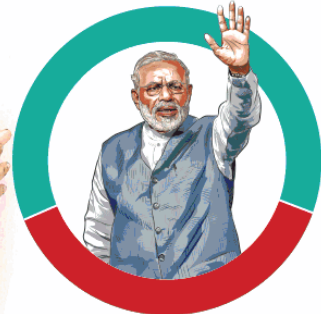# Fast Off the Blocks

The early days of Modi 2.0 get high approval ratings for its decisive political moves in a study by MavenMagnet for *ET Magazine*
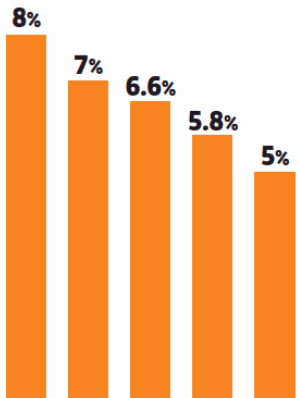
Overall Sentiment for Modi 2.0 in the First 100 Days

64% Favourable

36% Unfavourable

Falling GDP Growth Rate

- 8% — Apr-Jun 2018
- 7% — Jul-Sep 2018
- 6.6% — Oct-Dec 2018
- 5.8% — Jan-Mar 2019
- 5% — Apr-Jun 2019

:: **Suman Layak**

India loved Narendra Modi's first term as prime minister, going by the 2019 election results. How is the country warming up to the initial months of its second-term PM?

To gauge this, *ET Magazine* relied on conversation research agency MavenMagnet. Based in New York and Mumbai, the company uses patented proprietary technology to glean the mood by analysing thousands of conversations online – on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, on forums and blog posts as well as comments on news articles.

The results have one limitation – it does not capture sentiment that has not been expressed online. If it has been expressed online in English, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam, the study captures it.

The results are unequivocal. Modi's approval rating, so to speak, is high currently: 64% of the conversations analysed expressed positive sentiments about the government, with 36% expressing negative sentiments.
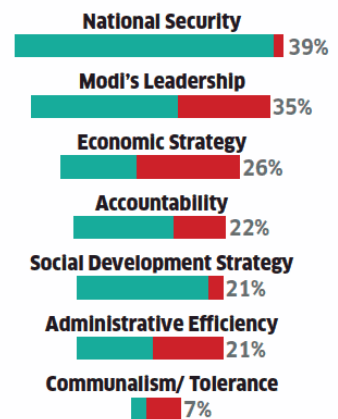
The gains are principally from political decisions such as the abrogation of Special Status for Kashmir in Article 370 and the National Register of Citizens in Assam, while the negatives have predominantly focused on the government's management of the economy.

MavenMagnet analysed more than 10,000 conversations on the government among 8,400 individuals from various sources for 89 days starting May 30, when the government took oath, and ending on August 26. The government completes 100 days on September 6.

The MavenMagnet Brand Aura, which measures impactful words around discussions on the government, shows the name "Modi" having the biggest impact with a mix of positives and negatives. The words with the biggest positive impact are "One India", "Kashmir", "Article 370" and "Amit Shah", while the big negatives are "economy", "tax", "middle class" and "demonetisation".

Among all the conversations, a large share – 39% – men-

Key Conversational Themes Around Modi 2.0

- **National Security** — 39%
- **Modi's Leadership** — 35%
- **Economic Strategy** — 26%
- **Accountability** — 22%
- **Social Development Strategy** — 21%
- **Administrative Efficiency** — 21%
- **Communalism/ Tolerance** — 7%

Percentages denote the share of a particular topic in total conversations; green denotes positive reactions and red negative

■ FAVOURABLE   ■ UNFAVOURABLE
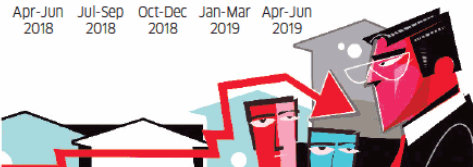
tioned national security and almost all of it were in positive tones. The second most talked-about idea is around the prime minister's leadership of the government – at 35%. Economic strategy and accountability come up at third and fourth with 26% and 22% conversations on them, respectively. (These percentages, when added, exceed 100 as a conversation may have mentioned more than one topic.) Social development strategy (21%), administrative efficiency (21%) and communalism (7%) were the other top conversation themes. Economic strategy and communalism are the two topics where negative reactions overtook positive ones.

Apart from the top topics of conversation, the survey looked at reactions to some specific issues. Kashmir, criminalisation of triple talaq and the progress of the National Register of Citizens drew overwhelming positives for the government. The Union budget presented by Sitharaman on July 5, new announcements and rollback of some of the tax surcharge proposals on August 23 and the target of a $5 trillion economy got high net negative vibes.

Commenting on the findings of the survey, Ritu Ghuwalewala, founder of MavenMagnet, says: "Modi's leadership continues to be a dominant force for NDA. However, we observed some negativity because of perceived false promises and publicity gimmicks."

The survey missed covering conversations around the transfer of ₹1.76 lakh crore by the Reserve Bank of India to the government on August 28, as the announcement came two days after the survey closed. It had also missed the big-bang bank mergers that were announced on August 30 as well as the drop in GDP growth to 5% in the April-June quarter. However, the issue of transfer of funds had been in the air since the Union budget proposals in July and the survey recorded a highly negative reaction to the idea up to August 26.

Ghuwalewala also says: "'Economic Strategy' is the primary factor that drove negativity around Modi 2.0 in the first 100 days, led by the current state of economy that was seen as a failure of the first term, and disappointing Union Budget proposals."

Of all the conversations on economic strategy, 30% discussed fiscal policy. The survey noted 22% negative reaction compared with 8% positive on this topic. Around 16% of the conversations on the economy were about employment generation, and 14% were negative.

Conversational research picks up cues from online conversations among a large number of people – and therefore the set can be classified as those having access to the internet and an inclination to engage in such conversations. In comparison to a normal survey, conversational research avoids leading the participant through a choice of questions.
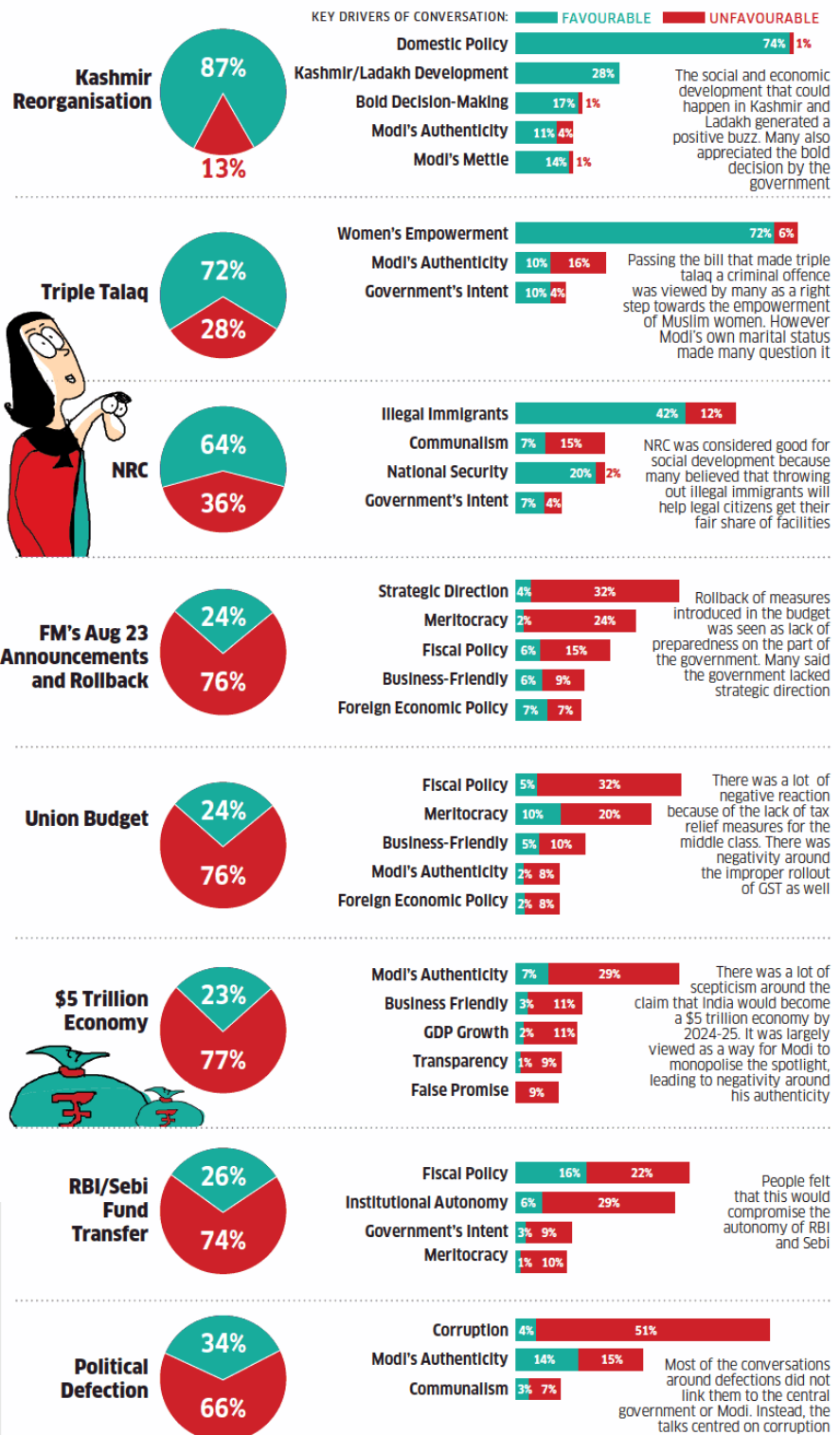
One more tool used by MavenMagnet is called Brand Association Meter and this shows perception around the government are in positive territory on "trust" and "respect", but is neutral on "hope".
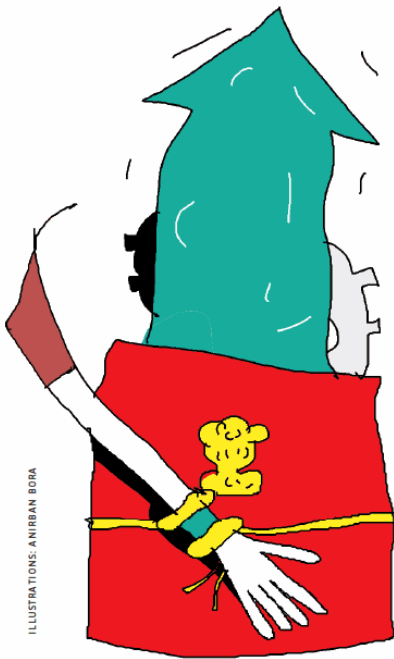
ET Magazine also spoke to industrialist Harsh Goenka on his views on the government's performance and he felt the first 100 days have been "action-packed". He says: "The Modi government has shown decisiveness and boldness in dealing with long-pending social and political issues. The government has also been responsive to the needs of industry and investors. I am confident that there will be many more initiatives aimed at boosting exports, rural demand and reforms." ◼

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Methodology

MavenMagnet, a multinational company, analysed 10,900 online conversations of 8,400 individuals between May 30 and August 26 this year around the Modi government. These conversations were on various platforms, including news websites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. By analysing these conversations, MavenMagnet identified the most impactful initiatives of the Modi government in its first 89 days and how people perceived them online.
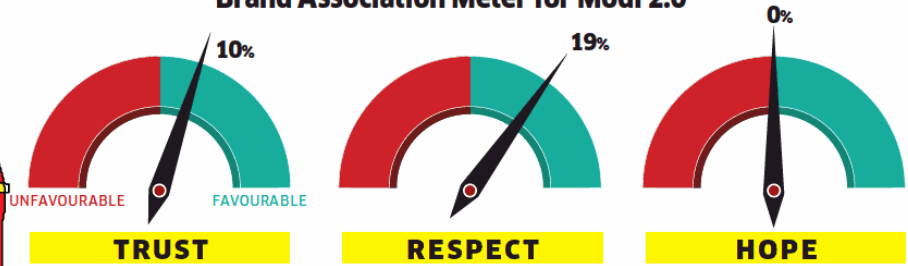
Change in Kashmir's Status Got the Biggest Approval

KEY DRIVERS OF CONVERSATION: FAVOURABLE   UNFAVOURABLE

Kashmir Reorganisation — 87% / 13%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Domestic Policy	74%	1%
Kashmir/Ladakh Development	28%	
Bold Decision-Making	17%	1%
Modi's Authenticity	11%	4%
Modi's Mettle	14%	1%

The social and economic development that could happen in Kashmir and Ladakh generated a positive buzz. Many also appreciated the bold decision by the government

Triple Talaq — 72% / 28%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Women's Empowerment	72%	6%
Modi's Authenticity	10%	16%
Government's Intent	10%	4%

Passing the bill that made triple talaq a criminal offence was viewed by many as a right step towards the empowerment of Muslim women. However Modi's own marital status made many question it

NRC — 64% / 36%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Illegal Immigrants	42%	12%
Communalism	7%	15%
National Security	20%	2%
Government's Intent	7%	4%

NRC was considered good for social development because many believed that throwing out illegal immigrants will help legal citizens get their fair share of facilities

FM's Aug 23 Announcements and Rollback — 24% / 76%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Strategic Direction	4%	32%
Meritocracy	2%	24%
Fiscal Policy	6%	15%
Business-Friendly	6%	9%
Foreign Economic Policy	7%	7%

Rollback of measures introduced in the budget was seen as lack of preparedness on the part of the government. Many said the government lacked strategic direction

Union Budget — 24% / 76%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Fiscal Policy	5%	32%
Meritocracy	10%	20%
Business-Friendly	5%	10%
Modi's Authenticity	2%	8%
Foreign Economic Policy	2%	8%

There was a lot of negative reaction because of the lack of tax relief measures for the middle class. There was negativity around the improper rollout of GST as well

$5 Trillion Economy — 23% / 77%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Modi's Authenticity	7%	29%
Business Friendly	3%	11%
GDP Growth	2%	11%
Transparency	1%	9%
False Promise		9%

There was a lot of scepticism around the claim that India would become a $5 trillion economy by 2024-25. It was largely viewed as a way for Modi to monopolise the spotlight, leading to negativity around his authenticity

RBI/Sebi Fund Transfer — 26% / 74%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Fiscal Policy	16%	22%
Institutional Autonomy	6%	29%
Government's Intent	3%	9%
Meritocracy	1%	10%

People felt that this would compromise the autonomy of RBI and Sebi

Political Defection — 34% / 66%

Driver	Favourable	Unfavourable
Corruption	4%	51%
Modi's Authenticity	14%	15%
Communalism	3%	7%

Most of the conversations around defections did not link them to the central government or Modi. Instead, the talks centred on corruption

Deliberated Disruptions

The ruling BJP has mastered the art of accruing political dividends even as the nation passes through a turbulent economic stretch

ILLUSTRATIONS: ANIRBAN BORA

Brand Association Meter for Modi 2.0

10%
UNFAVOURABLE   FAVOURABLE
TRUST

19%
RESPECT

0%
HOPE

MavenMagnet Association Meter shows, on a scale of -100% to +100%, consumer experience and emotive association of the brand with a particular factor as reflected in the tone of their conversations. Trust is of the highest order, followed by respect and hope

:: **Shantanu Nandan Sharma**

Incumbent governments rarely do well politically when the economy is on a downward slide. We are witnessing an exception: the political equity of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party appears to be on a rapid rise even as citizens on the street, and on the web, candidly say that they are feeling the financial tremors.

So far, Modi 2.0 has been a story of good politics co-existing with a turbulent economy. As an exclusive survey for *ET Magazine* by MavenMagnet – analysing internet conversations of 8,400 individuals till August 26 – has shown, the negative sentiments around the new government arising out of a disappointing budget and overstepping of tax sleuths, among others, are being neutralised by what's being perceived as big positives such as the government's recent action in Kashmir, the ban on triple talaq and roll-out of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, although the last is more a Supreme Court-directed initiative.

So far, Modi 2.0 has been a story of good politics coexisting with a turbulent economy. As captured in the survey, some of the political moves are both bold and disruptive, pushing the first 100 days of Modi 2.0 into a positive trajectory

As captured in the survey, some of those political moves are both bold and disruptive, pushing the first 100 days of Modi 2.0 into a positive trajectory. The overall sentiments for the government are 28% net positive, meaning 64% positive responses as against 36% negative, the survey tells.

The second term of the Modi government, to be precise, will complete 100 days on September 6, five days from now.

Here lies the question: how have PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the one who anchored the recent reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, succeeded in scripting a positive political narrative, forcing the opposition space to shrink further? The answer has several dimensions.

One, Modi 2.0 has demonstrated from day one that it was ready to bite the bullet. The promise of scrapping Ar-

Buzz on **National Security** was Led by Domestic Policy Around Kashmir

FAVOURABLE   **UNFAVOURABLE**

Domestic Policy   90%   2%
Foreign Policy   7%   1%
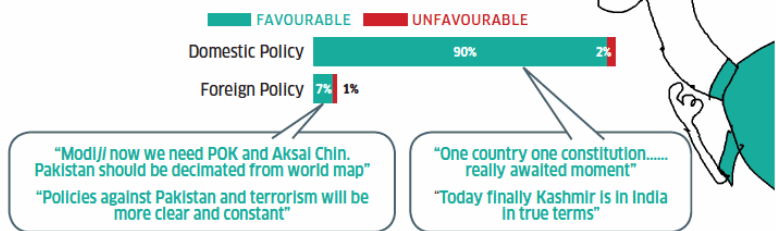
"Modiji now we need POK and Aksai Chin. Pakistan should be decimated from world map"

"Policies against Pakistan and terrorism will be more clear and constant"

"One country one constitution...... really awaited moment"

"Today finally Kashmir is in India in true terms"

(These are verbatim reproductions of conversations around each theme. Conversations in green are positive and in red are negative)

Buzz on **Modi's Leadership** was Led by His Authenticity and Mettle

Modi's Authenticity   27%   27%
Mettle   23%   8%
Capability   4%   6%
Vision   8%
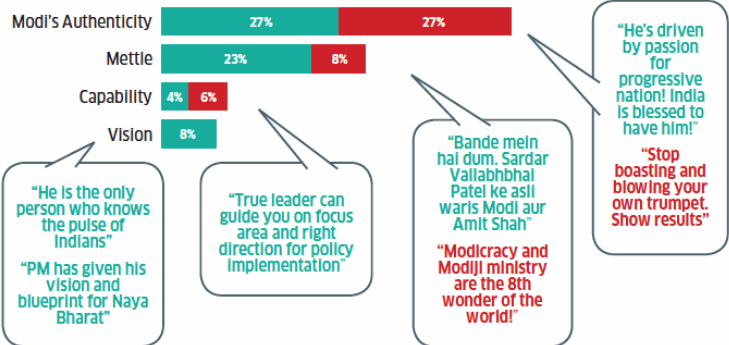
"He is the only person who knows the pulse of Indians"

"PM has given his vision and blueprint for Naya Bharat"

"True leader can guide you on focus area and right direction for policy implementation"

"Bande mein hai dum. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ke asli waris Modi aur Amit Shah"

"Modicracy and Modiji ministry are the 8th wonder of the world!"

"He's driven by passion for progressive nation! India is blessed to have him!"

"Stop boasting and blowing your own trumpet. Show results"

ticle 370 of the Constitution, a provision that bestowed certain autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, had found a place in BJP's manifestos. But no political pundit could predict that Modi would act on it so early in his second term. Not only did Modi-Shah do it, but they went a step ahead by dividing the state into two entities – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and then downgrading their status to Union territories.

The question that may arise here is why should a government with 350-plus members in a house of 543 need to begin its innings with disruptions, pushing the strategically sensitive Kashmir Valley and its eight million citizens into a lockdown? Will a large conglomerate with a near-total monopoly in market share resort to such disruptive tactics while they are ahead with no threats on the horizon?

Modi-Shah found merit in this gamble, something, as the survey has shown, helped it big time to grow its political capital. The move also earned it a bonus in the form of dismantling opposition unity. The government's Kashmir venture received unequivocal support from some unlikely quarters – the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). It also helped in engineering cracks in the principal opposition party, the Congress, with senior leaders such as Jyotiraditya Scindia and Bhupinder Singh Hooda backing the government on Article 370.

Kashmir Valley today is under siege, something that is likely to alienate its citizens further. But the political reality is that the rest of India is rejoicing. No wonder, "One India" is the most popular term in recent online conversations as captured by the survey.

Two, a standalone move, however bold and decisive it may be, can't create positive political vibes of this magnitude unless the party relentlessly moves on an expansionist mode.

Disruptions in Kashmir could at best be a trigger in creating positive political vibes. The real causes have a wider canvass – from the ruling party's insatiable hunger to add more and more members, to the Opposition finding itself in utter disarray

As demonstrated during Modi 1.0 (2014-19) and now, the ruling party uses every tool to consolidate its base and weaken both its opposition as well as allies. On August 5, the day the government announced its decision to abrogate the special status enshrined in Article 370 in the Rajya Sabha, the then Congress chief whip in the House, Bhubaneswar Kalita, tendered his resignation, arguing that the Congress' opposition on this matter was inappropriate. Four days later, Kalita joined the BJP. Further, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United), an NDA ally that abstained from voting on Kashmir, later found itself isolated in the larger electoral arithmetic.
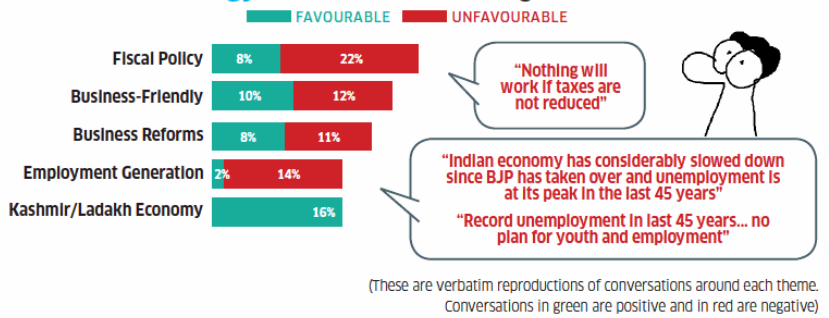
Finally, the BJP has a well-oiled political machinery with an undeclared motto that preparing for elections is not a seasonal affair. The party says it now has 18 crore registered voters, of which 7 crore has been added since July 6.

During the last three months, the BJP installed its government in Karnataka after toppling the JD(S)-Congress regime. It also welcomed four Rajya Sabha MPs belonging to the Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh into its fold. And in Sikkim, a small northeastern state that sends one MP to Lok Sabha and has only 32 assembly seats, the BJP established its footprint after 10 MLAs of its own ally, the Sikkim Democratic Front, defected to its side a fortnight ago. The party is now the principal opposition, standing at a striking distance to form the next government.

So, disruptions in Kashmir could at best be a trigger in creating positive political vibes. The real causes have a wider canvass – from the ruling party's insatiable hunger to add more and more members, to the Opposition finding itself in utter disarray. ■
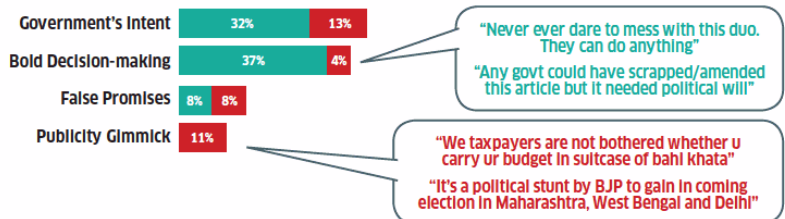
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Economic Strategy Created Maximum Negative Buzz in Modi 2.0

■ FAVOURABLE ■ UNFAVOURABLE

	Favourable	Unfavourable
Fiscal Policy	8%	22%
Business-Friendly	10%	12%
Business Reforms	8%	11%
Employment Generation	2%	14%
Kashmir/Ladakh Economy	16%	

"Nothing will work if taxes are not reduced"

"Indian economy has considerably slowed down since BJP has taken over and unemployment is at its peak in the last 45 years"

"Record unemployment in last 45 years... no plan for youth and employment"

(These are verbatim reproductions of conversations around each theme. Conversations in green are positive and in red are negative)

Buzz on Accountability was Led by Government's Intent

	Favourable	Unfavourable
Government's Intent	32%	13%
Bold Decision-making	37%	4%
False Promises	8%	8%
Publicity Gimmick	11%	

"Never ever dare to mess with this duo. They can do anything"

"Any govt could have scrapped/amended this article but it needed political will"

"We taxpayers are not bothered whether u carry ur budget in suitcase of bahi khata"

"It's a political stunt by BJP to gain in coming election in Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi"

Buzz on Social Development was Led by Perceptions on Kashmir

Kashmir's Social Development	61%	
Women's Empowerment	19%	3%
Banning Illegal Immigrants	11%	3%
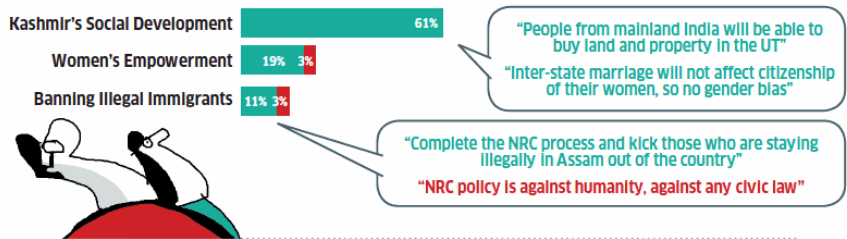
"People from mainland India will be able to buy land and property in the UT"

"Inter-state marriage will not affect citizenship of their women, so no gender bias"

"Complete the NRC process and kick those who are staying illegally in Assam out of the country"

"NRC policy is against humanity, against any civic law"

## Buzz on Administrative Efficiency was Led by Meritocracy
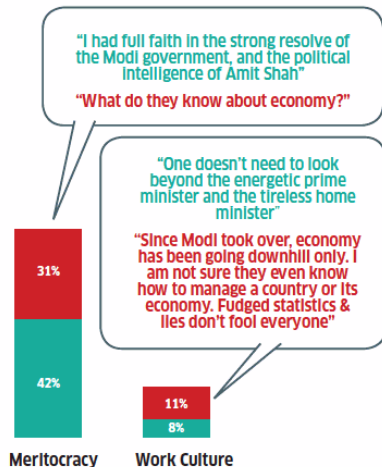
"I had full faith in the strong resolve of the Modi government, and the political intelligence of Amit Shah"

"What do they know about economy?"

"One doesn't need to look beyond the energetic prime minister and the tireless home minister"

"Since Modi took over, economy has been going downhill only. I am not sure they even know how to manage a country or its economy. Fudged statistics & lies don't fool everyone"

Meritocracy		Work Culture	
31%		11%	
42%		8%	

Meritocracy **Work Culture**

Buzz on Communalism was Led by the Perception that NDA Govt is Pro-Hindu
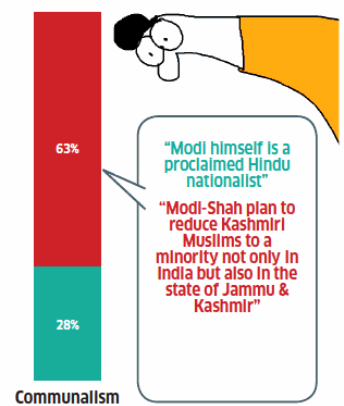
"Modi himself is a proclaimed Hindu nationalist"

"Modi-Shah plan to reduce Kashmiri Muslims to a minority not only in India but also in the state of Jammu & Kashmir"

Communalism	
63%	
28%	

Communalism