

# Political Branding and Voters' Preference: A Conceptual Model

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[https://doi.org/10.35609/gcbssproceeding.2023.1\(5\)](https://doi.org/10.35609/gcbssproceeding.2023.1(5))

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## ABSTRACT

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The use of branding in politics has changed and political parties are increasingly using branding to distinguish themselves from competitors during elections. Political parties and the offerings of organisations have similar characteristics, as the offerings that the consumer votes for are intangible, perishable, heterogeneous and inseparable from the service provider. Similar to commercial organisations, political parties are interested in understanding why voters are drawn to the specific party and what motivates voters to switch to a competing party. There are thus many similarities between how customers choose between commercial brands, and how voters choose the political party they intend to support (Ahmed et al., 2017). Due to the complex nature of political branding, political parties, as brands, are dynamic and the political party needs to ensure that voters understand what the party entails in terms of their core values, such as social equality (Pich et al., 2019). The integration of branding principles into consumer (voter's) preference has led to political parties being branded differently to be distinguishable. According to Busby and Cronshaw (2015), differentiation can be achieved by moving away from simply providing customers (voters) with image-based differentiation but by promising them a lifestyle-enhancing experience which provides benefits to both the customers and the brand. Parties have therefore realised the importance and relevance of having a strong branding strategy. Darling and Gilbert (2019) note that voters do not see much differentiation between the various parties' mandate. In line with the views of Needham and Smith (2015) who states that there is a growing consensus that parties and politicians can usefully be conceptualized as brands, Ferreira and Van Eyk (2022) recommends that more research is needed on political branding and voters' perceptions. It is important that political parties identify and understand the political brand elements that influence voters' decision making. The aim of the paper is to create a conceptual model of political brand elements that can influence voters' decision making.

**Keywords:** Elections, Branding, Politics, Preference, Voting