

Mapping the Landscape of Political Branding Research: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Branding has not been limited to businesses only but has also been applied to other sectors like politics. The concept of political branding has gained popularity after the winning of Ex- President Barack Obama and researchers, marketers and political actors around the globe have started focusing on the same. The current study emphasised on detailed investigation of political branding literature. The data was extracted from Web of Science and observed 137 documents of 205 authors over the period of 2000 to 2020 which were analysed using bibliometric analysis via the “biblioshiny” package of R Software. The study analysed the data based on sources, contributors and the concept ‘political branding’. The results reveal that the literature of political branding is evolving and has been gaining much attention since 2015. Majority of studies were researched in the UK and US which can be extended to other countries for more generalisability. Major sources in the field of political branding are Journal of Political Marketing and European Journal of Marketing and major contributors are Gareth Smith and Margaret Scammell. Party image and ideologies are the major topics of discussion in political branding. This is the first comprehensive quantitative study of the concept of political branding based on literature. The summarized outcomes will help the researchers to get well versed with the concepts of political branding, theory building and its extension.

Keywords: Political Branding, Bibliometric Analysis, Landscape, Mapping

1. INTRODUCTION

The marketing strategies have been explored largely and are growing in different perspectives and implementing marketing theories in political areas has been started (Newman, 1999). The concept of marketing management is used for making strategies to influence voters (Kotler, 1982) and concept of consumer behaviour is used to study voter’s decision about party choice (Dermody & Scullion, 2000) whereas, concept of communication is used to exchange the information, news or facts with one another using different media to target voters in order to seek their support and political participation. Similarly, Branding has not been limited to businesses only but has also been applied to other sectors like politics. The concept of political branding has gained popularity after the winning of Ex-President Barack Obama and researchers, marketers and political actors around the globe have started focusing on the same. Political branding means how the public perceive a political organisation (Bal et al., 2009). It also aids political parties or candidates to create and maintain identity, reputation, and also helps in creating trustworthy relations with voters. It also accommodates political consumers to recognise the party or candidate and distinguish them from other rivalries (Cosgrove, 2007). Nevertheless, there is scarcity of research papers focused on publication characteristics of this discipline. Hence, the current study emphasised on detailed investigation of political branding literature to fill the research gaps and explain the relevance of political branding in academic discipline. For this purpose, data was analysed using bibliometric analysis via the “biblioshiny” package of R Software. The study analysed the data based on sources, contributors and the concept ‘political branding’. This study presents a comprehensive overview of research literature of political branding to facilitate great understanding of the domain. It

also provides useful information to new entrants in the research field as well as other researchers about key characteristics of the discipline such as sources of publication, journals, authors, countries and word growth trends. Based on the insights from the analysis, research agenda for advancing the literature in the political branding discipline is developed. The paper contains the sections that elaborate the methodology, analysis, results, discussion, conclusion and future research avenues.

Bibliometric analysis is comprehensive approach to study the development of disciplines containing authors, topics on the basis of domains' conceptual, social and intellectual structure (Donthu, 2020). This technique has been used in variety of disciplines such as corporate social responsibility (Bhattacharyya & Verma, 2020), strategic management (Ferreira, Fernandes, & Ratten, 2016), and corporate universities (Singh, Verma, & Chaurasia, 2020). Although bibliometric is applied by many researchers but none of them have studied it for political branding discipline. Hence, to overcome this research gap, the paper used bibliometric analysis to provide better insights of political branding to emergent researchers.

2. POLITICAL BRANDING

Political branding has become a unique field of study within the field of political advertising over time (Scammell, 2015). Political branding, according to Harris and Lock (2010) and Needham and Smith (2015), is essentially the strategic application of conventional branding concepts, theories, and frameworks to politics in order to distinguish political contenders and create identification among voters and political entities. Building on the ground-breaking work of Lock and Harris in 1996, the conception and analysis of political brands have undergone a major evolution in the past ten years. Notably, 'political brands' are being used more and more to describe numerous institutions including political parties (local, regional, national, and worldwide), pressure groups, movements, politicians, candidates, and campaigns (Ahmed, Lodhi, and Ahmad, 2017; Billard, 2018; Meyerrose, 2017; Nai and Martinez, 2019; Simons 2016; Scammell 2015; Speed, Butler, and Collins, 2015).

Regarding the use of branding in a political context, several similar themes and tensions appear in all of these articles. The origin and evaluation of political brands are an important topic of discussion. Some contend that brands are created in voters' minds and can be uncovered by survey or experimental approaches, as do Cwalina and Falkowski (2015) and Guzmán et al., (2009). Conversely, De Landtsheer and De Vries (2015) and Dean et al. (2015) argue that brands can be evaluated by looking at the statements and positions of political parties and individuals.

De Landtsheer and De Vries (2015), meantime, use an intriguing psychological profiling technique to identify Herman van Rompuy's traits and make deductions about how his personality affects the perception of the new leadership position inside the European Union. By separating brand identity—which parties work to promote—from brand image—which voters define—Grönroos (2000) adds to the conversation. Can one of these components individually offer a compelling account of the party brand, though, is the unanswered question.

Political branding has received a lot of attention lately as political players and researchers have become more aware of its possible influence on election results. The vital connection between political parties and their brand entities, which can greatly affect voters' decisions and win support from the electorate, is highlighted by Gangloff (2020). However, despite the fact that political parties are not recognised as brands by law, Smith and French (2009) contend that voter perceptions of political parties are shaped by how party leaders engage with the public and how their policies are implemented. This image is frequently examined based on the alleged advantages and qualities of each party, which influence voter perceptions and choice-making.

Additionally, Needham (2015) highlights how appealing brand concepts are in political parties since they provide a distinctive synthesis of political science, economics-based techniques, and cultural

analysis insights. By appealing to both the cognitive and emotional sides of voters, parties can unite their behaviour and influence their political views. With a focus on the analytical usefulness of brand concepts and their ubiquitous effect in contemporary political marketing, Scammel's work from 2007 explores the use of branding and research methodologies in politics. Winchester, Hall, and Binney's (2014) discussion of the connection between brands and political environments and Nakanishi, Cooper, and Kassarian's (1974) extension of the concept of branding to political elections and its alignment with branding practises in various domains demonstrate the growing interest in political branding. Collectively, these pieces show how important political branding is becoming and how it could affect elections and voter behaviour.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research trends and patterns in the area of political branding were explored and described using the approach used in this bibliometric study. To examine the pertinent literature and comprehend the evolution of the subject, the study used an exploratory and descriptive research design. The Web of Science (WoS) database was specifically searched for data, with a concentration on documents containing the term "political branding." Ninety different sources, including books, journals, and other periodicals, produced a total of 137 documents.

The data analysis included a number of bibliometric analysis techniques, such as source analysis, citation analysis, author influence analysis, location analysis, and theme analysis. The biblioshiny package in R Software was used to do the study, enabling thorough and organised investigation of the gathered data. The study found that 205 authors contributed to the discussion of political branding in their academic work, with a distribution of 56 papers with a single author and 151 documents with multiple authors, indicating a collaborative research environment.

The influence and relevance of the publications in the field are demonstrated by the average document's 7.98 citations, with an average of 5.38 citations per year. The information was further divided into sub-parts, and each section was examined to learn more about the important sources, significant writers, regional trends, and expanding themes in political branding literature. The technique utilised in this study helps to identify important areas for additional research and theory development in the subject of political branding while also providing a thorough assessment of the state of the field at this time.

Table 1 Summary of Data

| Description | Results |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Sources (Journals, Books, etc) | 90 |
| Documents | 137 |
| Average years from publication | 5.38 |
| Average citations per documents | 7.98 |
| Authors | 205 |
| Author Appearances | 258 |
| Authors of single-authored documents | 54 |
| Authors of multi-authored documents | 151 |
| Single-authored documents | 56 |
| Authors per Document | 1.5 |
| Co-Authors per Documents | 1.88 |
| Collaboration Index | 1.86 |

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section deals with analysis of data collected, which is further classified into subsections, namely Source Analysis, Citation Analysis, Author's Influence, Location Analysis, Co-word analysis or Theme Analysis.

4.1 SOURCE ANALYSIS

Source analysis involves analysing the sources to identify the most productive journal in the field of political marketing. Table 2 lists the most productive journals along with its key characteristics in political branding discipline. The current study identified top 20 journals that have been considered as productive journals in this field where the first article was published by *Journal of Brand Management* in the year 2006. In terms of frequency of publication, *Journal of Political Marketing* has published highest number of articles (17) on political branding with having H-Index 9 and G-Index 11. In addition, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Public Affairs and Place Branding and Public Diplomacy Journal* have the same number of h- indexed publications related to political branding. Likewise, *Journal of Brand Management and Journal of political branding* are found to be the most influential journals as both have the highest number of citations (134). The contribution of these top 20 journals out of 90 journals in political branding literature is 22.22 percent.

Table 2 Most Productive Journals

| Source | H index | G index | M index | TC | NP | PY Start |
|---|---------|---------|---------|-----|----|----------|
| Journal Of Political Marketing | 9 | 11 | | 134 | 17 | 2014 |
| European Journal Of Marketing | 3 | 5 | 0.27 | 87 | 5 | 2010 |
| Journal Of Public Affairs | 3 | 5 | 0.25 | 48 | 5 | 2009 |
| Place Branding And Public Diplomacy | 4 | 5 | 0.29 | 73 | 5 | 2007 |
| Journal Of Brand Management | 3 | 4 | 0.20 | 134 | 4 | 2006 |
| Journal Of Marketing Management | 3 | 3 | 0.30 | 51 | 3 | 2011 |
| Perspectives On Politics | 0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 3 | 2010 |
| Annals Of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science | 2 | 2 | 0.14 | 95 | 2 | 2007 |
| Cuadernos Info | 2 | 2 | 0.50 | 6 | 2 | 2017 |
| International Journal Of Market Research | 2 | 2 | 0.33 | 10 | 2 | 2015 |
| Journal Of Business Research | 1 | 2 | 0.33 | 4 | 2 | 2018 |
| Journal Of Consumer Culture | 1 | 2 | | 11 | 2 | 2017 |
| Journal Of Indian Business Research | 0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 2 | 2017 |
| Journal Of Language And Politics | 2 | 2 | 0.15 | 15 | 2 | 2008 |
| Journal Of Product And Brand Management | 2 | 2 | 0.33 | 6 | 2 | 2015 |
| Marketing Theory | 2 | 2 | 0.17 | 71 | 2 | 2009 |
| Media Culture & Society | 1 | 2 | 0.20 | 9 | 2 | 2016 |
| Party Politics | 1 | 2 | 0.50 | 5 | 2 | 2019 |
| Qualitative Market Research | 1 | 2 | 0.17 | 7 | 2 | 2015 |

Further, Figure 1 elucidates annual occurrence of political branding discipline in five popular journals in which more publications were made in *Journal of Political Marketing* during the tenure of 2010 to 2017, however it has declined in subsequent years. But, *European Journal of Marketing* followed by *Journal of Public Affairs* and *Journal of Brand Management* have gained higher number of publications after 2014 and is still growing.

4.2 CITATION ANALYSIS

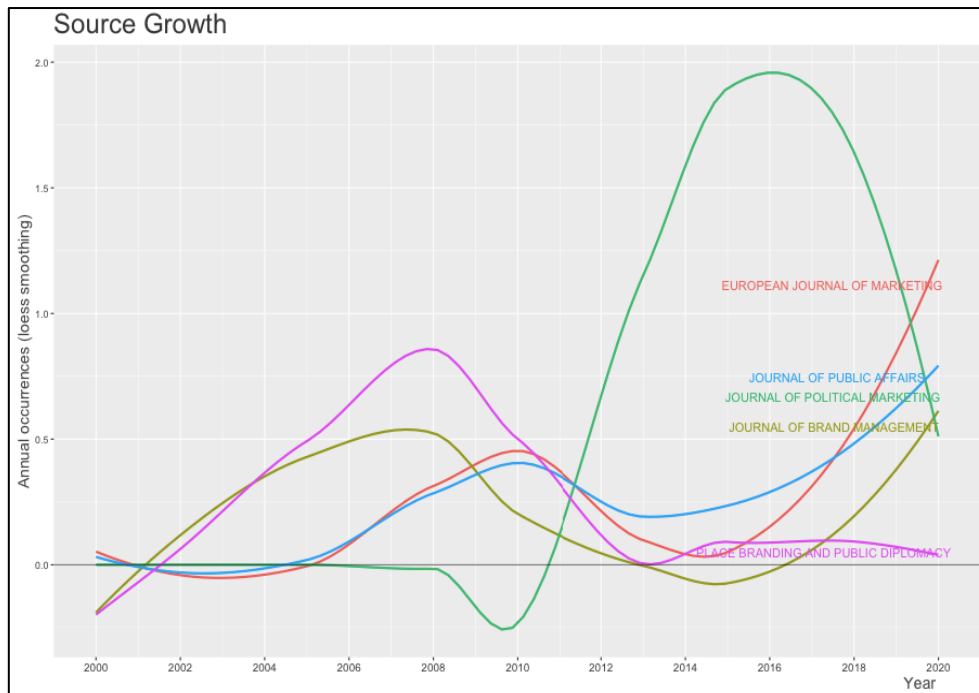


Table 3 Most Productive Papers

| Author | Year | Journal | Total Citations | TC per Year |
|-----------------------------|------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| Smith G | 2009 | Marketing Theory | 64 | 5.33 |
| Scammell M | 2007 | Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science | 63 | 4.5 |
| Bennett WI | 2004 | Politics, Products and Markets: Exploring Political Consumerism Past And Present | 56 | 3.29 |
| Lupu N | 2014 | World Politics | 52 | 7.42 |
| French A | 2010 | European Journal Market | 51 | 4.63 |
| Needham C | 2006 | Journal Brand Management | 50 | 3.33 |
| Reeves P | 2006 | Journal Brand Management | 48 | 3.2 |
| Guzman F | 2009 | Journal Brand Management | 36 | 3 |
| Bennett WI | 2007 | Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social | 32 | 2.28 |
| Phipps M | 2010 | European Journal Market | 31 | 2.81 |
| Speed R | 2015 | Journal Political Marketing | 30 | 5 |
| O'cass A | 2011 | Journal Market Management | 29 | 2.9 |
| Lucarelli A | 2018 | Cities | 28 | 9.33 |
| Gertner D | 2007 | Place Branding Public Dipl | 28 | 2 |
| Bal A | 2009 | Journal Public Affairs | 27 | 2.25 |
| Ottovordemgentsche nfelde S | 2017 | Journalism | 26 | 6.5 |
| Djupe Pa | 2000 | Journal Science Studies Religion | 23 | 1.09 |
| Boerman Sc | 2016 | Computer Human Behaviour | 22 | 4.4 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------|-----------------------------------|----|------|
| Rawson Eag | 2007 | Place Branding Public Dipla | 19 | 1.35 |
| Rius Ulldemolins J | 2015 | International Journal Cult Policy | 16 | 2.66 |

Citation analysis is a widely used technique to measure the impact of a publication (Xu et al. 2018). Table 3 lists the number of citations of most renowned authors of this discipline followed by average citations per year. It is evident from table 3 that maximum citations were received by Smith's article of Marketing Theory as the numbers accounted for 64, followed by Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science with 63 citation of Scammell which received around 4.5 citations per annum, indicating high impact of documents published on political branding. Journal of Politics, Products and Markets: Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present were cited 52 times. It is succinct from the table that the concept of political branding is being cited numerous times in plethora of research papers indicating the importance of this concept inclining frequently.

4.3 AUTHOR INFLUENCE

Table 5 shows, the dominant authors who are ranked as per the articles published, number of citations of their documents, authors' H-Index, G-Index, M-Index which indicates that H papers of the author are cited H times (Hirsch, 2005), G times (Egghe, 2006) and M times. Top 20 authors who are considered as productive authors in the field of political branding in which Pich is observed as the most influential author whose total publications on political branding are 12 since 2015 with 27 citations. It is followed by Armannsdottir with 8 publications and 13 citations. Nevertheless, Smith is the most prominent author as he received the highest number of citations. Pitch and Smith also dominate in terms of H and G-Indexes.

Table 4 Most Productive Authors

| Author | H Index | G Index | M Index | TC | NP | PY Start |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|-----|----|----------|
| Pich C | 4 | 5 | | 27 | 12 | 2015 |
| Armannsdottir G | 2 | 3 | | 13 | 8 | 2015 |
| Dean D | 3 | 4 | 0.5 | 20 | 4 | 2015 |
| Smith G | 4 | 4 | 0.33 | 144 | 4 | 2009 |
| Spry L | 2 | 2 | 0.66 | 6 | 4 | 2018 |
| Bal A | 2 | 3 | 0.16 | 30 | 3 | 2009 |
| Bigi A | 2 | 3 | 0.2 | 11 | 3 | 2011 |
| Guzman F | 2 | 3 | 0.16 | 46 | 3 | 2009 |
| Banerjee S | 1 | 2 | 0.2 | 4 | 2 | 2016 |
| Bennett WI | 2 | 2 | 0.11 | 88 | 2 | 2004 |
| Berthon P | 1 | 2 | 0.08 | 27 | 2 | 2009 |
| Billard Tj | 1 | 2 | 0.33 | 7 | 2 | 2018 |
| Bonera M | 1 | 2 | 0.1 | 8 | 2 | 2011 |
| Carnell S | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | |
| Chan Ey | 1 | 1 | 0.5 | 3 | 2 | 2019 |
| French A | 2 | 2 | 0.16 | 115 | 2 | 2009 |
| Hogan J | 1 | 1 | 0.16 | 2 | 2 | 2015 |
| Jain V | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2017 |
| Lucarelli A | 2 | 2 | 0.4 | 42 | 2 | 2016 |
| Lupu N | 1 | 2 | 0.14 | 52 | 2 | 2014 |

4.4 LOCATION BASED ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATIONS

Figure 2 illustrates countries where research on political branding has been conducted more. The statistics in figure 2 are calculated based on the data about the author's affiliation in the published document. To determine the leading countries driving research on Political Branding, the present study

extracts affiliations of authors from the comma separated value (CSV) file in Google sheets. After this, authors derive the GPS coordinates of these affiliations with the help of the Geocode tool in Google Sheets. Finally, the study plots these coordinates through Google Maps. It is evident from the table that political branding discipline is the widely researched area in the United Kingdom and USA as around 30 publications have been received from these countries and it has also gained momentum in other Nations like India, Australia, Canada and many more. In contrast, the contribution of Brazil and Bangladesh is minimal in this field. Moreover, all the countries possess high Single Country Publication (SCP) ratio and low Multi- country publication (MCP) ratio, and this calls for a focus on international collaboration in this discipline.

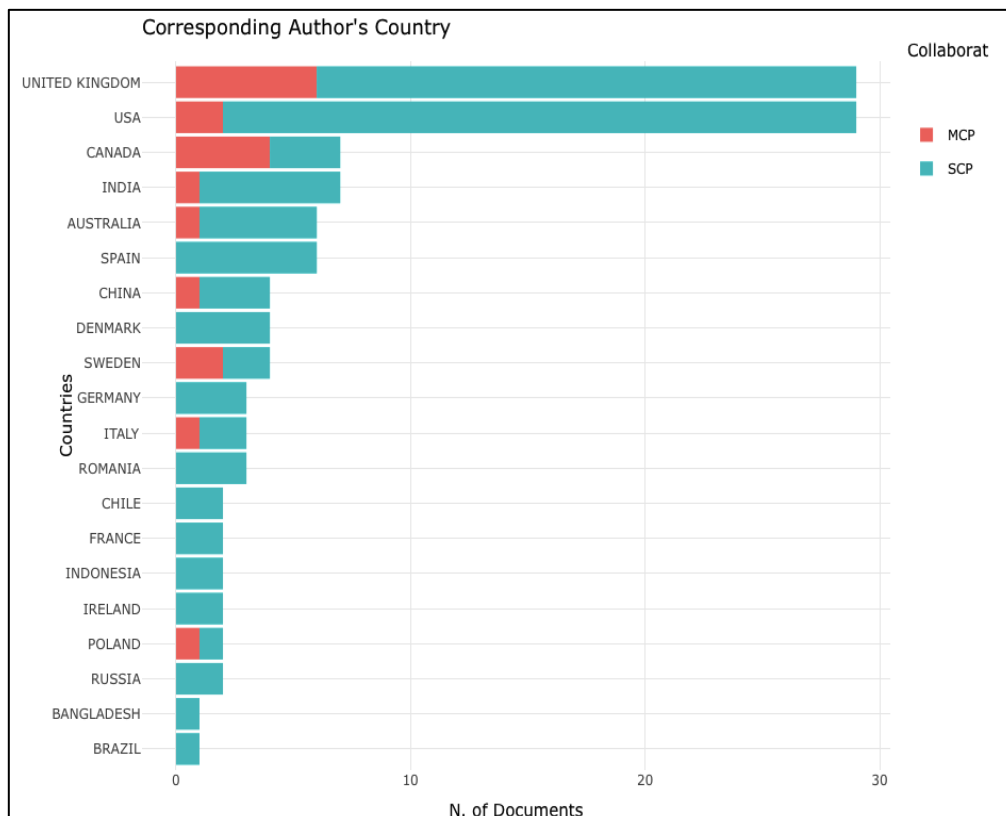
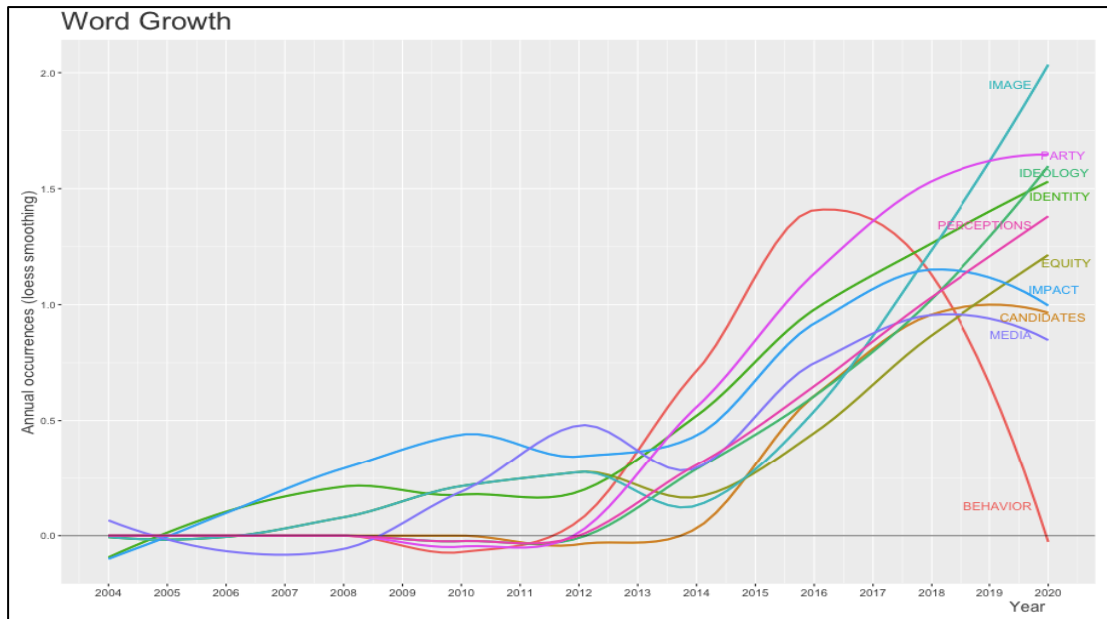


Figure 1 Location based Publications

4.5 WORD GROWTH ANALYSIS

Figure 3 explains yearly growth of keywords used by authors in the domain of political branding as per WoS. It is conspicuous that in 2020, more emphasis is given on political image, political parties, their ideologies, perception as compared to behaviour of political parties in this discipline, so the data in figure 3 reveals that the existing literature is mostly concerned with studying the impact of political ideologies and its image over public minds and social media. It also indicates that as compared to 2004, these concepts in political branding are gaining momentum over the period of a decade from 2010 to 2020.



4.6 MODULARITY ANALYSIS

Academics continue to favour data clustering as a method for categorising literature (Radicchi et al. 2004; Xu et al. 2018). The co-occurrence analysis of important terms is shown in Figure. This research shows how frequently recurring keywords appear in a variety of documents (Montemurro & Zanette, 2013). Only keywords that have appeared at least five times in articles are included in the data once it has been filtered. A total of 35 words were chosen and grouped into 6 clusters, each of which contained 2 to 10 keywords. The word "image" was placed in the middle of each cluster to connect them together. Cluster 1 comprises 8 words which are image, party, identity, methodology, perspective, creation, exploration, management, creation and market orientation, indicating that these concepts of political branding are widely taken into consideration. Moreover, cluster 2 includes impact, personality, perception, equity, consumer, dimensions, models, communities, knowledge and consumer ethnocentrism. These are linked to cluster 1, 3, and 5, which indicates that the prime emphasis of this literature is on the image of parties and its personality among people. Cluster 3 consists of behavior, ideology, framework, culture, people, market research, consumption, valueless subjectivity. The cluster focuses on market research regarding the cultural framework of inhabitants, their behaviors and their ideologies. The words in cluster 4 involve media, parties, Facebook, participation indicating emergence of social media sites in political branding discipline. There are 3 words included in cluster 5 ranging from candidates, leader to campaigns followed by political parties to raise their popularity during elections. And cluster 6 comprises city and transformation words.

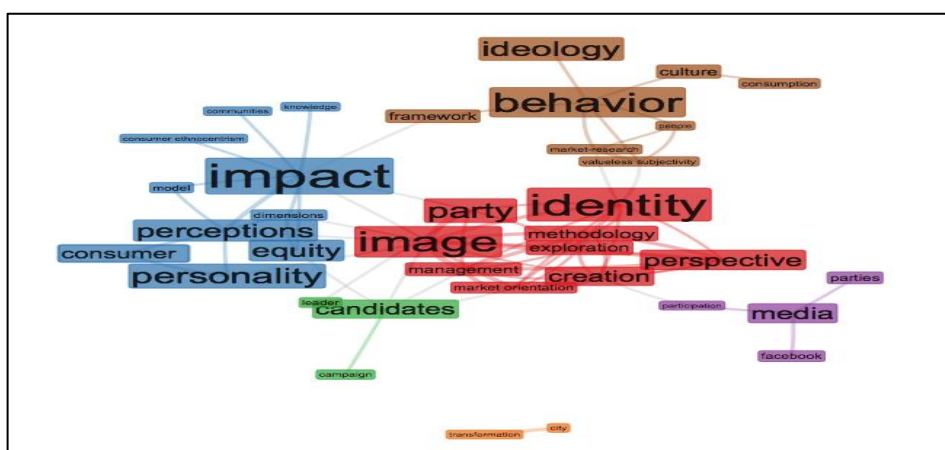


Figure 2 Co-Word Network Analysis

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Following Barack Obama's successful presidential campaign, the idea of political branding has become increasingly popular, attracting the attention of researchers, marketers, and political actors across the globe. In this study, data from 137 papers written by 205 writers and published between 2000 and 2020 were extracted using bibliometric analysis to undertake a thorough evaluation of political branding literature.

The analysis showed that since 2015, there has been a steady evolution and increase in interest in the literature on political branding. Although the majority of the research was done in the United States and the United Kingdom, the results can be applied to other nations for wider generalisation. The *Journal of Political Marketing* and *European Journal of Marketing* have emerged as the two primary publications in the area, with eminent authors like Margaret Scammell and Gareth Smith having a big impact.

Political branding literature predominated on issues relating to party ideas and image. The studies looked into a number of topics, such as the influence of political figures, voter perceptions, and the function of social media in influencing political branding tactics. The results show how crucial political branding ideas are becoming for comprehending, shaping, and influencing public opinion and political outcomes.

This study is the first in-depth quantitative analysis of political branding literature and offers helpful insights for both academics and professionals. The condensed findings provide a thorough comprehension of political branding principles, assisting scholars in developing hypotheses and deepening their knowledge of this important area. The study also suggests future directions for the study of political branding to ensure that the field of political advertising continues to develop and be explored.

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