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Double jeopardy benchmarks for political polls

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ABSTRACT

Consumer goods marketers often benchmark brand performance against known patterns of consumer loyalty, such as the law of double jeopardy. This law states that lesser known brands suffer twice; fewer people buy them, and those that do like them less and are less loyal. Unless double jeopardy effects are understood the performance of a small brand may be misinterpreted as poor when it is in fact normal for a brand of that size. Political opinion polls also show double jeopardy effects, although the evidence base remains thin. We provide fresh evidence of double jeopardy in political opinion polls in a New Zealand context, and show how to benchmark politicians' performance against the double jeopardy line. We discuss insights arising from this new method of analyzing political performance.

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Consumer goods marketers often benchmark brand performance against known patterns of consumer loyalty, such as the law of double jeopardy. This law states that lesser known brands suffer twice; fewer people buy them, and those that do buy them like them less and are less loyal (Ehrenberg et al., 1990; Sharp et al., 2012). Unless double jeopardy effects are understood, the performance of a small brand may be misinterpreted as being poor, when in fact it is normal or even good for a brand of that size.

There are scattered reports of a similar double jeopardy effect in political polling (Ehrenberg, 1991) and voting behaviour (Solgaard et al., 1998) although the evidence base remains thin. However, no method is yet available for benchmarking political performance against the double jeopardy effects found in political opinion polling. The present research produces further evidence of the double jeopardy effect in political opinion polling in a New Zealand context, and introduces a method for benchmarking politicians' performance using this effect. The result is a new approach to diagnosing the performance of politicians, of potential use to pollsters, political managers and the media. This approach determines whether voter's regard for an individual politician is poor, normal, or even good for

a politician of that level of awareness. We illustrate the value of this analysis by application to politicians in the New Zealand context.

1. Background

Double jeopardy was first applied to the commercial marketing context by William McPhee (1963) who detected the trend when comparing the awareness and liking scores of radio presenters and comic strips. The effect has since been widely observed in the field of brand buying (Ehrenberg et al., 1990; Romaniuk and Sharp, 2015; Sharp et al., 2012) and it is illustrated by 'unpopular' or 'obscure' brands that have fewer buyers who are also less loyal over time. Double jeopardy effects can be found in consumer behaviour and attitudinal responses, including consumer free-choice measures for brand attributes (Stocchi et al., 2015).

Double jeopardy will occur whenever there is comparability between products in a category, provided the popularity of these product offerings differs (Ehrenberg et al., 1990). McPhee describes how an asymmetry in consumers' familiarity with products, or brands, will lead to double jeopardy effects, thereby proposing exposure as an explanation. The exposure theory is illustrated by Ehrenberg et al. (1990) using the example of two hypothetical restaurants, A and B, that are of equal merit but differ in awareness. Consumers who know of the more popular restaurant (restaurant A) may not know of the more obscure restaurant (restaurant B). Conversely, consumers who are aware of the more obscure restaurant (B) will tend to know of the more popular restaurant (A). Restaurant A has higher awareness than restaurant B so it will also have more customers. Customers of restaurant A are less likely to know of both options than are customers of restaurant B, so are less likely

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to split their choices between restaurants, making them more loyal than the customers of restaurant B. Thus, differences in awareness cause double jeopardy effects – smaller brands suffer twice, fewer people buy them and those that do are less loyal.

Another explanation for an obscure brand being picked less frequently is the spiral of silence theory (Solgaard et al., 1998) – that is, people do not always publicly express their true opinion as they believe they are a part of the minority. Consequently, people may choose the more popular option to avoid isolation, resulting in double jeopardy effects.

Within commercial marketing, double jeopardy trends have been consistently observed in packaged goods buying (Ehrenberg et al., 2004), store choice (Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990; Wright et al., 1998), industrial purchases (Ehrenberg, 1975; McCabe et al., 2013; Wright and Riebe, 2010), and media consumption (Barwise and Ehrenberg, 1988; Goodhardt et al., 1975; Lees and Wright, 2013; Wright and Riebe, 2010). Double jeopardy trends have been observed for many categories over many years in many countries (Sharp, 2010) including durables, services, and luxury brands in both established and emerging markets (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2015).

Beyond commercial marketing, double jeopardy has been observed for politicians and political parties. However, there are presently just two studies that investigate double jeopardy in the political context. The first was undertaken by Ehrenberg (1991) who used British Gallup poll data to examine the relationship between the proportion of respondents who had heard of a politician, and the proportion of those who also regarded that politician as an asset to their home party. Data were collected using a free-choice pick-any approach to eliciting opinions (commonly used to study brand attribute associations). Ehrenberg found a double jeopardy pattern, with some exceptions, but he did not offer any method for benchmarking individual politician's performance against this pattern. In commercial marketing, benchmarking is often done using the Negative Binomial Distribution (NBD) or the NBD-Dirichlet model (Ehrenberg et al., 2004), both statistical distributions for modeling count data. These are easily applied to counts of purchases gathered from consumer panel data, but are not easily applied to non-count data, such as proportions of those who express an opinion.

Solgaard et al. (1998) undertook a similar study to Ehrenberg's, although in relation to political parties rather than politicians. Solgaard et al. (1998) did collect count data from a panel, in the form of intended votes at consecutive points of time in Denmark. This enabled them to apply a double jeopardy benchmark, the " $w^*(1-b) = \text{constant}$ " approximation of the NBD model (Ehrenberg, 1988). This approach fit the actual voting data well, confirming the presence of double jeopardy effects in political loyalty. However, as this work was restricted to count data, in the form of intended votes over consecutive periods, it did not solve the problem of benchmarking opinions elicited from political polls at a single point in time.

A solution to the problem of modeling double jeopardy effects for non-count data can be found in the work of Habel and Lockshin (2013). They investigated the shape of the double jeopardy line and tested several approximations to see which most closely reproduced the double jeopardy effects found in loyalty data. Habel and Lockshin (2013) noted that a linear approach generated systematic biases for high share brands, while their empirical analysis showed relatively high errors for the linear approximation. Conversely, they found that an exponential regression was an excellent fit to double jeopardy patterns, and broadly performed as well or even better than the NBD-Dirichlet model. Habel and Lockshin (2013) preferred the NBD-Dirichlet model due to its detailed theoretical base and widespread evidence of successful use. Nonetheless, as the NBD-Dirichlet cannot be adapted to the non-count data reported in political opinion polls, an exponential regression provides a practical

substitute that will allow double jeopardy effects in proportions to be modeled and benchmarked.

We therefore extend prior work on double jeopardy in political opinion polls by (i) checking for the presence of double jeopardy patterns in a new political context, and (ii) demonstrating how an exponential regression can be used to provide a double jeopardy benchmark of the performance of individual politicians in political opinion polls.

We do not consider whether our approach gives a similar result to the analysis of count data (e.g. as used by Solgaard et al., 1998). Counts of votes are incommensurable with the proportions reported in political polls, as they are a different type of behavior and different type of data, and so cannot be used for cross validation purposes. It may be that one of these measures is predictive of the other; however, we leave that as a question for future research.

2. Sample and method

The present study was undertaken in New Zealand, which operates under a multiparty mixed member proportional representation system similar to that used in Germany. Multiparty political polls in New Zealand are known to be as accurate as those from other jurisdictions (Wright et al., 2014).

Data were collected through an online survey ($n = 642$) of New Zealanders aged 18+ (the eligible voting age). The sample reflected New Zealand 2013 census data and Electoral Commission New Zealand data, within ± 10 percent. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of two conditions, with a total of 308 participants for condition one and 334 for condition two. The first condition presented the top 10 ranked politicians for each of the National and Labour parties, as outlined on the party websites in October 2015 (Labour, 2015; National, 2015). The second condition presented the top 10 rated politicians from the preferred prime minister list polled by Colmar Brunton in October 2015 (Colmar Brunton Ltd, 2015).

The use of two conditions reduced respondent fatigue. It also enabled party rankings and preferred prime minister rankings to be separately presented, thus minimizing order or priming effects that may have occurred from combining the conditions. To avoid availability bias, the order of presentation was consistent with the levels of public support or party rankings. That is, in condition one the National party politicians were presented first, consistent with that party's lead in the polls, and each of the National and Labour party lists of politicians were presented in the order of their party ranks. In condition two, politicians were presented in the order of their ratings for preferred prime minister, regardless of party. Thus, there are two studies in condition one, and one study in condition two, giving three studies overall.

Within each condition, participants first identified the politicians from the list that they had heard of, and then indicated whether they believed each of the politicians identified to be an asset to their party. This replicates Ehrenberg's (1991) original approach, and closely follows the awareness and liking measures referred to by McPhee (1963).

3. Results

Table 1 summarizes the results. Double jeopardy trends can be observed in all three studies. That is, lesser-known politicians are less likely to be regarded as an asset to their party by those who do know of them. Study one shows a fairly smooth decline in 'Asset' ratings as politicians become less known; there are some exceptions to this trend with GB and HP having lower asset ratings than SJ and SB, despite being better known. However, overall the 'Known' and 'Asset' ratings have a correlation of $r = .78$ confirming the double

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