

# FROM COMMERCIAL MARKETING TO ELECTORAL MARKETING: CANDIDATES' ATTRIBUTES IN THE PERCEPTION OF BRAZILIAN AND AMERICAN VOTERS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates attributes that influence the vote in different socioeconomic contexts (Brazil/USA). Our results show an asymmetric effect of candidates' attributes on voters' decision. In less developed socioeconomic contexts, voters analyze candidates' image by satisfying their unconscious will than by making strictly rational choices, which shows a shift of a democratic discourse to an eminently advertising clash. On the other hand, American voters tend to be more judicious regarding the image of their representatives, giving value to elements of the political debate. Such findings can be used to explain election results in both countries under a political marketing perspective.*

## Keywords:

Political Marketing; Candidates' attributes; Voters' decision.

## RESUMÉN

*Este estudio investiga la influencia de los atributos en los votos en diferentes contextos socioeconómicos (Brasil / USA). Nuestros resultados muestran un efecto asimétrico de los atributos de los candidatos en los votantes decisión. En contextos socioeconómicos menos desarrollados, los votantes de analizar la imagen de los candidatos por la satisfacción de sus voluntad inconsciente que al tomar decisiones estrictamente racional, que muestra el desplazamiento del discurso democrático a un choque de publicidad eminentemente. Por otro lado, los votantes estadounidenses tendencia a ser más juiciosa En cuanto a la imagen de sus representantes, dando valor a los elementos del debate político. Tales hallazgos pueden ser utilizados para explicar los resultados de las elecciones en ambos países bajo una perspectiva política de marketing.*

## Palabras Clave:

Marketing Político; Atributos de los candidatos; La decisión de los votantes.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the main goals of marketing is to develop strategies able to aggregate value of products or services, by demonstrating the advantages of choosing a certain brand over others (Pike and Page 2014; Busse 2015). In this context, effective political marketing involves developing strategies that can influence voters' preference for a given candidate (Butler and Collins 1996; Gregor 2014).

Studies in this area have perceived that the electoral process can be explained by the behavior of voters, notably in reaction to exposure to political campaigns and the characteristics of candidates (Anderson 2007; Chatterjee, Mitrović and Fortunato 2013; Dalton and Anderson 2010; Kinder 1978; Sinclair, Alvarez and Levin 2012). Most of these studies, however, are based on analyses that do not allow differentiating the effects of candidates' attributes on voters' choices in distinct socioeconomic contexts. According to Singer (2013), the socioeconomic setting has a strong effect on voters' perceptions of candidates' attributes. This has been shown, for example, by the different importance attached to political parties in Latin American and European countries (Singer 2013).

Besides this, modern electoral marketing is inserted in a global scenario of profound changes in the behavior of voters, with reduction of the strength of political organizations and erosion of voter loyalty to candidates and/or parties (O'Cass and Pecotich 2005). In Brazil, for example, despite the seemingly endless political crises and scandals, a certain trend toward greater maturity can be perceived in democratic institutions, reflected in more active participation of society and greater demand for politicians' accountability, mainly in fulfilling their campaign promises (O'Cass and Pecotich 2005). For instance, the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE), the highest court in Brazil for questions involving the electoral process, presented to Congress proposals to alter political legislation, to include more rigorous mechanisms to deter infraction of the electoral rules, by both candidates and parties.

In this respect, analyzing how voters perceive candidates, taking into consideration the particularities of the socioeconomic and institutional context, is important to develop competitive advantages in the complex political game (Shama 1975; Hoegg and Lewis 2011). The objective of this paper is to investigate the most relevant attributes of candidates for political office in the perception of voters. More specifically, we aim to verify whether these attributes are judged differently in countries with distinct socioeconomic characteristics.

To analyze voters' perceptions of candidates' attributes, it is necessary to call on a model able to systematize those traits in the microsystem of electoral marketing. In this sense, Shama (1975) suggested applying the concepts regarding the behavior of consumers by analogy to analyze voters, by considering candidates as a type of product (Reeves 2013). However, since the literature review did not reveal a specific model able to make that connection between electoral marketing and product marketing, here we propose a new model for analysis, specific for political candidates, to assess candidates as products of electoral marketing.

One of the theoretical contributions of this study relates to adapting the traditional product marketing model proposed by Garvin (1988) for use as an election marketing model. The adjustment of Gavin's (1988) model to the electoral marketing reality expands the prospects in the political marketing field by improving the discussion in such area. Specifically, the proposition of such model complements Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987) Petrocik (1996), Newman and Sheth (1985), Jacobson (1990), Hoegg and Lewis (2011), among other, by systematizing and organizing in a common axis a number of attributes of electoral candidates, and also assisting the need of greater coherence to studies in this area (Gregor 2014; Pike and Page 2014).

To verify that the factors that motivate voters' decision depends on the socioeconomic context in which the voter is inserted, we use Brazil and the United States, since both are large countries (both geographically and demographically) with substantial differences in terms of socioeconomic development. Besides this, elections in both countries are highly competitive, a fact that, as pointed out by O'Cass (2002), produces large strategic differences in electoral marketing actions. To obtain information on voters' perceptions, we used a non-probabilistic process to gather data by applying questionnaires in the United States and Brazil. The data were then submitted to multivariate analyses.

The results indicate that Brazilian and American voters' act based on different perceptions according to the context in which they are inserted (Paiva and Tarouco 2011; Brewer 2014). American voters tend to be more judicious regarding the image of their representatives, giving value to elements

of the political debate that contemplate the interests of the particular constituency. In contrast, Brazilian voters are less judicious regarding questions of image and party affiliation, and rely more on subjective judgment regarding the trustworthiness and morality of their representatives. Such results present empirical contribution to the literature by showing an asymmetric effect of candidates' attributes on voters' decision.

## 2. From Commercial Marketing to Electoral Marketing

Understanding how the market behaves is a fundamental task to build competitive advantages, because it permits companies to potentialize their gains in a given competitive environment. According to Shama (1975), this improvement in business performance is intimately related to the organization's ability to offer products that represent high value to customers at the lowest possible cost. This whole process is directly influenced by consumers' expectations about a determined product at the moment of making the buying decision.

In this context, marketing has the task of planning the development of the organization so as to translate the behavior of potential customers into strategic solutions. According to Rahmani, Emamisaleh and Yadegari (2015), those organizational actions are based on application of the marketing mix (4P) model: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. The product is the set of goods or services that firms offer in the market; price corresponds to the amounts charged for the respective good or service; place is the distribution chain by which products reach customers; and promotion consists of the communication activities aimed at persuading potential customers (Constantinides 2006).

In this way, as added by Newman (1985), when a company traces out its objectives, considering the needs of consumers, what it seeks is to understand the set of components that integrate the buying behavior of these consumers. Thus, the better a company is at evaluating consumers' preferences, the more persuasive power it will be able to exercise in the competitive environment. As pointed out by Wring (1996), a tendency exists among authors to assign a determining value to a product's perceived attributes in the buying decisions of consumers, so that the study and measurement of these attributes is a fundamental task in understanding consumers' attitudes toward a given brand.

In light of this, the description of attributes has been used successfully by firms since the proposal of Garvin (1984). One of the main contributions of the model of Garvin (1988) was the perception of eight dimensions able to measure the quality of a product: performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, esthetics, and perceived quality. Table 1 gives the definition of these dimensions.

TABLE 1  
**Dimensions of Products**

Performance	Ability to do what was promised.
Features	Additional items that supplement the product's basic functioning.
Reliability	The confidence of consumers regarding the history of problems presented by the product over its life cycle.
Conformance	The degree to which a product's design and operating characteristics match preestablished standards.
Durability	The expected useful life of the product; its ability to withstand regular use.
Serviceability	The quality of after-sale service and/or the ease of repairing the product.
Esthetics	The beauty or attractiveness of the product as perceived by customers.
Perceived Quality	Perception of customers regarding the product, which can be influenced by advertising.

Source: Garvin (1984); Garvin (1988)

According to Garvin (1988), the understanding of these dimensions should go beyond mere theoretical subtleties, constituting a true strategic difference in competitive markets. The same can be said for electoral marketing (Shama 1975; O'Cass 2002). For Norris, Frank and I Coma (2014), in both cases organizations (companies/parties) are striving in their respective markets for the trust and loyalty of their target public (consumers/voters). The process of choosing a candidate obeys the same premises proposed by Engel, Blackwell

In this sense, tracing a parallel between the 4 P's of commercial marketing and electoral marketing, the product can be understood as the candidate; price as the vote; place as the

communication space candidates have to reach as many voters as possible, including through the efforts of their precinct workers; and promotion as the set of integrated publicity actions by which candidates disseminate their proposals, build their image and carry out their campaign strategy (Wring 1996; Rahmani, Emamisaheh, and Yadegari 2015). The parallel of the marketing mix matrix is described in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
**Marketing Mix Matrix (4 P's)**

	<b>Commercial Marketing</b>	<b>Electoral marketing</b>
<b>Product</b>	Set of goods or services that companies offer in the market.	The candidate him/herself
<b>Price</b>	Amount charged for the respective good or service	The vote cast
<b>Place</b>	Distribution chain through which the products reach customers	Communication space used to access as many voters as possible, including the efforts of precinct workers.
<b>Promotion</b>	Communication activities aimed at persuading potential customers	Integrated publicity actions used to disseminate proposals, build image and carry out campaign strategies

Source: Kotler (1964); Wring (1996); Constatinides (2006); Zuccolotto, Silva and Garcia (2004).

### 3. Candidates' Attributes

The creation of a specific model for candidates requires an inter-textual analysis between the general model of product attributes proposed by Garvin (1988) and studies on the behavior of voters. Those studies, although not having systematic pretense, jibe with the core of the variables proposed by Garvin (1988), and can be used as constructs for the attributes of candidates.

In this sense, while the performance dimension covers functional characteristics of the product, planned to meet the intended purposes, in the sphere of candidates it can be understood as planning for government, represented by the political platform, since this encompasses the strategic objectives, policy proposals, way of behaving in office, profile and other ideological and program characteristics of the candidate and his/her team (Newman and Sheth 1985; Wenzelburger 2011).

While in commercial marketing, the features are the items that, although not essential to the product, enhance its performance, in the political sphere it can be observed in the relationship of the candidate with the respective political party. In this context, assuming that all candidates are members of a party, the electoral promotion involves the representation of parties in electoral campaigns, especially the effects of the association of the image of the respective party and the person of the candidate (McClosky, Hoffmann, and O'Hara 1960; Newman and Sheth 1985; Brewer 2009; Gunter, Saltzis, and Campbell 2015).

While the reliability of the product is the consumer's perception regarding its results, taking into consideration its track record, for the candidate this involves the level of expectation of voters, based on the candidate's history and trustworthiness, which encompass elements like socio-political representation, private life, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, financial situation, professional standing and ideas, etc. (Kinder 1978; Markus 1982; Thompson and Steckenrider 1997; Schiffman, Thelen and Sherman 2010).

The conformance of the product refers to its satisfaction of standards of quality and production processes. For the candidate this involves standards of personal behavior socially required of people who intend to hold public offices, such as the ability to demonstrate respect for the moral principles of honesty, probity, ethics and rectitude (Hoegg and Lewis 2011).

The durability of the product represents its useful life and ability to withstand reasonable use to serve its purpose. In turn, the durability of the candidate is the ability, if elected, to serve the full term in office with full physical and mental vigor and absence of legal impediment (McDermott 1998; Todorov 2005; Dolan and Lynch 2013).

The serviceability of the product refers to the after-sale relations, including the ease of repair or adjustments for proper use. Likewise, in the political sphere serviceability can be defined as the candidate's ability to relate with voters and allies, to adjust his or her behavior in line with constituents' wishes (Shama 1975; Nimmo 1975).

While the esthetics of the product involve the beauty and attractiveness perceived by consumers, the candidate's esthetics are the image formed by his/her attributes, involving personal

traits like appearance, posture, persuasive ability and courtesy, among others (Shama 1975; Nimmo 1975; Hoegg and Lewis 2011; Bian and Moutinho 2011; Brewer 2014; Scammell 2014).

Finally, while the perceived quality of the product is the relationship between the expectation created by advertising campaigns and the perception of consumers of the results delivered, in the political arena this involves the expectation of the candidate's performance created by the social communication elements and campaign propaganda, or electoral exposure (Jacobson 1990; Schiffman, Thelen and Sherman 2010; Brewer 2014).

Therefore, based on the proposals of Garvin (1988) and of the referred authors on political marketing, the candidate's attributes can be defined as in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
**Dimensions of Candidates**

Trustworthiness	The level of trust by voters, according to the personal and political life of the candidate (private life, family background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, financial situation, professional standing, ideology etc.).
Moral Principles	Ability to satisfy the principles of honesty, probity, ethics and rectitude.
Durability	Ability to serve out the full term in office with full physical and mental vigor and without legal impediment (risk of being removed from office by impeachment or criminal conviction).
Relationship with Voters	Ability to Interact with voters and institutional supporters.
Image	Physical attributes of the candidate, such as good dress, posture, courtesy, persuasiveness, eloquence, knowledge and education.
Electoral Exposure	Set of social communication elements to promote the qualities of the candidate, involving publicity aspects like jingles, banners, posters, media ads, billboards, pamphlets and events.

Sources: Garvin (1984); Garvin (1988); Wring (1996); Thompson (1997); Brewer (2009); Schiffman (2010); Hoegg (2011); Brewer (2014); Wenzelburger (2011); Scammell (2014); Norris (2014).

Based on those concepts, the quality attributed to candidates follows the line proposed by Garvin (1988), demonstrating the connection between commercial marketing and electoral marketing. In this sense, it is possible to compare the attributes of products proposed by Garvin (1988) with those of candidates, as summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
**Dimensions of Products and Candidates**

<b>Attributes of Products</b>	<b>Attributes of Candidates</b>
Performance	Political Platform
Features	Party Identification
Reliability	Trustworthiness
Conformance	Moral Principles
Durability	Durability in Office
Serviceability	Relationship with Voters
Esthetics	Image
Perceived Quality	Electoral Exposure

Sources: Garvin (1984); Garvin (1988); Wring (1996); Thompson (1997); Brewer (2009); Schiffman (2010); Hoegg (2011); Brewer (2014); Wenzelburger (2011); Scammell (2014); Norris (2014).

#### 4. Research Method

To represent the behavior of voters in different socio-economic contexts, we used Brazilian and American voters. The objective was to find a universe of voters inserted in different contexts in which, given the high level of competition, the characteristics of candidates become more important. Besides this, we took into consideration the need to find a setting where freedom of choice is respected, without interference from abusive political power.

On this point, it should be mentioned that our intention was to analyze the criteria for voters' choices at the intimate moment of personal reflection, when they decide on one candidate over the others. Therefore, although certain differences in the electoral systems of the two countries (notably the obligation to vote in Brazil) can bring some distortion to the behavior of voters, we aimed to capture the attributes that the respondents consider at the moment of deciding on a preferred candidate, regardless of actually voting (or choosing "none of the above" or voting in a way that nullifies the ballot).

To verify the impact of candidates' attributes on voters' decisions, primary data were gathered by applying a structured questionnaire posted on the Internet in February and March 2015. The period chosen was not in a nationwide election year in either of the two countries, thus reducing the impact of campaigns on voter behavior (Newman 1985).

The control questions aimed to make sure the respondents were potential voters, by declaring they were voters in Brazil, the United States or another country. The questionnaires where the respondents were not voters in Brazil or the USA were deleted from the sample. Besides sending more than 20,000 e-mails via electronic marketing providers, we also disseminated the questionnaire in social networks (Facebook and Whatsapp), seeking to reach as many people as possible. Therefore, the samples from the two countries can be classified as non-probabilistic by convenience (Matell and Jacoby 1972).

The questionnaire was based on the studies of Newman and Sheth (1985), Jacobson (1990), Petrocik (1996), Thompson and Steckenrider (1997), Baines, Harris and Lewis (2002), Norris (2004), Brewer (2009), and Hoegg and Lewis (2011), according to the variables presented in Tables 3 and 4. The first part of the questionnaire contained 23 statements covering each variable of the model, accompanied by a five-point Likert scale (from [1] = totally disagree to [5] = totally agree). The final score of each construct was formed by the average per respondent of the variables of each of the attributes.

The second part contained objective questions to identify the profile of the respondents, consisting of seven closed items (gender, civil status, schooling level, profession, income, voting country and level of interest in politics) and one open question (age). The questionnaire was prepared in English and Portuguese, and was submitted to a validation process by Brazilian and American professors. Then pre-tests were conducted among native speakers of both languages. The statements composing the instrument are transcribed in Table 5 (Hoegg and Lewis 2011; Norris, Frank and I Coma 2014).

TABLE 5  
Attributes of Candidates

Candidates' Attributes	Statements
Voting criteria	1. I am very judicious about the candidate I intend to vote for.
Political Platform	2. I choose candidates who have the best political platform. 3. I choose candidates who seem to be more able to implement their political platform. 4. I choose candidates who have the best team of advisors.
Party Identification	5. I consider the political party to choose my candidate. 6. I choose candidates who respect the direction and decisions of their parties. 7. I take the alliances of political parties into consideration when choosing a candidate.
Candidate's Trustworthiness	8. I choose candidates I trust more. 9. I choose candidates according to their political career (public life, political experience, political rise, policies implemented, etc.); 10. I choose candidates according to their personal aspects (family background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, financial situation, professional standing, ideological orientations).
Candidate's Moral Principles	11. I choose candidates who seem to be the more honest, ethical and true. 12. I choose candidates who respect moral principles with which I identify.
Candidate's Durability	13. I choose candidates who have physical and mental health to complete their terms in office. 14. I choose candidates according to their capacity to complete their terms without risks of being removed by a judicial process.
Candidate's Relationship with Voters	15. I choose candidates who are concerned with keeping a good relationship with their election committee. 16. I choose candidates who are concerned with keeping a good relationship with the institutions that support them (NGOs, churches, unions, associations, companies etc.). 17. I choose candidates who are concerned about satisfying the desires of their constituencies.
Candidate's Image	18. I choose candidates who have better appearance. 19. I choose candidates who are more charismatic. 20. I choose candidates who run a better political campaign.
Candidate's Electoral Exposure	21. I choose candidates who are ranked better in the polls. 22. I choose candidates who have better election material 23. I choose candidates who appear more often in ads.

Source: Shama (1975); Kotler (1972); Garvin (1988), Wring (1997); Jacobson (1990); Petrock (1996); Thompson (1997); Baines et al. (2002); Norris (2004); Goren (2005); Brewer (2009); Hoegg (2011).

After the data were collected, they were validated according to the control variables, to check for the existence of bias and outliers, eliminating the questionnaires answered outside the expected parameters (66 questionnaires were excluded). The final tally of valid questionnaires was 772: 575 from Brazil and 197 from the USA.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Characterization of the Sample

There were two groups of voters sampled, one Brazilian and the other American, to represent voters in each country. The distribution of the sample is described in Table 6.

TABLE 6  
Characteristics of the Sample of Voters (USA/Brazil)

	BRAZIL		USA	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
<b>GENDER</b>				
Women	238	41.4%	105	53,3%
Men	337	58.6%	92	46,7%
<b>INCOME</b>				
Up to 1 time the minimum monthly wage/US\$31,790	27	4.7%	62	31,5%
1 to 5 times the minimum monthly wage/US\$ 31,790-40,610	146	25.4%	26	13,2%
5 to 10 times the minimum monthly wage/US\$40,610-52,910	160	27.8%	41	20,8%
Above 10 times the minimum monthly wage/over US\$73,260	238	41.4%	43	21,8%
No income	4	0.7%	25	12,7%
<b>SCHOOLING</b>				
High School Dropout	3	0.5%	-	-
High School / GED	58	10.1%	75	38,1%
College Degree	2	0.3%	67	34,0%
Postgraduate Specialization	203	35.3%	11	5,6%
Master's/Doctorate	309	53.8%	44	22,3%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>				
Private Sector Employee	105	18.3%	92	46,7%
Government Employee	313	54.4%	19	9,6%
Business Owner/Freelancer	107	18.6%	24	12,2%
Student/Intern	26	4.5%	-	-
Retired	9	1.6%	32	16,2%
Unemployed	15	2.6%	30	15,2%
<b>POLITICAL INTEREST</b>				
No interest	18	3.1%	22	11,2%
Little interest	209	36.3%	56	28,4%
Strong interest	348	60.5%	119	60,4%
<b>AGE</b>				
Mean/Std. Dev.	39.54 ± 11.56		42.44 ± 17.63	
Min/max	17 a 78		18 a 82	

Source: Research data.

The results reveal diversified samples with good social representation, corroborating the studies of Downs (1957) and Campbell (1960) in the sense that the analysis of themes involving voters should be based on a heterogeneous and stratified population. In Brazil, the sample was composed mainly by men (58.6%), with monthly income higher than five times the minimum monthly wage (41.4%), with postgraduate degrees (master's or doctorate) (53.8%), working in the public sector (54.4%), with strong interest in politics (60.5%) and average age of 39.54 years. In the United States, the sample was mainly composed of women (53.3%), with monthly income equivalent in dollars to at most the minimum monthly wage (31.5%), with high school diplomas (or GED) (38.1%), employed in the private sector (46.7%), with strong interest in politics (60.4%) and average age of 42.44 years.

### 5.2 Descriptive Statistics

To check whether the attributes, on average, were statistically equal or different in the two countries, we applied Student's t-test to compare each variable based on the respective samples. The results are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7  
Characteristics Of The Samples Of Voters (Usa/Brazil)

Variables	Brazil		USA		Diff. of means	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	BR-USA	P( T  >  t )
Voting Criterion (y)	4.34	0.88	3.94	1.09	0.04	0.00***
Political Platform	3.79	0.87	3.88	0.84	-0.09	0.02**
Party Identity	3.05	1.15	3.23	1.10	-0.17	0.03**
Trustworthiness	3.87	0.72	3.37	0.86	-0.51	0.00***
Moral Principles	4.31	0.85	4.24	0.91	0.07	0.17
Durability in Office	3.76	1.11	3.45	1.09	0.30	0.00***
Relations with Voters	3.44	0.94	3.31	1.01	0.12	0.07*
Image	2.00	0.91	3.35	0.96	-1.34	0.00***
Electoral Exposure	1.40	0.66	2.35	1.07	-0.95	0.00***
Gender	0.59	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.12	0.00***
Income	3.08	0.94	2.71	1.43	0.37	0.00***
Schooling	4.19	0.06	3.74	1.55	0.68	0.00***
Private Sect. Employee	0.18	0.39	0.47	0.50	-0.28	0.00***
Public Sect. Employee	0.54	0.49	0.10	0.30	0.45	0.00***
Bus. Owner/Freelancer	0.19	0.39	0.12	0.33	0.06	0.02**
Retired	0.02	0.12	0.16	0.37	-0.15	0.00***
Interest in Politics	2.57	0.55	2.49	0.69	0.08	0.05**
Age	39.54	11.57	42.44	17.63	-2.90	0.00***

Source: Research data. \*, \*\* and \*\*\* represent coefficients significant at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

The results in Table 7 demonstrate that, at 5% significance, only the means of the candidate's moral principles and relationship with voters are statically different. In both the sample of Brazilian voters and that of American voters, the highest average is the variable moral principles, which covers the candidate's honesty, probity, ethics and rectitude.

Comparison of the two scenarios suggests that on average American voters pay more attention to attributes like political platform (M=3.88), party identity (M=3.23), image (M=3.35) and electoral exposure (M=2.35) than do their Brazilian peers, characteristics that reflect a conservative profile, able to perceive the aggregate value of political parties, whose appearance is a strategic differential in election campaigns. That fact, in turn, could explain the election in Brazil of people from the entertainment world, such as a comedian/clown, musicians and soccer players, to executive and legislative positions (Rosenberg and McCafferty 1987; Petrocik 1996; Newman and Sheth 1985; Jacobson 1990, Hoegg and Lewis 2011). With respect to the profile of the electorate, the Brazilian voters showed higher income (M=3.08), schooling level (M=4.42) and interest in politics (M=2.60) than their American counterparts, while in the American sample more respondents stated they worked in the private sector and the average age was slightly higher (M=42.44), which might have influenced the results.

The results thus show that although the two samples and the two countries' democratic systems have similar characteristics, the individuals in these samples give different weights to most of the attributes of candidates.

### 5.3 Multivariate Analysis

In the sequence of analyses, we carried out multiple linear regression tests to check the degree of association between the candidate choice criterion and the candidates' attributes. As controls of voters' characteristics, we included in the regressions variables for gender, age, income, schooling, occupation and interest in politics. The regression model used can be described as follows:

$$\text{Model 1: Criterion to choose candidates} = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_i X_i + \text{Controls} + E_1$$

where  $X_1$  to  $X_8$  represent Political Platform, Party Identification, Trustworthiness, Moral Principles, Durability in Office, Relationship with Voters, Image and Electoral Exposure, respectively.

To enable differentiation of the relationship between the attributes and the criterion to choose candidates of voters in the USA and Brazil, we included a dummy variable  $D_{US}$  set as 1 if voters are from the USA, and 0 otherwise.

$$\text{Model 2: Criterion to choose candidates} = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_i X_i + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_{i+8} X_i D_{US} + \text{Controls} + E_2$$

Although these two models contain controls for the profile characteristics of the respondents, they do not allow identifying whether voters with different profiles have distinct behavior when



associating one of the attributes with the voting choice criterion. The model specified below, by interacting each profile variable with each of its respective attributes, permits that sensitivity analysis. Specifically, such model represents six triple-interaction regressions, where the profile variable assumes characteristics of gender, age, income, education level, occupation and interest in politics.

$$\text{Model 3: Criterion to choose candidates} = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_i X_i + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_{i+8} X_i D_{US} + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_{i+16} X_i \text{Profile} + \sum_{i=1}^8 \beta_{i+24} X_i D_{US} \text{Profile} + \text{Controls} + E_3$$

TABLE 8  
Results Of The Regression, Considering All Voters, With And Without Controls

Attribute of the Candidates	Coefficient	P> t	Coefficient	P> t
Political Platform	0.47***	0.00	0.43***	0.00
Party Identity	0.07***	0.00	0.05**	0.03
Trustworthiness	0.17***	0.00	0.12***	0.01
Moral Principles	0.06	0.27	0.04	0.40
Durability	0.02	0.46	0.02	0.45
Relationship	-0.04	0.31	-0.01	0.75
Image	-0.13***	0.00	-0.12***	0.00
Electoral Exposure	-0.14***	0.00	-0.10**	0.03
Gender			0.05	0.42
Income			-0.04	0.22
Schooling			0.03	0.34
Private-Sector Employee			-0.02	0.86
Government Employee			0.06	0.59
Business Owner/Freelancer			-0.09	0.49
Retired			-0.08	0.68
Interest in Politics			0.25***	0.00
Age			0.01***	0.00
Number of observations				772

Source: Research data \*, \*\* and \*\*\* represent coefficients significant at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.

Table 8 reports the results of the estimation of Model 1, with and without controls, considering all the respondents without distinguishing between countries. It shows that, at 95% confidence, only the attributes “Moral Principles”, “Durability in Office” and “Relationship with Voters” are not statistically related to the voter choice criterion. The results thus show that the variables “Political Platform” (0.43); “Party Identification” (0.05) and “Trustworthiness” (0.12) are positively associated with the voting decision, while the variables “Image” (-0.12) and “Electoral Exposure” (-0.10) are negatively related.

In this context, the voters who took part in the survey indicated they are more careful in their voting decisions when evaluating the aspects of political platform, party identity and trustworthiness of the candidate, and less judicious only in assessing the image conveyed by the election campaign. However, although the two countries are in some respects similar in being mature democracies where the right to vote is respected, the process of choosing candidates is quite different, due to cultural and institutional differences.

The results of estimating Model 2 are presented in Table 9 below for each attribute, to enable distinguishing the influence of each variable on the voting decision criterion in the two countries. The first quadrant contains the results of the regression corresponding to the common influence between Brazil and the USA. The second quadrant shows the additional effects among American voters in relation to their Brazilian counterparts.

TABLE 9  
Results of the Regression With Differentiation Between the Brazilian and American Samples.

Variables	Without Control		With Control	
	Coefficient	P> t	Coefficient	P> t
Political Platform	0.47***	0.00	0.42***	0.00
Party Identity	0.06**	0.03	0.03	0.20
Trustworthiness	0.14***	0.01	0.10*	0.06
Moral Principles	0.04	0.47	0.04	0.46
Durability	-0.01	0.84	-0.00	0.93
Relationship	0.01	0.86	0.01	0.81

Image	-0.17***	0.00	-0.16***	0.00
Electoral Exposure	-0.14**	0.04	-0.11	0.10
Political Platform (interacted with D.US)	-0.05	0.68	-0.01	0.94
Party Identity (interacted with D.US)	0.07	0.31	0.08	0.22
Trustworthiness (interacted with D.US)	-0.03	0.83	-0.04	0.73
Moral Principles (interacted with D.US)	0.0923	0.47	0.02	0.85
Durability (interacted with D.US)	0.12	0.16	0.09	0.26
Relationship (interacted with D.US)	-0.20**	0.05	-0.11	0.24
Image (interacted with D.US)	0.26***	0.01	0.26***	0.01
Electoral Exposure (interacted with D.US)	-0.004	0.97	-0.02	0.89
Married			0.01	0.94
Divorced			-0.10	0.44
Widowed			-0.53	0.11
Stable Union			-0.03	0.79
Private-Sector Employee			0.02	0.84
Government Employee			0.07	0.56
Business Owner			-0.05	0.69
Retired			0.01	0.95
Schooling			0.02	0.38
Age			0.01***	0.00
Income			-0.05	0.16
Interest in Politics			0.26***	0.00
Number of observations		772		772

Source: Research data. \*, \*\* and \*\*\* represent coefficients significant at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.

The resulting coefficients, at 5% significance, indicate rejection of the hypothesis of no correlation between the attributes described in the model and the behavior of voters for the Brazilian case. After controlling for the other variables, it can be inferred that a relationship exists of the attributes “Political Platform” (0.42), Trustworthiness” (0.10) and “Image” (-0.16) with the voter choice criterion. The model without controls indicated also that on average the variables “Party Identification” (0.06) and “Electoral Exposure” (-0.14) are also associated with the voter choice criterion.

Taking into consideration the differences between the two samples, with the exception of “Image” (0.30), Brazilian and American voters, on average, express the same degree of association of the variables described in the model with the voting criterion. In this case, the American voters in the sample stated they are more judicious at the moment of voting when assessing the candidate’s image. This finding is in line with the descriptive statistics reported by Chen, Jing and Lee (2012).

A possible explanation – requiring future studies to confirm – for the fact that image among the Brazilian voters surveyed has a negative effect on the voting criterion, is the relationship between candidates’ image and cases of corruption, especially relatively recent ones in national politics (Baquero 2007). An example of this is the political trajectory of former president Fernando Collor de Mello, who after a successful electoral marketing campaign disappointed the country with a series of scandals that culminated in his resignation on the verge of being impeached.

In this respect, Pinto (1989) narrated that American Senator Bruce Babbitt, after meeting Fernando Collor at a luncheon, was surprised at the similarity between Collor and the American President Ronald Reagan, both with telegenic images (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: President Fernando Collor de Mello in 1989 (Brazil)



Source: [www.planalto.gov.br](http://www.planalto.gov.br)  
Consulted on Nov. 30, 2015

Figure 2: President Ronald Reagan in 1989 (USA)



Source: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)  
Consulted on Nov. 30, 2015

However, after winning election, the political trajectory of the two presidents was very different. While Reagan stood out for implementing liberal economic policies, Collor produced ill-conceived economic plans (especially the “confiscation of savings”, a plan that froze balances above a certain threshold in passbook savings accounts, in an effort to control hyperinflation) and then became involved in corruption scandals, such as the “PC Farias affair” (massive bribes received by his campaign finance chairman) and the “Uruguay Operation” (an obscure “loan” from that country used to remodel Collor’s private residence). These prompted massive street protests demanding his ouster, mainly by students, known as the “painted faces” because they painted their faces with Brazil’s national colors, leading to his resignation on the eve of certain impeachment in 1992. It might be added, however, that he managed to preserve enough popularity in his home state to later be elected senator, a position he has held since 2007.

Therefore, Fernando Collor de Mello, a successful “product” who fired the nation’s hopes, had his image transformed into one of the worst examples in the country’s political history, frustrating not only those who initially supported him, but a large part of Brazilian voters who were influenced by the media (Meyer 2004).

This is not the only example in recent history of breach of the voters’ trust based on the image promoted by election campaigns and the candidate’s behavior once in office. Another example is that of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (as seen particularly in 1989, 2002 and 2014), associated with cases of corruption. After winning the election in 2002, Lula’s image constructed by his marketing campaign was gradually undermined by his association with cases of corruption. Among these are the “Mensalão” (“Big Allowance”) scandal during his first term, involving wholesale bribery to lawmakers in return for votes, and recently the “Lava Jato” (“Carwash”) investigation into bribery, illegal campaign financing and kickbacks on contracts with Petrobras, the national oil company, during the first term of his handpicked successor, Dilma Rousseff. The revelations of this investigation have severely tarnished public confidence in him and the Workers Party.

The feeling of frustration generated by these constant letdowns from high hopes has intensified the negative association between image and candidates, influencing the voter choice criterion. The survey results suggest that while the theory of electoral marketing suggests the need to build a positive image for campaign success (Shama 1975; Nimmo 1975; Brewer 2014; Scammell 2014), on the other hand the negative association between this attribute and the voting criterion observed in this study points to an intensification of mistrust by Brazilian voters in all political candidates.

These results are related with Nimmo (1975) in the sense that candidates’ image is a big differential in electoral marketing campaigns, especially in the USA, where voters have a more rigid attitude toward the profile of their representatives. In the same sense, the results corroborate the findings of Brewer (2014) regarding the perception of voters about candidates’ authenticity, according to which these personality traits play an important role in voters’ decisions. Comparison of the two scenarios reveals the possible explanation that in Brazil, voters are not as concerned with electing candidates who do not fit the traditional image as is the case in the United States, as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Federal Deputy "Tiririca"  
(Brazil - 2014)



Source: Profile of the Deputy Tiririca on twitter.com

Consulted on: Nov. 31, 2015

Figure 4: Congressman Paul Ryan  
(USA – 2014)



Source: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov)

Consulted on: Nov. 31, 2015

### 5.4 Complementary Analyses

Finally, with the aim of verifying the way the attributes are perceived by voters in making their choices, depending on their characteristics, we tested the correlation of the model's variables with gender, age, interest in politics, income, schooling and occupation. The results of estimating model are presented in Table 10. It only contains the significant coefficients corresponding to the common influence between Brazil and the USA (quadrant 1) and the additional effects expressed by American voters in relation to the Brazilian sample (quadrant 2).

TABLE 10  
**Interactions Between Variables and Characteristics of Brazilian and American Voters**

	Variables	Gender (0F/1M)	Age	Political Interest	Income	Schooling	Economic Sector (0Publ./ 1Priv.)
Common influence of the interaction between Brazil and USA	Political Platform.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Party Identity.X	0.20***	-	-0.09**	-	-	-
	Trustworthiness.X	0.20*	-	-	0.13**	-	-
	Moral Principles.X	-0.20**	-	0.12***	-	-	-
	Durability.X	-	-	-	-0.07**	-	-
	Relationship.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Image.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Electoral Exposure.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additional effect of interaction for the USA	Political Platform.USA.X	-	-	0.11**	-	-	-
	Party Identity. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Trustworthiness. USA.X	0.40*	-0.01**	-	-	-	0.53**
	Moral Principles. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-	-0.66**
	Durability. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Relationship. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-0.14*	0.45**
	Image. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Electoral Exposure. USA.X	-	-	-	-	-	-0.74***	

Source: Research data. \*, \*\* and \*\*\* represent coefficients significant at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively. Out of convenience, only the significant results are presented, referring to the interactions of the candidates' attributes with each of the profile characteristics, both for Brazilian and American voters. "X" represents each of these characteristics, which are specified in each column.

The results shown in Table 10 reveal different degrees of association between the attributes of candidates and voters' perception when correlated with criteria of gender, age, interest in politics, income, schooling and occupation. These results corroborate those of Brewer (2014), by indicating that the behavior of voters depends on the context and varies according to the personal characteristics of each voter.

In summary, the results reported in Table 10 support the hypothesis that voters' behavior is influenced by various perceptions, according to the context in which they are inserted and their personal characteristics (Paiva and Tarouco 2011; Brewer 2014). The analysis of those characteristics, interacted with candidates' attributes, suggests that in general, electoral marketing strategies should be concerned with burnishing the particular candidate's image, so that voters will perceive the candidate as having strong moral principles and a solid political platform, as well as being trustworthy in fulfilling campaign promises.

These results also indicate that in general voters' perception of candidates' image varies according to the socioeconomic context. In this sense, American voters tend to be more judicious regarding the image of their representatives, paying more heed to the debate over policy proposals, aligned with the interests of the candidate's constituency. On the other hand, Brazilian voters are less

judicious regarding questions linked to image, have weak party identification, and tend to choose candidates based on judgments of trustworthiness and morality.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the perception of voters regarding the attributes of candidates for public office, taking into consideration two different socioeconomic contexts (Brazil and the United States). For this purpose, based on studies of voter behavior, we formulated a model for electoral marketing that is able to verify the outlines of voters' perception at the moment of voting.

The analyses of the descriptive statistics and multivariate regressions, including the interaction in each sample group (income, gender, age, occupation, schooling and interest in politics) showed that the perception of voters regarding candidates' image varies according to the socioeconomic context. In particular, the results revealed that voting decisions go beyond voters' value judgment of candidates, and include the personal characteristics of these voters, which are associated with the socioeconomic setting and exposure to election campaigns.

In this respect, American voters tend to be more judicious regarding the image of their candidates, valuing the debate over public policies, aligned with the interests of the particular constituency. On the other hand, Brazilian voters pay less heed to questions related to image, have low party identification and tend to make subjective choices regarding the trustworthiness and morality of candidates.

This work is important to advance the theory of electoral marketing since it systematize a set of attributes for candidates, providing greater coherence and rationality with the studies of marketing in general. Besides this, it has brought new elements that can be used in the strategic planning of election campaigns, helping to achieve competitive advantages in the complex setting of political disputes.

Practical contributions of this study relates to assisting politics and political marketers with a systematized election marketing model and with several insights relating the factors that motivate voters' decision, depending on the socioeconomic context in which voters are inserted.

First, the adjustment of Gavin's (1988) model to the electoral marketing reality expands the prospects in the political marketing field by allowing politics and political marketers to investigate which candidates' characteristics affects voters' perception. By this way, political practitioners can establish concrete actions in the planning and improvement of election campaigns. As Cukierman and Nissan (1991) argues, strategies in a campaign produce information that affect voter behavior in the short term, with the potential to significantly impact the election results (Sinclair, Alvarez and Levin 2012; Chatterjee, Mitrović and Fortunato 2013).

Second, once politics and political marketers get a better understanding of the main forces that drive voters' preference depending on the socioeconomic contexts, such practitioners could choose different strategies to be used in the elections campaigns depending on the heterogeneity among voters, especially in high competitive elections where specific and strategic actions can determine elections' results (O'Cass 2002).

The results show an asymmetric effect of candidates' attributes on voters' decision and present different implications:

i) in less developed socioeconomic contexts, voters analyze candidates' image by satisfying their unconscious will than by making strictly rational choices. Such result suggest that in such contexts the challenge of election campaigns and political marketers shall be no more political discourse, but to establish relations of affection with voters, creating emotional bonds of personal identification, especially when the environment is triggered by corruption scandals. In other words, in less developed socioeconomic contexts political marketers should rely less on issues regarding image and party affiliation, and more on subjective judgment regarding the trustworthiness and morality of their representatives.

ii) in more developed socioeconomic contexts, voters tend to be more judicious regarding the image of their representatives, giving value to elements of the political debate that contemplate the interests of the particular constituency. In such case, political marketers should focus more on political discourse rather than on subjective judgment factors.

In general, such results review that the perception of voters regarding the image, political proposals and subject factors of candidates varies according to the socioeconomic context and should play different rules on electoral strategies.

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