

Summary of doctoral thesis research proposal

“Image-related party campaign strategies (Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands case)”.

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In the recent decades, research has mostly concentrated on parties' ideology, policy positions and issue-related questions, while few political communication literature focuses on the role of images in electoral campaigns. Although image has been a center concept when attributed to individual political actors, few scholars have investigated party images and the way parties build and use them. My thesis project aim is to investigate the factors that influence parties to implement image-related strategies in the electoral competition. I argue that several factors, including the proximity of ideological position, the campaign phase, and the size of the party, make parties more likely to implement such strategies. I test my theoretical assumptions using the data collected from various sources (party manifestos, press releases, newspaper advertisements and articles) for two previous successive elections in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. I use various methods to analyze my data, including quantitative content analysis and panel data analysis to define how parties use images during the electoral process and which dimensions are the most frequently used. I also conduct case studies for each election and each country in order to find patterns and differences and discuss them in detail.