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Facilitating Political Performance in the USA

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Abstract

The current research was carried out to investigate the correlation of two organizational resources and two organizational capabilities with political performance. This quantitative study was conducted on 128 U.S. elected politicians. Data were collected by a valid and reliable questionnaire, consisting of three sections: Demographic information, resources and capabilities, and questions about politicians' performance. Using a correlation analysis, the study found that possessing sufficient experiential and physical resources and innovative and adaptive capabilities are statistically significant in achieving superior political performance. Although the results were weak correlations and had little relationship to effectiveness, several implications can be drawn from the study's findings for elected politicians, political candidates, and political parties and interesting directions for future research are provided.

Introduction

This study aims to upgrade political marketing theory by measuring the relationship between specific resources and capabilities and a politicians' performance via the resource-based view model (RBV). The researchers examined the correlation between specific resources and capabilities (i.e., Experiential and Physical Resources, and Motivation and Adaptive Capabilities) and performance. To reach this aim, this paper provides a brief review of the conceptual background and the methodology behind this quantitative survey. The study proceeds with the analysis and presentation of the results and closes with a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Political marketing has been a steadily growing theme in academia over the past decades; however, it seems that still there is a limited general theory (Gronroos, 1990). Most marketing research has concentrated on everything a marketer does to place the product or service in the hands of potential customers, including diverse disciplines like sales, public relations, pricing, packaging, and distribution (Kotler, 2000). Marketing concepts are quite applicable to political marketing (Shama, 1975). One such concept is the resource-based view (RBV). The RBV is a basis for the competitive advantage of a firm and lies primarily in the application of a bundle of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the firm's disposal (Penrose, 1959). Important attempts were made by scholars to apply the RBV in the political parties' performance (Lynch, Baines, & Egan 2008; O'Cass 2009; Voola & O'Cass 2010). However, still more research is necessary to effectively address critical issues relevant to the topic. The above-mentioned studies led this study to attempt to fill an important gap in the political marketing literature by discussing the role of specific resources and capabilities in the achievement of a politician's performance.

Conceptual Background

Due to limited research in political marketing, this study may bring important business characteristics to politics in an attempt to build a model of resources and capabilities that could act as drivers to a politician's superior performance.

Organizational Resources

The first type of resources is experiential resources. Experiential resources refer to knowledge gained from the firm's operational experience and help identify and match customer needs and anticipate new market trends (Leonidou et al., 2012). With the adoption of internal routines and accumulation of know-how issues, the firm widens and deepens its experiential knowledge, which acts as a facilitator toward building marketing strategies (Russo & Fouts, 1997). According to Lee (2001), winning candidates are more experienced and enjoy a high electoral success rate and an incumbent politician has a higher probability of winning the election even though the candidates are ex-ante identical; the incumbency advantage is the electoral success that an incumbent party enjoys if the incumbent runs for re-election, over and above the electoral outcome that would have occurred if a new nominee for the party had run in the same district.

The second type of resources is physical resources. Physical resources are available to business organizations in the form of buildings and other machinery needed for the day to day running of these organizations. This refers to the possession of modern technology equipment and the availability of operating capacity or other infrastructure required to facilitate product/service efficiency and effectiveness. If properly deployed, these resources can help the firm capitalize on and make better use of its internal methods related to the infrastructure required to facilitate product/service efficiency and effectiveness and eventually result in superior firm's performance (Leonidou et al., 2012).

Organizational Capabilities

The first type of capabilities is innovative capability. Innovation represents the implementation of something new into the organizational context; it is a step beyond the conception of a new idea and represents the application of a change which is new to an organization and to the relevant environment (Pierce & Delbeq, 1977). Innovation represents an organization's "first use ever" of a new product, service, process, or idea (Pierce & Delbeq, 1977, p. 28) and is used to sustain long-term firm performance (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). Frankelius (2009, p. 41) defined innovation as something original and more effective and, as a consequence, new, that "breaks into" the market or society. According to Sørensen and Torfing (2002), some people see the rising innovation agenda as a new possibility for breaking policy deadlocks, reducing costs, and improving services to the benefit of citizens, private firms, and other private stakeholders.

The second type of capabilities is adaptive capability; it is the ability to change something or oneself to fit occurring changes (Andresen & Gronau, 2005). Empirical evidence suggests that adaptive ability is a source of both sustainable competitive advantage and success in new product development (NPD) and commercialization (Hurley & Hult, 1998). Although the contemporary literature on political parties has made significant progress with regard to elaboration of models of party adaptation and change, it has failed to confront the challenge of developing theories of party or politicians as individuals' formation that can also be applied to cases other than the Western European parties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Van Biezen, 2005).

Performance

Performance can involve studying processes/strategies within organizations or studying engineering - processes/parameters/phenomena, to see whether output are in line with what was intended or should have been achieved (Upadhaya, Munir, & Blount, 2014). Its legitimacy rests on a convincing performance; it has to be representative of a particular political stand; it must engage the audience that is its particular target; it should satisfy the formal rules, rituals, and conventions of the institutions through which the meaning is being projected; and be received as logical and coherent (Rai, 2014). Performance measurement is the process of collecting, analyzing and/or reporting information regarding the performance of an individual, group, organization, system or component (Upadhaya, Munir, & Blount, 2014); it is the degree of satisfaction, loyalty, and reputation (Leonidou et al., 2012).

Development of Research Hypotheses

The Leonidou et al. study (2012) became an example to build the questions of this study and to transfer the theory to the political marketing of a politician. Based on the above literature review, the conceptual model comprises four hypothesized associations between key constructs and performance. The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1. The research hypotheses to be examined are the following:

H1. The politician's Experiential Resources (EXR) are positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP).
H2. The politician's Physical Resources (PHR) are positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP).
H3. The politician's Innovative Capability (INC) is positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP).
H3. The politician's Adaptive Capability (ADC) is positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP).

Figure 1

The Conceptual Model

Organizational Resources

Experiential Resources (EXR) — H1

Physical Resources (PHR) — H2

Organizational Capabilities

Innovative Capability (INC) — H3

Adaptive Capability (ADC) — H4

Superior Political Performance (SPP)
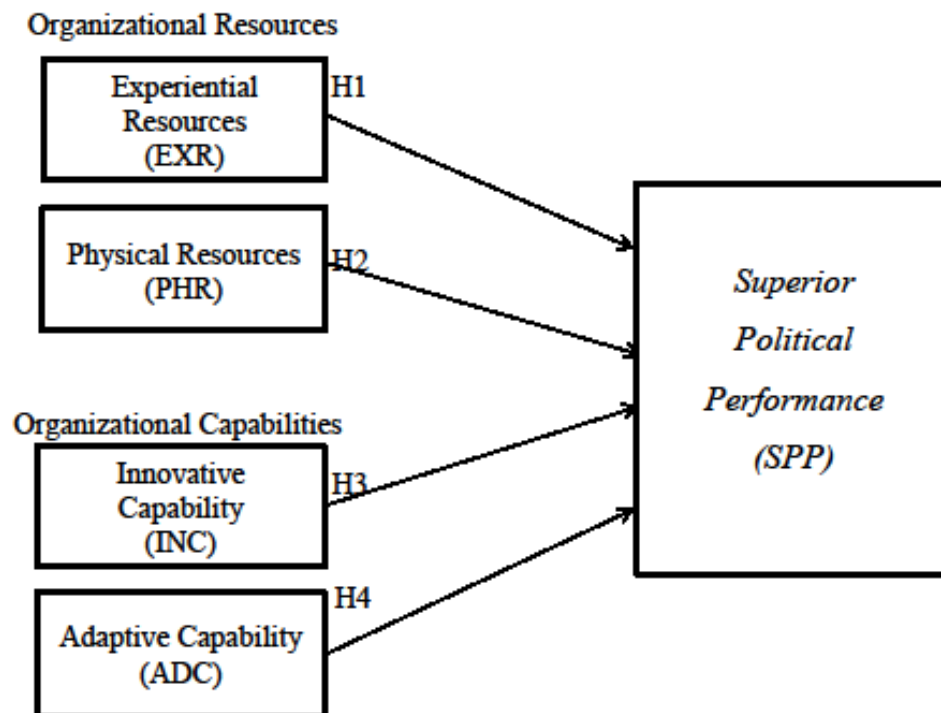
Research Methodology

This quantitative study took place in the United States. It has the world's largest economy

and military, and the superpower's influence is almost as much cultural as it is political (Haynie, 2017). According to the National Conference of States Legislatures (2010) and the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1992), the total elected officials in the US is 519,682. Based on this data, State Legislatures (7,382) and Mayors and members of the Municipal governments (135,531) consisted the population of this survey; a total 142,913 U.S. elected politicians. A questionnaire link was designed with Survey Monkey online software (2018). Survey Monkey automatically exports data into an Excel spreadsheet. The questionnaires (Survey Monkey link) were sent randomly by e-mail. All U.S. politicians' contact information is officially published at the State Government official websites and the City Council official websites. The sample was distributed according to the four regional areas as stated by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015); Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. The process resulted in 128 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire took place between 2 October 2017 and 5 December 2017.

The questionnaire used a structured approach with closed statements and was based on a 7-point Likert rating scale (1932). Thus the range captured the intensity of the politicians' feelings for a given item (i.e., Experiential Resources). Experiential Resources, Physical Resource, Innovative Capability and Adaptive Capability were measured by a two-item, seven-point Likert scale, each. Performance was measured by a three-item, seven-point Likert scale.

An Excel spreadsheet was copied to RStudio (2015) statistical program for further statistical analysis. The statistics used in this study were as follows: (a) the mean; (b) the standard deviation; (c) correlations to measure the linear relationship between the variables (Rumsey 2018); and lastly, statistical hypothesis testing (Wasserstein and Lazar 2016). The p-value is a number between 0 and 1 and interpreted in the following way: A small p-value (typically ≤ 0.05) indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Statistical Analysis

	Mean	Cron. Alpha	St. Deviat.	Pearson Cor. (SPP)	p-value
Experiential Resources (EXR)	5.051	0.74	1.250	0.331	0.006
Physical Resources (PHR)	5.031	0.71	1.537	0.218	0.021
Innovative Capability (INC)	5.789	0.71	0.983	0.321	0.001
Adaptive Capability (ADC)	4.691	0.71	1.109	0.187	0.033
Superior Political Performance (SPP)	5.607	0.70	0.703		

2. Presentation of Results

Respondents' Demographics

More than 90% of the respondents went to College or University; this distribution shows that most of the respondents were highly educated people facilitating their perception in this study. The majority of the respondents (62%) had more than ten years' experience, 16% had two to five years' experience, and 22% had less than two years' experience. As regards their political affiliation, 40% of the respondents came from the Democratic Party, 39% came from the Republican Party, and 21% came from "Other" affiliations. Sixty-four percent were Local Government elected officials, 8% were Mayors, and 28% were State Government elected officials. Twenty-one percent of the respondents came from the Northeast, 21% came from the Midwest, 25% came from the South, and 33% came from the West.

Reliability Test

A reliability test was conducted based on Cronbach's alpha (1951) to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A satisfactory level of reliability is 0.70 or greater (Nunnaly, 1978). This study's scales are considered valid and reliable since all the values were greater than 0.70 (Table 1).

Hypothesis testing

H1. The politician's Experiential Resources (EXR) are positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP)
The correlation value (0.331) shows a weak positive relationship between Experiential Resources and Political Performance. The results are significant with a p-value of 0.006.
H2. The politician's Physical Resources (PHR) are positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP)
The correlation value (0.218) shows a weak positive relationship between Physical Resources and Political Performance. The results are significant with a p-value of 0.021.
H3. The politician's Innovative Capability (INC) is positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP)
The correlation value (0.321) shows a weak positive relationship between Innovative Capability and Political Performance. The results are significant with a p-value of 0.001.
H4. The politician's Adaptive Capability (ADC) is positively related to the achievement of Superior Political Performance (SPP)
The correlation value (0.187) shows a weak positive relationship between Adaptive Capability and Political Performance. The results are significant with a p-value of 0.033.

Conclusion

This study showed that experiential and physical resources and innovative and adaptive capabilities are statistically significant in the achievement of a politician's superior political performance. Although correlations were weak, these preliminary results bridge an important gap on the general theory and practice of the political marketing of politicians, as units and build an important framework for further research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given that the sample of this study is small, future research could build on this framework, i.e., more resources and capabilities could be identified and tested among a bigger number of U.S. elected politicians. Further research could also validate the findings of this study using data obtained from other countries. Last but not least, new research could also consider the voters' views (not only the politicians' views).

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