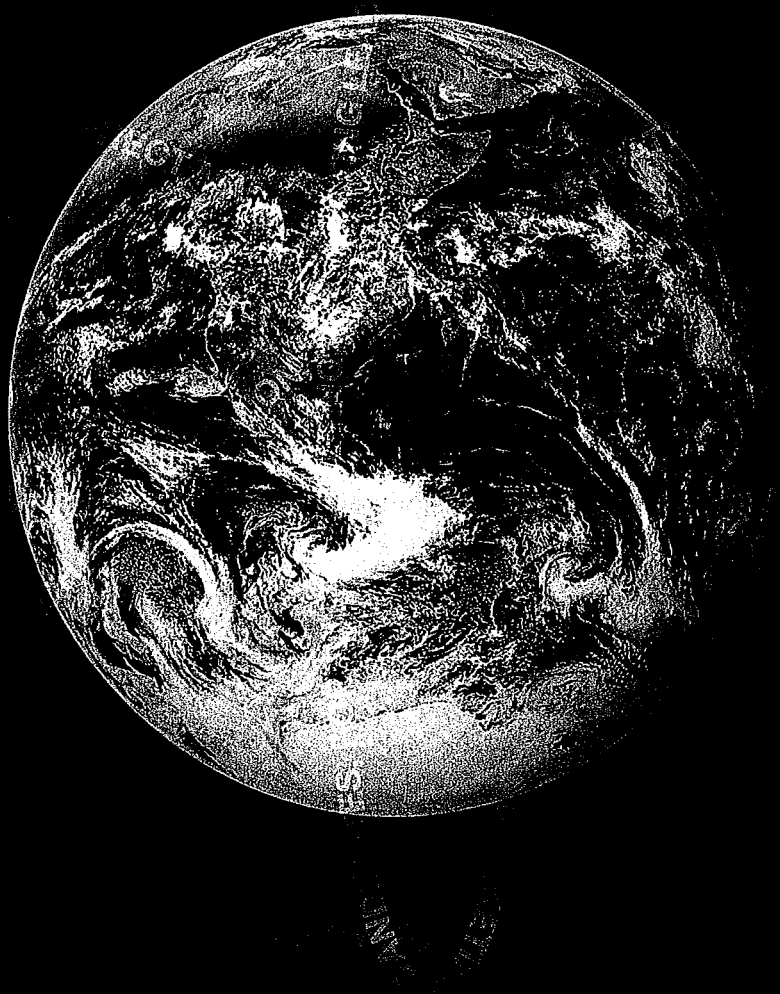
ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS



Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing

Edited by Jennifer Lees-Marshment

Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing

With the Obama campaign universally acknowledged as the most successfully marketed presidential campaign of all time, the future of political marketing is fiercely contested, provoking a wealth of high-quality scholarship from across the globe. This work provides an accessible introduction to the field, international in both content and authorship, which will set the direction of future research.

The *Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing* contains cutting-edge contributions written by academic experts and informed practitioners but also has a cohesive structure, containing emerging areas and authors alongside established ones. The *Handbook* addresses the practicalities as well as the broader impact of political marketing on politics including its role in the changing relationship between political leaders, parties and voters. With each chapter providing a comparative and carefully structured discussion of a key topic, the *Handbook* examines issues within the following broad themes:

- Understanding the market, gathering ideas and debate
- Product development, branding and strategy
- Internal marketing
- Communicating and connecting with the public
- Government marketing – delivery, policy and leadership

With each chapter written to a common template presenting new research and contemporary case studies, the *Handbook* combines a succinct presentation of the latest research with an accessible and systematic format, which will be of great interest to scholars and practitioners alike.

Jennifer Lees-Marshment (University of Auckland, New Zealand) is an international expert in political marketing and author/editor of 10 books, including *Political Marketing: principles and applications* (2009) and *Global Political Marketing* (2010).

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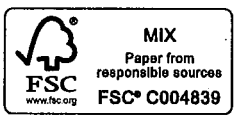

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1

Introduction

Political marketing in the 21st century

Jennifer Lees-Marshment

The *Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing* offers cutting-edge, fresh perspectives on how politicians, parties and governments can use political marketing to develop a more productive relationship with the public. Each chapter outlines a different topic, previous research in that area, presents new research, and then reflects on what works, the impact on politics and democracy and the way forward for research or practice. The chapters are written by leading and emerging scholars around the world, ensuring that the content is international in outlook. Aside from the worth of individual chapters, collectively this produces advice for practitioners, considerations for academics, and a sense not just of the field's progress to date but how it may develop in future. This provides a flagship work in the field that will not only be an accessible introduction to the field but will set the direction of research in the years to come.

The *Handbook* was guided by an editorial board whose role was to provide input such as suggestions for topics and authors, and to review submissions. They were selected because of particular expertise in a particular area of political marketing, to ensure a broad geographical spread, and their ability to provide constructive critique:

Dr Ken Cosgrove (Suffolk University, US)
Dr Nigel Jackson (Plymouth University, UK)
Dr Alex Marland (Memorial University, Canada)
Dr Roger Mortimore (Ipsos Mori, UK)
Dr Robin T. Pettitt (Kingston University, UK)
Dr Claire Robinson (Massey University, New Zealand)
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Their expertise spans market research, branding, political parties, political communication, candidate electioneering, market orientation, journalism, e-marketing, public relations, political advertising and Asian political marketing. I would like to express my thanks to the board. Not only did they read and comment on the first draft of the chapters submitted for review, but their contribution to the framework for the book, the open call for contributions, and their

suggestions of topics and authors contributed significantly to ensuring that the handbook was groundbreaking, rather than just a summary of previous research.

All chapters in this book went through three processes: submission of an initial outline, the first draft of the chapter in October 2010, and the second draft at the end of February 2011. Authors were both invited individually to submit an outline, and to respond to an open advertisement via Professor Phil Harris's mailing list and the Political Marketing Group. Initially over 30 chapters were invited to proceed to first draft, with the overall process resulting in 27 chapters. All chapters were required to follow the set structure, so that the sum of the book would be greater than the parts. I would like to record my thanks to authors for not only their hard work but the quality and originality of content, and their appropriate response to review comments.

I would also like to thank Routledge for the opportunity to edit this handbook, and for possessing a both practical and intellectual vision that now is the right time not just for a textbook such as *Political Marketing: Principles and Application*, but for a new handbook in political marketing.

The *Handbook* is divided into five sections (see Figure 1.1). Part I, on understanding the market, gathering ideas and debate, discusses a range of market research methods, including polling, focus groups, segmentation, voter selection and targeting, but also deliberation and co-creation; more importantly, how they are or could be used in politics. Part II, on product development, branding and strategy, explores market orientation, niche marketing and political branding. Part III, on internal marketing, considers relationship marketing and direct marketing to members and volunteers, marketing fundraising, and the role of party officials in political marketing. Part IV, on communicating and connecting with the public, explores changes in marketing over time, the branding and positioning of candidates, populism and marketing, political communication in elections, how leaders can interact with voters, political public relations, and short- and long-term online relationships. Part V, on government marketing – delivery,

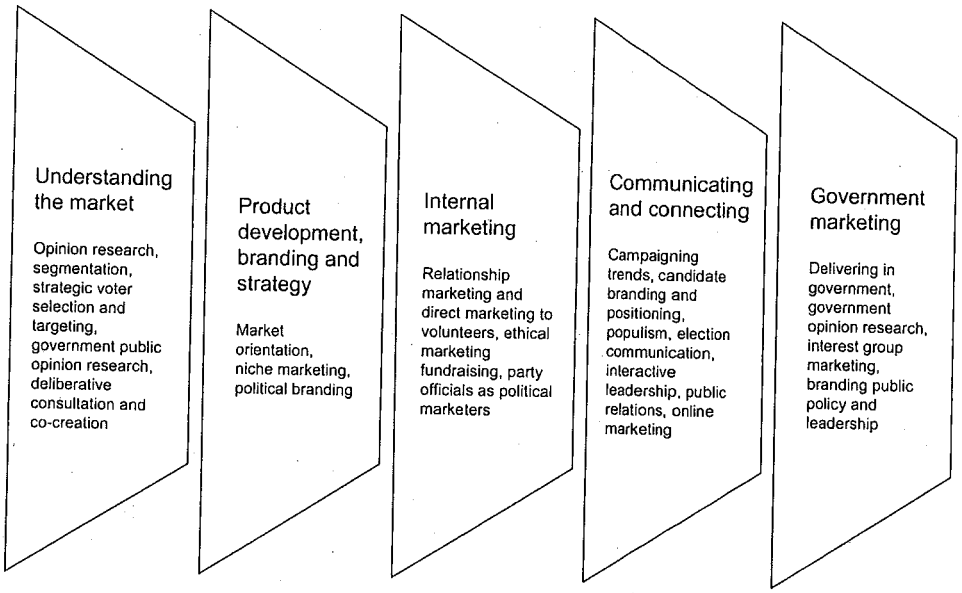

Figure 1.1 Topics in the *Routledge Handbook of Political Marketing*

policy and leadership, discusses delivering in government, how governments use public opinion research, the use of marketing by interest groups, branding public policy and making space for leadership. The concluding chapter sets out new directions in political marketing practice, discusses political marketing and democracy, and outlines future trends in political marketing research and practice.

Part V
Government marketing – delivery, policy and leadership

25

Branding public policy[1]

David Marsh and Paul Fawcett

The topic: branding public policy

Branding is often thought of as being about the branding of politicians and parties, but in this chapter we explore the branding of public policy and what this means for democracy and governance.

Branding has attracted relatively little interest even in the field of political marketing, although that may be changing (see French and Smith 2008: 210). Holt makes this point most effectively:

> Today branding is a core activity of capitalism, so must be included in any serious attempt to understand contemporary society and politics. Yet, despite its social significance, branding has rarely been subject to concerted empirical examination and theoretical development outside of business schools.
>
> *(Holt 2006: 300)*

Even those, like Savigny (2008), who argue that marketing and branding hinder democracy, nevertheless recognise that we should aim to develop a better and more critical understanding of how these techniques are used, given their increased popularity amongst political actors.[2]

However, before we examine this link in further detail, one other point is important here, namely the relationship between marketing and branding, which is not an entirely uncontentious issue in the marketing literature.[3] Whilst the branding of a city, party or policy is a key feature of the marketing of it, this is a relationship that is not as straightforward in the public sector as it is in the private sector. In the private sector, branding is probably best seen as a marketing tool designed to increase a company's market share/sales revenue. To an extent, the same is true of country and city branding where, in part, the aim is to market a country/city to increase revenue from tourism. However, in the case of the branding of politicians or parties, the aim is to market them to increase support and, particularly, vote share. Finally, the branding of public policy is different again. Policies are marketed, but the aim is usually not to increase revenue, but rather to ensure the adoption and success of a particular policy.

Previous research: branding and politics

The limited literature on politics and branding is not systematic and most of it is, in essence, a sub-set of the political marketing literature, concentrating upon the branding of parties and politicians. In contrast, we develop a heuristic, which identifies four different areas in which branding and politics intersect. A summary of this heuristic is shown in Table 25.1 below (for a fuller development of the heuristic see Marsh and Fawcett 2011).

In what remains of this chapter, we focus on the branding of public policy.

Table 25.1 Four areas wherein politics and branding intersect

Public sector organisations that use branded products and services	*Branding countries, sub-national governments and government departments/ agencies*	*Branding parties, leaders and governments*	*Branding public policy*
Description			
Public sector organisations have developed both their own branded products and services, and have used products and services that have been branded by the private sector, particularly in the HR, IT and finance sectors.	Successful place branding is increasingly viewed as a key competitive asset and can be linked to the move towards a post-modern or late-modern world. Its increased importance is reflected in Anholt-GfK Roper's decision, in 2005, to begin producing an annual Nation Branding and City Branding Index based on 1,000 interviews with respondents in 20 developed countries. Government departments and agencies also increasingly brand themselves and their activities.	The branding of parties, politicians and governments is a key concern of the political marketing literature, which has grown rapidly in the last decade.	Public policies are sometimes, perhaps increasingly, branded either by international organisations or government departments and agencies.
Examples			
Examples include: the Investors in People Standard, which is now used worldwide in over 20 countries, and the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model, which was first developed by industry in 1988, but which has since been adopted by a number of public sector agencies.	Examples of place branding are frequent and range from the national (Australia, Canada and Singapore) to the local (South Australia). The branding of government departments and agencies is just as frequent. To choose one example, the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in the UK is	Two of the most prominent examples are Clinton and Blair, who are noted for not only branding themselves, but also their parties and the governments that they led.	Examples include: the Truth Campaign in the US; the World Health Organization's (WHO) Direct Observation of Treatment, Short-Course Chemotherapy Programme (DOTS) for tuberculosis control;

Table 25.1 (continued)

Public sector organisations that use branded products and services	*Branding countries, sub-national governments and government departments/ agencies*	*Branding parties, leaders and governments*	*Branding public policy*
	branded and has also used branding to promote its activities, including its 'Best Practice Portfolio'. It owns the intellectual property and trademarks to the generic swirl logo that is used in all of its promotional material.		the UNAIDS Red Campaign; and the Gateway Review Process, which we discuss below.

Example sources

Civil Service College Singapore 2006; Emberson and Winters 2000; Evans *et al.* 2005; George *et al.* 2003; Hides *et al.* 2004; Nabitz *et al.* 2000; Nimijean 2006; Ogden *et al.* 2003; Sanchez *et al.* 2006; Temple 2005.

New research: policy transfer and branding – the Gateway Review Process

Branding appears to play an increasingly important role in the development and implementation of public policy, but it can also feature as part of the process of policy transfer, which is an increasingly important development in public policy (see Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 2000; Evans 2009). In this section, we examine the case of the Gateway Review Process (henceforth Gateway), which was first introduced by the UK's Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in February 2001 (for more detail on Gateway see Fawcett and Marsh forthcoming; Marsh and Fawcett forthcoming). At the time that interviews were conducted for this chapter, the OGC was an independent office of HM Treasury with responsibility for, amongst other things, public sector procurement and project management (from 15 June 2010 the OGC was based in the Efficiency and Reform Group in the Cabinet Office). Gateway was introduced with the aim of improving the public sector's capacity in both of these areas. It is a particularly interesting case in the context of this discussion because it is an example of a public policy that has been branded and franchised to other jurisdictions both within and outside of the originating country. In addition, whilst the focus of the policy transfer literature has been on why and how a country imports policy models from another country to solve a policy problem, the Gateway case turns our attention to why and how a country tries to export its policies and the role of branding and franchising in this process.[4]

Three critical reports focused on the issue of public procurement policy between 1995 and 1999, including the Gershon Review, which was published in April 1999 (Gershon 1999). In response, the government created the OGC in April 2000 and introduced a new set of best practice guidance for the procurement of major projects in the public sector, which became known as Gateway. In its initial stages, the Gateway process involves the creation of a risk profile, which determines whether the Department can conduct its own review or has to call in an independent team of reviewers nominated by the central Gateway Unit. All reviewers are accredited by the OGC and many are drawn from the private sector. Each project is then

assessed at six key decision points or 'gates': start up; business justification; procurement strategy; investment decision; readiness for service; and benefits evaluation. At the end of each review, which lasts between three and four days, a short report is produced for the Department's Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). Initially, these reports would grade projects Red, Amber or Green, although that process has subsequently changed. The report is discussed with the SRO and forwarded to OGC within seven days, with all actions agreed before the Gateway team departs.

Gateway was conceived as a brand from the outset, after a brand consultant gave a three-hour presentation to its first head, Ian Glenday, and his colleagues (Glenday 2007). Given that it was branded, it is clear that it was intended to 'market' Gateway, initially to UK partners and then overseas. As such, franchising was also a key element of Gateway's strategy. These two features of Gateway are clearly reflected in both the trade-marking of the Gateway brand and in the quality of the promotional literature that they produce, which is adopted, but also adapted to varying extents, by all the franchisees.

In the UK, Gateway is overseen by the Gateway Unit in the OGC and operates in central government, local government, the National Health Service (NHS), the Ministry of Defence, the police force, and in the sub-national governments in Scotland and Wales. It is widely seen as a success in the UK (see Fawcett and Marsh forthcoming for a discussion of its putative 'success'), and has been transferred to Australia, first to Victoria and, subsequently, to the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. There has also been transfer to other sub-state jurisdictions in Australia, notably Brisbane City Council, which has established itself as a leader in this area and is attempting to market itself as a centre of excellence among councils in northeastern Australia. In 2008 it was introduced to New Zealand and the Netherlands.

However, we argue here, and it is a point that we develop at further length elsewhere (see Fawcett and Marsh forthcoming), that there is strong prima facie evidence that, other factors notwithstanding, the way in which Gateway has been branded and franchised helps to explain not only the success of the policy itself, but also the success of its subsequent transfer to other jurisdictions. Certainly, our interviewees in the Gateway Units in the UK and Victoria emphasised this point (see Fawcett and Marsh forthcoming). Interestingly, however, Gateway wasn't branded and franchised in order to raise revenue, as would clearly be the case in the private sector. Rather, the initial intention was to ensure that Gateway was used in a consistent and comprehensive manner as it spread to different parts of the UK public sector. Subsequently, as the transfer became international, franchising was regarded as crucially important to 'preserve the brand' and to ensure that: first, failures, which might reflect back adversely on the process in the UK, were less likely; and second, best practice could be exchanged within a common framework.

The importance that the OGC attached to Gateway, as a brand, was most clearly demonstrated in 2007 when it established a Brand Assurance Team. The Brand Assurance Team was created to protect the integrity of the brand, deal with requests for information about Gateway from other jurisdictions, and encourage the exchange of best practice, or lesson drawing from hubs, including the international hubs. In addition, the Brand Assurance Team was also responsible for conducting a review of each of the hubs every three years. To date, of the international hubs, only Victoria has been reviewed. This occurred in 2007 and it was a light touch review. The franchisee bears the cost of the review, but no other payment is involved.

As emphasised, Gateway is also franchised. Again, franchising is more common in the private sector. Alon (2005) argues that franchising in the private sector is most successful in companies

with strong and continuing profitability and for businesses that can be easily duplicated. There has also been considerable work identifying the putative advantages and disadvantages of franchising for both franchisors and franchisees. Most of these factors are not relevant in relation to franchising in the public sector, but some are important. So, it is argued that franchisers benefit from the opportunity to spread their business model at limited cost and from the fact that franchisees have more incentives than employees to make a brand work. The main disadvantage is that franchisers lose control unless they have a careful vetting procedure and regular checks on performance. As far as franchisees are concerned, they are seen as benefitting from the knowledge of, and training by, the franchiser, but the main disadvantage is the loss of control, compared with the option of launching their own brand.

These arguments about franchising have some, if limited, resonance in the case of Gateway. Franchising has enabled Gateway UK to spread the model with limited cost, but the benefits it has enjoyed have not been financial. In most cases, what franchising has helped Gateway UK to do is reinforce its claims about its success and, to a limited, if growing, extent, gain from the exchange of best practice. As far as the borrowing jurisdictions are concerned, the benefits are more obvious. Their costs have been reduced by the fact that the Gateway model and the accompanying documentation were already available, and indeed tried and tested. In addition, the fact that it was widely seen as a success in the UK made it less of a risk. At the same time, borrowing jurisdictions have also retained significant control as UK Gateway has, to date, given then significant flexibility over the way in which they have implemented the model enabling them to adapt it to suit local circumstances.

Advice for practitioners

Measuring the success of branding in the public sector is much more difficult than it is in the private sector. In the private sector, success is judged in terms of factors such as sales, profit and market share, but in the public sector indicators of success are much more problematic. In the case of parties or politicians, the success of branding might be measured at election time or by opinion polls between elections. However, the problem is, perhaps, more complex in relation to the branding of public policy. A public policy may be branded and marketed in order to ensure effective implementation or greater take-up, but it is not usually sold or charged for, so we cannot assess success in monetary terms. Overall, this raises a set of broader questions about how to assess policy success, but this is an under-analysed area within public policy (for attempts to address the issues involved, see Marsh and McConnell 2010; McConnell 2010). However, our key argument here is that success in the public policy field, whether or not branding is involved, is a contested issue. This point can be briefly illustrated by returning to two cases, one based on our research into Gateway and the other based on Ogden *et al.*'s research into the World Health Organization's (WHO) Direct Observation of Treatment, Short-Course Chemotherapy Programme (DOTS) campaign, which was referred to briefly in Table 25.1.

Ogden *et al.* (2003) examine how branding was used by the WHO as part of their DOTS programme for tuberculosis control, which was introduced in the early 1990s. DOTS was strongly contested and resisted by academic and scientific communities, despite Ogden *et al.* (2003: 184) argument that the policy package was explicitly developed with the aim of making it 'simple and marketable to policy makers and programme implementers'. This meant that:

> a strongly political approach characterized what is usually thought of as a technical health policy process. The DOTS campaign was extremely successful in emphasizing advocacy and the marketing of an idea. ... [T]he Global TB Programme managed effectively to

> exploit an important window of opportunity (a TB outbreak in New York) in order to come up with a branded solution by which to solve it. Their success can be measured in the number of countries adopting the DOTS policy to date – 127 out of 211.
>
> *(Ogden* et al. *2003: 186)*

Ogden *et al.* focus on programmatic success: whether the policy achieved its intended outcomes and whether it was implemented as per its objectives. This is perhaps the most common measure of success. For example, it is the same measure used by Evans *et al.* (2005) in their study of the Truth Campaign, which was launched in the US to establish an anti-smoking brand with teenagers. They note that: 'There was a marked decline in youth tobacco use associated with the Truth Campaigns in the states of Florida and Massachusetts' (Evans *et al.* 2005: 188). Again, success is equated here with whether the outcomes of the programme have been achieved.

However, Ogden *et al.*'s analysis also highlights other measures of success (or, to be more accurate, lack of success). For example, they point out that: 'While the marketing of DOTS was, in many ways, hugely successful, in terms of attracting attention and resources for TB, branding had disadvantages and led to further contestation' (Ogden *et al.* 2003: 185). They continue: 'the overt political approach of branding and marketing DOTS led to considerable contestation within a normally technical and relatively consensual policy community, with disagreements between academic, scientists and programme managers at WHO' (ibid.: 186). This suggests that other aspects of the programme were less successful. Hence, the lack of success to which they refer here is less about whether the outcomes of the programme were achieved (indeed, on most counts it appears that they were), and more about process success, or, in other words, the extent to which the programme had legitimacy amongst relevant stakeholders. It is therefore insufficient to concentrate only on financial output measures, or even the outcomes of a programme, when it comes to assessing the success of branding in public policy.

Of course, the problems associated with assessing policy success mean that identifying what makes the branding of a public policy more or less likely to be successful is difficult. Basu and Wang's (2009) work on the branding of public health programmes is important here. Their main concern is to explain why branding in the public sector is less likely to be as successful as branding in the private sector, with particular reference to public health. The weaknesses that they identify include: 'fuzzy brands' that don't sustain interest or retain sufficient loyalty; a bias within public health communication towards one-way, top-down promotion; a reliance on standard communication tools that lack tactical excellence and effectiveness; dominant health control frameworks that fail to accommodate the culture and context of the target audience in the planning, design and implementation of campaigns; and a lack of organisational resources and managerial commitment towards the promotion, protection and ongoing success of the brand (Basu and Wang 2009).

Applied to the public sector more broadly, many of Basu and Wang's conclusions still hold. For example, some of the reason for the success of Gateway as a brand can be explained by the way in which it addressed many of the weaknesses identified by Basu and Wang. First, Gateway is certainly not a 'fuzzy brand'. The jurisdictions that franchise the Gateway Review system are all well aware of the nature of the system and only adopt it after extensive consultation. Second, the documentation associated with Gateway is extensive, thorough and professional, and franchising means that it is used by all jurisdictions. Certainly, no one can mistake the brand. Third, the quality of the documentation, along with the establishment of a Brand Assurance Team, reflects the continued commitment of the OGC and the UK Gateway

Unit to the brand. Here, the Brand Assurance Team plays a key role in ensuring that all of the relevant stakeholders are involved in the process of brand development. For example, reviewing each of the hubs every three years is one way in which the OGC can exchange best practice. This enables policy learning and further strengthens the brand through a process of ongoing revision to the documentation that is produced. This exchange of best practice, and consequent brand development, is also encouraged by the UK Gateway Governance Board, which includes representatives from the international stakeholders group. Of course, the latter is, by its very nature, a virtual group, but this does not stop an extensive exchange of ideas, experience and best practice from taking place (see Fawcett and Marsh forthcoming). Finally, whilst all of these factors are important, perhaps the key reason for the success of the Gateway brand lies in brand communication. While Gateway is branded and franchised, the UK allows the borrowing jurisdictions to adapt the Gateway process to meet their needs, as long as they accept the 14 broad principles of the system. As such, the management of the brand is not top-down and takes account of the different contexts that exist across jurisdictions.

In short, the factors outlined above help to explain the role that branding has played in ensuring the success of Gateway as a public policy. However, what they also do is contribute towards our understanding of the role that branding has played in ensuring that Gateway's transfer to other jurisdictions has been a success. Building on this, the following principles could be suggested for how to make the branding of public policy effective:

- The brand should only be adopted after all relevant stakeholders are aware of its nature and have been extensively consulted.
- Extensive, thorough and professional documentation must be provided about the brand, especially for franchising, so that the brand is clear.
- A Brand Assurance Team should be established, so that all relevant stakeholders can be involved in the process of brand development.
- The government department needs to show continued commitment to the brand.
- There should be a review of the policy at appropriate intervals to enable the exchange of best practice and policy learning; this can help reinvigorate and strengthen the brand.
- Franchisees need to be free to adapt the overarching brand to meet their needs as long as they accept the broad principles of the system, which need to be established at the outset of the programme.

Impact on politics: branding, governance and democracy

Much of the work and growing interest in the intersection between branding and politics has been rooted in an argument about the putative move towards a post-modern or late-modern world. As van Ham (2002: 252) puts it: 'The importance public relations has taken on in public diplomacy implies a shift in political paradigms, a shift from the modern world of geo-politics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence'. This suggests that the links that are developing between branding and politics are probably best understood as part of a longer-term process in which political systems and political actors adapt to the technological, social and political changes associated with what is most often termed late-modernity. As such, the increased use of branding in politics raises immediate questions about the nature of modern governance and the operation of contemporary democracy. Here, we consider the two issues separately.

Branding and governance

Sociologists argue that we have moved into a period of late-modernity characterised by increased complexity and broad changes in economic, socio-cultural and political processes. This debate has permeated political science, particularly in the literature on governance (Pierre and Peters 2000; Bell and Hindmoor 2009) and its relation to late-modernity. Here, the work of Henrik Bang (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008; Bang and Sørensen 2001) is particularly interesting. Bang sees the politics of late-modernity as characterised by: the replacement of hierarchy by networks as the dominant mode of governance; the hollowing out of the state; a move from politics-policy to policy-politics; the increased fluidity of identity, including political identities; greater reflexivity; changing forms of political participation; the increased importance of the discursive arena for network governance and the associated rise of the role of the media and celebrity politics; and the changing nature and role of parties. These are crucial claims which, to the extent that they are true, change the nature of politics and the political and, perhaps most crucially of all, contemporary democracy.

We are not concerned with Bang's overall argument here (see Marsh *et al.* 2010; Li and Marsh 2008; Marsh 2011), but it is easy to see how branding might play a role in the changes that he describes, particularly in the move from politics-policy to policy-politics (Bang 2007, 2008). For Bang, politics-policy was rooted in an input-output model, in which the focus was upon how pre-constituted political agents, individuals, but also groups, gained access to, and recognition in, political decision-making processes. In contrast, policy-politics is rooted in what Bang terms a 'flowput' model, in which the focus is upon how political elites from the public, private and voluntary sectors are networking in order to produce and deliver the policies wanted by the reflexive individuals characteristic of late or high modernity.

Bang (2007) further contends that the contemporary governance networks that he identifies operate in three arenas: parliamentary, corporatist and discursive. He argues that the discursive arena is becoming more important because it is crucial for attempting to resolve the tension between the complexities of late-modernity and the imperative involved in the need to produce effective public policy. The idea here is that contemporary states are under more pressure to deal with increased complexity and, for that reason, incorporate more elites into the policy-making process.

In Bang's view, in contemporary network society, policy emerges through this networking process, as a result of discursive engagement among the network elite, which utilises their media expertise, in order to convince citizens that they have the answers to the problems that they face. As such, Bang (2007: 8) identifies a shift from an input-output model of politics, in which inputs from citizens, via parties and interest groups, are negotiated and aggregated into policy outputs by government (in his terms a period of politics-policy), to a recursive one in which the network elite, operating through the political system, acts 'in its own terms and on its own values, thereby shaping and constructing societal interests and identities' (in his terms a period of policy-politics).

Bang also argues that the move from politics-policy to policy-politics has led to a significant change in the nature and role of political parties. In his view, parties are no longer channels of representation; rather, they are the means by which governments, and, indeed, oppositions, attempt to convince citizens that they have the best leaders and the best policies. From this perspective, the branding of parties, politicians and policies is increasingly necessary to convince citizens of the quality of the product produced by the party/government.

If Bang is right, then his conclusions raise important issues about the relationship between political branding, governance and democracy. In short, if it does appear that branding is being

increasingly used to legitimise policy decisions taken in expert networks, then one might suggest that this may well undermine the foundations of representative and parliamentary democracy. Overall, there is little doubt that the growing prominence of political branding in politics has implications for the nature and future of democracy and this is an issue that a number of authors have discussed, particularly in the political marketing literature.

Branding and democracy

Moufahim and Lim (2009: 764) argue that the branding/marketing literature 'has, for the most part, taken an "instrumental" approach to marketing, focusing on practical, rather than methodological or philosophical, issues'. Consequently, they contend that 'political marketing scholars continue to wrestle with the narrowly pragmatic nature of much of the research conducted by their peers and colleagues' (Moufahim and Lim 2009: 764). This is partly because most of the mainstream literature on political branding/marketing essentially treats it as almost totally analogous to branding/marketing in the business sector, although, as we saw earlier, that is problematic. As Moufahim and Lim (2009: 765) put it, 'Applied to political processes, commercial marketing becomes "political marketing", i.e. the application of business practices to politics and the mindset of "voter-centeredness"'. In contrast, there are two distinct streams in the more critical literature: authors who see branding as involving control by parties/politicians/governments, rather than increased participation/involvement by citizens (Moufahim and Lim 2009; Savigny 2008; Smith 2009); and authors who think that branding/political marketing could extend democracy but, to date, does not (Lees-Marshment 2004). Most of this work, however, has focused exclusively on the branding/marketing of political parties and politicians.

As such, much of this literature tends to avoid the hard, but very important, question of whether this process constrains democracy. Yet, at the same time, what also underpins much of the same literature is the implicit view that branding makes it easier for citizen customers to make a choice between parties/politicians/policies, etc., which subsequently helps to expand democracy, because it engages more people in the political process. In addition, treating citizens as consumers means that parties will be more responsive to their wishes, so branding and marketing can contribute to a better representation of constituents (Lees-Marshment 2001).

Many authors are critical of this view and, indeed, the broader orientation of the political marketing and branding literature. Here, Smith (2009) makes an important point by identifying the tension between the focus on voters as consumers, which is crucial to political marketing/branding, and the need for parties to be 'responsible', particularly in government. Indeed, it could be argued, in a way that fits with Bang's analysis, that this tension is resolved by parties using brands as a means of control, 'selling' policies made in expert networks to citizens.

This argument is developed by Jansen (2008: 131), who argues that nation branding normalises market fundamentalism, with few benefiting. As Jansen (2008: 134) puts it, 'The primary impetus for branding products, companies and nations, like cattle and slaves, is control'. As such, Jansen contends that there is little room for democratic control of a nation's brand identity: 'nation branding is a monologic, hierarchical, reductive form of communication that is intended to privilege one message, require all voices of authority to speak in unison, and marginalize and silence dissenting voices' (Jansen 2008: 134).

This link between neo-liberalism, or economic rationalism, and political marketing/branding is developed by Savigny (2004; see also Scammell 1999: 726). Savigny contends that marketing, and thus branding 'is not adopted to enhance the democratic process; rather, it is a means to an end [the election of political parties/politicians], as such [sic] usage does not necessarily entail

democratic outcomes' (Savigny 2007b: 133; our addition in brackets). Consequently, Savigny suggests that political marketing/branding effectively depoliticises the democratic process.

More specifically, Smith and French, who are generally more positive, argue that:

> when branding has been applied in the political marketplace, it can produce unwanted effects such as narrowing the political agenda, increasing confrontation, demanding conformity of behaviour/message and even increasing political disengagement at the local level (Scammell 1999; Lilleker and Negrine 2003; Needham 2005). For some at least, political parties are not soap powder brands and should not be treated as such.
>
> *(Smith and French 2009: 210)*

In contrast, a number of authors are less sceptical, seeing marketing and branding as capable of extending democracy, but currently failing to do so (Smith and French 2009). Much of this argument originates from a post-structuralist position and suggests that late-modernity, with increased information and reflexivity, can give rise to a consumer counter-culture, in which affluence and choice empowers consumers in the marketplace and citizens in the polity. So, Smith and French argue that:

> Even accepting that greater pluralism is possible within the system, achieving greater connection (with a distant political elite), a greater sense of community (in an increasingly atomised society) and authenticity (in a combative political system concerned with point scoring) calls for a root and branch re-think as to what the political brand is for. For example, for consumers to see a political brand as authentic requires it to be seen as 'disinterested'. That is, driven, not by a self-serving motive to achieve power and govern, but core brand values that are of relevance and use to consumers in living their lives and fulfilling their ambitions.
>
> *(Smith and French 2009: 219)*

As such, Smith and French's argument is that marketing and branding can improve democracy, but only if the focus of the political brand is upon authenticity:

> The prize of a more connected electorate, involved in politics and gaining benefits at a number of levels from their brand of choice, is critical for the democratic process. The danger is that an increasingly alienated electorate, for whom political brands have nothing of real value, won't engage enough to let them.
>
> *(Smith and French 2009: 220)*

To date, this discussion about the relationship between branding/marketing and democracy has focused on the branding of parties and politicians, because this is the main concern in the literature. However, it is worth briefly considering how the branding of public policy affects democracy.

Again, this is inevitably a contested area. So, we might see the branding of public policy as positive if it brings increased attention to public health issues like AIDS, or means that the policy is easier/cheaper to implement, because it is accepted by more citizens (who 'buy into the brand'). However, the branding of one policy by drawing attention to that area may lead to more finance for that policy area at the expense of another equally/more important area. More broadly, if one follows Bang's reasoning, policies may be developed in unrepresentative expert networks, which are then marketed to citizens using branding: not a very democratic process.

The way forward

We conclude by suggesting three areas for further research. First, there is a need to engage more systematically with the relationship between branding/marketing and governance and democracy. More specifically, we agree with Moufahim and Lim (2009; see also Savigny 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) that it is essential to develop a more critical political marketing/branding agenda, which is much less instrumental in its research concerns and draws on a broader range of epistemological and theoretical perspectives. This should start with a far more thorough interrogation of the critical relationship between political marketing/branding and democracy.

Second, the branding of public policy appears to be a growing phenomenon. This suggests that the public sector, as well as researchers, need to take it more seriously. Research in this area should start with more empirical work on the different uses of branding in public policy, why we have seen a growth in its use, and its potential benefits and drawbacks for the public sector.

Finally, we need more work on what it means to say that public policy is 'successful', as this is obviously an essential precursor to any attempt to assess whether, and why, a branded policy is successful or not. A better understanding of the factors that contribute to policy success will also help us to better assess what leads some brands to be more effective than others and why.

Notes

1 We are grateful to Carsten Daugbjerg, Jennifer Lees-Marshment, Catherine Needham, Heather Savigny and the two anonymous referees for their useful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.
2 We are grateful to Heather Savigny for this point.
3 We are grateful to both Catherine Needham and Heather Savigny for drawing our attention to the need to, briefly at least, make this point.
4 We are grateful to Carsten Daugbjerg for this important point.

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ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOKS

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