

# Identity Priming in Political Marketing: Field-Experimental Evidence from Female Candidates

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## **Abstract**

For female candidates in elections, gender is not only a social characteristic but also an important social identity and lived experience, which they discuss with voters on the campaign trail. While there is solid evidence on how gender influences vote choice, we know little about the effects of identity priming on how voters evaluate female candidates. This study seeks to advance our understanding of how messages that emphasise candidates' social identities, including their gender identity, influence voter evaluations. Based on two field experiments that we conducted in collaboration with two female state parliamentary candidates in Germany, we show that emphasising a candidate's gender and discussing gender in combination with other social identities can positively affect how voters view candidates. However, there is little evidence that this effect materializes via identity alignment between voters and candidates or that priming gender identity independently affects vote choice when other social identities are primed.

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