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REVIEW

of the doctoral dissertation by **Mr. BARTOLOMEO RAFAEL BIALAS, M.A.**
titled **"THE IMPACT OF BRAND MANAGEMENT IN POLITICS ON CANDIDATES'
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS"**

Supervising Professors:

Professor Adam Figiel, PhD, DSc

Professor Janusz Nesterak, PhD, DSc

The subject of this review is the doctoral dissertation by Mr. BARTOLOMEO RAFAEL BIALAS, M.A., titled **"The Impact of Brand Management in Politics on Candidates' Competitive Advantage in the U.S. Presidential Elections,"** supervised by **Professor Adam Figiel, PhD, DSc,** and **Professor Janusz Nesterak, PhD, DSc.** The review was prepared as part of the doctoral proceedings initiated at the **Cracow University of Economics** on October 15, 2024, aimed at awarding the Candidate the doctoral degree.

The basis for the review is the letter by **Professor Stanisław Popek, PhD, DSc, Eng., Director of the Doctoral School of the Cracow University of Economics,** dated October 25, 2024 (RDC.600.45P.2.2024).

In accordance with Article 187 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, dated July 20, 2018 (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, as amended), the review assesses: the originality of the scientific problem formulated by the Candidate, their general theoretical knowledge in the discipline of management and quality studies, and their ability to conduct independent scientific research.

The dissertation comprises 302 pages and consists of:

- an introduction, justifying the undertaken research and presenting the main objectives and research hypotheses,

- five chapters, of which four are theoretical and one empirical,
- conclusions.

The final part of the dissertation includes a bibliography, and lists of tables and figures.

Assessment of the Originality of the Dissertation's Subject Matter

The topic addressed in the dissertation, concerning the application of brand management concepts in U.S. election campaigns, represents an engaging and evolving field of research. Although political marketing is not a new subject in the literature, the Author introduces an original perspective on the research problem by adapting branding theories to the electoral context. The interdisciplinary combination of management, consumer psychology, and political science perspectives extends the traditional approach to political marketing, underscoring the innovative nature of the dissertation. This approach moves beyond traditional campaign analysis to focus on deeper mechanisms of identity building and the creation of a candidate's competitive advantage in presidential elections.

The originality of the dissertation lies in several aspects:

1. The conceptualization of voters as consumers, which builds upon existing models in the literature.
2. The application of memory network theory and the concept of "emotional tagging" in analyzing perceptions of political brands.
3. The empirical study analyzing Pete Buttigieg's campaign strategy, which uniquely bridges theory and practice.

While the use of brand management principles in politics is not entirely novel, the dissertation distinguishes itself by employing an interdisciplinary approach and offering new interpretations of existing phenomena and processes, enhancing its originality.

Assessment of the Dissertation's Structure and Layout

The work is organized in a clear and cohesive manner. Its division into five chapters addresses key issues, progressing from theoretical considerations (including the definition and role of brands in society) to empirical analysis of selected U.S. presidential campaigns. The sequential development of chapters forms a logical progression—from introducing branding in

its socio-cultural context, through discussing the concept of competitive advantage, to the empirical part, which concretizes previously outlined assumptions.

This structure enables readers to first acquire a broad theoretical foundation and then evaluate how it has been applied and verified in political practice.

Substantive Assessment of the Dissertation

The Author demonstrates a strong command of the literature, referencing both classical sources in marketing and management as well as recent publications on political marketing, neuromarketing, and cognitive psychology. Theoretical concepts are effectively synthesized and contextualized within a novel research framework. The theoretical foundation has been consistently employed to formulate research hypotheses and validate them in the empirical section.

The discussion of key elements of political brand building—such as positioning, identity, and authenticity—and their application to specific electoral strategies is particularly noteworthy. The dissertation contributes valuable insights into the psychological and sociological mechanisms shaping voter loyalty and provides a useful basis for further research on branding in politics.

Each chapter of the dissertation supports a positive assessment of the Candidate's ability to conduct independent research. The Author appropriately formulates research problems, selects relevant research approaches, constructs arguments, and analyzes and interprets findings.

The stated objective of the dissertation—to demonstrate that the application of brand management principles and strategies in U.S. election campaigns contributes to electoral success—has been achieved. This was accomplished through theoretical analysis, document and content analysis, and direct research. The hypotheses proposed by the Author guided the exploration of research questions and the achievement of the dissertation's main goal.

One of the strengths of the dissertation is its interdisciplinary nature. The Author skillfully integrates knowledge from various fields, enabling a multidimensional analysis of the problem. Drawing from management theory, political science, cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, and sociology, the Author approaches political branding comprehensively. Concepts such as brand equity, authenticity, selective perception, and cultural symbolism are cohesively integrated, while the inclusion of notions like "psychological brand ownership" and "voting-consumption analogy" transcends typical political marketing approaches and suggests new research directions.

Areas for Improvement

1. Methodological Issues. A significant shortcoming of the dissertation is the absence of a methodological chapter. While the Author mentions quantitative research in several places, they do not provide a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted or what tools were used at each stage of the scientific inquiry. The lack of a clear structure describing the research process hinders the assessment of the methodological rigor and reliability of the results.

Additionally, there is inconsistency regarding the sample size in the quantitative research. Different parts of Chapter V and the summary present varying figures, ranging from 600 respondents to smaller numbers, raising questions about the consistency of the data.

2. Interpretation of Hypotheses. The verification of hypotheses based solely on simple survey response distributions is methodologically insufficient. The lack of advanced statistical analyses, such as significance tests or correlation analyses, weakens the validation of causal relationships between variables.

Language and Formal Aspects

The dissertation employs appropriate academic language and structure characteristic of branding research. However, several typographical errors and overly long, complex sentences were noted, which occasionally hinder readability. Repetition of information in some sections and an overly enthusiastic tone in describing political brands as "exceptional" or "revolutionary" detracts from the scholarly nature of the work. A more objective tone would be advisable.

Final Assessment

Taking into account the scientific quality of the dissertation, I conclude that it provides an original solution to the research problem, demonstrates the Author's theoretical knowledge in the discipline of management and quality studies, and confirms their ability to conduct independent research. These findings justify allowing **Mr. BARTOLOMEO RAFAEL BIALAS, M.A.**, to proceed to the public defense of the dissertation.

Magdalena Jaciow

