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Applying branding theory to political marketing: a pilot study

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Caitlin Kooyman

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ABSTRACT

Recent developments in the research field of political marketing highlights the growing importance and application of branding to politics. However, despite recent advancements in the research field of customer-based brand equity, the methods used to evaluate brand image and performance remain simplistic and provide little insight into strengths and weaknesses of a political brand.

This study pilots Romaniuk's 'Mental Market Share' brand equity measure, as an alternative method to measuring political brand equity (2013). Specifically, the measure is used to analyse the data collected from primary research conducted on the brand image of New Zealand political parties, and secondary research published by CNN and ORC International on the 2016 presidential primary candidates for the Democratic and Republican parties. Participants of both studies indicated the parties or candidate that they perceive as performing well, or having strong policies, on a set list of political issues.

The results show a high correlation between the mental market share of a political brand and election results; this suggests that the more salient a political party or candidate is the more support or votes they will receive. However, in the context of the New Zealand and United States political systems, the method was unable to predict election outcomes. Therefore, mental market share predicts the popularity, or popular vote, of a political brand. Future research should develop the methodological design of mental market share to account for the unique structure of a country or electorate's political system.

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