sabha election from Kendrapara, yet I follow him in social media" said R 29 a PhD scholar "because he had been very consistence in putting across the issues of the people, continues to commit for the development issues of the state through his political activities.

3.2.2.2 According to R. 23 before being elected as the MLA in a BJD ticket from Morada constituency of Myurbhanj district. Rajkishore Das held top positions in the state unit of BJP. The reasons for the immense popularity in the BJP as well as in the constituency were his pro-people activities for the constituency. R. 27 explained that Rajkishore was seemingly inseparable from the party talking about party unit in Morada and to an extent he groomed the constituency with his organizing ability. It was clearly visible in his media reactions that Rajkishore Das was not having a cordial relationship with his party colleague and central minister Dharmendra Pradhan. R. 13. and R. 16 believe that Rajakshore left the party because his rationale did not match with party colleague Dharmendra Pradhan. R. 13. and R. 16 also said, that the party he served for years has been harassing him and he feels suffocated to be in the party. Respondent R. 24 explained he was

greatly determined by voters support and his popularity. Hence, he ambitiously announced that he will win the election and he was elected to assembly.

3.2.2.3 Respondents R. 13, R. 27, R. 26, R. 29 cited the media interview of Balabhadra Majhi to say that he had been neglected by the party and there was dissatisfaction for non-involvement of Majhi in intra-party matters. Respondents R. 6 and R. 11 found him defunct (no functionality) in his tenure as a parliamentarian. Inspite of putting effort to publicize himself as the son of the soil, it could not rationalize among the voters of Nabarangpur said R. 23, R. 25, R. 29 and R. 30. Respondent R. 15, R. 18 and R. 30 recall his credit of enabling railway connectivity in Nabarangpur and Malkangiri. R. 15 contradicts his credibility by saying that he is not a strong leader, he won

the election due to Naveen Pattanik's popularity. Balabhadra Majhi blames the party which established him as politician; hence I (R. 24) think he cannot be recognized as a leader who even rationally repositions himself. R. 14 highlighted people's reaction in the social media about Balbhadra Majhi's emotional media bytes and criticize him as a seasonal MP who rarely visited constituency post-election.

3.3. Complete repositioning of politician joining new party

The analysis of the interviews shows that Baijayant Panda and Soumya Ranjan Patnaik have completely repositioned themselves in terms of politicians and media tycoon characteristics through the platform of political party BJP and BJD respectively (R4, R6, R10, R18, R16, R22).

Table 5. Complete repositioning of the politician joining new party

Complete repositioning	Old perception	New Party	New perception
Soumya Ranjan Pattnaik	Party Founder (*Aama Odisha Party*), Parliamentarian, Editor and Media owner, Film Producer, Good orator	BJD	Parliamentarian, Assembly Members, Media tycoon, Writer, Organizer, Good orator
Baijayant Panda	Parliamentarian, industrialist, Media tycoon, Writer, Spoke person	BJP	National Vice President, State In-charge (Assam) Parliamentarian, industrialist, Media tycoon, Writer, Good orator

3.2.3.1 The researchers clarified in detail with the respondents regarding the complete repositioning which has both functional and rationality aspect. Within the subject analysis the researchers also found very conducive feedback from the respondents to compare and segregate each party switcher in 2 by 2 matrix quadrant. Moreover, by summing the responses across the entire respondents, the researcher narrowed down following party switchers into complete repositioning.

> R. 20, an academician who has followed politics minutely says with confidence that "Soumya Ranjan Pattnaik is also a tall leader. He has treaded into many walks of life. Pattanik carries the political legacy of his

father-in-law late Janaki Balabha Pattanik, former chief minister of Odisha. Soumya Ranjan the founder of Aama Odisha Party joined the BJD and was nominated to Rajya Sabha. He was also elected to Odisha Assembly on a BJD ticket in 2019.

R. 10 a senior journalist opines that before joining BJD, Soumy Ranjan was known to be a ruthless critic of BJD and state chief minister Naveen Pattanik. The editor-politician is also a supporter of the cause of farmers and leading the agitation against the fraudulent

chit fund companies that looted poor people of the state. He also owns various businesses, media organizations, academic institutions and film production companies.

In an interview with voter (R. 29) a homemaker said he has changed party but as a person, he has not abundant his working for causes. "I think Soumya Ranjan is a multifaceted personality who deserves place in the complete repositioning quadrant" she said.

3.2.3.1 Respondent R.1 during the interview elaborated on the political career of Baijayant Panda. He said that Panda was from a renowned industrialist family of the state but nominated to Rajya Sabha and entered into electoral politics in 2002. He is a writer and columnist whose wife leads a media house.

R. 2and R. 7 recall:

> The son of a well-known industrialist, Baijayant Panda was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 2002 by the BJD. The party also appointed him as a leader to the Upper House of the Parliament for a period of seven years. His ability to connect with the central leader and closeness to Naveen Pattanik brought acceptance in the party as well as among the voters in the constituency. His participation in the parliament debate on the issues of the state and nation was remarkable which drew the attention of the people of Odisha.

R. 17 intentionally hinted that the blue-eyed boy of the state chief minister was also media and people-friendly in his interaction. R. 24 claimed that he had won the hearts of the Kendrapara people in 2009 by winning in a big margin.

Respondents R. 1, R. 13, R. 19, R. 24, R. 26 and R. 30 hold the opinion that though he lost the Lok Sabha election from Kendrapara in 2019 yet he is able to reposition himself as the national vice president of BJP. He also proved his organizing ability as the state election in charge during the last assembly election in Assam.

Panda has consolidated his position within the BJP through various portfolios and assignments.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The study followed the framework of "An analysis of the repositioning of the 'BMW Mini' brand" Simms, C. and Trott, P. (2007) and "An analysis of celebrity repositioning through reality television" (Kabra, S., Dass, S. and Popli, S. (2021). The research study explored the repositioning of the party switcher politicians among the three major parties of the state. The politicians are depicting their present repositioning status in the election. The present research paper contributes to the field of political engagement of the party and politicians providing the regional perspective of the state into a wider domain of democracy. Party switching is largely a global phenomenon but present research focused on the state of Odisha where in-depth study in this particular area has not be conducted.

The findings are in relation to the literature review that perceives the politicians as brands that are often not maintained. The brand positioning mostly in the regional context as observed depends on the party rather than a candidate or politician. The responses of the interviewees indicate that some of the politicians could emotionally reposition themselves, while some are repositioning rationally themselves, many could complete repositioning through party switching. There are some politicians who could not come into the quadrant and failed to reposition themselves after -party switching.

Moreover, the findings of the interviews were analyzed in the light of the framework used in (Simms and Tortt 2007), the four quadrants namely; positioned maintained, emotional repositioning, rational repositioning, and complete repositioning. The analysis of the preferences made by the respondents is indicative of voters' perception and responses to the politicians who switched parties. Politicians as parliamentarians or assembly members were the quintessential examples of "great politicians" until they were in a party. Most of the party switchers are repositories of negative image and bad reputation until they have repositioned in the new party. According to the respondents Baijayant Panda and Soumyaranjan Pattnaik are the redeemed politicians. Thus they have

rationally repositioned themselves according to   the framework Simms and Tortt (2007).

Politicians (Brand) Repositioning Quadrant

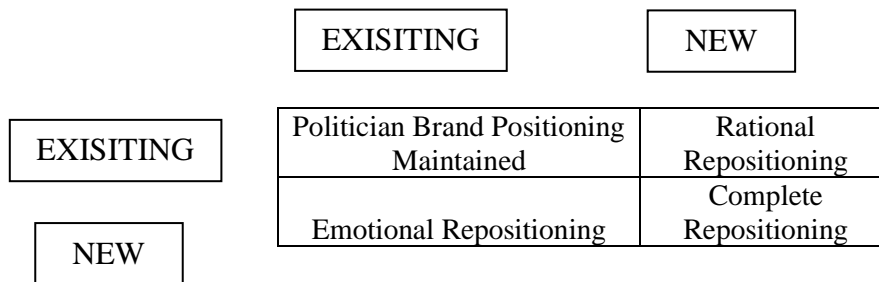|	EXISITING	NEW
EXISITING	Politician Brand Positioning Maintained	Rational Repositioning
NEW	Emotional Repositioning	Complete Repositioning

Figure1. Celebrity repositioning framework as adapted from the work of Simms and Trott (2007) after the analysis of the in-depth interviews and social media sentiments.

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Baijayant Panda who has been building his political career and image carefully further aggrandized it through a new political party as a veteran politician, columnist, orator and debater. According to the respondents, Panda should occupy the position of "complete repositioning" in the Simms and Tortt (2007) framework as he has added new functions to his portfolio which connects to voters directly. In the case of Soumya Ranjan maintaining the position found to be unstable yet the respondents agree by his ability to lead various walks of life that exposes his (functional and symbolic) complete repositioning.

According to respondents, most of the party switchers fall into two categories: firstly under the emotional or symbolic quadrant where the politician fails to base emotional or symbolic characteristics; secondly where the politicians' maintain the symbolic characteristics in the new party. Pratyusha Rajeswari Singh, the widow of former MP (2014) Hemendra Singh with the affiliation to the royal family joined BJP but failed to connect people symbolically as well as functionally. Damodar Rout a charismatic leader and follower of Biju legacy switched into BJP but as he remained mostly controversial, sooner he became a waning politician. Nabokishore Das, a senior congress leader, many time legislator, pro people leader, jumped into BJD poised himself as dynamic grassroots level leader. Balabhdra Majhi a technocrat, representative of a community switched as BJP candidate taking development agenda as an important local issues repositioned himself. Both

Nabakishore and Balabhadra projected themselves as the 'son of soil' and 'people's leader' symbolically to build their position in the party.

The analysis proves that politician as brand derives from a context of social esteem, effective image, reputation or mocking based on the countless judgments both negative and positive which gather in mass media, public domain on the internet and becomes subject of public discourse (Stewart and Giles, 2002, p1). This research sets out to the extent politician brands themselves with a positive image to reposition themselves through switching party. The results of the interviews appear that the new and old positions mostly vary and differ with many of the politicians. In the case of Nabakishore Das, the result showcases him as a symbolic or emotional politician due to his campaign '*prathame mati, pare party*' meaning people and soil first then only the party.

It is, therefore, possible for politicians to repositioning themselves. Mostly in three ways, it is possible to view the politicians repositioning: the symbolic (emotional), the functional (rational) and complete re-positioning (emotional and symbolic) as suggested in the literature Simms and Trotts (2007), Gokeriket al. (2018).

5. Limitations and future research
The research focused on the study of repositioning with the sample size of 30 respondents who are academicians, senior journalists and voters mostly residents of

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha. The research is constrained to politicians of Odisha who are members of national and regional parties. Since the intention of the research was to limit it to the regional perspective of repositioning study, the wider scope of studying other regions or national politics generate scope for future research activities. This paper focuses only on politicians from the three major parties active in Odisha politics. As regard the methodology and approach, an opportunity can be created to study the change, shift and repositioning of politicians over the time with a longitudinal research method. Study was made with sole intention of academic purpose.

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