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Political party offers of representation for minority voters: advertising in Chinese-language newspapers in New Zealand

Kate McMillan^{1*} , Fiona Barker¹ and Caleb Hoyle¹

*Correspondence:
kate.mcmillan@vuw.ac.nz

¹ Te Herenga Waka-Victoria
University of Wellington,
Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

For reasons of both electoral competitiveness and democratic legitimacy, political parties in diverse democracies increasingly compete for the votes of immigrant and ethnic minority voters. A considerable literature has examined the effects of electoral advertising on the partisanship and turnout of targeted groups. Little attention has been given, however, to the nature of the representational offers contained in advertising that targets ethnic minorities. Do party advertisements offer descriptive representation, by featuring ethnic candidates? Do they offer geographic representation, by focusing on districts where ethnic minorities live? Do they offer to represent ethnic minorities' specific interests or experiences? Where ethnic minorities are internally diverse, what efforts do parties make to address such diversity in their advertising? How parties answer these questions affects the scope and inclusivity of the representational offers extended to ethnic minority voters, with consequences for their political inclusion and representation. We examine how these questions have been answered in New Zealand, a country characterised by high rates of inward migration and the enfranchisement of resident non-citizens. Using data from a novel study of New Zealand political parties' election advertisements targeting Chinese voters, we assess the quantity and character of representational offers made to this internally diverse minority group. Our findings suggest that, even as the main political parties are increasingly making specific representational offers to Chinese New Zealanders, these offers vary across the political spectrum in their quantity, scope and inclusiveness.

Keywords: Representation, Political advertising, Ethnic minority voters, Immigrant vote, Chinese, New Zealand

Introduction

Election campaign communications are not a one-size-fits-all affair (Barreto et al., 2011, 304). Political parties now routinely engage in micro-targeting (Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016), tailoring their campaign strategies and communication to reach specific segments of the electorate, including through political advertising. In democracies where ethnic

minorities form electorally significant populations, these minorities are also the object of targeted outreach by vote-seeking political parties that stand to benefit electorally from successful appeals. In addition to the benefits that accrue to political parties that attract minority voters, effective campaign communications to increasingly diverse segments of the population can also enhance democratic citizenship (Freedman et al., 2004): political advertisements can reduce voters' information costs by providing information about policies and candidates (DeFrancesco Soto & Merolla, 2006), and increase voters' interest in, and knowledge about, elections and candidates contesting them.

Parties seeking to attract the votes of ethnic minorities must adapt their political advertising—whether in mainstream or ethnic media—to consider the distinctive characteristics of these population segments. Cultural differences and language barriers can constitute one key difference, in response to which some parties and candidates run campaign advertisements in the language of significant ethnic groups in the electorate (Abrajano, 2010; McCann & Nishikawa Chávez, 2016). In addition, in the case of migrants who were not socialised in the destination country, lower levels of political knowledge, as well as weaker partisanship and sense of belonging, make them a substantively different audience for parties' campaign communications (McCann & Nishikawa Chávez, 2016). Party and candidate advertising may thus be further segmented to reflect (and target) the significant heterogeneity that exists within ethnic minority populations along dimensions such as ideology, language, country of origin, migrant generation, and extent of acculturation into the society (DeFrancesco Soto & Merolla, 2006).

Political advertising of any kind represents an invitation to 'join the political club': what kind of 'club' is presented and how the invitation is fashioned are both consequential for understanding the relationship between parties' advertising and the voters receiving the 'invitation' (McCann & Nishikawa Chavéz, 2016). Targeted outreach can extend this invitation to minorities via appeals that relate not only to the kinds of political goals and policy interests the group might share with the party, but also via appeals to group identity, solidarity and belonging, affirming that 'people like you are welcome here' (McCann & Nishikawa Chavéz 2016, 1198). As in any political advertising, then, where persuasion—more than information—is the goal, both issues and images can be mobilised to reach voters (Just, 2017; Kaid, 2004). In the case of ethnic minority voters, this might entail language-specific or ethnic-specific appeals, wording or symbols in advertising so as to elicit the desired connection and voter response (Abrajano, 2010, 14).

Existing studies of political advertising targeting ethnic minorities around the world are limited; most attention is paid to the United States, where scholars have tested and applied findings from the broader political science literature on how campaign strategies, including advertising, matter for turnout, partisanship and vote choice (Jacobson, 2015). In relation to Latino voters, for instance, scholars have examined whether and how the *content* of campaign outreach (e.g. negative versus positive tone in advertisements) and *type* of targeting (e.g. language of campaign appeals) influence levels of turnout and vote choice (Abrajano & Panagopoulos, 2011; Barreto et al., 2011), as well as whether variables such as level of acculturation and strength of identity mediate the impacts of campaign outreach (Abrajano, 2010; Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016).¹

¹ See also Panagopoulos and Green (2011) for a study of how *non-partisan* advertising on Spanish-language radio can stimulate Latino voter turnout.

Little attention has been paid, however, to the political parties doing the advertising and to the nature and quantity of the representation they offer to ethnic minority voters. As political advertising allows parties to communicate in a ‘controlled, non-mediated way’ to voters (Holtz Bacha & Kaid 2006, 3), party advertisements to immigrants or ethnic minorities provide insights into how parties conceive of the interests, identities, and attributes of the heterogeneous communities they are targeting. These conceptions, combined with parties’ differing aspirations in relation to the ethnic vote, and available resources to spend on advertising, will affect the number and types of ‘representational offers’ parties make to this growing segment of the population. Different approaches among parties, over time, and across distinct media types, including within the ethnic media itself (Velez & Newman, 2019), are to be expected. These, in turn, affect both the types and quantity of representation available to ethnic minorities, with potential effects on the inclusiveness of the political system.

This article contributes to scholarship on party competition for ethnic minority voters through a study of political advertising in Chinese-language newspapers in New Zealand. We analyse an original dataset of 225 electoral advertisements placed by political parties and candidates in three high-circulation New Zealand-based Chinese-language newspapers over five national parliamentary election campaigns between 2008 and 2020.

We ask four questions. First, how do New Zealand’s parties compare in terms of the *number* of election advertisements they place in high-circulation Chinese-language newspapers? Second, when parties advertise in these newspapers, how *multi-dimensional* are the offers they make to represent potential Chinese voters: do they offer substantive, geographical, ideological, or descriptive forms of representation? Third, as Chinese New Zealanders form a heterogeneous population, containing generational, linguistic, ethnic, country-of-origin, religious, ideological and other differences, how *inclusive* are the offers of representation made by political parties via advertising to different Chinese identities? Finally, we ask how the representational offers to Chinese New Zealanders have changed over the five election campaign periods studied. Have the number of offers to represent Chinese New Zealanders made by New Zealand political parties increased in number, dimensions of representation, and inclusiveness, in line with the growing diversity of the population?

New Zealand provides a fruitful case with which to study parties’ patterns of outreach and advertising to ethnic minority populations. High levels of immigration and rapid diversification of source countries over the past three decades have driven significant growth in the Asian share of the population. Indeed, in 2018, almost a quarter of a million people, or nearly 5% of New Zealand’s population, self-identified as of Chinese ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand, 2022). Moreover, inclusive voting rules (Altman et al., 2023; Barker & McMillan 2014; Finn, 2020) mean a substantial proportion of first generation immigrants is enfranchised. Together with ethnic Chinese New Zealanders whose roots in New Zealand date back two or more generations, they create an ethnic Chinese constituency now identified as electorally significant. Increasingly, parties of both the left and right have sought to appeal to this segment of the population, including through advertising in Chinese language media (Elder et al., 2021). As already noted, such advertisements have the potential to inform Chinese voters about their electoral

options, influence their voting behaviour, and shape future political representation of an historically excluded minority in New Zealand.

We begin the article by outlining our theoretical framework in section “[Political representation of, and political advertising to, internally diverse minority groups](#)”, addressing the challenges of representing and advertising to internally diverse minorities, and briefly discussing how political advertising can also serve to construct the identities of the groups it offers to represent. Section “[Historical and contemporary political representation of Chinese New Zealanders](#)” contextualises the contemporary relationship between political parties and ethnic Chinese New Zealanders by providing historical background to this community’s social and political incorporation in New Zealand. In section “[Sample and methods](#)” we outline our sample and methods. Section “[Findings](#)” presents our findings regarding the quantity, multi-dimensionality and inclusiveness of the political advertising in our data set, and the changes in number, type, or target of party advertising over the period under study. Section “[Discussion](#)” provides a discussion and section “[Conclusion](#)” a conclusion.

Political representation of, and political advertising to, internally diverse minority groups

Increasingly, Pitkin’s (1967) idea of descriptive representation, whereby there is a ‘likeness and resemblance between the representatives and their constituencies’ (Castiglione & Pollak, 2018: 19), is seen as important for democratic legitimacy (Mansbridge, 1995; Phillips, 1995). For Young (1997), descriptive representation is desirable because of the perspectives individuals bring by virtue of their membership of a social group. Descriptive representation is also, she argues, important for groups whose members share experiences of historical or contemporary discrimination. These groups, Young argues, have, ‘specific experiential background and knowledge of the workings of society which makes them attentive to certain issues, questions, or events that others tend not to think about’ (Young, 1997: 367). Additionally, the presence in parliament of members of historically marginalised groups challenges and counteracts historic and racially biased assumptions about what politicians should ‘look like’. As such arguments have penetrated democracies with diverse populations, the growing expectation that political parties diversify their candidates and policies has coalesced with parties’ perception of the electoral gains to be made by attracting minority votes.

Confounding efforts to represent any group, including historically marginalised ones, however, is the inevitable existence of diversity within such groups. A party that treats a diverse collective as homogenous renders invisible important internal differences. Yet, as there will never be enough candidates to represent the variety of sub-identities within any group, singular individuals must always stand in for the diverse many. Given this, the definitions and boundaries of groups are subject to contestation: which aspects of a group identity will be highlighted as worthy of representation; which aspects will be left out?

Contestation over which aspects of identity are salient for the purposes of representation occurs within identity groups, but a degree of power to define that group can also rest with those offering to represent them. The ‘constructivist turn’ in representation theory acknowledges this power (Saward, 2010), arguing that identity groups do not

exist, fully formed and with their interests clearly defined, prior to an offer of representation. Rather, any constituency, such as an ethnic group, is at least partially 'constructed' by those who offer to represent it. Those to whom the offer of representation is made can accept or reject the version of their identity presented in the offer, but that does not stop the construction from being made: '[W]ould-be representatives, of whatever type, must of necessity pick and choose, propose and fabricate, a distinctive and limited vision of, or set of interests for, the constituency' (Saward, 2010, p. 45). By constructing identities in this way, political actors, such as political parties, invariably prioritise or highlight the interests, experiences or identities of some group members over others. Offering to represent a specific group is thus also a distributional undertaking, as representatives who make 'present' in Parliament some but not all aspects of a group identity might act to advance the interests of some members of the group, possibly at the expense of others.

This is precisely the challenge facing New Zealand political parties offering to represent 'Chinese New Zealanders', a demographic which includes people whose ancestors moved to New Zealand in the nineteenth century from Qing-dynasty China, those recently arrived from the Xi Jinping-era People's Republic of China, and others who arrived at various points in-between. Ethnically Chinese people also hail from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, and differ along linguistic, religious, cultural, and political lines. Even among Chinese immigrants who grew up in mainland China, cultural and sometimes political differences exist. Some, for example, will support the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its values, while some will have left China explicitly to have distance from the CCP (To, 2014). Despite these internal differences, Chinese New Zealanders are often described as a 'community' or collapsed into a larger 'Asian' category, both in high level official statistics and in popular discourse (Chen, 1993; Yee, 2001; Park 2006).

As the Chinese population in New Zealand has grown, New Zealand political parties have recognised its electoral potential. In seeking to mobilise support from this population, parties must make decisions about how much resource to expend on wooing the Chinese vote and which, if any, specific Chinese identities, experiences and interests to offer to represent. In the process, they have, through those offers, constructed what they consider to be a 'representative' Chinese identity and assessed which policies and value statements will most appeal to those with this identity.

Political parties frequently communicate their offers to represent ethnic, linguistic or immigrant minorities via election advertisements in the 'ethnic media': that created by and for ethnic minorities. Such media, whether newspapers, television channels, radio stations, websites and, increasingly, social media apps, often play a significant role in helping immigrants understand their adopted country (Niche Liu, 2009; Media, 2018) and its electoral politics (Hoyle, 2020; Li, 2013; McMillan & Barker, 2021). They provide, among other content, political news, analysis, and sites for political discussion.

Such advertising can perform several functions. It can provide information about the forthcoming election and about the parties, candidates and policies on offer. Branding, including colours, logos, imagery and text can all familiarise audiences with the identities, values, goals, and personalities of the parties advertised. The process of building political knowledge and familiarity may be particularly important among immigrant voters, many of whom were not politically socialised in the country of settlement. Political

advertisements are also, of course, designed to persuade the audience to vote for one party or candidate and not the alternatives (Just, 2017; McNair, 2017).

In the New Zealand context, candidate and party election expense returns show many candidates have begun to purchase ethnic media packages during recent election campaigns (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2020), and companies have emerged to provide advice to advertisers, including major political parties, wishing to reach minority language audiences (Niche Media, 2022).

For parties wishing to reach Chinese voters, Chinese language newspapers have been a key site of electoral advertising, although it is, of course, by no means the only way in which parties attempt to reach Chinese voters. Hosting or appearing at community events, meeting with community leaders, appearing on Chinese radio or television programmes, or in mainstream media, all offer opportunities to engage with voters. As unmediated forms of political communication, however, political advertisements provide a rare opportunity for parties and candidates to control their message. The election advertisements placed in Chinese newspapers therefore provide a record of the representational offers political parties and candidates make to an historically under-represented segment of the population. The next section provides background to this under-representation of Chinese New Zealanders.

Historical and contemporary political representation of Chinese New Zealanders

Contemporary under-representation of ethnic Chinese New Zealanders follows a long history of racial discrimination and exclusion from politics. Shortly after Chinese began arriving in the new colony during the gold rush of the 1860s, New Zealand, like other British settler societies, passed a series of anti-Asian laws. Between the 1880s and late 1930s, efforts to restrict Chinese migration involved language tests, numerical restrictions based on tonnage carried by ships, and a 'poll tax' levied explicitly on Chinese (Ip, 2015). Barriers to Chinese voting also emerged, with the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 excluding non-British subjects or legal 'aliens' such as Chinese from the right to vote. From 1844 to 1908, Chinese could access the franchise through naturalisation, but legislation passed in 1882 and 1892 set the price for naturalisation higher for Chinese than any other aliens, which proved an excessive financial barrier for many Chinese (Ip, 2015). In 1908 the naturalisation of Chinese in New Zealand was banned altogether, effectively excluding them from the right to vote until the ban was revoked in 1952 (McMillan & Hood, 2016). As a result, the country's Chinese population remained small, disenfranchised, and officially discriminated against until well into the twentieth century (Yee, 2001).

These barriers to the immigration and political incorporation of Chinese New Zealanders began to be dismantled in the late 1980s. The 1987 Immigration Act removed the 'traditional source countries' preference rule, which, in conjunction with the introduction of an immigration points system in the early 1990s, resulted in a rapid increase in immigration from Asia, including ethnically Chinese migrants. Initially the largest numbers of Chinese immigrants came from Hong Kong (late 1980s and early 1990s) and

Taiwan (early to mid-1990s) (Li, 2013), but by the 2000s, migrants from mainland China² began to dominate (Li, 2013). By the 2018 census, Chinese from the mainland were the second largest overseas-born group in New Zealand (behind those from England), dwarfing the number of immigrants from Hong Kong (10,992) and Taiwan (10,440) (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). ‘Asians’ as a percentage of the total population, and comprising both local- and overseas-born, were by 2018 over 15% of the total population; this number included New Zealanders of Indian ethnicity whose population also grew rapidly over the same period, constituting 5% of the total population by 2018.

In 1975 the franchise had been extended to all non-citizens resident in the country for a year or longer (Barker & McMillan, 2014), enabling non-naturalised resident Chinese New Zealanders to vote in elections at all levels. The shift to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system in 1996 reduced institutional barriers to minority political representation, facilitating the entry of Chinese and other non-Māori ethnic minority candidates into Parliament, alongside significant increases in the number of female and Māori representatives (Barker & Coffé, 2018).

The number of MPs with Chinese ancestry did not, however, grow at the same rate as the ethnically Chinese population: in 2022, 0.8% of MPs were Chinese compared to the 5% of the total population who identify as Chinese. This under-representation stood in contrast to that of the other main non-indigenous ethnic minority of Pasifika, whose representation in Parliament (9.1%) in 2021 exceeded their proportion of the general population (8.1%) (McMillan, 2021).³ Regardless of the level of descriptive representation, however, demographic transformation and institutional changes undoubtedly influenced political parties’ calculus about the electoral benefits of targeting campaign outreach to Chinese voters. The concentration of immigrants in specific Auckland electorates made standing immigrant or co-ethnic candidates in those electorates potentially feasible, although parties prioritised using the closed party list to nominate ethnic minority candidates who could appeal to Chinese voters nationwide and whose collective vote was now electorally significant.⁴

When seeking the votes of Asian New Zealanders, parties also needed to consider which of the many significant new Asian communities—Chinese, Korean, Indian, Filipino, Sri Lankan, to name a few—they might seek to represent. Further, with regard to Chinese voters, parties needed to consider which segment they would primarily seek to attract: Chinese New Zealanders whose ancestors arrived generations ago? The much larger first-generation Chinese immigrant population from mainland China, many of whom were on visas that entitled them to vote, even if they were not New Zealand

² New Zealand’s immigration statistics include separate categories for China, Hong Kong and Macau.

³ There are many possible demand- and supply-side explanations for comparatively low descriptive representation of Chinese in the New Zealand Parliament. On one hand, would-be candidates may be reluctant to seek selection due to a long history of racism in New Zealand (Park 2006; Yee, 2001), as well as the complexities of political engagement for immigrants from the PRC. On the other hand, parties have appeared reluctant to select Chinese candidates in safe electorate seats or high party list positions, possibly compounded by low turn-out among Chinese voters who would be likely to support co-ethnic candidates (Henderson 2013; Barker and McMillan 2017; Huang 2023). Moreover, given enormous diversity within the Chinese population (Yee 2001), parties face a difficult task to choose candidates who can plausibly offer to represent very different constituencies, including non-naturalised Chinese immigrants, naturalised immigrants, and ethnically Chinese New Zealanders whose roots in New Zealand stretch back two or more generations.

⁴ In New Zealand’s MMP electoral system, voters cast one vote for a local electorate MP and one vote for a party. Parties construct closed lists, and candidates may stand both in an electorate and on the party list.

citizens? Those from Hong Kong or Taiwan also on resident visas that enabled them to vote? Naturalised Chinese immigrants? All ethnic Chinese?

The characteristics of Chinese candidates successfully elected to parliament provide some clues as to how party strategists have answered these questions to date. Prior to the 2020 election, all were born in mainland China and the first MP of Chinese ethnicity, Shanghai-born, Hong-Kong raised, Pansy Wong (黄徐毓芳), was the only ethnically Chinese MP to win an electorate race.⁵ After Wong's election and up to the 2020 election, all other Chinese MPs entered Parliament via a party list: ACT's Kenneth Wang (王小选) (2004–2005), Labour's Raymond Huo (霍建强) (2008–2014; 2017–2020), National's Dr Jian Yang (杨健) (2011–2020), and Naisi Chen (2020–2023).⁶

While barriers to political representation of Chinese New Zealanders appeared to be disappearing, in the late 2010s a new challenge emerged: concerns that Chinese politicians could be working to further the interests of the Chinese Communist Party in New Zealand, as had reportedly occurred in other countries with significant Chinese populations (To, 2014). In 2017, New Zealand academic Anne-Marie Brady (2018) released a paper alleging that the PRC had been attempting to shape public opinion about China in New Zealand through a coordinated programme of CCP-led 'United Front' work. The targets of this work, according to Brady, were Chinese immigrants living in New Zealand, among whom the CCP wished to suppress criticism of the CCP, as well as New Zealand politicians in both national and local government who might be persuaded to advocate foreign and trade policies favourable to the PRC (Brady, 2017). Other developments fuelled concerns about potential CCP influence on New Zealand politics. In October 2018, then-National Party MP Jami-Lee Ross alleged that the party's leader had accepted illegal donations from a Chinese businessman (Bateman, 2018). In March 2020 he again claimed that National had benefited from large foreign donations, linked back to China and the CCP (Ross, 2020).

Brady's and Ross's allegations impacted on the politics of Chinese representation, as political parties confronted the perception (and potential reality) that Chinese candidates (and funders) might be a vehicle for the CCP to influence New Zealand politics. Such sensitivities were compounded by concerns that the editorial line and content of Chinese-language media in New Zealand were being influenced by the CCP (To, 2009). In 2019 New Zealand's Security Intelligence Service noted that '[F]oreign language media is another way through which expatriate communities or diaspora populations can be influenced or mobilised towards particular issues, including issues relevant to elections' (Cooke, 2019). Thus, the process of selecting and promoting Chinese candidates became more fraught, even as growth in the Chinese population made their claim to democratic representation normatively compelling and electorally appealing.

⁵ Wong served four terms as a National Party List MP (1996–2008), before being elected in 2008 for the new Auckland electorate of Botany, an electorate with a high Asian share of population and thus a battleground for the Chinese vote. She resigned from Cabinet in November 2010 following revelations she had misused her Parliamentary travel allowance in 2008 to allow her husband to conduct private business in China. She subsequently resigned as an MP, leaving Parliament in January 2011. Other ethnically Chinese candidates, from mainland China, Taiwan and Malaysia, have stood as candidates in Botany since its creation, including, most recently, Labour List MP Naisi Chen (陈耐德), who described herself in 2020 as a 'Labour List MP based in Botany'.

⁶ Jian Yang and Raymond Huo both withdrew their candidacy ahead of the 2020 election.

It is in this context of complex opportunities and challenges outlined above that we examine how parties have handled their election campaign advertising: how much effort have parties put into wooing the Chinese vote, how multi-dimensional is the representation they offer, and which Chinese identities and experiences have they offered to represent? In the next section, we describe our sample and outline the dimensions along which we analyse political parties' advertising.

Sample and methods

Our sample comprises all political advertisements placed in three Chinese-language newspapers—the *Chinese Herald* (先驱报), *Home Voice* (乡音), and *New Zealand Messenger* (新西兰信报)—in the six-week election campaign period before the five national parliamentary elections held between 2008 and 2020. The three newspapers were selected for their high circulation and geographic coverage. Each is the highest-circulation Chinese-language newspaper in one of New Zealand's three main cities—Auckland (*Chinese Herald*), Wellington (*Home Voice*) and Christchurch (*New Zealand Messenger*). Of the three, the *Chinese Herald* is the largest and most significant. It is published weekly (Thursday) using simplified script⁷ and claims a circulation of 10,000 copies per issue and a readership of 90,000 (*Chinese Herald*, 2020).⁸ *Home Voice* (2022) and the *New Zealand Messenger* (2019)⁹ also use simplified script and claim weekly readerships of more than 16,000 (across physical and digital newspapers) and 21,200 respectively.

As in other countries (Davies & Kuang, 2022), some political advertising has already moved or will move online to places such as the PRC-based, multi-platform *WeChat*, which is used in many countries by migrants from the PRC and has become an important medium for engaging with Chinese New Zealanders (Irvine & Morgan, 2021; Sun, 2021).¹⁰ Personalised feeds and closed groups make it difficult to track all advertising provided in online spaces such as *WeChat*. Our preliminary analysis found that all three newspapers in our sample have *WeChat* accounts, from which they link to their newspapers. Moreover, newspapers routinely republish their content on their own websites.¹¹ Thus, even as content moves online, newspapers continue to be influential channels for reaching out to Chinese-speaking audiences in New Zealand. While our sample does not contain all party election advertising, it does nonetheless represents a significant share of overt advertising strategies specifically targeting Chinese voters.

A start date of 2008 was chosen to allow analysis of campaigns during which each of the two main parties was the incumbent in government (Labour 2008 and 2020, National 2011, 2014 and 2017). Resources precluded a larger sample. We coded as

⁷ The *Chinese Herald* published in traditional script until 2019. The publication schedule has undergone changes over time. In 2008 it was published three times per week (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday), four times per week in 2011 and 2014 (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday) (Hoyle, 2021), back to three times per week in 2019, and since April 2020, it has been published only once per week (Thursdays).

⁸ This is a significant increase from 2018–2019 when the claimed readership was between 30,000 and 40,000 (*Chinese Herald* 2018; 2019).

⁹ The *New Zealand Messenger* was published using traditional characters until at least late 2011, but by the time of the 2014 election had switched to simplified script.

¹⁰ The National Party claimed to be the first 'overseas political party' to have a *WeChat* account (全球首个入驻微信平台的海外政党) (Yang 2014). The Labour Party also operates a *WeChat* official account, as does Labour Party MP Chen Naisi. The New Zealand People's Party and TEA Party also ran *WeChat* accounts in the past.

¹¹ *Chinese Herald* at www.chnet.co.nz, *Home Voice* at <http://www.homevoice.co.nz/newEpaper/>, *New Zealand Messenger* at www.nzmessengers.co.nz/信报电子版/ and *Mandarin Pages* at <http://mpages.co.nz/portal.php>

‘political’ advertisements those designed to promote a particular party or candidate and containing the promoter statement that all political advertisements are required to display during election campaigns under New Zealand law (New Zealand Electoral Commission 2022).

We use content analysis to answer the four questions outlined in the introduction: first, how extensively did political parties advertise in these Chinese language outlets? Second, when parties advertise in these outlets, how *multi-dimensional* are the offers they make to potential Chinese voters; that is, do they include photographs of the party leader, implying a *recognition* by those leaders of Chinese New Zealanders? Are they focused on electorates in which Chinese New Zealanders make up a significant proportion of the population, suggesting a commitment to *geographical representation*? Do they mention specific issues and policies of interest to Chinese New Zealanders, suggesting a commitment to *substantive representation*? Do advertisements feature ethnically Chinese candidates, suggesting a party’s commitment to *descriptive representation*? Third, how inclusive of different Chinese identities are the offers of representation made by political parties via political advertising? Fourth, have there been any noticeable changes in the number, type or target of parties’ political advertising over time?

Each advertisement in the sample was coded along the following seven dimensions. The coding schema allowed for a single advertisement to be recorded as making representational offers across multiple, and potentially all, of these dimensions:

1. *Generic party representation*: We take any political advertisement in a Chinese language newspaper to be an implicit offer by that party to include Chinese people among those whom the party will represent.
2. *Generic party leader representation*: Any advertisement containing a picture of a leader was coded as offering party leader representation.
3. *Geographic representation*: Advertisements were coded as offering geographic representation if they referred to a specific electorate or electorates.
4. *Policies of specific interest to Chinese voters*: An advertisement was coded as meeting this criterion if it identified policies described by the candidate or party as of particular interest to Chinese voters.
5. *Co-ethnic representation*: An advertisement was coded as offering co-ethnic representation if an ethnic Chinese candidate was pictured or mentioned.
6. *Collective name for Chinese voters*: We identify the collective noun used to describe those whose votes are being sought, to assess whether it is inclusive of a broad range of Chinese experiences and backgrounds.
7. *Language of advertisements*: We categorise advertisements according to whether they appear in simplified or traditional script, English, or a combination.

Advertisements were coded manually by a single native English speaker who is fluent in traditional and simplified Chinese text; no software was employed. In cases of ambiguity, coding decisions were discussed among the authors. None of the authors has Chinese ancestry. Given this, our study is limited to aspects of the advertisements that can be recorded unambiguously. We therefore do not make any claims about how the advertisements would be understood or interpreted by the Chinese New Zealand readers to

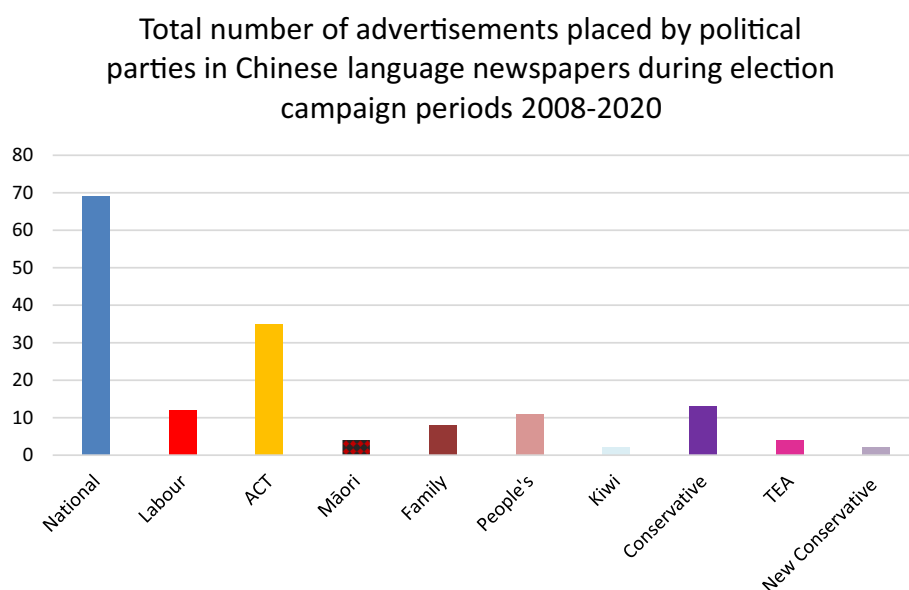


Fig. 1 Political party election advertisements in Chinese-language newspapers, 2008-2020

whom they were addressed. Nor can we make claims about why the parties adopted the advertising strategies they did, or the comparative effects of those strategies.

Findings

In this section we present our findings along each dimension coded.

Generic party representation

Figure 1 shows the number of advertisements placed by each political party during election campaign periods between 2008 and 2020 in our three sample newspapers (total of 225). We find substantial cross-party differences in the quantity of targeted advertising to Chinese voters via ethnic newspapers. National placed more than five times as many advertisements (69) over this period than did the other major party, Labour (12), and nearly twice as many as the next-biggest advertiser, ACT (35). Most other parliamentary parties (Greens, United Future,¹² and New Zealand First) placed no advertisements. Notable in some years is significant advertising from non-parliamentary parties, with the Kiwi Party placing two advertisements in 2008; the Conservatives placing 13 in 2014; the People's Party placing 11 in 2017; and the TEA Party and the New Conservatives placing four and two, respectively, in 2020.

Overall, National and ACT emerge as the two parties campaigning most strenuously for Chinese votes when measured by how much advertising they purchased in these papers. For the purposes of this study, they are therefore understood to have made the most offers to represent Chinese New Zealanders in Parliament. The remainder of the analysis in this section focuses on advertisements placed by the parliamentary parties, although we do report data on advertising by non-parliamentary parties.

¹² During the period of our study, the United Future Party was in Parliament between 2008 and 2017, and New Zealand First was in Parliament 2011–2020.

Aside from cross-party differences, temporal trends also emerge. 2020 saw a significant drop—from 48 to 18—in the total number of advertisements placed by all political parties. This decline was particularly striking for the National Party, which placed 22 advertisements in 2017 but only 6 in 2020. Labour placed 3 advertisements in 2017 and only 1 in 2020, while ACT placed 8 in 2017 compared with 4 in 2020—less than a quarter as many as they had placed in 2011 (18). Te Pāti Māori, which had placed 4 advertisements in 2017 placed none in 2020.¹³

The reason for the overall drop in political party advertising between 2017 and 2020, even as the enfranchised Chinese New Zealand population continued to grow, is unclear. Advertising efforts may have been moved elsewhere, although the parties' own spending records do not indicate such a shift. Parties' links with, and willingness to reach out to, the migrant audiences of the three papers examined here were possibly dented by nervousness about the CCP's actual or perceived influence over Chinese diaspora MPs, following the controversies outlined earlier. Alternatively, the unique circumstances of a mid-pandemic election in 2020 might have influenced parties' campaigning strategy in general, and the efforts undertaken vis-a-vis the ethnic communities in particular, although how or why this happened cannot be ascertained from the content of the advertisements themselves.

Representation by party leader

Figure 2 shows the share of each party's political advertisements containing an image of the party leader. Fully 56% ($n=39$) of National's advertisements over five elections contained a picture of their leader, while a third of Labour's adverts ($n=4$) and 63% ($n=22$) of ACT's published advertisements contained a picture of the leader. No Te Pāti Māori advertisements contained a picture of the party leader, while the Family Party (a Christian party that ran in 2008 and targeted South Auckland's Pacific communities), included a picture of their leader in all advertisements. The New Zealand People's Party (a pan-Asian immigrant-focused party that ran seven candidates in the 2017 election and subsequently merged with the Advance New Zealand Party in 2020), included photos of its leader in over 60% of its advertisements.

Some advertisements showed the party leader alone, with Chinese script to highlight the party vote (Illustration 1), while others showed the party leader alongside a Chinese candidate (Illustration 2). In 2017, Labour placed an advertisement showing the party's Ethnic Communities' spokesperson (and MP for the diverse Mt Roskill electorate) alongside both the party leader, Jacinda Ardern, and ethnically Chinese List MP Raymond Huo (Illustration 3). This latter advertisement is representative of an apparent Labour strategy of including Chinese voters within a broader offer to represent ethnic communities as a population segment. In these types of advertisements, appearing with the party leader burnishes the image of the co-ethnic candidate, while the Prime Minister—as representative of the party—emphasises the party's link and commitment to the ethnic community.

¹³ In contrast to political party advertising, 2020 saw substantial growth in advertising from New Zealand's Electoral Commission, the agency tasked with administering parliamentary elections. Reflecting their efforts to increase voter turnout among ethnic minority communities, in 2020 the Electoral Commission placed 24 advertisements in the three newspapers studied, three times as many as in 2017, explaining the electoral system and how to vote.

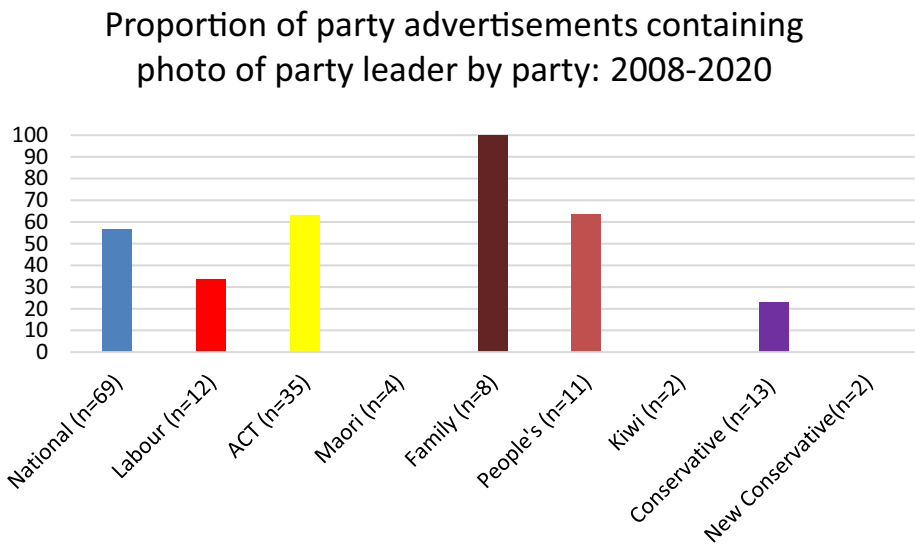


Fig. 2 Party advertisements containing party leader photos, 2008-2020

Illustration 1 National Party advertisement with Party Leader John Key (2011).



Illustration 2 National Party advertisement showing List MP Jian Yang with Party Leader John Key (2011).



Illustration 3 Labour Party advertisement. Leader Jacinda Ardern with List MP Raymond Huo and Ethnic Communities Spokesperson Michael Wood (2017).



Geographical representation

Given the varied incentives offered by the MMP electoral system, the National Party's advertising approach more clearly and consistently targeted electorates containing a high Asian share of the population, which also translated to a high ethnic Chinese population. Table One, which maps electorates mentioned in advertisements on to the ethnic

Table 1 Number of advertisements mentioning specific electorates 2008–2020 by parliamentary party and proportion of electorate identifying as Asian in 2020

	% Asian 2020	National	Labour	ACT	Māori
Mt Roskill	48.6	4	–	–	–
Botany	44.9	6	–	–	4
Pakuranga	37.4	2	–	–	–
Epsom	34.8	–	–	3	–
Upper Harbour	32.5	–	–	3	–
Maungakiekie	32.3	1	–	–	–
Te Atatū	29.3	–	–	3	–
Kelston	26.8	1	–	–	–
Wigram	26.5	4	1	–	–
North Shore	26.0	3	–	–	–
Ōhāriu	22.8	–	3	–	–
Ilam	20.4	–	4	–	–
Wellington Central	16.8	–	3	–	–
Rongotai	15.1	–	3	3	–
Waikato	6.5	–	–	3	–
Nelson	6.1	–	–	3	–
Helensville (2005–17)**	5.2	5	–	–	–
Northland	2.8	–	–	3	–
Total		26	14	21	4

**Helensville figure from 2017 as electorate discontinued in 2020

composition of the electorate, shows the clear differences between National and Labour in this respect. National mentioned specific electorates in its advertisements much more frequently than Labour and concentrated advertising in electorates with a relatively higher share of Asian population, mostly centred around Auckland; specifically, Mount Roskill (48.6% Asian in 2020); Botany (44.9%); Pakuranga (37.4%); Maungakiekie (32.3%).¹⁴

Labour, by contrast, focused its appeals on five electorates, three in Wellington in 2008 (Ōhāriu, Rongotai and Wellington Central); Ilam in 2011; Wigram in 2014. Wigram was a competitive electorate in terms of party vote, with National winning 43% of party vote, but Labour's candidate, Megan Woods, won the electorate seat. This suggests that Labour was pursuing Chinese votes in an ad hoc fashion, as part of its general candidate-level strategy in these electorates, rather than running a coherent party-wide advertising strategy targeting locations with high shares of Chinese voters. This distinguished Labour from other parties. ACT and Te Pāti Māori, like National, targeted their geographic representation appeals to two electorates with a high proportion of Asian residents: the electorate held by an ACT MP since 2005, Epsom (34.8% Asian in 2020), and Upper Harbour (32.5%). Te Pāti Māori targeted Botany, where almost 45% of the electorate identified as Asian in 2020 (Table 1).

¹⁴ An outlier was the number of National Party advertisements mentioning the Helensville electorate, which, by 2017 only had 5.2% of residents who identified as Asian, but which was the electorate of Prime Minister John Key between 2008–2017.

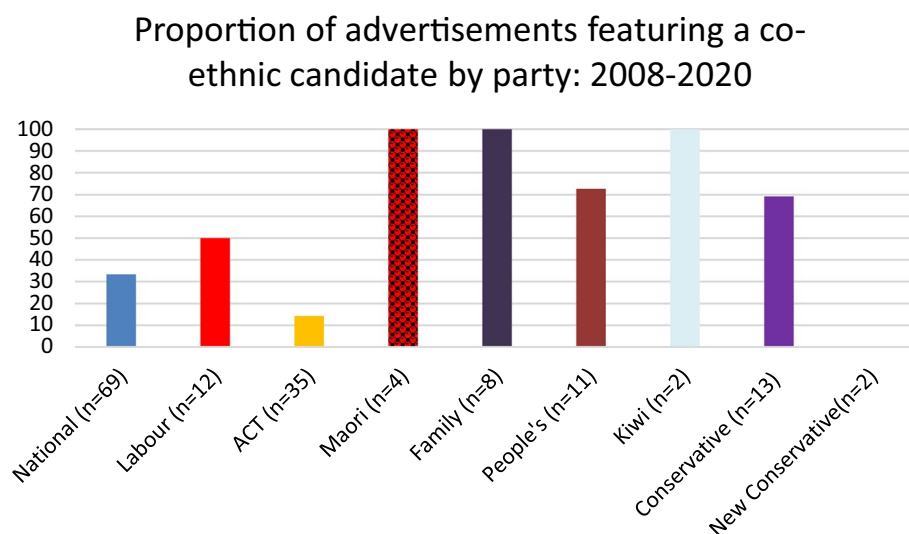


Fig. 3 Party advertisements featuring co-ethnic candidates, 2008-2020

Party policy

Existing studies have commonly identified economic policy and law and order as central to Chinese New Zealanders' policy concerns (Elder et al., 2021; Mao, 2020), although definitive conclusions about the strength of these concerns are harder to draw if we consider detailed results. In 2020, one poll found Chinese New Zealanders' top five election issues to be, in order of preference: economic stimulus, taxation, law and order, health-care and immigration.¹⁵ Others have identified specific aspects of economic policy as of particular concern to Chinese New Zealanders, including 'preserving wealth' (Liu, cited in Chen, 2020) and 'individual responsibility, economic competence ... and closeness with China' (Elder et al., 2021). However, the 2020 Vote Compass study (n = 3235) found ethnic Chinese respondents were significantly *less* likely than non-Chinese to mention the economy as their most important election issue: 'economy' was the most-commonly mentioned election issue among non-Chinese, with 33% citing it as their most important issue in 2020. For Chinese, by contrast, the economy was ranked fourth, with just 4.09% of respondents mentioning it as their most important election issue. COVID management, education and health were accorded higher priority in that year. Law and order was, though, a comparatively important issue for Chinese voters—it was the fifth most-commonly mentioned issue among Chinese voters, but did not appear among the top five issues for non-Chinese voters (Zhao, 2021).

Our analysis finds that the National and ACT party advertisements mention a wide range of policy areas, with law and order and macroeconomic policy the focus of more advertisements than any other issue area, consistent with the widespread perception of these two issues areas being of primary concern among Chinese New Zealand voters. A 2011 ACT party advertisement, for instance, stated that criminals often target Asians, that law and order is the issue of most importance to Chinese, and that ACT is tough on crime (Illustration 4). None of the advertisements placed by Labour mention specific

¹⁵ Sample size of 1,350 ethnic Chinese New Zealanders, margin of error ± 2.65 at 95% confidence level. Trace Research, cited in Seabrook-Suckling (2020).

policies, suggesting the party may not have considered policy areas central to its platform to be fertile terrain for campaigning to ethnic Chinese voters.

Illustration 4 2011 ACT Party advertisement.



Co-ethnic candidate

We first consider what share of each party's overall advertising emphasized descriptive representation by featuring an ethnically Chinese candidate (Fig. 3). A third of National's advertisements in our sample ($n=23$) featured a Chinese candidate, 50% of Labour's advertisements ($n=6$), 14% of ACT's ($n=5$) and 100% ($n=4$) of Te Pāti Māori advertisements (Illustrations 5 and 6). On the surface, these findings broadly align with the parties' stated perspectives on the importance of identity politics and descriptive representation, although further research into party campaign planning would be necessary to draw this conclusion explicitly.

Turning to change over time, and particularly the comparison between 2017 and 2020, we find that no parliamentary party advertisements in 2020 featured an ethnic Chinese candidate, although in 2017 National had published eight, Labour three, and Te Pāti Māori four. This finding is in keeping with the overall noticeable decline in outreach to Chinese voters between these two elections evidenced across the three newspapers in our sample.

Illustration 5 ACT advertisement with co-ethnic candidate (2014).

不当花瓶
是华人议员应有的气节!

有人說，不該讓華裔當「花瓶」，選擇候選人就該選中「中」：
代表人士，大都是華裔，華人代表華人，這是不錯的。
沒有人說，華人代表華裔的價值，影響不小，在國會裏就是花瓶。

但誰，能知道嗎？
選舉是華裔人士選出議員的最好途徑，我們應該鼓勵華裔人士向我們投票！
我們行動黨候選人，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」。
2014年大選，我們行動黨候選人，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」。
只有當選行動黨候選人，才能讓華裔的意見在國會裏被聽到。

2014年大選，我們行動黨候選人，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」，在國會裏是「中」，在華人社區是「中」。
只有當選行動黨候選人，才能讓華裔的意見在國會裏被聽到。

我們務必阻止華裔的優先進入聯合政府！
9月20日前 請投票給 **act** 行動黨。

給行動黨一票，三項三選：
1. 支持了行動黨的政策，反對政府，打倒政府，降低稅率。
2. 促進了行動黨和國家黨合作，反對政府，打倒政府，降低稅率。
3. 反對政府，打倒政府，降低稅率。

ACT New Zealand

王小选
ACT 行動黨 候選人
敢作敢為

“三選三選” 嚴厲打擊 / 反對政府 人人平等 / 降低稅率 多勞多得

Illustration 6 Te Pāti Māori advertisement with co-ethnic candidate (2017).

www.dragontaniwha.co.nz
WETEX KANG ✓
江威德
Botany

- 組建民團，改善治安
- 開放家庭團聚，更多技術移民
- 開發毛利族資源，促進經濟發展

✓ **māori** 毛利黨
Celebrate diversity 四海一家

Authorised by Wetex Kang, 337 Chapel Road, Flat Bush, Auckland

Collective name for Chinese voters

Li's (2013) examination of New Zealand's Chinese-language media in New Zealand identifies multiple terms used to describe Chinese people, both in acts of self-identification and when identified by others. Some, like the English word 'Chinese' may be translated into the 'Chinese race' (*zhonghua minzu* 中华民族),¹⁶ or into *zhongguoren*.

¹⁶ We have used simplified script throughout except where we quote from an original in traditional script.

(中国人), which can mean either a national of the People's Republic of China, or, more broadly, someone who is culturally Chinese. Another word, *huaren* (华人), is a (contested) term often used to denote those who are ethnically Chinese, regardless of nationality (Li, 2004; Tan, 2013). Yin (2015, 566) argues that *huaren* carries 'a connotation of a homogenous group, including all ethnic Chinese without any acknowledgement of their differences in culture and country of origin' and that its use in ethnic media is part of the presentation of a pan-Chinese identity.

The term most frequently used to refer to Chinese people in New Zealand in our sample was *huaren* (华人).¹⁷ The term *huaren*, including abbreviated forms, was found in 36 advertisements—22 from the National Party, 10 from ACT and 2 each from the People's and Kiwi parties. *Huaren* was utilised in various ways including in mentions of the 'huaren community' (华人社区),¹⁸ and 'huaren compatriots' (华人同胞),¹⁹ discussion of 'huaren MPs' (华人议员),²⁰ as well as in reference to 'mainstream *huaren* values' (华人主流价值观)²¹ and the 'common interests of *huaren*' (华人共同的利益).²² The other word used, albeit much less frequently, to explicitly refer to Chinese in New Zealand was *huayi* (华裔), which was used in the context of 'candidate of Chinese descent' (华裔候选人)²³ and appeared in two Kiwi Party advertisements. Despite changing ownership, and possibly changing editorial orientation, of Chinese-language media over the period, we did not observe any significant longitudinal change in the collective terms used by politicians to address Chinese voters.

Political parties' use of the term 'huaren compatriots', 'mainstream *huaren* values' and 'common interests of *huaren*' appears to assume a common identity among the Chinese voters being targeted. A 2017 advertisement by the People's Party (Illustration 7), for instance, is addressed to Chinese compatriots and stresses the importance of having ethnic Chinese MPs in order to convey the aspirations of ethnic Chinese to mainstream society.²⁴ How such terms are interpreted by Chinese New Zealanders is beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁷ Characters in this article are reproduced in the same form in which they were originally published.

¹⁸ National, *Chinese Herald*, 24.11.2011, A8.

¹⁹ People's Party, *Chinese Herald*, 09.09.2017, A11.

²⁰ ACT, *Chinese Herald*, 12.09.2014, B3.

²¹ ACT, *Chinese Herald*, 25.11.2011, A7.

²² ACT, *Chinese Herald*, 12.09.2014, B3.

²³ Kiwi Party, *Chinese Herald*, 01.11.2008, A12.

²⁴ People's Party, *Chinese Herald*, 09.09.2017, A11.

Illustration 7 NZ People's Party advertisement (2017).



Language used

Figure 4 shows the changing use of traditional and simplified script and English across our sample. Most notable is the decreasing use of traditional script between 2008 and 2020 across all party advertising. By 2020 all party advertisements in Chinese were published in simplified script; ACT (3) and TEA Party (4) also placed some advertisements in English. The dominance of simplified script by 2020 (68%), and the complete absence of traditional script the same year, suggests that in our sample papers all parties were targeting their offer of representation to post-1990 immigrants from mainland China. As all the newspapers in our sample now publish their news articles in simplified script (despite each of the three newspapers continuing to use traditional Chinese in their mastheads), it could be that the parties see these publications almost exclusively as a conduit to reach immigrants from mainland China.

Discussion

Our analysis has found considerable cross-party and longitudinal variation in the quantity and substance of political parties' targeted election campaign communications, via advertising, to one population segment: ethnically Chinese voters who consume ethnic media. Most notably, political advertising effort in the ethnic media outlets under analysis was uneven across political parties, with the centre-right National Party and right-libertarian ACT placing many more advertisements than Labour, the major centre-left party.

While the small absolute numbers of advertisements placed by Labour limit the strength of conclusions we can draw about cross-party differences, we do also observe

that National and ACT made more multi-dimensional offers of representation. For example, National and ACT advertisements include the party leader's image more frequently than do Labour advertisements and focus their advertising in electorates with a high ethnic Chinese and other 'Asian' share of population. Labour, by contrast, did not systematically focus its advertisements in such electorates, instead appearing to advertise and appeal to Chinese voters simply as part of a broader 'ethnic minority' campaign strategy. The placement of advertisements depicting the party leader, the Ethnic Affairs spokesperson and the highest-ranked ethnic Chinese candidate, but with no reference to specific electorates, supports this conclusion and is in line with Labour's advertising practice in other ethnic media outlets, notably Indian newspapers and news websites. National and ACT also highlighted policies shown by polling to appeal to large parts of the Chinese community, especially macro-economic issues and law and order. Labour advertisements, by contrast, did not mention policy at all, suggesting either an untargeted use of advertising or a desire to stay away from substantive policy issues.

All political parties have increasingly constructed diverse candidate slates and thus offered co-ethnic candidates to these communities. This suggests parties consider descriptive representation to be important, whether due to ideological commitments or as electoral strategy, or both. Given these candidate selection patterns in recent elections, we might have expected to observe more advertising effort by Labour and the Greens to accompany this diversification of candidate slates.

It may seem unsurprising that National and ACT put so much more effort into election advertising to Chinese voters than Labour and the Greens. The limited survey data available indicates that Chinese New Zealanders are more likely to situate themselves on the right of the ideological spectrum and to vote for a party on the right (Huang, 2023). We might, therefore, expect that these parties consider advertising directly to this potential pool of voters to be more worthwhile than do parties of the left. In her study of Chinese and Korean immigrants to New Zealand, however, Park (2006) found strong levels of support for the incumbent Labour Government among mainland Chinese New Zealanders, suggesting an ideological preference for the right might be only one factor among many for the more recent findings that Chinese tend to support National and ACT. Other factors might include incumbency and both the quantity and depth of outreach to Chinese voters. With both the major and minor parties of the left trailing significantly behind the right in both the quantity and depth of electoral appeals to Chinese voters, outreach may well play a larger part than previously recognised.

The third query of this article concerned how inclusive parties' advertising was of diversity within the New Zealand Chinese population. We sought to measure this by examining the language of advertisements and the collective name used for Chinese voters. We found that, over time, political party advertisements are increasingly published in simplified Chinese script. While one interpretation of this trend is that political parties have become more focused on addressing newer migrants from mainland China, it is difficult to disentangle this pattern from the parallel trend over time of newspapers themselves adopting simplified script. In terms of drawing conclusions about parties' understanding of the community, we found the term *huaren* to be dominant across political party advertisements. While we do not, as noted earlier, advance a claim about

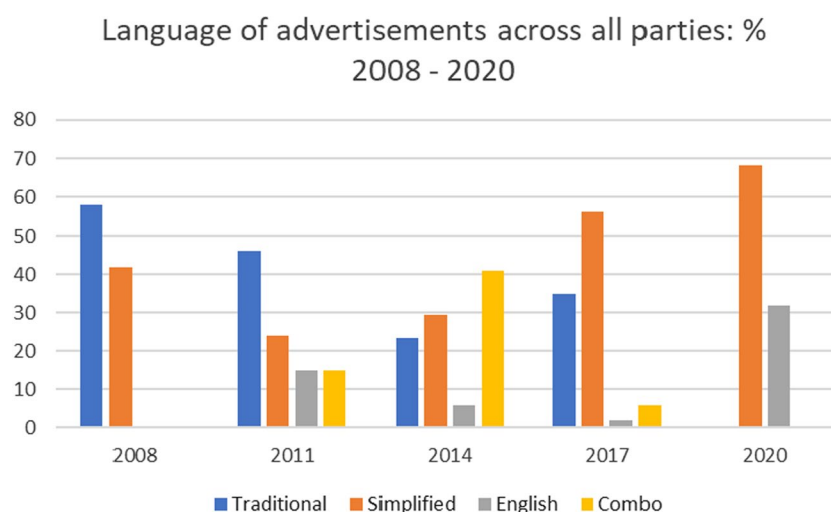


Fig. 4 Language used in party advertisements, 2008-2020

how readers interpret these terms, parties' use of the term *huaren* suggests the assumption of a common identity among Chinese New Zealand voters, rather than emphasising heterogeneity of experiences and backgrounds. This is compounded by the fact that up to 2020 all MPs of Chinese ethnicity were immigrants from the PRC, with the effect that in both electoral advertising and in parliament, the language, interests and experiences of one part of the Chinese population is better represented than others.

Another observation arising from the longitudinal nature of the data is an unexpected decline in advertising in 2020, which belies the ever-growing electoral importance of this population. While further research—and observation of more elections—is needed to understand this pattern, we note that the decline in party advertisements occurred in the wake of a period that saw numerous controversies regarding the role of ethnically Chinese representatives in New Zealand politics and the fundraising relationships between political parties and Chinese communities (Elder et al., 2021). Alongside the sensitive political circumstances leading up to the 2020 election, the transformation of political outreach as parties come to terms with social media and other online channels, such as *WeChat*, may mean that advertising dollars are being directed in a broader range of directions and, possibly, in an ad hoc way across media venues.

The difference we observe between the number and types of election advertising placed by political parties could be the product of, variously, differing party resources, differing strategies based on market research into Chinese voting behaviour, personal connections between candidates or leaders within sectors of the Chinese community or the newspaper editors, or the political orientations of the papers themselves. Further research, by those familiar with both the Chinese community and intra-party strategy, is needed to shed light on these explanatory questions and thus to further advance our understanding of the dynamic electoral politics of representation in New Zealand. It is likely, however, that the political right's more extensive and comprehensive attempts to attract the votes of Chinese New Zealanders could raise awareness of, and cement loyalty to, the parties of the right among the targeted part of the Chinese community. This could have enduring consequences for both the partisanship and representation of

a diverse ethnic population that has experienced historical and contemporary political marginalization.

Conclusion

Post-war immigration has meant ethnic minorities are now a significant part of the electoral landscape in most liberal democracies. In response, parties have developed micro-targeting strategies, including via election advertising campaigns, to attract the votes of specific ethnic minorities. Such political advertising involves multiple stages of 'representation', including, first, how the parties conceive of the interests and identities of those they are offering to represent, and, second, what forms of representation they choose to offer. In electoral contexts characterised by competing demands for campaign expenditure, and where ethnic communities are (like other segments of the population) heterogeneous, parties' decisions about which representational offers to make to ethnic minorities necessitate trade-offs that may involve prioritising the interests, experiences and identities of some community segments over others.

For the minorities whom such strategies target, decisions made by party strategists regarding campaign outreach and candidate slate construction are consequential for both symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation. They affect how rich and inclusive the offers of representation they receive are, which can in turn have consequences for minorities' perceptions of the legitimacy of the political system and their place in it.

For scholars of political representation in general, and of previously under-represented ethnic and immigrant minorities in particular, our analysis of targeted political advertising provides two key insights. First, it enriches understanding of the power political parties have to construct partial ethnic minority group identities, representation of which is then offered back to the ethnic group concerned. Where such offers result in the election of a specific candidate or candidates, that partial identity is further solidified and prioritised. Given that representation itself is a resource that can be distributed unevenly, and that pragmatic political strategies of ethnic targeting may result in representation of some but not all parts of an internally diverse ethnic community, parties' targeted advertising may play a bigger role in intra-ethnic politics than has been previously recognised.

Secondly, by systematically comparing the number and types of representational offers made to specific ethnic groups, as we have done here, we can better assess the factors that give some political parties a competitive edge when attempting to attract specific ethnic groups. Our findings provide evidence of a phenomenon that may exist in other ethnically diverse liberal democracies: political parties differ in the number and range of representational offers they make to previously under-represented groups via election advertising, with possible effects on their success in attracting the votes of those targeted. Further, those parties with the most sophisticated targeting of minority voters (here, the National Party in New Zealand), exert a definitional power through that act of targeting, with consequences for both the political and the social representation of an internally diverse New Zealand Chinese minority.

Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese communist party
MMP	Mixed member proportional
PRC	People's Republic of China

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Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations**Ethics approval and consent to participate**

No ethics approval was required for this research.

Consent for publication

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Competing interests

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Kate McMillan is an Associate Professor of Politics at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.

Fiona Barker is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.

Caleb Hoyle has a Master of Arts in Political Science from Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington. He is the recipient of a Prime Minister's Scholarship and a Freyberg Scholarship. He is fluent in Mandarin and currently works at the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

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