# Editorial: Global Political Marketing – The Future and Aspirations of Political Marketing

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The last decade has seen shock election victories, from Brexit, the return of President Trump, the emergence of political movements and communities, the spread of misinformation and 'fake news', and the rise of voter disengagement. Many of these political events, historic occasions and campaigns have been investigated and documented within the sub-discipline of political marketing. Political marketing aims "*to create, communicate, deliver and exchange promises of value with voter-consumers, political party stakeholders and society at large*" (Hughes and Dann, 2009, p. 244).

Over the last thirty years political marketing has advanced as an international area of study and generated a buoyant consultancy industry (Newman 2024). Political marketing has moved "*beyond the black arts of propaganda*" (Harris and Lock 2010:297) and developed into a sophisticated field bringing together theories, concepts, tools and frameworks from disciplines including marketing and political science (Newman 2024; Scammell 2024; Speed et al. 2015). However, the application of marketing concepts, theories, and frameworks to the political environment is nothing new (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). Indeed, marketing concepts, techniques and frameworks have been adopted in politics for centuries to achieve various objectives (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). For example, marketing principles are routinely used by aspiring and elected policymakers to raise awareness of policies, ideologies and their desired position on important issues facing society. Marketing techniques have been transferred to the political arena with little difficulty and have generated deep insight into the wants, needs and engagement of different stakeholder groups (Baines et al. 2025; Ormrod and Henneberg 2011; Pich 2023). This provides political stakeholders with opportunities to develop targeted strategies, tactics, and programmes that build long-term, meaningful relationships with a diverse range of stakeholder groups. In this editorial, we introduce research featured in this special issue of the International Journal of Market Research entitled *Global Political Marketing – The Future and Aspirations of Political Marketing*.

**Global Political Marketing – *Specialisation, Interdisciplinary and Diversified***

The first paper by Newman (2024), entitled 'The future of political marketing: new bridges and faster, more dangerous roads', provides a reflective and critical debate on the development of political marketing theory and practice, and discusses how technology is reshaping the field of sub-discipline. This is followed by the work of Lees-Marshment, Bendle, and van der Linden (2024) entitled 'From landslide to mudslide: The strategic marketing mistakes of the 2020–2023 New Zealand Labour Government' which explores the rise and misfortunes of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern New Zealand Labour Party. The third paper by Koliastatis and Lilleker (2024), entitled 'Measuring prime ministerial brands: Exploring Needham's framework for assessing the UK's Boris Johnson and the Greek Kyriakos Mitsotakis' investigates the communication of two prime ministerial brands by analysing their speeches and critically applies and challenges Needham's (2005, 2006) brand schematic framework.

We then turn to the work by Khan, Pich and Armannsdottir (2024). Their paper entitled 'Political brand culture of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf: An internal perspective' critically examines the political brand identity of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf [PTI] party with a distinct focus on the concept of brand culture. Khan et al. (2024) conclude by proposing a new systematic framework which can be used by practitioners, policymakers and researchers to examine and manage the political brand culture of political brands. This is followed by the work of Van Steenburg and Guzman (2025). Their paper entitled 'Politician as brands in parliamentary vs. presidential systems: A cross-national comparison' examines the brand image of candidates in different political settings including the Parliamentary systems of Canada and the United Kingdom, and the Presidential systems of the United States and Mexico. The sixth paper of this special issue by Scammell (2024), entitled 'Populism and political marketing: Is the discipline still relevant?' critical reviews and challenges the literature on populism within the sub-discipline of political marketing from 2013 to 2023.

Cwalina, Drzewiecka, and Newman, (2024) then take up the gauntlet and introduce their paper entitled 'Who vs. what? Consistency of a politician's brand in shaping voters' preferences' where they investigate how a political brand image is developed and interpreted in the mind of the voter set within the context of Poland. The eighth paper of the special issue by Shavit and Konrádová (2025), entitled 'The challenge for political personal branding - The democratic leader paradox' adopt a theoretical perspective and focus on personal branding of political leaders. This is followed by Jain and Sharma (2024) who investgiate 'Discovering AI-driven purposeful political brand content to influence the voters' attitude'. Their study explores how AI- generated content can influence voters attiudes from the perspective of Indian voters. Next we see the work by Harrison, Thelen, and Yoo (2024). Their paper entitled 'How political ideology relates to political branding in the United States: A longitudinal analysis of the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections' examines political ideology aspects over a period of three election cycles in the United States to study the ideological connections with republican and democrat voters. The special issue concludes with the work of Jain, Gupta, and Sharma (2025). Jain, Gupta, and Sharma (2025) present their paper entitled 'Political Branding of Parties and Leaders: A Bibliometric Clustered Analysis of Four Decades' which systemically investigates the literature on political branding using bibliometric clustered analysis.

**Global Political Marketing – *Multiple Streams, and Multiple Stakeholders***

This special issue highlights two key points. First, the sub-discipline of political marketing is made up of multiple research streams. More specifically, the eleven research papers provide a

snapshot into the sub-discipline of political marketing as they illustrate a diverse range of topics and perspectives (conceptual and empirical), present a range of theoretical lenses, and grounded within a variety of dynamic global contexts. These research streams are visualised in figure 1: the Political Marketing Research Map.

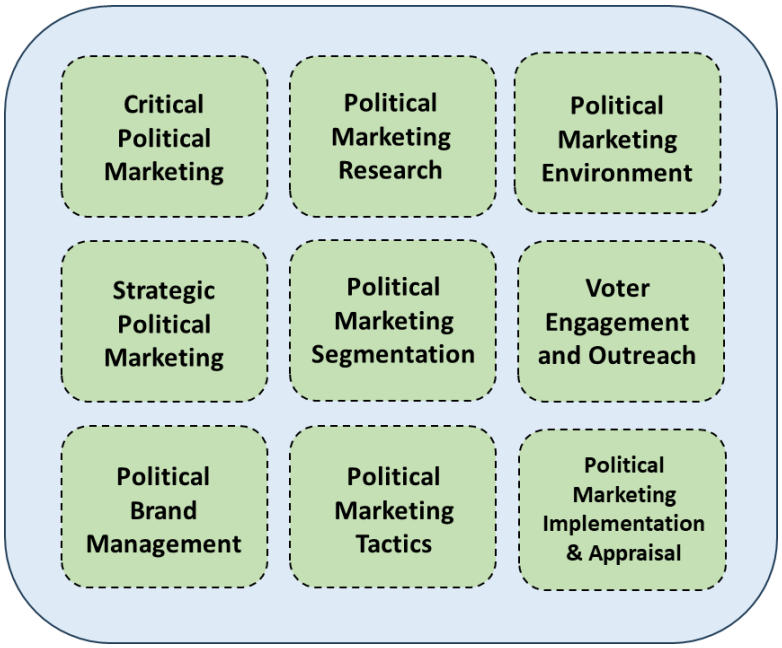


Figure 1: Political Marketing Research Map – developed by the authors

The 'Political Marketing Research Map' (figure 1) is a visual representation of nine related yet distinct research streams within the sub-discipline of political marketing. Further 'Political Marketing Research Map' was developed from reflecting on previous research published within the field of political marketing and appraising the eleven papers that make up the special issue. Therefore, the 'Political Marketing Research Map' serves as a simple framework to guide and inspire researchers, practitioners and policymakers as they engage with future research within political marketing.

Second, the sub-discipline of political marketing focuses on a broad range of stakeholder groups, and perspectives as part of the investigatory process. For example, political marketing studies are often investigated from the perspective of citizens (voters and non-voters), candidates-politicians, political strategists, academics and policymakers. However, there has been limited progress in mapping the different stakeholder groups, which form part of the political marketing ecosystem (Poorrezaei et al. 2023). The political marketing ecosystem can be defined as an interrelated network of people, organisations or groups that are affected by or have an interest in political marketing research, strategies, tactics and programmes. Further, the political marketing ecosystem is under-researched as a concept within the discipline, and this represents an area for further research. In order to move, forward we have visualised an ecosystem within political marketing illustrated in figure 2 and entitled 'the political marketing stakeholder hive'.

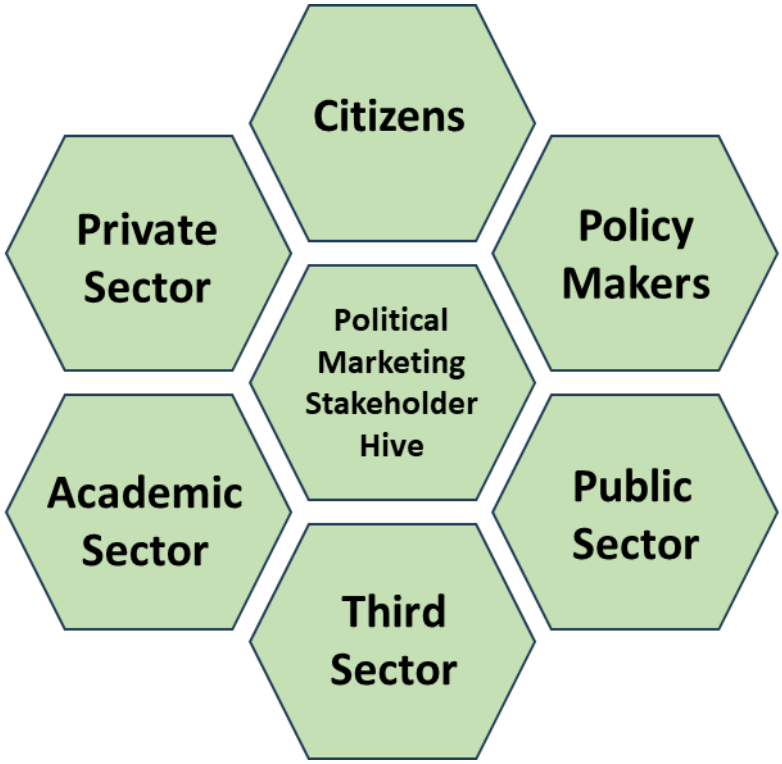


Figure 2: Political Marketing Stakeholder Hive – developed by the authors

The 'Political Marketing Stakeholder Hive' (figure 2) puts forward six interrelated stakeholder groups are affected by or have an interest in political marketing research, strategies, tactics and programmes. As each stakeholder group is potentially affected or have an interest in political marketing related studies, future studies should adopt a proactive, multisectoral and collaborative approach. This could lead to a range of mutually agreeable opportunities for all parties including shared resources, knowledge, expertise, experiences, and provide new insight on a variety of topic areas and perspectives to address societal issue.

**Global Political Marketing – *The Future*'s Bright**

The articles that make up this special issue present explicit implications for researchers, practitioners and policymakers to consider as they as design future studies and develop political marketing strategies, campaigns, and tactics tailored for global markets. In addition, we have liaised with some key researchers from across the discipline to catalogue specific priorities for the advancement of political marketing research, which are set out in detail below (table 1).

| Priority Issues for Future Research on Global Political Marketing | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Impact of AI** | Future research should consider the use, role and impact of AI [Artificial Intelligence] in global political marketing. For instance, '*AI driven media strategies will become the latest technology that will be applied to and used by political campaigns around the world as the underpinnings of these methods become more easily understood and implemented. Generative AI will continue to play out as a very hot topic that needs to be well understood and used by all campaigns in the future'*. | Newman (2024: p4-5). |
| **Democratic Outreach Programmes** | Future research should be devoted to the appraisal, development, implementation, and long-term impact of co-designed targeted outreach programmes designed to strengthen voter-democratic engagement in different contexts and settings. | Pich (2023). |
| **Political Crises** | Future studies should consider critically applying and appraising the framework for strategic political marketing during a crisis and its aftermath to different governments and countries. | Lees-Marshment et al. (2024). |
| **Voter Motivation** | Future research should focus on the voter's motivation and the increasing impact of leadership in the era of backsliding democracies. What positive and negative role can play in political marketing? | Shavit & Konrádová (2025). |
| **Personal Political Brands** | Future research should examine how leader brands are constructed and what attributes candidates, party leaders, prime ministers and presidents emphasise at key points during their tenures and with what potential or actual effects on their public ratings. | Koliastasis & Lilleker, (2024). |
| **Political Marketing and Warfare** | Consider the interface between political marketing and warfare. Second, research should consider political marketing and its use in non-democratic and quasi-democratic settings. Finally, studies should examine political marketing its use in the Global South. | Baines et al. (2025). |
| **Political Brand Image in Different Political Systems** | Determine if the brand image of politicians in parliamentary systems affect voting intention, as it does in presidential systems. Examine the effects of political polarization on attitudes toward a politician as brand by taking into account individual differences such as political affiliation or political values. | Van Steenburg & Guzmán (2025). |
| **Political Branding and Participation** | Future research on political branding must incorporate how different communication media enhance the political participation of voters. There are limited studies specifically highlighting the adverse outcomes of online and offline communication that can become overwhelming. In addition, studies focusing on assessing the role of voters' values and belief systems in creating political identities are critical for future research. | Jain et. al (2025; p.11, 12). |
| **Management of Political Brand Image** | Future research should examine how a candidate's brand image evolves across election cycles. While some ideological factors remain stable over time, others fluctuate based on external socio-political conditions. The ability of a | Harrison et al. (2024). |

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| | candidate's brand to maintain relevance despite these shifts is critical to long-term political success. Second, future research should investigate whether personal charisma alters the impact of ideological constructs. Charismatic leaders like Trump and Bolsonaro often influence voter perception beyond ideological consistency, while more pragmatic leaders like Merkel and Sunak appeal to competence and policy expertise. | |
| **Populism** | Future research should examine how populism and populist governance modifies political marketing theory. It should explore whether specifically marketing (rather than communication) theory can enhance our analyses of populist phenomena. | Scammell (2024). |
| **Message Discipline** | Future studies should provide greater understanding on the concept of "message discipline". Previous research on message discipline in the context of Canada has observed that the old standard of party discipline (i.e., unity of voting on bills and motions) has grown into the more insidious and all-encompassing party message discipline (i.e., cohesion on all public remarks, both inside and outside the legislature). Therefore, future work should consider this. | Marland & Wagner (2019). |
| **Trust and Political Campaigns** | Future research should examine how political campaigns use various marketing tactics to undermine or bolster trust in various systems and actors. | Cwalina et al. (2024). |

Table 1: Priority Issues for Future Research on Global Political Marketing

The table above (table 1) sets out an agenda for further research within political marketing on a global scale. The priority issues align with the nine research streams illustrated in the 'Political Marketing Research Map' (figure 1). Therefore, the agenda provides a snapshot of key topics, which should inspire and guide researchers, practitioners and policymakers to unite and address deep-seated and emerging societal issues. Future studies should consider longitudinal research, which continues to be under-researched within political marketing. Further, future studies should continue be more proactive, interdisciplinary, multisectoral and consider the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. This in turn will advance the sub-discipline and promote inclusivity, diversity and inclusion within political marketing.

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