

EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE SINCERITY OF YOUNG VOTERS' INTENTIONS IN POLITICAL MARKETING

Dinu Vlad SASU¹, Adela Laura POPA¹, Oana-Maria SECARĂ¹, Simona Aurelia BODOG¹, ROȘCA Remus Dorel¹

¹*Department of Management-Marketing, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania*

dsasu@uoradea.ro

apopa@uoradea.ro

osecara@gmail.com

sbodog@uoradea.ro

rrosca@uoradea.ro

Abstract: *This exploratory research aims to investigate the sincerity of young Romanian voters declared voting intentions within the context of political marketing. Using a qualitative approach, the study employs focus groups as the primary data collection method. This research aims to explore young people's voting intentions, the sincerity of their declared intentions versus actual voting behavior, their perceptions of electoral responsibility, the influence of voting on their lives, and their views on the integrity of the electoral process. Focus group discussions will involve university students and other young participants aged 18 to 25. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for political marketers and campaign strategists seeking to foster more authentic engagement with youth audiences. Additionally, the study will contribute to the broader academic discussion on the reliability of self-reported voting intentions in political research.*

Keywords: *political marketing, electoral behavior, decision-making process, voting intentions, attitude-behavior consistency*

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

This article aims to investigate the behavior and sincerity of declared voting intentions of young Romanian voters from the university environment in the context of political and electoral marketing.

As a research method and implicitly for data collection, this study is based on a qualitative exploratory focus group research, the samples being made up of 8-10 students each.

From the research perspective, the elements subject to analysis were grouped into distinct categories such as: impact and relationship to the political and electoral process; voting intention and motivation; sincerity of declared intention compared to real behavior; electoral responsibility; perception of the electoral process from the perspective of integrity, fairness and correctness of the electoral process; involvement in the political campaign and prospects for improving voting participation.

Numerous examples that can be found in the specialized literature talk about the consequences and relationship to the political and electoral process (Watson, 2025; Jjuuko, Omland, Dralega, 2025).

Among the aspects related to the intention and motivation to vote, studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between these two variables (Ibrahim, Atia, 2025; Smith et al., 2025), with a direct impact on voting behavior.

Studies found in the specialized literature with reference to the sincerity of voting declarations (Khalil, 2025), (Gebrihet, Gebresilassie, 2025), in direct comparison with real behavior show that there is a sensitivity when the individual is faced with expressing their own opinions, intentions with a high degree of intimacy, such as those perceived to be above.

Research found in works on social responsibility reveals (Radavoi, 2025; Zhang, Y., Hou, T., Matsuoka, 2025; Lappeman et al. 2025) that individuals, and especially young people, have a high degree of awareness of the importance of their electoral act despite quasi-generalized opinions and imported by the collective mind that this is not the case. The configuration of the vote in elements with a strong figurative imagology is proof of the fact that there is a strong degree of intrinsic significance of the personification of the act of voting.

Similarly, studies in the specialized literature attest to the fact that perceptions of the integrity of the act and the electoral process have a close connection with the personality and character of the individual, these being transposed also in terms of the fairness of the electoral process as a whole. Individuals with a high degree of social fairness tend to have opinions consistent with these attitudes (Santolamazza, 2025; Gebrihet, 2025; Che et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of electoral campaigns among young people (Stepaniuk and Misiewicz, 2025) and not only that, along with improving youth participation in voting, are closely linked to social networks, as a component of the online environment with a direct impact on future behaviors (Alsaleh et al., 2019; Chahal et al., 2020; Jamil et al., 2022). This aspect is proven in numerous specific studies and specialized works. One way or another, all types of modern social networks impact on both general human psychological processes and also on specific behavioral ones, whether it is Facebook (Luarn et al., 2015; Clark and Çallı, 2014), Twitter/X (Cerasi et al., 2023), Instagram (Torregrosa et al., 2023; Ramdani and Belgiawan, 2023), YouTube (Dehghani et al., 2016), but especially TikTok (Meng and Leung, 2021; Wahid et al., 2023).

The ways and means of stimulating the increase of participation and presence in the act of voting are not only of a material nature but also psychological (Dodson, 2025; Sasu, Popa, Țarcă, 2023)

2. Research Methodology and Results

The purpose of this study is to investigate, from the perspective of political and electoral marketing, the voting intentions, motivation and degree of sincerity in which young people participate in the political and electoral process, especially in voting, and what are the factors that influence their behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010; Gerber et al., 2008; Stromback et al., 2013)

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory focus group methodology, using an analysis grid as the primary research instrument comprising seven key dimensions: voting intention, voting motivation, voting sincerity, electoral responsibility, perceptions of the electoral process, integrity, and influencing factors. The target population consists of students from the Faculties of Economic Sciences and Visual Arts at the University of Oradea. A total of seven focus groups were conducted, involving 102 participants, with the final analytical sample including 100 respondents. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1 below. The present research aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

O1: Exploring young people's voting intentions and motivations

O2: Analysing declared sincerity versus real behaviour

O3: Defining the elements of influence

O4: Presenting how young people perceive electoral responsibility through an imagological perspective

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables		No. of respondents	%
Gender (n=100)	female	75	75,00%
	male	25	25,00%
Age groups (n=99)	<21	14	14,14%
	21	20	20,02%
	22	21	21,20%
	23	28	28,28%
	>23	17	17,17%
Residential environment (n=98)	urban	55	56,12%
	rural	45	45,90%

Source: Own research

O1: Exploring young people's voting intentions and motivations

This objective seeks to examine voting participation and to identify the factors that motivate voter turnout. The analysis sheet includes four categories of questions addressing these aspects. Findings indicate that discussions and engagement related to the political and electoral process occur predominantly only during election periods (74.3%), while less frequent involvement is reported rarely (19.6%) or not at all outside electoral contexts (5.1%). These patterns align, to some extent, with the correlation analysis conducted in relation to voter turnout. **Figure 1**

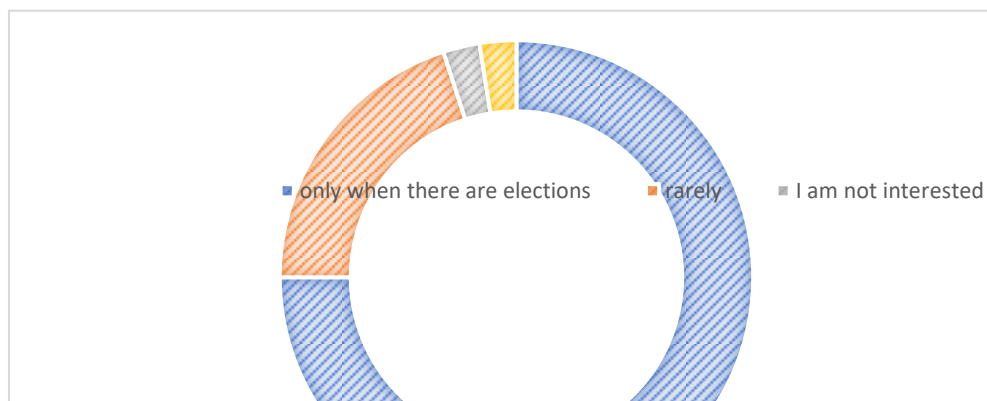


Figure 1: Interaction with the electoral process
Source: Own research

Thus, for the question "What motivated you to vote?", on a scale from 1 to 5, the score obtained is 4.8 in terms of responsibility and awareness of the importance of each vote, followed by the desire for change with 4.3, because I care 3.8 **Figure 2**

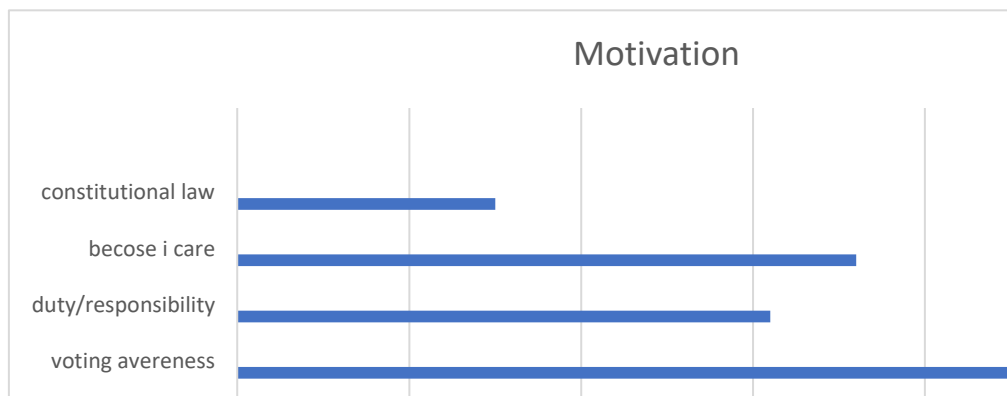


Figure 2: Motivation for voting
Source: Own research.

Another category of motivating factors is represented by the candidate's traits, where we can see that by analysing the responses, the descending order of frequencies are, going from the most frequently invoked attribute to the least, the following, on a scale with a maximum score of 15: wisdom (15), education (10), charisma (7), political program (6), sincerity and past (4), knowledge, character, honesty (3). Other attributes invoked are principles, open-mindedness, empathy, modesty, seriousness, achievements, and reasoning. **Figure 3**

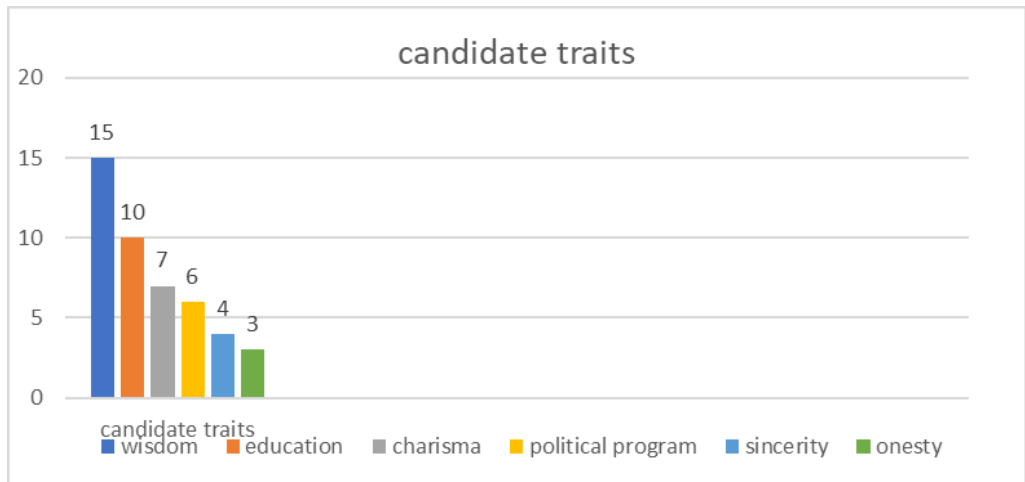


Figure 3: Candidate traits

Source: Own research.

O2: Analysis of declared sincerity vs. actual behaviour. Analysing the statements of the young people investigated, most of them stated that there is a high degree of sincerity between the declarative statements regarding the participation in voting of young women (89%, respectively 86% of men) and the actual voting behaviour.

Table 2: Gender-based comparative analysis of mass media information usefulness

What do you think is the degree of sincerity between those who participate in the vote and those who actually go?	Yes	No
Female	88.69%	11.31%
Male	86.14%	13.86%

Source: Own research

O3: Defining the elements of influence among the most significant factors of influence regarding the vote of young people, the results showed the following in descending order: mass media and social media and especially tik-tok (60%), core family (50%), friends, (20%), influencers and reference groups (6%), shows, podcasts (3%), political debates (2%). **Figure 4.** These elements are correlated with the characteristics of the candidate, where his composite attributes are listed, such as: wisdom/reasoning/thinking (60%), education, political program, achievements, sincerity, past, character, charisma, empathy, integrity, open-mindedness, modesty, principles, flexibility/versatility. **Figure 5**

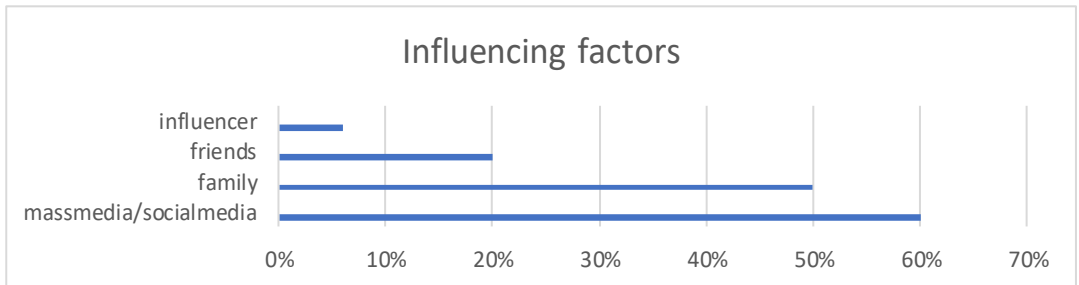


Figure 4: Influencing factors- external factors
Source: Own research.

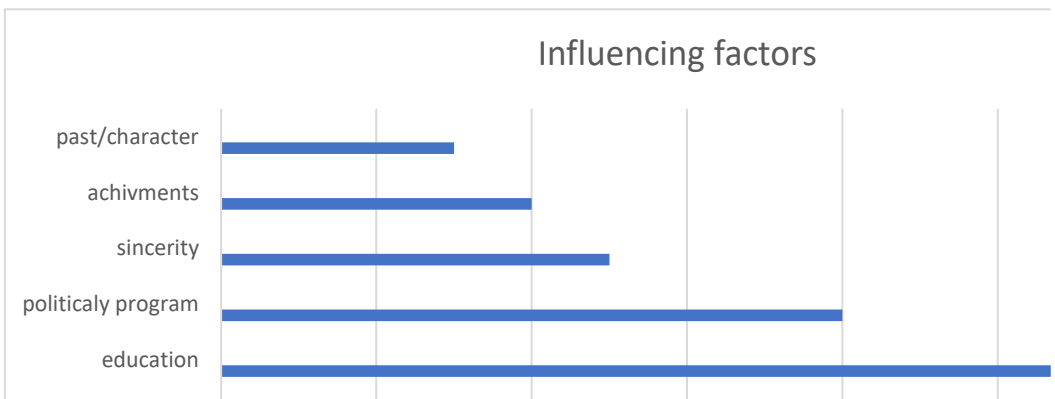


Figure 5: Influencing factors- candidate
Source: Own research.

O4: Presenting how young people perceive electoral responsibility through an imagological perspective

The component of this objective involves the imagological analysis of the perception of the electoral process integrity. The opinion that the elections are seen to be fair (93%) and (91%) is clearly distinguished.

Table 3: Gender-based comparative analysis of mass media information usefulness

Do you think the elections are being conducted fairly?	Yes	No
Female	93.43%	6.57%
Male	91.56%	8.44%

Source: Own research

The imagological component of the research, reflecting how the electoral process is perceived, covers a wide range of elements that carry both material and psychological significance. These representations are shaped by a strong political and electoral marketing perspective and may serve as a basis for further analyses and future research directions. The most frequently mentioned associations include:

motor vehicle, pen/pencil/writing instrument, telephone, water, seed, shield, stamp, hose, door, jeans, mirror, circle, magic wand/hat, key, diamond, bed, microphone, glasses, mobile phone, weapon, and hammer.

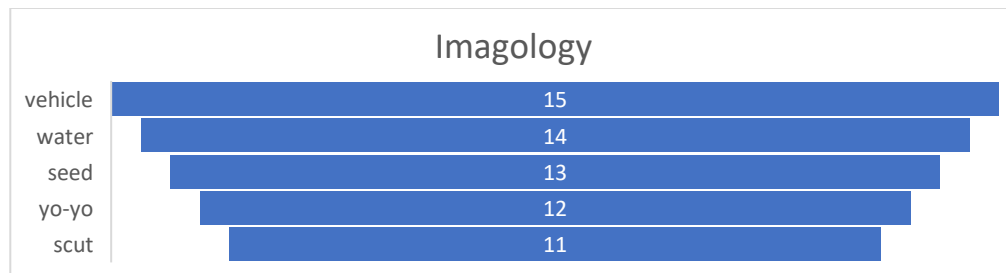


Figure 6: Imagological component

Source: Own research.

5. Conclusions

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution, as it was designed as a pilot project to open the door to further studies in the context of the addressed theme. The target population of the research is students of the Faculties of Economic Sciences and Visual Arts of the University of Oradea. According to this study, the voting intention of students and the influence of mass media on behavior are assessed as moderate, and a gender analysis shows that female students perceive information from mass media as more useful than male students. Regarding the actual electoral behavior and especially voting, it is worth mentioning that the main reasons for voting are the direct influence of social media and the basic family, closely followed by the characteristics of the candidate.

The analysis reveals some interesting findings regarding increased responsibility and awareness of this duty seen through the lens of sincerity, at least of the respondents, and it seems that a significant relationship was found between sincerity expressed as voting intention and actual post-voting behavior and dependence on social networks.

We can say that this type of exploratory qualitative research, which is intended to provide insights into the political and electoral behavior of young people and the correlation with influencing factors in particular, can be a valuable resource for marketing specialists interested in understanding the dynamics of youth involvement in the political and electoral process.

References

1. Alsaleh, D.A., Elliott, M.T., Fu, F.Q. and Thakur, R. (2019), "Cross-cultural differences in the adoption of social media", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 119–140, doi: [10.1108/JRIM-10-2017-0092](https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-10-2017-0092).
2. Cerasi, C.C., Balcioglu, Y.S., Kilic, A., Huseynov, F. and Rasti, P. (2023), "A Sentiment Analysis to Understand the Role of Twitter Towards Sustainable

Consumption", Int. Conf. Inf. Technol., IT, presented at the 2023 27th International Conference on Information Technology, IT 2023, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc., doi: 10.1109/IT57431.2023.10078580.

3. Chahal, H., Wirtz, J. and Verma, A. (2020), "Social media brand engagement: dimensions, drivers and consequences", Journal of Consumer Marketing, Emerald Publishing Limited, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 191–204, doi: 10.1108/JCM-11-2018-2937

4. Clark, L. and Çallı, L. (2014), "Personality types and Facebook advertising: An exploratory study", Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 327–336, doi: 10.1057/dddmp.2014.25.

5. Che S, Kuang K, Liu L, Liu S (2025), "Communicating climate change to young adults in China: examining predictors of user engagement on Chinese social media". International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management, Vol. 17 No. 1 pp. 547–572, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCCSM-09-2024-0151>

6. Dodson S, Bartley J (2025), "The paper behind the program: a documentary history of FORTRAN". Journal of Documentation, Vol. 81 No. 7 pp. 464–481, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-08-2025-0213>

Gebrihet HG (2025), "Slaying the giant of corruption in Africa: analysing the rhetoric-reality gap under Africa Agenda 2063". International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 45 No. 13-14 pp. 92–112, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-05-2025-0309>

7. Fishbein, M., Ajzen, I., "Predicting and Changing Behavior: The Reasoned Action Approach" January 2010, Publisher: Psychology Press, ISBN: 978-0-8058-5924-9, DOI:10.4324/

8. Gebrihet HG, Gebresilassie YH (2025), "Tracing the path to democratic governance in South Africa and Ethiopia: a comparative policy analysis". Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy, Vol. 19 No. 1 pp. 203–223, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-08-2024-0198>

9. Gerber, A. S., Green, D., Larimer, C. - "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment"-American Political Science Review, Volume 102, Issue 1, February 2008, pp. 33 – 48 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540808009X>

10. Ibrahim, N.T., Attia, N.D." The impact of disinformation generated by AI on democracy case studies: the US presidential elections in 2016 & 2024", Journal: Review of Economics and Political Science 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-12-2024-0104>

11. Jjuuko, M., Omland, Dralega, C.A. (2025) "Perspectives from Sub-Saharan Africa, Gender and Media Representation", Emerald Publishing Limited, ISBN electronic: 978-1-83608-406-8, ISBN print: 978-1-83608-409-9, Publication date: 2025, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83608-406-8>

12. Khalil EL (2025;), "The paradox of friendship-and-love: distinguishing dishonesty from insincerity à la Adam Smith". International Journal of Ethics and Systems, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-01-2025-0057>

13. Lappeman J, Broster P, Madurai M, Masipa MS, Cheteni (2025;), "Can we be young and carefree?" Using the Roy Adaptation Model to explore youth pressure in South Africa". Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-10-2024-2292>

14. Luarn, P., Lin, Y.-F. and Chiu, Y.-P. (2015), "Influence of Facebook brand-page posts on online engagement", *Online Information Review*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 505–519, doi: [10.1108/OIR-01-2015-0029](https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-01-2015-0029)
15. Meng, K.S. and Leung, L. (2021), "Factors influencing TikTok engagement behaviors in China: An examination of gratifications sought, narcissism, and the Big Five personality traits", *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 45 No. 7, p. 102172, doi: [10.1016/j.telpol.2021.102172](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2021.102172).
16. Radavoi CN (2025;), "Preserving human relevance, as a new social responsibility of business in the AI age". *Social Responsibility Journal*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-01-2025-0011>
17. Ramdani, M.A. and Belgiawan, P.F. (2023), "Designing Instagram Advertisement Content: What Design Elements Influence Customer Attitude and Purchase Behavior?", *Contemporary Management Research*, Academy of Taiwan Information Systems Research, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 1–26, doi: [10.7903/cmr.23023](https://doi.org/10.7903/cmr.23023)
18. Santolamazza V, Grossi G, Mattei G (2025), "The seesaw experience of participatory budgeting: the role of the institutional entrepreneur". *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-10-2024-0328>
19. Sasu, Dinu Vlad & Popa, Adela Laura & Țarcă, Naiana Nicoleta, 2023. "Aspects Regarding The Influence of Mass Media on The Human Psychic System of The Young Consumer From A Marketing Perspective," *Annals of Faculty of Economics, University of Oradea, Faculty of Economics*, vol. 32(2), pages 265-274, December.
20. Smith R, Reichard B, Dailey S, Robbins A, Wefald A (2025;), "Developing everyday leaders: a four-year study of undergraduates' identity, motivation and civic values". *Journal of Leadership Education*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOLE-05-2025-0046>
21. Stepaniuk K, Misiewicz C (2025;), "Affordances of social networking sites and imitation of interactions by Generation Z users". *Central European Management Journal*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CEMJ-11-2024-0369>
22. Torregrosa, M., Sánchez-Blanco, C., SanMiguel, P. and del Río Pérez, J. (2023), "Instagram: Digital Behavior in Luxury Fashion Brands", presented at the Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, pp. 14–26, doi: [10.1007/978-3-031-38541-4_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38541-4_2).
23. Zhang Y, Hou T, Matsuoka H (2025), "Turning loss into gain: how distressed brand's philanthropic corporate social responsibility drives customer citizenship". *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 34 No. 7 pp. 990–1007, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-11-2024-5587>
24. Wahid, R., Karjaluoto, H., Taiminen, K. and Asiati, D.I. (2023), "Becoming TikTok Famous: Strategies for Global Brands to Engage Consumers in an Emerging Market", *Journal of International Marketing*, SAGE Publications Ltd, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 106–123, doi: [10.1177/1069031X221129554](https://doi.org/10.1177/1069031X221129554).
25. Watson, S., (2025) Chapter Six: 'They Think You're Fair Game' – "Challenges Encountered by Women Serving in Public Facing Occupations Gendered Online Abuse Against Women in Public Life: More than Just Words", Published: 2025, EISBN: 978-1-83549-724-1 , doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83549-724-120251006>