

# Campaign Management and Electoral Performance in Urban Local Governance: A Strategic Management Perspective on the 2026 Municipal Corporation Elections in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

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## Abstract

Political campaign management is now becoming an essential strategic function in the contemporary democratic system. While there is substantial research on the management of campaigns in parliamentary and assembly elections, but relatively very little research on municipal elections, despite their growing political significance. The present study examines the relationship between campaign management structures and electoral performance in Mandi Municipal Corporation elections, 2026, Himachal Pradesh. In this study, we have used official electoral records, ward-wise voters' data, polling reports, candidate data, organisational deployment records and election results. The study analyses the effect of strategic deployment of organisational resources on electoral results. The findings demonstrate that structured ward-level management, booth-level voter mobilisation, deployment of leadership and a coordinated campaign architecture played a significant role in electoral success. The study also considers the impact of strategic campaign management on electoral results. The findings suggest that systematic coordination of campaigns, mobilisation of voters at the booth level, structured deployment of the organisation and allocation of leadership significantly influenced electoral success. The study develops an index of Campaign Deployment (CDI) and an index of Ward Competitiveness (WCI) to measure organisational effectiveness and electoral competition. The findings suggest that wards with higher levels of campaign deployment generally had better electoral performance. The paper contributes to the literature on political campaign management, strategic management and political marketing by providing empirical evidence from an urban local body election in a Himalayan state.

**Keywords:** Campaign Management, Electoral Performance, Strategic Management, Political Marketing, Municipal Elections, Voter Mobilisation.

## 1. Introduction

Political campaigns have increasingly evolved from traditional electoral activities to sophisticated management exercises that involve strategic planning, organisational

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coordination, resource allocation, voter targeting, and performance monitoring (Johnson, 2016; Newman, 1999). Today, political parties are complex organisations, applying management principles similar to those employed in the corporate world (Porter, 1985; Barney, 1991). The growing professionalisation of election campaigns has made campaign management a specialised field combining strategic management, political marketing, communication management and voter relationship management (Kotler & Kotler, 1999; Lees-Marshment, 2014). Electoral success now not solely dependent on ideology or the popularity of the candidate but also on organisational effectiveness and campaign execution.

Political campaign management in India has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention in national and state elections. However, despite their importance for democratic governance and citizen participation, local body elections are relatively under-researched. Municipal elections offer a unique vantage point to examine campaign management, as election results are more prone to be influenced by local tactics, personal networks and ward-based mobilisation instead of grand ideological narratives.

The municipal level is especially useful for the study of campaign management, because electoral outcomes are often decided by localised mobilisation, interpersonal networks, grassroots organisation, and ward-level strategic deployment. Nevertheless, municipal elections are relatively understudied in political and management literature.

The Municipal Corporation Mandi Elections, 2026 are a major case to study the campaign management practices in urban local governance. The election was held in fifteen wards, with over 31,000 registered voters, and involved structured campaign deployment by the major political parties and extensive ward-level mobilisation efforts. The present research is carried out to investigate the role of campaign management structures in electoral success in Municipal Corporation Mandi Elections 2026 from the perspective of strategic management.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Political Campaign Management**

Political campaign management is the systematic planning, coordination, implementation and control of activities aimed at influencing voter behaviour and maximising election outcomes. Campaign management is the process of gathering resources, making communication plans, deploying leadership, reaching out to voters, and coordinating the organisation (Johnson, 2016; Newman, 1999).

### **2.2 The Strategic Management Theory**

Strategic management is concerned with developing and using organisational capabilities to gain a competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). Political parties are increasingly using strategic management frameworks to improve their electoral competitiveness.

### **2.3 Political Marketing**

Political marketing considers political parties and candidates as political brands competing in an electoral marketplace (Kotler & Kotler, 1999). So, voter segmentation, positioning, branding and relationship building are all part of effective campaign management.

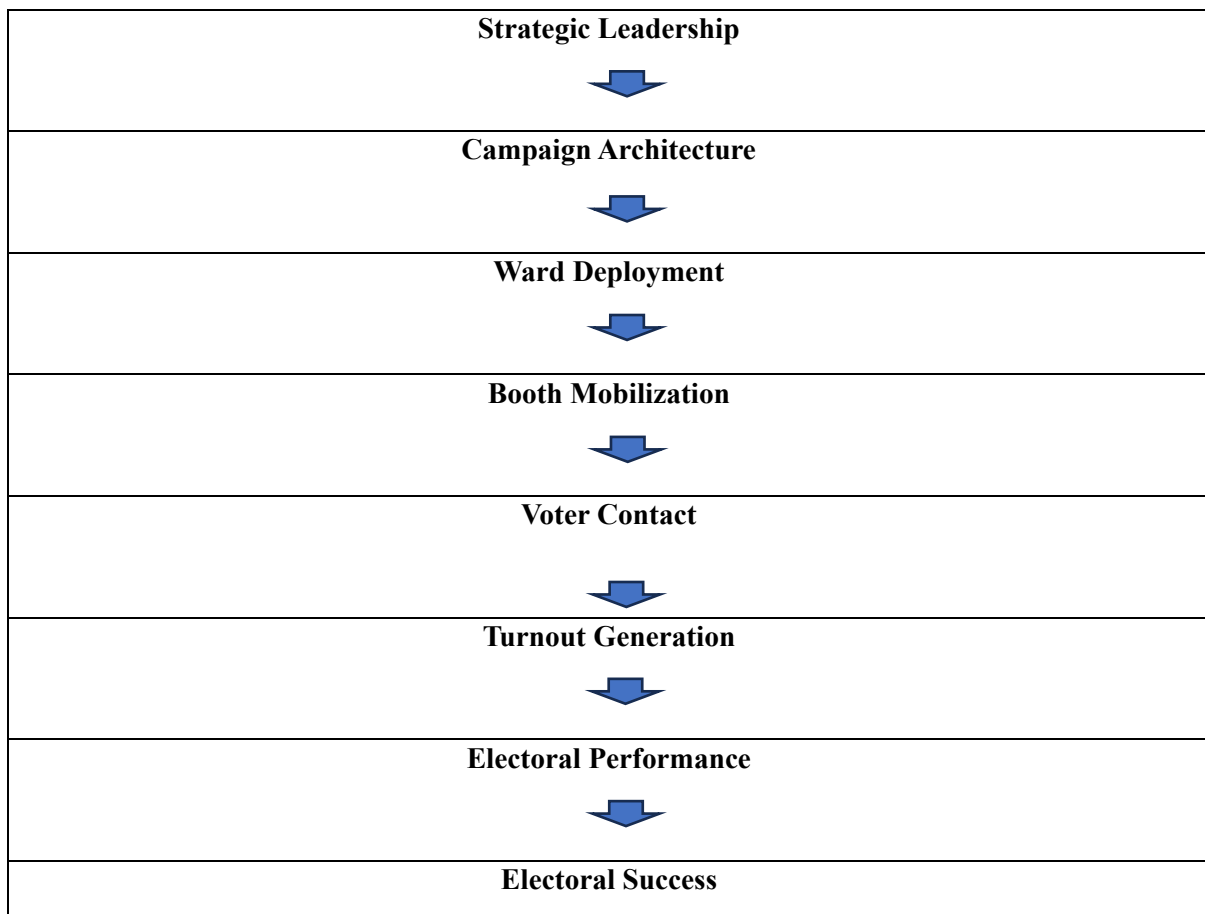
## 2.4 Research Gap

Most of the existing studies are focused on national and state-level elections. There is little empirical evidence on managing municipal election campaigns, especially in the context of Himalayan states and urban local body governance. Most electoral studies are concerned with: Parliamentary Elections, Assembly Elections, Leadership effects, and Voting behaviour. Very few studies have focused on: Management of municipal election campaigns, Deployment of booth-level organisation, Political resource allocation on a ward-wise basis, and campaign command structures at the level of urban local bodies.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the campaign management structures used for elections of the Municipal Corporation in Mandi for 2026.
2. To explore the relationship between organisational deployment and electoral performance.
3. To study ward-level voter turnout patterns.
4. To evaluate the competitiveness of electoral wards.
5. Development of a strategic framework for the management of municipal election campaigns.

### Strategic Campaign Management Framework



*This framework integrates strategic management principles with electoral campaign operations.*

#### 4. Methodology

Research Design: The study adopts a descriptive and analytical case-study approach. Study Area: Municipal Corporation Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. Data Sources : 1. Primary Sources : Form-25, Candidate Lists, Form-44 Election Results, Ward-wise and booth-wise polling data., Ward-wise voter statistics, Party Organisational Deployment Records. 2. Secondary Sources: Election Commission Notifications, Academic literature, Government reports, Media Reports and Press Releases

Analytical Techniques: Descriptive Statistics, Comparative ward analysis, Vote Share Analysis, Campaign Deployment Index (CDI), Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI)

#### 5. Electoral Profile of Municipal Corporation Mandi

The Municipal Corporation Mandi election consisted of 15 wards with a total electorate of 31,263 voters. **The election was carried out only in 14 wards.**

Category	Voters
Male Voters	15,368
Female Voters	15,895
Total Voters	31,263

Female voters slightly outnumbered male voters, indicating the strategic importance of gender-sensitive campaign approaches. Khaliyar emerged as the largest ward with approximately 2,892 voters. Palace Colony-I represented the smallest ward with approximately 1,327 voters.

**Table 1: Ward-wise Electoral Competitiveness, Turnout and Campaign Effectiveness**

Ward	Total Voters	Votes Polled	Turnout (%)	Winning Margin	Electoral Competitiveness
Khaliyar	2892	1987	68.71	24	Very High
Purani Mandi	1812	1258	69.43	17	Very High
Paddal	1741	1262	72.49	119	High
Nela	2227	1523	68.39	123	High
Mangwain	2118	1396	65.91	198	Moderate
Sanyard	1990	1441	72.41	297	Low
Talyahar	2113	1484	70.23	98	High
Palace Colony-I	1327	856	64.51	278	Low

Palace Colony-II	2238	1578	70.51	400	Very Low
Suhra	2085	1433	68.73	155	Moderate
Samkhetar	2242	1554	69.31	377	Very Low
Bhagwahan	2265	1578	69.67	133	High
Thanera	2111	1359	64.38	609	Very Low
Dhoundhi	2083	1494	71.72	141	High

*Source: Compiled from Ward-wise Polling Report and Form-44 Return of Election.*

## 6. Campaign Management Architecture

### BJP Campaign Structure:

The BJP adopted a decentralised yet coordinated management model. Each ward was assigned dedicated in-charges and co-in-charges drawn from legislators, party office bearers, district leaders, former councillors, and organisational functionaries.

**The BJP used a decentralised model of campaign management marked by:**

Ward Prabharis, Co-Prabharis, Ex-Councillors, District Office Bearers, Morcha Representatives

This structure is similar to a multi-layer strategic management system that allows for efficient communication and coordination. This structure ensured the effective distribution of resources and the ability to reach voters.

### Congress Organisational Structure:

The Congress established a campaign committee headed by senior observers and ministers. Ward-specific coordinators were also appointed. The organisation was to have centralised coordination and support of ward-level leadership.

### The Congress formed:

Senior Observer, Election In-Charges, Ward Coordinators, Media Teams, Social Media Teams. The campaign structure demonstrated strategic oversight at the central level with coordination at the ward level.

## 7. Electoral Performance Analysis

**Table 2: Ward-wise Winning Margin and Vote Share**

Ward	Winner	Votes	Runner-Up	Votes	Margin	Vote Share (%)
Khaliyar	Independent	719	BJP	695	24	36.19

Purani Mandi	BJP	637	Congress	620	17	50.64
Paddal	BJP	687	Congress	568	119	54.44
Nela	Congress	805	BJP	682	123	52.86
Mangwain	BJP	789	Congress	591	198	56.52
Sanyard	BJP	869	Congress	572	297	60.31
Talyahar	BJP	619	Congress	521	98	41.71
Palace Colony-I	BJP	500	Congress	222	278	58.41
Palace Colony-II	BJP	981	Congress	581	400	62.17
Suhra	BJP	779	Congress	624	155	54.36
Samkhetar	BJP	860	Congress	483	377	55.34

*The BJP shows effective electoral dominance across most wards.*

### 8. Ward Competitiveness Analysis

#### Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI) :

To measure the degree of electoral competition in wards, a Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI) was developed. The index compares the margin of victory to the total number of valid votes cast in a ward, to assess the closeness of electoral contests.

#### Formula

$$WCI = (\text{Victory Margin} \div \text{Total Valid Votes}) \times 100$$

#### Interpretation Scale :

WCI Value	Interpretation
0–5	Highly Competitive
5–10	Competitive
10–20	Moderately Competitive
Above 20	Safe Ward

A lower WCI indicates a closely contested election, whereas a higher WCI indicates electoral dominance by the winning candidate or political party.

**Table 3. Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI)**

Ward	Victory Margin	Valid Votes	WCI
Khaliyar	24	1987	1.21
Purani Mandi	17	1258	1.35
Talyahar	98	1484	6.60
Nela	123	1523	8.08
Paddal	119	1262	9.43
Bhagwahan	133	1488	8.94
Dhoundhi	141	1494	9.44
Suhra	155	1433	10.82
Mangwain	198	1396	14.18
Sanyard	297	1441	20.61
Samkhetar	377	1554	24.26
Palace Colony-II	400	1578	25.35
Palace Colony-I	278	856	32.48
Thanera	609	1359	44.81

**Interpretation:**

The Ward Competitiveness Index reveals substantial variation in electoral competition across the Municipal Corporation Mandi election.

The most competitive wards in the election were Khaliyar (1.21) and Purani Mandi (1.35). The very low values of the WCI show that electoral outcomes were determined by a very small number of votes, making these wards very sensitive to the effectiveness of the campaign, voter mobilisation and the management of polling day. In these wards, even a little better conduct of the campaign could have changed the final outcome.

Another group of Talyahar (6.60), Nela (8.08), Bhagwahan (8.94), Paddal (9.43) and Dhoundhi (9.44) are in the competitive category. In these wards, the elections were competitive and the voter support was fairly evenly divided. The results in these wards suggest that campaign management, voter contact programs, booth-level coordination and local candidate appeal played an important role in determining electoral success.

Suhra (10.82) and Mangwain (14.18) are considered fairly competitive wards. Electoral competition was still visible, but the winning candidates had a relatively stronger advantage on their rivals, reducing electoral uncertainty.

On the other hand, Sanyard (20.61), Samkhetar (24.26), Palace Colony-II (25.35), Palace Colony-I (32.48) and Thanera (44.81) were found to be safe wards. Within these wards, we observed clear signs of organizational dominance and high voter consolidation for the winning party. Thanera's very high WCI score suggests that the ward was a political bastion, where long-term organizational presence, political branding, leadership credibility and voter loyalty combined to produce a crushing electoral advantage.

From a strategic management perspective, the WCI shows that campaign management varies across electoral contexts. In the case of competitive wards, winning an election is more about voter mobilization and execution of the campaign. In the case of safe wards, the outcome of an election is more about organizational strength, political branding and sustained grassroots penetration. Thus, the WCI is a useful managerial tool for identifying where political parties should focus campaign resources, leadership deployment and voter engagement efforts in future elections.

## 9. Campaign Deployment Analysis

### Campaign Deployment Index (CDI)

To assess the intensity of organisational resource allocation in the Municipal Corporation Mandi elections, a Campaign Deployment Index (CDI) was constructed. The index measures the level of campaign management attention given to each of the ward through the appointment of election in-charges, co-in-charges, coordinators and other campaign functionaries.

#### Formula :

CDI = Number of Assigned Campaign Functionaries

CDI Classification

Number of Functionaries	CDI Category
1–2	Low
3–4	Medium
5 or Above	High

This is based on the assumption that more organisational deployment results in better voter mobilisation, campaign co-ordination, booth management and strategic communication, which in turn improves electoral performance.

**Table 4. Campaign Deployment Index (CDI)**

Ward	Total Leaders Assigned	CDI
Khaliyar	3	Medium
Purani Mandi	3	Medium
Paddal	5	High

Nela	3	Medium
Mangwain	5	High
Sanyard	3	Medium
Talyahar	3	Medium
Palace Colony-I	3	Medium
Palace Colony-II	3	Medium
Suhra	3	Medium
Bhagwahan	3	Medium
Thanera	3	Medium
Dhoundhi	3	Medium

### **Interpretation :**

The Campaign Deployment Index indicates that political parties employed distinct organisational strategies in different wards. In most wards, there was a medium level of campaign deployment, which indicates a standard organisational structure of ward in-charges, co-in-charges, and local coordinators. This enabled very rudimentary campaign functions, voter contact and coordination at the booth level across the Municipal Corporation.

However, Paddal and Mangwain wards, where more campaign functionaries were deployed, scored high on the CDI. The electoral importance, demographic composition and competitive political environment made these wards strategically important. The use of organisational resources in these wards reflects a strategic management approach that finally enhances voter mobilisation and campaign effectiveness.

Looking at CDI and electoral outcomes suggests a few important patterns. CDI scored high in Paddal, and the constituency registered one of the highest voter turnout rates in the election (72.49%) and secured a comfortable victory margin. Mangwain, too, produced a decisive result despite being categorised as a moderately competitive ward. The results indicate that the deployment of intensive campaigns might have been instrumental in effective voter mobilisation and electoral consolidation.

The analysis also demonstrates that high electoral performance was achieved in several wards with medium CDI scores, including Thanera, Palace Colony-II, Samkhetar and Sanyard. These wards provided huge majorities based on normal organisational deployment. This suggests that the mere deployment of campaigns cannot account for electoral success. Electoral results were also strongly influenced by long-term organisational penetration, political branding, candidate credibility and historic voter alignment.

When analysed along with the Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI), an important pattern emerges. In competitive wards like Khaliyar, Purani Mandi, Paddal, Nela and Bhagwahan, intensive campaign engagement and voter contact programmes were required. On the other hand, the organisational strongholds like Thanera, Palace Colony-II and Samkhetar saw less electoral uncertainty and more consolidation of voters.

The CDI highlights the importance of resource allocation in political campaigns for strategic management. Organisations commit managerial resources to key businesses, and political parties commit campaign personnel to wards expected to yield the greatest electoral return. The findings suggest that campaign deployment is a strategic capability that improves organisational effectiveness, enhances voter mobilisation and improves electoral performance.

### **Managerial Implications of CDI :**

The Campaign Deployment Index offers a helpful tool for planning future elections. It can be used by political parties to:

1. Identify the areas that need more organisational support.
2. Assign leaders based on electoral competitiveness.
3. Track the intensity of the campaign in a particular ward or area.
4. Measure the effectiveness of strategies of resource deployment.
5. Link organisational planning with voter mobilisation goals.

The CDI thus provides an operational framework for measuring the effectiveness of campaign management and shows the contribution of organisational deployment to election success in urban local body elections.

### **10. Strategic Ward Classification Analysis**

The study also develops a Strategic Ward Classification Framework based on voter turnout, electoral competitiveness and victory margins. This further enhances the understanding of electoral dynamics.

The framework allows identification of wards where a different approach to campaign management is needed. Based on the Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI) and the levels of turnout, there are four broad categories:

- 1. Strategic Battleground Wards;** Khaliyar and Purani Mandi were the most competitive wards with very close margins of 24 and 17 votes, respectively. In such wards, there was high electoral uncertainty and the decisive determinants of electoral outcomes were campaign execution, voter mobilisation and polling day management.
- 2. Competitive Growth Wards ;** Paddal, Nela, Bhagwahan, Dhoundhi and Talyahar had moderate to high electoral competition with relatively strong voter participation. These are important growth wards where effective organisation and voter outreach had a significant impact on electoral performance.

- 3. Moderate Competitive Wards:** Mangwain and Suhra had moderate victory margins and were relatively competitive elections. Although campaign efforts still mattered, the winning candidates had a relatively greater advantage in the electoral arena.
- 4. Organisational strongholds:** Thanera, Palace Colony-II, Palace Colony-I, Samkhetar and Sanyard had large victory margins and high WCI values indicating strong organisational penetration and consolidated support from the voters. The election results in these wards were less a function of the immediate campaign and more a function of the long-term party organisation, political branding, candidate credibility and voter loyalty.

From a management perspective, this classification provides a useful framework for allocation of campaign resources. Political parties should focus on leadership deployment and mobilisation of voters, while in stronghold wards, parties should focus on retention of voters and maintenance of organisational structures.

### **11. Polling-Day Mobilisation Analysis**

The ward-wise polling data provides important insights into voter mobilisation behaviour on polling day. Analysis of hourly polling trends indicates a significant increase in the afternoon period across most wards, indicating the effectiveness of voter-contact programmes, transportation support mechanisms, booth-level coordination and last-mile mobilisation efforts.

**For instance**, Khaliyar recorded around 16.08 percent polling till 9:00 AM, which rose to 34.23 percent by 11:00 AM and finally reached 68.71 percent at the close of polling. Similar trends were seen in Purani Mandi, Paddal, Nela, Talyahar and Dhoundhi where a good percentage of voters turned out in the latter half of the polling day.

The analysis shows that in municipal elections electoral performance is influenced not only by pre-election campaign activities but also by polling-day management. Booth coordination, voter reminders, transport arrangements and continuous voter-contact programmes seem to have played a crucial role in generating turnout.

The polling day operation is a crucial strategic weapon in the armoury of campaign management. Political organisations that can mobilise supporters in the closing stages of the vote are more likely to translate their organisational strength into electoral success. These results highlight the need to integrate polling day administration into broader campaign planning models. They show the role of mobilising voters as an important intermediate process linking organisational deployment to electoral outcomes.

### **12. Municipal Campaign Management Framework (MCMF)**

The study proposes a Municipal Campaign Management Framework (MCMF) by integrating strategic management principles with electoral campaign operations, based on the findings of the Municipal Corporation Mandi Elections 2026.

**The framework has six components related to each other:**

- 1. Strategic Leadership:** Campaign strategies were formulated, and the strategic directions were given by Senior political leaders, election observers, district coordinators and

campaign managers.

- 2. Campaign Architecture:** Political parties develop a hierarchy of ward in-charges, co-in-charges, booth committees, media teams and voter outreach mechanisms.
- 3. Ward-Level Deployment:** Organisational resources are deployed in the wards based on electoral competitiveness, demographic characteristics, and political importance.
- 4. Booth Level Mobilisation:** Voter identification and voter-contact programmes were carried out to increase voter turnout.
- 5. Voter Participation:** Effective mobilisation efforts increased voter engagement and electoral participation.
- 6. Electoral Performance:** Voter mobilisation, organisational coordination, and campaign execution collectively improve electoral outcomes.

This framework shows that campaign management is a strategic organisational capability. Similar to business organisations that allocate managerial resources to achieve competitive advantage, political parties deploy organisational resources to maximise electoral performance. Consequently, electoral success emerges not only from candidate popularity or party affiliation but also from the effectiveness of campaign management systems.

The framework contributes to the literature on political campaign management by providing a practical model for analysing municipal election campaigns from a strategic management perspective. The framework can be used in future studies for other urban local body elections and can be tested for its applicability across different political and institutional contexts.

### 13. Party Performance Analysis

**Table 5: Party-wise Performance**

Party	Seats Won	Seat Share (%)
BJP	12	85.71
Congress	1	7.14
Independent	1	7.14

*The BJP won an overwhelming victory, taking more than four-fifths of all the available seats.*

### 14. Strategic Interpretation

The findings demonstrate that campaign management acted as a strategic capability influencing election results.

The BJP campaign displayed characteristics associated with successful strategic organisations:

- Structured hierarchy
- Decentralised execution
- Resource mobilization

- Ward-level responsibility
- Coordination at the booth level.

The relationship between CDI and electoral success implies that organisational capacity is an important factor in political performance.

## **15. Conclusion**

The Municipal Corporation Mandi Elections 2026 provide an important case to understand electoral campaigns in the context of strategic management. The findings of the study show that the municipal electoral outcomes are not only shaped by the characteristics of the candidates and their party attachment, but also by the effectiveness of the campaign architecture, the organisational deployment, the voter mobilisation and the polling-day management. The elections saw well-organised campaign efforts by the major political parties, massive coordination at the ward level, and organised attempts to increase voter turnout across the Municipal Corporation.

A competitiveness analysis of elections revealed considerable differences at the ward level. Wards such as Khaliyar and Purani Mandi were competitive constituencies where electoral outcomes were decided by narrow victory margins, while wards such as Thanera, Palace Colony-II and Samkhetar were organisational strongholds with relatively low electoral uncertainty. These differences show the importance of having differentiated campaign strategies for local electoral conditions and not a one-size-fits-all campaign across all wards.

The Campaign Deployment Index (CDI) and Ward Competitiveness Index (WCI) developed in this study provide useful managerial tools to understand campaign intensity and electoral competition. While campaign deployment alone cannot explain electoral success, the results suggest that organisational capability, leadership deployment, penetration of the grassroots, voter-contact programmes and good booth management all contribute to better electoral performance. The study also reveals that campaign management is a strategic capability used by political parties to mobilise resources, coordinate organisational activities and increase voter engagement.

The analysis of the polling day shows that a large share of the turnout was mobilised in the last phase of polling, stressing the importance of booth coordination, reminding voters, providing transport, and last-mile mobilisation. These results imply that successful electoral campaigns are not only about pre-election communication, but also about effective implementation on polling day to convert organisational strength into electoral results.

The main contribution of the study is that it builds the Municipal Campaign Management Framework (MCMF), conceptualising electoral campaigns as integrated management systems consisting of strategic leadership, campaign architecture, ward-level deployment, booth-level mobilisation, voter participation and electoral performance. It offers a useful model for political parties, campaign managers and researchers interested in understanding the conversion of organisational resources into electoral success in urban local body elections.

The study contributes to the theoretical literature and expands the application of strategic management concepts to the domain of political campaign management. Consistent with the Resource-Based View, organisational networks, leadership resources, local party structures and voter mobilisation capacities are strategic assets that enhance electoral competitiveness. The findings therefore support the argument that political parties are increasingly complex organisations whose success depends on an ability to effectively deploy and co-ordinate resources.

The research adds to the growing body of literature on political campaign management, political marketing and electoral strategy by providing empirical evidence from a municipal election in a Himalayan state. The findings are instructive for the dynamics of grassroots political organisation and campaign execution, given the limited scholarly attention on urban local body elections in India.

Future research could extend the proposed framework by comparison across multiple municipal corporations, longitudinal analysis of electoral campaigns, and including variables such as political branding, digital campaigning, voter perception and organisational capability. Such studies would also contribute to the understanding of the impact of strategic management practices on electoral performance in contemporary democratic regimes.

Finally, we can say that the Municipal Corporation Mandi Elections 2026 revealed that electoral victory is not just a function of political popularity or party identity but also of the effectiveness of the campaign management systems. Political parties that successfully integrate strategic planning, organisational deployment, voter mobilisation, and polling-day execution are more likely to achieve sustainable electoral advantage. Consequently, campaign management should be viewed as a strategic organisational capability and an essential determinant of electoral performance in urban local governance.

### **Discussion:**

The findings support the strategic management perspective that organisational capability contributes significantly to performance outcomes.

The BJP campaign exhibited several characteristics associated with successful organisations:

- Clear command hierarchy.
- Decentralised execution.
- Strategic resource deployment.
- voter mobilisation.
- Grassroots coordination.

The Congress campaign shows organisational preparedness but was relatively less successful in converting campaign resources into electoral victories. The evidence suggests that campaign management functions as a strategic capability that influences electoral outcomes.

### **Managerial Implications :**

1. Political parties should institutionalise ward-level campaign management systems.
2. Booth-level deployment should be treated as a strategic resource.
3. Performance of campaigns should be monitored using indicators such as CDI and WCI.
4. Voter mobilisation strategies and voter data analyses should become an integral component of municipal election management.

### **16. Future Research**

Future research may extend this framework to comparative analyses of municipal elections across different states and political contexts. Future studies may employ regression analysis, comparative municipal studies, longitudinal campaign assessments, and political branding measures to further validate the proposed campaign management framework.

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