

# Political advertising and voting behaviour in a nascent democracy

## Towards a global model for the Tunisian post-revolutionary experience

Political  
advertising  
and voting  
behaviour

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Received 19 November 2017  
Revised 4 October 2018  
Accepted 29 January 2019

### Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to investigate the impact of political advertising on voter attitude and the processes of decision-making in the specific context of the inaugural democratic experience of post-revolutionary Tunisia.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study was conducted in Tunisia, where the target respondents included Tunisian's eligible to vote during the presidential campaign of October 2014. The study uses questionnaires for data collection using a convenience sampling technique.

**Findings** – The major findings of the study are that the persuasion power of advertising has a direct impact on voter involvement, trust and attitude towards voting. Specifically, involvement significantly influences a voter's attitude. The hypothesis on the impact of trust on attitude, and the hypothesis related to the mediating role of trust and involvement were rejected.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study recommends specialists in political advertising and politicians themselves give consideration to the trust and involvement considerations of the Tunisian voter, to enhance and optimize the quality and credibility of political advertising in the future.

**Practical implications** – The research offers some interesting findings for professionals in political advertising, for companies operating in political research, or advertising agencies. In this context, advertising agencies need to give prescient consideration to the trust of the voter by developing a credible and believable discourse.

**Social implications** – In the context of a nascent democracy, it is very important to educate people so they become familiarized with the practices of democracy, and to give them the ability to make the right choice. The study recommends specialists in political advertising and also politicians give consideration to the trust and involvement considerations of the Tunisian voter, to enhance and optimize the quality and credibility of political advertising.

**Originality/value** – This research paper related to political advertising can be used to formulate appropriate political advertising strategies and to ameliorate and optimize the advertising discourse in the context of a nascent democracy.

**Keywords** Trust, Involvement, Persuasion, Attitude towards voting, Political advertising

**Paper type** Research paper



## Introduction

Following Tunisia's revolution on the 14 January 2011, a lengthy process of political reform led to the adoption of a new constitution and culminated in Tunisia's first parliamentary and presidential elections in October 2014. This was a pioneering experience in the Arab world, and for emerging countries in general. It was marked by the use of techniques of political advertising by Tunisian politicians, parties, candidates and other stakeholders. Previously, under the former dictatorial regime, political advertising was unnecessary as a hegemonic single party monopolized the political scene.

The study of voting behaviour has attracted the interest of several authors. Thus, various studies have addressed the behavioural responses of voters under the influence of political advertising (Faber *et al.*, 1993; Tinkham and Weaver-Lariscy, 1993). Studying the impact of political advertising on voter behaviour and their decision-making process is essential for two reasons: The first relates to the economic and social impact of political advertising and, so, requires good control of allocated budgets. The second relates to the requirement to better understand the expectations and perceptions of voters and, therefore, to better target and guide political advertising strategies (Hayes and McAllister, 1996; O'Cass, 1996, 2001, 2002). Research in political advertising and its impact on the orientation of the reactions of voters has focussed on diverse and varied issues. Several variables have been processed and tested for empirical validation. However, a change in the context of the study often results in an impact on the significance and validity of results on the impact of advertising (Chang, 2003).

In this regard, the majority of studies that have considered the impact of political advertising on voting decisions were conducted in Western countries, which have a tradition of democratic practices and a lengthy history of political marketing (Shama, 1973; Swinyard and Coney, 1978; Rothschild and Houston, 1979; Newman, 1985; Burton and Netemeyer, 1992). Earlier studies on political advertising techniques and psychological processes governing behaviour patterns as a result of this privileged means of action policy marketing have always been in the context of developed countries, where advertising practices are well developed and behavioural tendencies of voters very specific.

Our literature review shows a paucity of research examining political advertising in emerging countries. This might be understandable given the political and sociological characteristics of these countries which are frequently governed by totalitarian regimes where the notion of competition, a fundamental condition for the practice of political marketing, is totally absent.

The starting point of our research is related to our interest in focussing on the two main aspects of political marketing: First, the study of the characteristics and mechanisms of influence in political advertising and, second, the study of the behavioural process of voters' attitude adoption and decision-making. We consider that this enquiry would present a good contribution and also shed new light on the problems of political advertising, in addition to offering a specific context from amongst developing countries.

The relevance and originality of this research finds its justification in the current movement known to many countries in the region. It is clear that the recent geopolitical transformations across the region of Middle East North Africa (MENA) have political implications, but there are sociological and economic ones as well. In addition, marketing practices are inevitably influenced by these changes. As political advertising is an essential tool in the election campaigns of candidates or parties, the use of advertising of various forms (media, digital, PR, etc.) has continued to increase and also to evolve and diversify.

Thus, in light of the above developments, this study aims to investigate the persuasion capability of political advertising to influence the attitude of voters, and also examine the role of trust and involvement in the specific context of an emerging democracy.

The paper is organized as follows. We first provide a literature review and develop our conceptual model (examining the variables persuasive power of advertising, voter attitude, trust and involvement). We then introduce our methodology, including measurement of variables, sampling and data collection. Following this, we share our results and analysis specifically outlining our measurement model and structural model with hypothesis testing. We illustrate this with a number of figures and tables. Finally, we present our summative discussion with theoretical and practical implications, which includes a limitations section.

### *Literature review and conceptual model*

First, we have to note the paucity of literature of political advertising in the context of emerging countries such as Tunisia. As mentioned, the political context in Tunisia has been characterized by the dominance of totalitarian regimes. Additionally, we did not find any theoretical contribution related to the political marketing in countries such as Tunisia in the extant literature. The major studies in this field were established in developed countries and distinguish the most studied variables into two groups: variables related to the attributes of the advertising and variables related to the attributes of the voter (O'Cass, 2002). In the context of our research, four variables retained our attention.

Concerning variables related to the attributes of the advertising, the main body of literature has focussed on the persuasion of political advertising (Baumgartner *et al.*, 1992; Baumgartner and Bettman, 1993; Price *et al.*, 1997; Atkin and Gary, 1976; Rothschild, 1978; Faber *et al.*, 1993).

On the other hand, literature concerning the attributes of the voter focussed on three main constructs: attitude towards voting (Kahn and Kenney, 1999; Bradley *et al.*, 2007; Nesbitt-Larking, 2009; Cheng and Riffe, 2008; Daignault *et al.*, 2013), trust (Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008; Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala, 2009; Andreani and al, 2014; Miller, 1974; Citrin and Green, 1986; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Dermoy and Hammer-Lloyed, 2010; O'Cass, 1999, 2002) and involvement (O'Cass, 1999, 2002; Rothschild, 1978; Choi and Becker, 1987; Berkowitz and Pritchard, 1989). Each of these variables will be discussed further.

### *The persuasion of political advertising and attitude of voters*

With regard to variables related to advertising attributes, the persuasion of political advertising has been the subject of several studies that have attempted to demonstrate the impact of this variable and its explanatory role in attitude adoption and the decision process related to voting. The study of the persuasive process for political advertising argues in favour of the positive impact of political advertising on participation in elections (Kahn and Kenney, 1999; Bradley *et al.*, 2007; Nesbitt-Larking, 2009; Cheng and Riffe, 2008; Daignault *et al.*, 2013). In addition, Merritt (1984) concluded that exposure to political advertising affects the assessment of candidates.

In this regard, it should be noted that the literature of political advertising is based on the distinction between two persuasive approaches: Negative and positive advertising (Bradley *et al.*, 2007). The content of advertising discourse can be positive, focussing on promoting the image of the candidate, his/her merits, achievements, qualities and positions (Shapiro and Rieger, 1992; Tinkham and Weaver-Lariscy, 1993; Ansolabehere *et al.*, 1994), or negative, using criticism and promotion of the faults, failures in performance and broken promises of the opposite candidate (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991; Gronbeck, 1992; Pinkleton, 1997; Pinkleton, 1998; Roddy and Garramone, 1988; Faber *et al.*, 1993;

Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Clinger, 1986; Gans, 1985; Ward, 1995). The persuasion power of the advertising is highly dependent on the information contained therein.

From another perspective, several studies (McLeod and McDonald, 1985; Chaffee and Schleuder, 1986; Reagan, 1996; and Pinkleton *et al.*, 1998) have shown that the more people are involved in the business of politics, the more they pay attention to both the information and its sources. Besides this, the works of Bettman *et al.* (1988) and Heath *et al.* (1999) are based on the assumption that the information does not have the same influence. Furthermore, the functional theory of political advertising is based on the instrumental role of this type of advertising, whose aim is to convince citizens of the opportunity to vote for a candidate or party and persuade them to do so. In this context, one of main objectives of political advertising is to create and enhance the “trust” of voters (Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008; Benoit and William, 2000).

From the previous discussion, the following hypothesis can be presented:

- H1a. “The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on the voter attitude towards the voting decision”.
- H1b. “The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on the voter involvement in the decision to vote”.
- H1c. “The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on voter trust”.

#### *Trust, involvement and attitude of the voter*

Regarding variables related to voter’s attributes, “Involvement” and “Trust” were the subject of several studies that have attempted to demonstrate the impact of these variables and their explanatory role in the voter decision process.

The “trust” concept has been examined in several studies (Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008; Cissé-Depardon and N’Goala, 2009; Andreani *et al.*, 2014). However, in the field of voting behaviour, we can identify two approaches: The first relates to trust in the candidate’s performance or the government. Thus, trust reflects the belief that politicians intend to do well (Miller, 1974; Citrin and Green, 1986; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Dermoy and Hammer-Lloyed, 2010). Another conceptualization considers voter trust in the ability to make a good choice (O’Cass, 1999, 2002). According to this conceptualization, trust plays an important role in intention to vote.

Therefore, the following hypothesis can be presented:

- H2a. “Trust has an effect on the voter attitude towards voting”.
- H2b. “Trust plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of the advertising and the voter attitude towards the vote”.

On the other side, the concept of “involvement” has been treated as part of the political decision by several works (Rothschild and Houston, 1979; Burton and Netemeyer, 1992; Smith and Carsky, 1996). Thus, several authors have recognized the importance of involvement in the context of the study of voting behaviour (Burton and Netemeyer, 1992). So, earlier research focussed on involvement in a political context by considering that is reflected in the level of interest in politics (Lazarfeld *et al.*, 1948). However, more recent research considers involvement as a mental construct that can be categorized in different contexts: situational and sustainable (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986). These authors insist that involvement can be conceptualized and operationalized in different ways (Zaichkowsky, 1986; Faber *et al.*, 1993), with other authors considering involvement a feature of the

stimulus (stimulus involving vs stimulus not involving) (Rothschild, 1975a, 1975b), still others consider that it is, rather, a characteristic of the voter (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). In this regard, involvement has been studied as one of the variables that impact the assessment of political advertising (Rothschild, 1978; Choi and Becker, 1987; Berkowitz and Pritchard, 1989).

The above discussion allows us to present the following hypothesis:

*H3a.* "Voter involvement, with regard to the decision to vote, has an effect on the voter attitude towards voting".

Furthermore, several studies have focussed on examining the relationship between the attitudes of trust and involvement of voters towards political advertising, and the impact of these variables on the decision to vote (Rothschild, 1978; Faber *et al.*, 1993).

In this context, the work of O'Cass (1999, 2002) examined the relationship between involvement and trust in making the voting decision. He concluded that among the determinants of voting behaviour are individual characteristics. In addition, the work of Burton and Netemeyer (1992) and Park *et al.* (1994) studied the relationship between the level of involvement and the level of trust and found that involvement has an impact on trust.

In reference to the preceding analysis, the following hypothesis can be presented:

*H3b.* "Voter involvement towards the vote decision has an effect on voter trust".

*H3c.* "Voter involvement towards the vote decision plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of the advertising and voter trust".

On the other hand, involvement plays a significant role in decision-making in the context of voting behaviour (Parameswaran and Spinelli, 1984). However, the work of Sharma (2012) reveals that in the context of political advertising, involvement also plays a significant role in forming the attitudes of the voter. Therefore, Suri (2009) concluded that there are significant changes in terms of attitude determined by the level of involvement. Involvement influences the information search process in a context of political advertising (O'Cass, 2002). Comparative negative advertising has an impact on trust, involvement and mobilization of voters (Burton and Netemeyer, 1992; Faber *et al.*, 1993; Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; and David Damore, 2002). As the work of Pinkleton (1997) shows the level of involvement with regard to political advertising has an impact on voting intentions. However, some researchers do not agree with the consideration of the mediating effect of involvement on the effects of political advertising. Some consider that involvement is a stimulus variable (high vs low involvement) (Atkin and Gary, 1976; Rothschild, 1978; Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986). Thus, heavily involved people are more influenced by advertising, especially with regard to negative advertising. Moreover, involvement plays a significant mediating role between advertising and the different cognitive and attitudinal processes (Rothschild, 1978). On the other hand, some studies have investigated the impact of negative advertising on the attitude of voters and their lack of interest and involvement with regard to policy (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1996). With research hypotheses based on these considerations and previous findings, some studies have focussed on the study of the relationship between the persuasive advertising and the level of involvement (Baumgartner *et al.*, 1992; Baumgartner and Bettman, 1993; Price *et al.*, 1997). Thus, it was found that involvement plays a mediating role between persuasive advertising and attitude (Atkin and Gary, 1976; Rothschild, 1978; Faber *et al.*, 1993). The moderating role of involvement is justified by the

distinction in terms of the level of involvement and its nature (low vs high) (sustainable vs situational) (Rothschild, 1978; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Craig *et al.*, 1990).

From this discussion the following hypothesis can be posited:

*H3d.* “Voter involvement towards the decision to vote plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of the advertising and the voter attitude towards voting”.

Finally, we can restate that our main objective is to discover what the relationships and the respective influences of the variables trust, involvement, persuasion of political advertising and attitude are. Furthermore, in our opinion, it is important to reveal the nature of the potential roles of the mediators trust and involvement in the relationship between the persuasion of political advertising and attitude.

*Proposal of the conceptual model and research hypotheses*

With reference to previous analysis, and with reference to our literature review, we present our conceptual model and assumptions as follows (Figure 1).

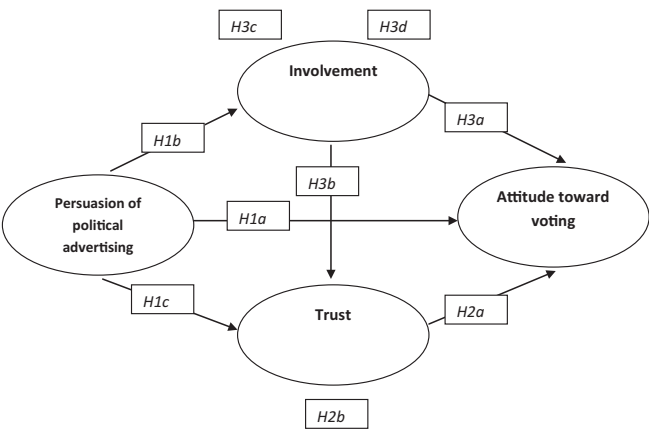
**Methodology**

To validate the research model, a positivist epistemological approach which “assumes that the social world is real” was adopted, using quantitative structured data that enhance the understanding, make the information collected more meaningful and which can be easily analysed quantitatively. A questionnaire was used with respondents to explore the concepts in depth, using structured questions (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

*Measurement of variables*

To test the relationships between the variables in the research model, a questionnaire composed of five parts was developed based on the literature, in addition to a section collecting the demographic characteristics of the respondents. An area total of 14 items were used to measure all the variables of the model, as the table below explains.

The variable “persuasion of advertising” was measured by reference to the work of Chang (2003) and through a seven-point scale consisting of three items. Regarding the measurement of the variable “involvement in the decision to vote”, we based this on the work of O’Cass (2002). Thus, respondents were asked about four items, through a seven-



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual model of  
the research proposal



point scale. The variable “attitude towards voting” was measured based on a seven-point scale composed of four items developed through the work of [Johnson-Cartee and Copeland \(1991\)](#) and [Pinkleton et al. \(2002\)](#). For the measurement of the variable “trust”, the selected items were inspired by the work of [O’Cass \(1999, 2002\)](#) and through a scale with three items.

The survey questionnaire was pre-tested before being distributed by some expert and potential respondents to identify all the questions that did not make sense or were not well understood and might lead to biased answers ([Matthews and Ross, 2010](#)).

### *Sampling and data collection*

A finalized questionnaire was distributed among more than 1,000 individual Tunisian voters (20 years old and over). The survey was conducted for two weeks via an electronic questionnaire, after the first round of presidential elections in 2014. Only 305 questionnaires were retained after careful examination for completeness. In this context, we referred to advertising media (print) of the official campaigns of four candidates (who were top ranked by the polls). The official posters of candidates were presented to respondents and each was asked to choose their preferred candidate and to complete a questionnaire with reference to the corresponding candidate.

Data were collected using a convenience sampling technique, although some researchers question the generalizability of results gathered using this technique ([Saunders et al., 2012](#)). However, with collection time being of the essence for this study, it was considered the most expedient choice.

We have to acknowledge that online surveys represent some major potential weaknesses such as representativeness of the sample used in the study, lack of internet expertise of some users, unclear answering instructions, privacy and security issues. On the other side, we cannot deny that online surveys offer major strengths such as global reach of population, flexibility, speed and timeliness, convenience, easy of data entry and low cost ([Evans and Mathur, 2005](#)). Although we acknowledge there are some potential weaknesses when using online surveys, we tried not to miss the chance to undertake research in this field as it is the first of its kind in Tunisia, with the lack of sufficient potential to get it done.

### *Results and analysis*

To validate the research model, a structural equation modelling analysis was used (using SPSS and AMOS software), which is a multivariate technique that permits examination of a series of relationships among measured and latent variables ([Hair et al., 2010](#)). The first step was to specify the final items retained for each construct of the analysis and their validity and reliability. The second step was devoted to examine, simultaneously, the structural model composed of an interrelated dependence relationship between constructs as described in the research model ([Hair et al., 2010](#)).

*Step 1: the measurement model.* To confirm the latent structure of the constructs used in our study, we first applied Exploratory Factor Analysis. This was used to check the validity of the construct which was supposed to be measured ([Carricano and Poujol, 2008](#); [Akrouf, 2010](#)). To perform this analysis, we tried in the first place to ensure the adequacy of the data and see if it was factorable ([Table I](#)). The index of Keyser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) is about 0.753 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity equals to 0.000, which indicates factorable solutions. An orthogonal rotation (Varimax) helps simplify the interpretation of the factors ([Hair et al., 2006](#)). The results obtained following the exploratory level indicate the adequacy of data. All items are selected with an acceptable variance (above the 50 per cent threshold) and good performance qualities (above the 50 per cent threshold). In addition, each construct

**Table I.**  
Study variables and  
its scales items and  
description

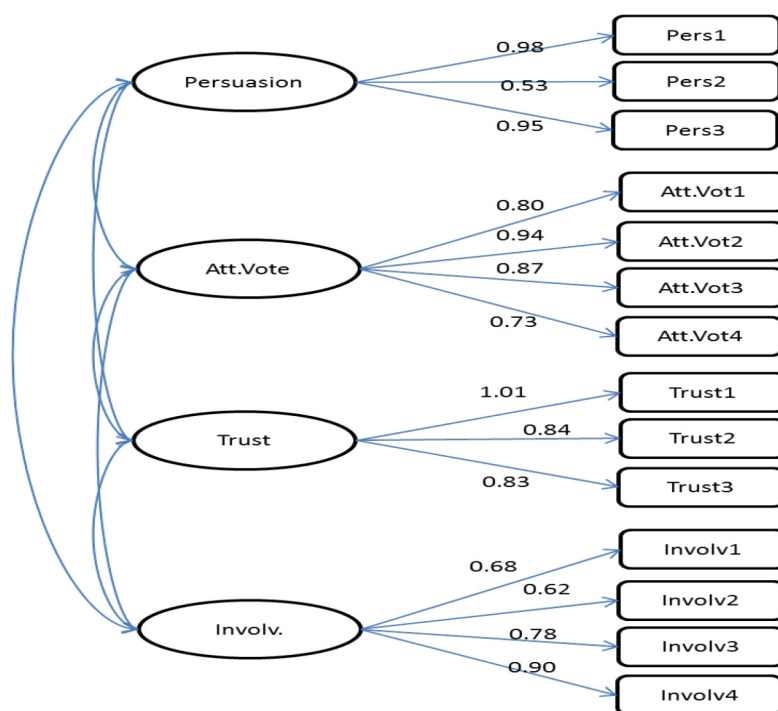
Variables	Scale description	Scale items	References
Persuasion of advertising	Three, seven-point binary adjectives are used to measure the degree to which a person believes a particular advertisement is believable	persuasive/not persuasive ethical/not ethical accurate/inaccurate	Chang (2003)
Involvement in the decision to vote	Four, seven-point statements are used to measure the importance of a particular voting decision to a person and the degree to which he/she is concerned about the decision	I would not care at all who I vote for/I would care a great deal who I vote for They are alike/They are all different Not at all important/ Extremely important Not at all concerned/ Very much Concerned	O'Cass (2002)
Attitudes towards voting	Four, seven-point Likert-type statements are used to measure the personal importance of engaging in voting activity	Voting in each election is a high priority for me. Voting in elections is important to me. I would feel guilty if I didn't vote. I like to vote	Johnson-Cartee <i>et al.</i> (1991) and Pinkleton <i>et al.</i> , (2002)
Trust	The three-item, seven-point Likert-type scale measures a voter's confidence in his/her ability to make a "good" choice in an upcoming election	1. I am confident I will choose the right party/politician. 2. I have confidence in my ability to make a good decision on who to vote for 3. I have confidence in my ability in deciding who to vote for	O'Cass (1999, 2002)

represents an acceptable internal reliability as their alpha coefficients are all higher than the threshold of 0.7 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair *et al.*, 2006).

To confirm our measurement model and test its validity we used confirmatory factor analysis, which is theory-driven rather than data-driven (Bollen, 1989; quoted by Akrou, 2010). This step is important for assessing the quality of the model and the assurance of the absence of unsuitable results (Figure 2). Preliminary results for the absolute indices show an acceptable ability of the model to fit the data because the CHI2 is less than 2 and equal to 1.189. GFI and AFM indices are acceptable as they are superior to 0.9 (GFI = 0.963 and AFM = 0.945). A value of RMSEA less than 0.1 (RMSEA = 0.025) indicates a good sign of fit. As for incremental adjustment indices that allow a comparison to a reference model, the NFI, TLI and CFI are close to 1 and indicate a good fit (NFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.994, CFI = 0.995). Concerning the parsimonious indices, we quote the PCFI which should be close to or above 0.5 to indicate good parsimony (PCFI = 0.766). The indices of AIC and CAIC must also be as low as possible (AIC = 153 221 and 318 432 = CAIC).

Once the model is properly adjusted, we turn to the study of the validity and reliability of constructs. The validity takes many forms and is defined as the ability of items to represent properly the studied phenomenon (Evard *et al.*, 2003). We focus our study on the convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is established when the measurements of the same constructs are correlated (Carricano and Poujol, 2008). Fornell and Larker (1981)





**Note:** Chi2 = 83.221,  $p = 0.134$ ,  $df = 70$ , GFI = 0.963, AGFI = 0.945, CFI = 0.995, TLI = 0.994, NFI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.025

**Figure 2.**  
Results of the  
measurement model

suggest that a value of the average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5 to indicate good convergent validity (Table II).

Discriminant validity ensures low correlation of items of the same construct with those of another (Carricano and Poujol, 2008), was verified by researchers. The approach of Bagozzi and Philips (1991; quoted by Akrou, 2010) requires verification of the positive variation between two models of partial measures of the two latent variables to confirm the discriminant validity.

As for reliability, other than the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha, we used the Rho coefficient of Joreskog. The latter indicates a value greater than 0.6, it approves a good internal consistency between the items (Joreskog, 1971) (Tables III, IV and V).

Step 2: the structural model and hypotheses testing. After assuring the fitness of the measurement model, the structural model used in our research consists of a variety of direct and indirect relationships. The structural equations gave us detailed results after proper adjustment. The model indicates a good fit according to the indices (Figure 3) ( $CMIN/DF = 1.189 < 2$ ;  $GFI = 0.963 > 0.9$ ;  $AGFI = 0.945 > 0.9$ ;  $NFI = 0.971 > 0.9$ ;  $TLI = 0.994 > 0.9$ ;  $CFI = 0.995 > 0.9$ ).

The results of the analysis of the structural model provide us with all the details regarding the structural links, including direct and indirect effects. All direct effects of the

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**Table II.**  
Results of  
exploratory analysis

Items	Communalities		Validity Loadings	Reliability Crronbach's alpha
PER 1	0.906	0.943		0.847
PER 2	0.541	0.699		
PER 3	0.902	0.943		
ATT VOTE 1	0.740		0.840	0.899
ATT VOTE 2	0.862		0.913	
ATT VOTE 3	0.819		0.902	
ATT VOTE 4	0.681		0.815	
TRUST 1	0.931		0.959	0.921
TRUST 2	0.837		0.912	
TRUST 3	0.834		0.910	
INVOLVEMENT 1	0.688			0.844
INVOLVEMENT 2	0.624			
INVOLVEMENT 3	0.676			
INVOLVEMENT 4	0.760			

**Notes:** Variance explained = 77.152; KMO = 0.753; Bartlett's test of sphericity = 0.000, *df* = 91

**Table III.**  
Correlations between  
persuasion items

	Correlations (Persuasion)		
	PER 1	PER 2	PER 3
<i>PER 1</i>			
Correlation	1	0.517**	0.930**
Signifiance (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
<i>PER 2</i>			
Correlation	0.517**	1	0.507**
Signifiance (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
<i>PER 3</i>			
Correlation	0.930**	0.507**	1
Signifiance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

**Note:** \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

structural model are verified, except the relationship between trust and attitude to the vote, as the *p*-value (*p* = 0.573) greatly exceeds the confidence level which is 0.05.

Results showed that the persuasion of the political ad has a direct and positive impact on the involvement with the voting decision, attitude towards voting trust, which is the ability to make a good choice in an upcoming election. This is an important finding for political marketing advertisers, who must pay careful attention to their ad contents. The content must be as realistic, persuasive, ethical and as accurate as possible.

From an alternative perspective, using Sobel tests we concluded that there was no mediating role validated in this model (Table VI). All the *p* values are greater than the confidence level permitted (0.05). Neither involvement, nor trust, played a significant mediating role between persuasion and attitude to voting. Moreover, there is no mediating role of involvement between persuasion and trust. This demonstrates the direct effect of the

**Table IV.**  
Correlations between  
attitude to vote items

	Correlations (Attitude to vote)			
	ATT VOTE 1	ATT VOTE 2	ATT VOTE 3	ATT VOTE 4
<i>ATT VOTE 1</i>				
Correlation	1	0.755**	0.677**	0.585**
Significance (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>ATT VOTE 2</i>				
Correlation	0.755**	1	0.817**	0.670**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
<i>ATT VOTE 3</i>				
Correlation	0.677**	0.817**	1	0.656**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
<i>ATT VOTE 4</i>				
Correlation	0.585**	0.670**	0.656**	1
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	

**Note:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

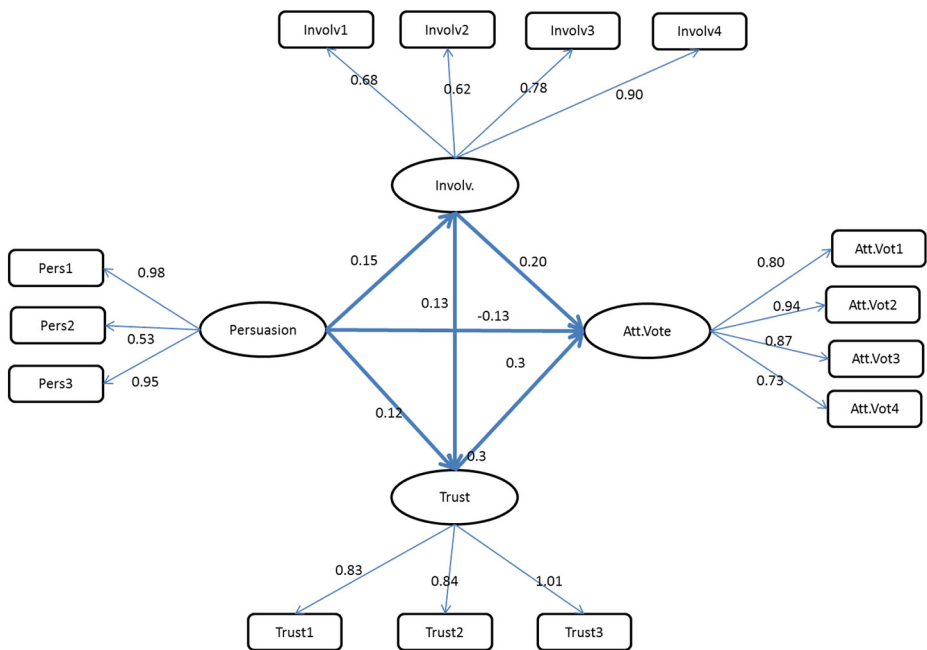
**Table V.**  
Correlations between  
trust items

	Correlations (Trust)		
	Trust 1	Trust 2	Trust 3
<i>Trust 1</i>			
Pearson Correlation	1	0.850**	0.838**
Significance (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
<i>Trust 2</i>			
Pearson Correlation	0.850**	1	0.706**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
<i>Trust 3</i>			
Pearson Correlation	0.838**	0.706**	1
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

**Note:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

political message on the attitude of voters and confirms that the process of creating a positive attitude to voting in the mind of voters does not last long.

With regard to our hypotheses (Tables VII and VIII), our empirical study allowed us to confirm the “H1a”. This is consistent with several previous empirical validations in other contexts; it also illustrates the key role of persuasion of political advertising in “attitude” of voter, especially, in the context of a young democracy where traditions of the practice of political marketing are virtually absent. The “Attitude” of voters in a nascent democracy is, logically, influenced by advertising. Political advertising, in this context, represents an important source of information about candidates and parties. The content of advertising discourse, the promise, the quality and credibility of information, must be considered very carefully in reference to the crucial role of persuasion of political advertising with regard to voter attitude (Tables IX, X and XI).



**Figure 3.**  
The structural model

**Notes:** CMIN/DF = 1.189, RMR = 0.098, GFI = 0.963, AGFI = 0.945, PGFI = 0.642, NFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.994, CFI = 0.995, RMSEA = 0.025

Correlations (Involvement)				
	Involvement 1	Involvement 2	Involvement 3	Involvement 4
<i>Involvement 1</i>				
Pearson Correlation	1	0.594**	0.533**	0.610**
Significance (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>Involvement 2</i>				
Pearson Correlation	0.594**	1	0.477**	0.553**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
<i>Involvement 3</i>				
Pearson Correlation	0.533**	0.477**	1	0.699**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
<i>Involvement 4</i>				
Pearson Correlation	0.610**	0.553**	0.699**	1
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	

**Table VI.**  
Correlations between involvement items

**Note:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Furthermore, “*H1b*” was also confirmed. This is quite understandable in a new “political market” where the consumer is generally sensitive to advertising. The confirmation of this hypothesis argues in favour of the idea that most voters are influenced by advertising the more they are involved in the decision to vote. Moreover, the issue of the decision is more crucial. This could explain the impact of persuasion of advertising on involvement.

Moreover, “*H1c*” was also validated. This result is very important, as it is based on the consideration of the significant role of political advertising. In a nascent democracy, the voter lacks experience, has no benchmarks, and is sceptical and hesitant. Trust is developed from a history of decision-making and, therefore, specialists in political advertising adopt persuasive speech to build trust among electors. The advertising must break with the splendid promises of politicians and must be based on credible and justifiable advertising routes.

In contrast, we rejected respectively the assumptions “*H2a*” and “*H2b*”. This is a surprising result, but could be explained, once more, by the context of our study and,

**Table VII.**

The average variance  
extracted for each  
construct

Construct	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Persuasion	0.715
Attitude to vote	0.703
Trust	0.805
Involvement	0.566

**Table VIII.**

Coefficients of  
reliability

Construct	Jöreskog's rho
Persuasion	0.876
Attitude to vote	0.904
Trust	0.925
Involvement	0.827

**Table IX.**

Goodness of fit  
indices (structural  
model)

Goodness of fit indices	Standards
$\chi^2 = 83.221, p = 0.134, dl = 70$	$\chi^2$ should be $< 2 \times dl$
GFI = 0.963	Should be $> 0.9$
AGFI = 0.945	Should be $> 0.9$
CFI = 0.995	Should be $> 0.9$
TLI = 0.994	Should be between 0 and 1
NFI = 0.971	Should be near the value of 1
RMSEA = 0.025	Should be less than 0.1
CMIN/DF = 1.189	Should be less than 2
RMR = 0.098	Should be near 0
GFI = 0.963	Should be $> 0.9$
AGFI = 0.945	Should be $> 0.9$
CFI = 0.995	Should be $> 0.9$
TLI = 0.994	Should be between 0 and 1
NFI = 0.971	Should be near the value of 1
RMSEA = 0.025	Should be less than 0.1
PGFI = 0.642	Varies between 0 and 1

especially, the characteristics of the Tunisian voter. The non-validation of these hypotheses suggests consideration of the position that the Tunisian voter adopts an electoral attitude from the advertising effect without his/her attitude being based on “trust”. The choice is not reasonable and can be considered “impulsive”.

We confirmed “H3a” and “H3b”. This demonstrates that involvement and trust are two closely related variables in making voting decisions. This conclusion supports previous work which was established in other experimental contexts. However, the assumption “H3c” was rejected. Thus, we conclude that involvement does not explain the relationship between persuasion and involvement. This could be explained by the “lack of political experience” and the absence of benchmarks and a behavioural repository for Tunisian the voter.

Finally, “H3d” was rejected. In other words, involvement does not explain the relationship between persuasion and the attitude to the vote. This finding could be explained by the lack of experience and political commitment amongst Tunisians. In fact, in a nascent democracy, a “consumer” of politics is not highly involved and behaves impulsively. In other words, the choice at the ballot is the result of a decision process in which involvement is not a determining factor of the impact of the advertising on the attitude towards the vote (Table XII).

*Discussion, implications, limitations and the future direction of this research*

While our research has some identifiable limitations, especially related to:

- Not taking into consideration in the modelling some variables such as “the image of the political candidate”, “The voters attitude towards political advertising”, “The political affiliation of the voter”. These are considerations for future research.
- The context of the study: In an “exceptional” political context, following a popular revolution, Tunisian voters are probably confused and do not yet have an electoral process that guides their decision-making. Our model could thus be replicated in future elections to further test the veracity of these results.
- The representativeness of the sample is potentially limited.

**Table X.**  
Estimate and  
significance of  
structural effects  
(regression  
coefficients)

Structural links	Estimation		S.E	C.R	p
	Non-stand	Stand			
Involvement ← Persuasion	0.098	0.149	0.041	2.384	0.017
Trust ← Persuasion	0.133	0.125	0.062	2.149	0.032
Trust ← Involvement	−0.214	−0.132	0.100	−2.130	0.033
AttVote ← Involvement	0.246	0.196	0.081	3.028	0.002
AttVote ← Perssuasion	0.144	0.175	0.050	2.899	0.004
AttVote ← Trust	0.025	0.033	0.045	0.563	0.573

**Table XI.**  
Sobel test of  
mediators effects

	Test	Persuasion/attitude to vote	
		S.E	p
Mediating variable: Involvement	1.878	0.012	0.060
Mediating variable: Trust	0.537	0.006	0.590
		<i>Persuasion/trust</i>	
Mediating variable: Involvement	−1.594	0.013	0.110



**Table XII.**  
Validation of the  
hypotheses of the  
research model

Hypothesis	<i>p</i>	Validation
<i>H1a.</i> "The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on the voter attitude towards the voting decision"	0.004	Yes
<i>H1b.</i> "The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on the voter involvement in the decision to vote"	0.017**	Yes
<i>H1c.</i> "The persuasion power of advertising has an effect on voter trust"	0.032**	Yes
<i>H2a.</i> "Trust has an effect on the voter attitude towards voting"	0.573	No
<i>H2b.</i> "Trust plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of advertising and the voter attitude towards the vote"	0.590	No
<i>H3a.</i> "Voter involvement, with regard to the decision to vote, has an effect on the voter attitude towards voting"	0.002*	Yes
<i>H3b.</i> "The voter involvement in the vote decision has an effect on voter trust"	0.033**	Yes
<i>H3c.</i> "Voter involvement towards the vote decision plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of advertising and voter trust"	0.110	No
<i>H3d.</i> "Voter involvement towards the decision to vote plays a mediating role between the persuasion power of advertising and the voter attitude towards voting"	0.060	No

**Notes:** \*Significant at 0.01; \*\*significant at 0.05

We achieved our main objective, which was to study the impact of political advertising on voter behaviour and processes of decision-making in the specific context of the original context of the Tunisian nascent democracy. This study represents a pioneering experience in the context of the developing Arab countries, within a conceptual framework examining the impact of political advertising on the behaviour of the Tunisian voter.

On the basis of our findings, it is clear that the decision-making process of the Tunisian voter was strongly influenced and guided by involvement, rather than by trust. Furthermore, the mediating role of these variables could not be confirmed.

The persuasion of political advertising has a direct and positive impact on the involvement, trust and attitude to voting. This demonstrates the impulsive character of the Tunisian voter now as he/she is living a new democratic experience, with a large number of parties having multiple ideas, principles and attitudes. This could be further supported by the non-validation of the mediating role of trust and involvement between persuasion and attitude to voting. Political marketers must realize that Tunisian voters are considered modern experimenters. Attitudes and positions are built depending on the content of the political ads.

At the same time, attitudes are impacted positively through the high involvement of the Tunisian voter towards the political messages. This is an obvious result, as anyone who is more involved would be more able to construct his/her attitude. In contrast, trust does not have any influence on attitude. This is considered a normal finding as the Tunisian voter – since January 14 and up until today, is living within a mixture of politicians with a variety of positions. This overlap has left voters confused and trust, therefore, had no role impacting attitude.

Another important point is that involvement has a negative impact on trust. This may confirm the latter idea as the more the Tunisian voter is involved, the less he/she will be confused.

Regarding our findings, we can summarize the contributions and implications of our research as follows:

Theoretically, the research's main contribution is to propose an original conceptual model in the context of a nascent democracy which had not been studied before. Furthermore, the conceptual model proposed to study, at the same time, the potential mediator role of "involvement" and "trust", and also the relationship between these variables.

From a practitioner perspective, we consider that our research offers, also, some interesting findings for professionals in political advertising, as companies operating in political research or advertising agencies. In this context, advertising agencies have to consider with great interest the "trust" of the voter by developing a credible and believable discourse. In this regard, the first aim of a political campaign, especially in the context of a nascent democracy, is to reassure a hesitant and under-confident voter. They have to, also, focus on the "involvement" of the voter, given involvements important role in attitude formation. The electorate must have the feeling that they have a responsibility and a role to play in the political scene. Media has a role in this context. They need to make people aware of the importance of their capacity to define their own destiny.

Certainly, this research provides the beginnings of a conceptual framework for the study of political advertising in countries where this issue has not even been raised. It also opens up avenues of research and brings some interesting managerial recommendations:

- A comparative study of the conceptual model among different countries could be considered.
- Testing the model as part of an experiment dealing with parties in the place of candidates.
- The use of the model as part of an approach to segmentation of voters.
- Better orientation of the discourse of political advertising by taking into consideration the levers of decision-making of Tunisian voters.

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