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Gender Backlash in Politics: The Impact on Competence and Likability

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Abstract

(German)

Die Politik gilt traditionell als männlich geprägtes Feld. Ihre Regeln und Normen sind eng mit klassischen Vorstellungen von Männlichkeit verknüpft. Zwar engagieren sich zunehmend mehr Frauen politisch, doch die Erwartungen an ihr Verhalten bleiben häufig geschlechtsspezifisch, insbesondere, wenn es um den Ausdruck von Emotionen geht: Wut gilt als „männlich“, Mitgefühl als „weiblich“. Solche kulturellen Zuschreibungen führen zu geschlechtsspezifischen Reaktionen auf politisches Verhalten.

Während diese Rückwirkungen im organisatorischen Kontext bereits gut erforscht sind, wurde ihre Rolle in der Politik bisher kaum untersucht. In dieser Studie wird analysiert, wie sich Geschlecht und emotionaler Ausdruck – konkret Wut versus Mitgefühl – auf die öffentliche Bewertung von Kompetenz und Sympathie politischer Kandidatinnen und Kandidaten auswirken.

Hierzu wurde ein 2x2-Experiment mit Teilnehmenden aus Österreich und Deutschland durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Kandidaten, die Mitgefühl zeigen, durchweg als sympathischer wahrgenommen werden als solche, die Wut ausdrücken – unabhängig vom eigenen Geschlecht. Die Äußerung von Emotionen hatte hingegen keinen Einfluss auf die wahrgenommene Kompetenz. Es ließ sich auch kein signifikanter Interaktionseffekt zwischen Geschlecht und Emotion feststellen.

Die Befunde deuten somit darauf hin, dass der strategische Einsatz von Mitgefühl im politischen Auftritt die Sympathiewerte steigern kann, ohne dass dies negative Konsequenzen für die wahrgenommene Kompetenz hat. Gleichzeitig spricht vieles dafür, dass sich die öffentliche Wahrnehmung zunehmend von geschlechtsspezifischen Stereotypen hin zu emotionsbasierten Bewertungen verschiebt.

(English)

Politics is traditionally considered a male-dominated domain, with norms closely linked to masculinity. While many women enter politics, expectations regarding appropriate behavior remain gendered. Emotional expressions are also gendered - anger is perceived as masculine, compassion as feminine. Such associations often lead to gendered backlash. While gender backlash is widely studied in organizational settings, its role in politics remains largely unexplored. This study examines the impact of political candidates' gender and emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) on public evaluations of competence and likability. A 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design is conducted with participants from Austria and Germany. Results indicate that candidates expressing compassion are rated as more likable than those expressing anger, regardless of gender. Emotional expressions do not influence perceived competence, and no significant interaction effect is found. These findings suggest that strategically expressing compassion enhances likability without triggering penalties, and they also indicate a shift from gender stereotypes to emotion-based voter evaluations.

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Introduction

Gendered assumptions emerge in daily communication and are extended to the political domain, influencing public evaluation and judgment of political candidates. Indeed, emotional expression is never neutral; only in rare cases can such gendered interpretation be avoided (Shields, 2002, p.3). Specifically, emotional expressions are often categorized as masculine and feminine. For instance, sadness, happiness, and fear are highly associated with femininity, while anger, contempt, and disgust are commonly linked to masculinity (Hess et al., 2004). These gendered emotional attributions reinforce social expectations of how men and women should behave and influence how they are evaluated.

Not only is emotional expression gendered, but different social domains are also gendered. Certain domains are traditionally considered and associated with masculinity, including politics and corporate leadership (Karl & Cormack, 2023; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). This male dominance is reflected in the underrepresentation of female political candidates. According to the data published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2025), Austria ranks 43rd, and Germany 44th in global women's representation in national parliaments. Specifically, women hold only 36.1% of the seats in the Austrian National Council (66 out of 183 seats) and 32.4% in the German Bundestag (204 out of 630 seats). This male dominance is reflected not only in women's underrepresentation but also in how women are evaluated when entering these male-dominated domains. Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) find that in a professional context, women who express anger are often seen as less competent, "out of control," and are conferred a lower status, whereas men are more likely perceived as competent and have higher status when they express the same emotion. Although existing literature reveals that there are gender double standards in professional contexts, there remains a lack of

research on how such gender double standards manifest themselves in expressing emotions in politics.

This study addresses this gap through the following research question: How do political candidates' gender (female vs. male) and emotional expression (compassion vs. anger) interact to influence the public evaluations of candidates' perceived likability and competence? Drawing on the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and Expectancy Violation theory (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), the study argues that in a male-dominated political domain, female political candidates expressing anger are evaluated as less competent and less likable than male political candidates expressing the same emotion. Moreover, when they express compassion, they are evaluated more positively compared to male political candidates.

Gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in social cognition and influence individuals' expectations regarding behaviors or roles toward different genders (Eagly & Woods, 2012). In male-dominated political domains, female candidates who express agentic emotions such as anger often experience gender backlash (Rudman et al., 2012). Such expressions deviate from prescriptive norms of gendered expectations that women are sympathetic, cheerful, and tender (Bem, 1981), thus leading to social penalties, such as being perceived as less likable or less competent (Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Heilman, 2007). Conversely, male candidates tend to receive positive evaluations when expressing identical emotions like anger because it aligns with leadership traits and masculine stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008).

This study aims to contribute to the following academic domains in light of existing theoretical and empirical gaps. Firstly, it contributes to the field of political communication. While many studies in this field explore issue positions, media coverage, and campaign strategies (Iyengar & Simon, 2000), relatively few focus on political candidates' emotional

expression. This study emphasizes the significance of emotional expression as a key element in the public evaluation of political candidates. Specifically, it addresses the research gap in gendered emotional expression in the political context. Previous scholars have mainly focused on gendered emotional expression in organizational or professional settings (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Domagalski & Steelman, 2007), with relatively few studies focused on politics.

Secondly, this study provides a theoretical contribution by extending the scope of gender studies to the political domain. Existing studies primarily concentrate on the underrepresentation of women in organizations or gender inequality in promotion, such as the glass ceiling, in the context of strategic and corporate communication (Berry & Franks, 2010; Wrigley, 2002; Pompper, 2011). Relatively less attention has been paid to how gendered emotional expression influences candidates' evaluation in politics.

Lastly, the study provides a theoretical contribution by integrating the Role Congruity Theory and the Expectancy Violation Theory within the intersection of political communication, gender studies, and social psychology. By applying these theoretical frameworks, the study offers new insights into how gendered emotional expression shapes public perception of political candidates' likability and competence in the political context.

To systematically examine the research question and hypotheses, the study employs a 2×2 between-subjects survey experiment in which political candidates' emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) and gender (male vs. female) are manipulated. The experiment is conducted using survey software and targets participants aged 18 and above who reside in Austria and Germany.

Participants are randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in which they read a short policy statement from a fictitious political candidate in an X-post form (formerly Twitter). The policy statement focuses on tourism, as tourism is considered a gender-neutral topic that

is unlikely to influence participants' evaluation based on candidates' gender (Anderson-Nilsson & Clayton, 2021). Competence and likability are analyzed separately as dependent variables. The collected data are analyzed using ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to examine the effects of gender and emotional expression on candidates' evaluation.

The study reveals that political candidates' emotional expression significantly affects the evaluation of political candidates, particularly in terms of their likability. Specifically, when political candidates express compassion, they are perceived as more likable than when they express anger, regardless of their gender. However, their emotional expression does not influence their perceived competence. Furthermore, no significant differences are found between male and female political candidates in how their emotional expressions affect evaluations.

Literature Review

Case Selection: Austria and Germany

The study focuses on participants residing in Austria and Germany. As both countries are German-speaking and share similar institutional structures, cultural backgrounds, and parliamentary democratic systems (Bandelow et al., 2013). Consequently, this context provides a more coherent setting to analyze how a political candidate's gender and emotional expression influence public evaluations in a similar social context.

Regarding institutional similarities, Austria (Republik Österreich) and Germany are both federal republics (Gamper, 2006; Jeffery, 1999), and share similar electoral systems and party structures. Both countries operate under a multiparty system, and their elections are based on proportional representation (Bandelow et al., 2013).

Gender and Political Representations in Austria and Germany

Women's representation in Austria and Germany has increased over the past decades. Since 2014, Austria has experienced the most significant rise in female parliamentary representation among EU countries (Gender equality in the EU-10 years in review, 2025). As of March 10th, 2025, 66 out of 183 seats in the Austrian National Assembly (Nationalrat) are held by women, accounting for 36.07% (Frauenanteil im Nationalrat, 2025). Moreover, according to the Global data on national parliaments, women hold 28 out of 60 seats, accounting for 46.7% in the Federal Council (Bundesrat), as of the end of February (Data on women, 2025).

Similarly, the data demonstrate significant women's representation in both chambers of the German government, with women holding 204 of the 630 seats in the Federal Diet (Bundestag) and 24 out of 69 in the Federal Council (Bundesrat) (German Bundestag, 2025; Federal Council, 2025).

Moreover, Austria and Germany have produced highly symbolic female political leaders like Brigitte Bierlein and Angela Merkel. Both worked in a traditionally male-dominated political domain, and their public images were often perceived through a gendered lens. Angela Merkel, the first female chancellor in Germany, was often portrayed by the media using gendered titles like "Pastor's daughter" (Pfarrerstochter), and "Mommy" (Mutti), which may have reduced her perceived authority (Van Halsema, 2019). Conversely, Austria's first female chancellor, Brigitte Bierlein, was portrayed predominantly as a neutral civil servant during her short tenure in 2019 (Hayek et al., 2022). These examples showed the importance of gendered framing and how such gendered framing influences public perceptions of political candidates' authority.

Gender in Political Communication

Gender is one of the most important factors in shaping political candidates' public perception. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) find that gender stereotypes influence perceptions of candidates' abilities and evaluation. For instance, communal traits such as sympathy, kindness, and nurturing are generally associated with female politicians. Whereas agentic traits like dominance, aggressiveness, and leadership are more associated with male political candidates (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Candidates who violate these expected gendered traits often experience gender backlash. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in politics, as it has long been a male-dominated domain (Cavazza & Pacilli, 2021).

Gender Stereotypes in Political Communication

Gender stereotypes are a concept that is both descriptive and prescriptive, as they not only describe how people usually think men and women behave, but also how they are supposed to behave in social and professional contexts (Ellemers, 2018; Vogel et al., 2003; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Generally, masculine traits include assertiveness, dominance, competitiveness, and leadership ability, while feminine traits consist of cheerfulness, sympathy, tenderness, and love for children (Bem, 1981). These socially constructed stereotypes often provide a shortcut for voters, especially when voters have little knowledge of the candidates.

Gender stereotypes heavily influence political candidates' evaluations. Specifically, an empirical study by Karl and Cormack (2023) finds that female political candidates receive higher evaluations in competence ratings when they are in caring or community-related policy domains like education. While male political candidates receive higher competence ratings in masculine policy domains, such as foreign affairs and defense.

Interestingly, not only are political candidates' perceived competence ratings influenced by their gender, but also their likability. A study by Heilman et al. (2004) finds that in a male-dominated domain, even when female political candidates perform well and their

competence is recognized. They are still considered less likable than their male counterparts. These findings emphasize that both competence and likability are essential dimensions in political candidates' evaluations.

Candidates' Evaluation: Competence and Likability

Competence and likability are two core attributes in leadership (Costinhas & Vera, 2021). Research suggests that these two attributes strongly influence voters' perceptions and electoral outcomes. Specifically, political candidates are more likely to win when their competence is perceived to be high (Castelli et al., 2009; Sussman et al., 2013). Importantly, perceptions of political candidates' competence can be formed instantly or through long-term observation. For example, Todorov et al. (2005) demonstrate that voters can determine political candidates' perceived competence in less than one second based on their appearances, and this short impression can predict up to 70% of the U.S. congressional electoral results. Even though the political candidates' competence can be formed instantly, it does not mean such evaluations are purely superficial. Chen and his colleagues (2014) further note that this quick formation of judgment is not only based on a first impression but instead plays a fundamental role in how individuals judge leadership ability.

In addition to competence, likability is also an important criterion in the evaluation of political candidates. McAllister et al. (2019) find that likability is one of the key assessments in effective leadership. Individuals tend to trust and support those political candidates they like. However, likability extends beyond being pleasant or agreeable; it involves the candidate's capacity to elicit positive emotional responses and be viewed as credible and trustworthy (Park, 2015). Although likability and credibility are closely linked, Teven (2008) emphasizes that they are distinct concepts, meaning a candidate can be perceived as competent without being admired or liked.

Emotion in Political Communication

In addition to gender, emotion also exerts a significant role in shaping voters' behavior, cognition, and attitude (Lamprianou & Ellinas, 2018). More specifically, emotion influences how voters process messages or information. For example, Nabi (2002) introduces the Cognitive-Functional Model (CFM), which indicates that a certain emotion influences persuasion through different cognitive mechanisms. Even within the same category, emotion can trigger different information-processing patterns. Emotions not only guide how individuals process information but also shape the type of information they are willing to seek and process (De los Santos & Nabi, 2019).

Emotion also functions as a motivational force in political engagement. Valentino et al. (2011) find that anger is the most effective emotion in political mobilization among emotions like anxiety and enthusiasm. This is because anger is often triggered by perceived injustice, which can effectively engage individuals to participate in political actions. Conversely, anxiety can only enhance individuals' awareness but tends to result in withdrawal when individuals lack coping strategies, and enthusiasm primarily strengthens support among existing partisans.

Anger is not the only emotion that can trigger political mobilization; other emotions, like compassion, can also trigger political mobilization. Wawrzyński (2022) highlights that compassion can foster participants to participate in prosocial behavior like donation, and this effect is particularly evident in mobilizing individuals who are initially neutral or disengaged. Similarly, Skurka et al. (2018) find that regardless of the type of emotional appeal, those that invoke emotions like humor or fear can increase participants' intentions to engage in political activism.

Existing literature highlights the significance of emotions in shaping voters' cognition and engagement in political communication. However, emotions are socially constructed and rarely evaluated in a neutral context, as they are shaped by gender norms and expectations.

Gendered Emotional Expression: Anger & Compassion

Emotional expression is heavily restricted by gender norms (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). There is a deeply rooted gender stereotype about emotions in Western cultures: women are perceived as more emotionally expressive than men (Shields, 2002; Chaplin, 2015), and are also believed to experience specific emotions more frequently and intensely. For example, society often expects men to display dominant expressions, such as anger, and women are expected to smile more often (Hess et al., 2010). This is because anger is commonly associated with masculinity, and smiling is considered a communal trait.

However, a study by Kring (2000) finds that men and women do not differ in expressing or experiencing emotions like anger. Despite the empirical evidence suggesting no difference in the frequency and intensity of emotional expression between men and women, emotional expression remains gendered in public perception. Shields (2002) argues that emotional gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in society and that they influence public perceptions of what emotions are appropriate for each gender.

Many emotions are associated with genders, for instance, anger and compassion. Anger is a basic emotion often classified as a masculine trait and is closely associated with dominance and assertiveness (Hess et al., 2009; Becker et al., 2007). Furthermore, anger is often regarded as a negative emotion or feeling (Huddy et al., 2021), and this feeling or emotion emerges when individuals think someone or something is preventing them from achieving their personal goal or interest (Lazarus, 1991; Frijda, 2007; Harmon-Jones et al., 2008). Anger also plays a crucial

role in political communication because it is used to express dissatisfaction and signal a demand for change (Valentino et al., 2011).

Similarly, compassion is also regarded as a gendered emotion and is often classified as a feminine emotional trait closely associated with terms like kindness, care, and warmth (Strauss et al., 2016; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Neff, 2003). Previous scholars define compassion as both an emotional and a behavioral response, and it can be differentiated into self-compassion and compassion towards others (Huddy et al., 2003; Slavich et al., 2022). Furthermore, compassion is about helping others and accepting other people's pain rather than ignoring or avoiding it (Lazarus, 1991; Neff, 2003; Goetz et al., 2021). In political communication, compassion functions as an emotional strategy that mobilizes political participation (Wawrzyński, 2002) and fosters social connection (Hofmann et al., 2011).

Theoretical Framework: Role Congruity and Expectancy Violation Theories

The study employs the Role Congruity and Expectancy Violation theories to examine how gendered emotional expression influences the evaluation of political candidates' competence and likability.

Role Congruity Theory posits that when specific social group members display characteristics congruent with social roles, no prejudice arises; however, when their characteristics are incongruent with social roles, the bias or prejudice is likely to occur (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In a political context, leadership is commonly aligned with agentic traits such as assertiveness, authority, and decisiveness, which are traditionally considered masculine. In contrast, women are expected to show more communal characteristics, including being helpful, nurturing, and sympathetic (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Koenig et al., 2011).

The incongruence between social roles and gender expectations results in negative perceptions of women leaders, making it difficult for them to succeed in leadership positions.

Even when women exhibit behaviors consistent with leadership roles, they still experience difficulties becoming leaders because their gender does not align with this leadership social role (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). In other words, female political candidates are in fact in a dilemma. On the one hand, they are expected to show traditional masculine leadership traits; on the other hand, they are expected to maintain communal characteristics (Omar & Davidson, 2001). Such contradictory demands make it difficult for female political candidates to be perceived as likable and competent simultaneously.

Similarly, the Expectancy Violations Theory also provides insights into how gender backlash can occur in the political context. The theory indicates that violation of expectations can lead to either positive or negative outcomes depending on context. A positive violation occurs when the unexpected behavior of an individual produces the desired outcome, whereas a negative violation results in negative consequences (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon, 2015). Moreover, individuals who violate the expected norm attract more attention or scrutiny from observers (Burgoon & Hale, 1998).

Based on the existing findings, as well as the Role Congruity Theory and Expectancy Violation Theory, the following hypotheses are formulated to examine how the emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) of political candidates influences evaluations of their competence and likability.

H1a: When male political candidates express anger, their likability will be higher than when they express compassion.

H1b: When male political candidates express anger, their competence will be higher than when they express compassion.

H2a: When female political candidates express anger, their likability will be lower than when they express compassion.

H2b: When female political candidates express anger, their competence will be higher than when they express compassion.

Gender Backlash in Political Communication

Drawing from role congruity and expectancy violation theories, female political candidates may face gender backlash when their behavior or emotional expression deviates from societal expectations. Such deviation can result in either negative or positive outcomes. Gender backlash is a social phenomenon that is highly correlated with political behavior and is directed not only at female political candidates but also at women in general (Green & Shorrocks, 2021; Sanbonmatsu, 2008).

Women often experience gender backlash in the political context. Politics is widely perceived as a male-dominated domain and is closely associated with leadership. When women pursue leadership roles that violate traditional gender role expectations, they are likely to encounter gender backlash, resulting in economic or social penalties (Rudman et al., 2012; Chakraborty & Serra, 2024; Sullivan et al., 2018). Nai et al. (2024) find that gender backlash is more evident in countries with low female political representation and significantly less pronounced in countries with balanced male-female representation. In fact, gender backlash exists not only in institutional systems but also in public evaluations. An experimental study by Okimoto and Brescoll (2010) finds that when voters perceive female political candidates as seeking power, they often respond with moral outrage such as anger, contempt, and disgust, which reduces their willingness to vote. In contrast, male political candidates expressing the same level of ambition do not face similar penalties.

Gendered Evaluation of Emotional Expression

Based on the previous studies, it is evident that the same emotional expression of different genders can elicit different evaluations. As Role Congruity Theory suggests,

leadership is highly associated with masculine traits (Eagly & Karau, 2002); thus, when female political candidates express anger or dominance, they violate or conflict with gender expectations. In line with this, Boussalis et al. (2021) find that Angela Merkel is rewarded when she expresses happiness, an emotion that aligns with feminine norms. However, she is punished when she expresses anger, as such emotion deviates from expectation.

Conversely, male political candidates do not experience the same punishment for expressing anger because anger is highly associated with masculinity and aligned with leadership roles. According to Wang et al. (2023), when male political candidates strategically emphasize agentic traits, they are more likely to be perceived as strong leaders. These studies indicate that when male political candidates express anger, they are less likely to experience gender backlash because such emotional expression is congruent with their gender.

In contrast to anger, compassion aligns more closely with feminine gender norms. If female political candidates emphasize communal emotions like compassion or caring, they are more likely to gain support. Renstrom and Ottati (2020) find that when female political candidates use empathetic communication, their likability increases significantly compared to their male counterparts, as empathetic communication is more consistent with feminine characteristics. Similarly, Burns et al. (2013) suggest that female political candidates can gain electoral advantages by showcasing their communal traits during campaigns.

Based on the existing findings, the following hypotheses are formulated to explore how the evaluation of political candidates differs when the same emotion is expressed by candidates of different genders.

H3a: When female political candidates express compassion, their likability will be higher than male political candidates who express the same emotion.

H3b: When female political candidates express compassion, their competence will be lower than male political candidates who express the same emotion.

H4a: When male political candidates express anger, their likability will be higher than female political candidates who express the same emotion.

H4b: When male political candidates express anger, their competence will be higher than female political candidates who express the same emotion.

Data and Method

Research design

To systematically explore how political candidates' gender and emotional expression influence the public evaluation of their competence and likability, a 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design is employed. Participants who take part in the study are randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups. The treatment groups are as follows: (1) a male political candidate expressing anger, (2) a male political candidate expressing compassion, (3) a female political candidate expressing anger, and (4) a female political candidate expressing compassion. To ensure the experiment's internal validity, all the experimental stimuli are formed in an X-post form (formerly Twitter), and texts are identical in length and content, varying only in the candidates' names, emotional expression, and gender.

The questionnaire is developed and conducted using the online survey platform "QuestionPro". Furthermore, the questionnaire consists of five parts: a consent form, pre-treatment measures, experimental stimulus, post-treatment measures, and debriefing. Since the target participants in the study are those who reside in Austria and Germany, the questionnaire is available in English and German.

Before answering the pre-treatment questions, participants are provided with a consent form that outlines the study procedure, participants' rights, and the study purpose. Participants

are required to provide informed consent; those who do not consent to participate are excluded from the study. Participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous in the survey. Participants can withdraw from the survey at any time, and their data is handled confidentially following the rules of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union. Participants are presented with a debriefing form when they complete the questionnaire. The debriefing form provides detailed information about the study's purpose and objective. To guarantee the transparency and reproducibility of the study, the study is preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Sampling Strategy and Participants

A power analysis assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) and a significant level of 0.05, a minimum of 77 participants is needed to ensure sufficient power for subsequent hypothesis testing. Participants who do not provide informed consent, fail attention checks, live outside of Austria or Germany, or are under the age of 18 are excluded from the survey.

The study employs a snowball sampling method to recruit participants. This method enables researchers to utilize personal networks, making it easier to recruit a diverse range of participants. This method is especially beneficial as it greatly reduces the time and costs of gathering samples (Sadler et al., 2010). Participants in the study are primarily recruited through social media platforms, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook, as well as by friends and acquaintances sharing the survey link. To encourage more participants to participate in the study, a €30 Amazon voucher is offered as an incentive through a prize draw. Respondents who complete the questionnaire and message the researcher are entered into a raffle.

Experimental Stimulus

Experimental stimuli in this study are statements from political candidates, which are presented as an X-post (formerly Twitter). Twitter is selected as it is considered a crucial

platform in political communication, where politicians frequently use Twitter to disseminate information and respond to public demands (Soedarsono et al., 2020). Moreover, the study used fictitious political candidates to avoid potential bias stemming from participants' preferences for particular political candidates: Thomas Schmidt (male) and Anna Schmidt (female). Participants are able to identify political candidates' gender by their name and profile picture.

To further minimize the potential bias in participants' evaluation, the policy domain of the statements is tourism-related. According to Karl and Cormack (2012), defense policy domain is related to masculinity because it is associated with terms like aggression and strength. Whereas the educational policy domain is more associated with femininity, as it is more connected to compassion and community values. However, the tourism-related domain is regarded as a gender-neutral policy area that is more technical and nonpartisan, thereby reducing the potential influence of gender bias in voters' assessments (Anderson-Nilsson & Clayton, 2021).

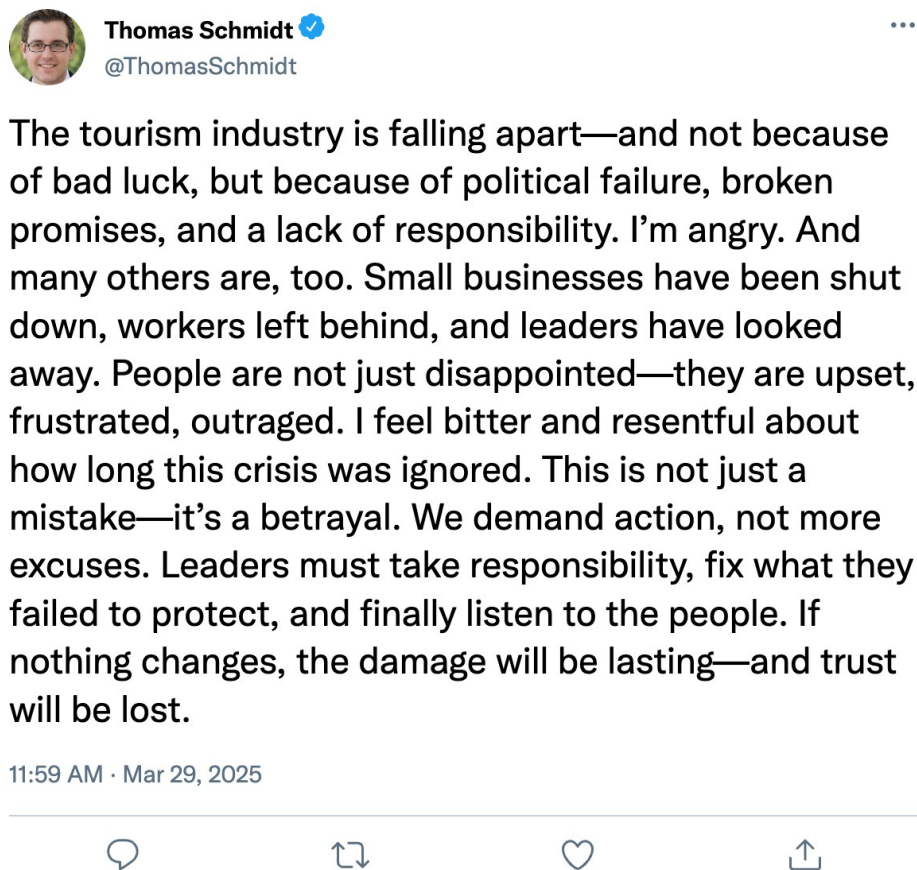
The experimental stimuli are manipulated along two dimensions: candidates' gender (male and female) and emotional expression (anger and compassion). Anger and compassion were chosen because these two emotions are widely regarded as gendered emotional expressions. Specifically, anger is typically categorized as a masculine trait and is highly associated with dominance and assertiveness (Hess et al., 2009; Becker et al., 2007). Conversely, compassion is often associated with feminine traits, which are strongly linked to "kindness," "care," and "warmth" (Strauss et al., 2016; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Neff, 2003).

Before viewing the stimuli, participants are shown the sentence: "Now you will read a statement made by a political candidate about tourism." Following this, participants are presented with one of the four X-posts (formerly Twitter). The post includes the fictitious

political candidate's name (Thomas Schmidt or Anna Schmidt), manipulated emotions (anger or compassion), and a tourism-related policy statement. The X-post is generated by TWEETGEN, with no likes and retweets. Profile images of the candidates are generated using an AI tool called "This Person Does Not Exist." Additionally, the statements used in the study are created by AI and are later refined by human editors to ensure the language flow.

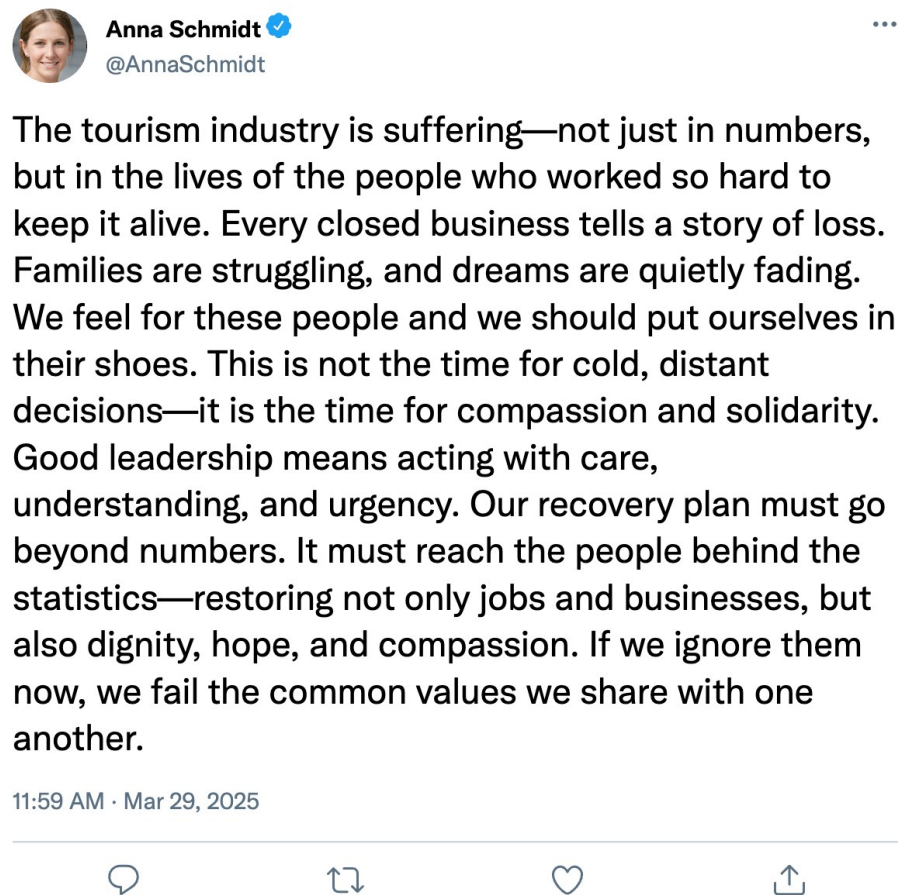
To ensure that participants correctly perceive the intended emotional expression of political candidates, emotion-related words are deliberately included in the statement. For instance, anger statements by political candidates feature words like "angry," "upset," "frustrated," and "outraged". The textual content of the statement is identical, with only differences in the political candidates' names and profile pictures. Therefore, the following figure displays a male political candidate (Thomas Schmidt) expressing anger.

Figure 1. Anger condition in an X-post featured by the male political candidate (Thomas Schmidt).



Similarly, the compassion statements feature terms such as “compassion”, “care”, and “hope”. The following figure displays a female political candidate (Anna Schmidt) expressing compassion.

Figure 2. Compassion condition in an X-post featured by the female political candidate (Anna Schmidt).



Experiment Procedure

The questionnaire is entirely conducted online, with an average completion time of less than 5 minutes. Participants are directed to pre-treatment questions after providing informed consent and completing the demographic information. This section contains twelve items, three attention checks, and nine questions designed to assess participants' baseline attitudes. Specifically, six items are based on Roller et al. (2014)'s short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), two items are adapted from Kisley et al (2024)'s Emotional Acceptance Questionnaire, and one item is from Pew Research (2015), measuring the gender-related attitude of leadership positions.

Those who pass all attention checks are randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups. Following this, they are asked to evaluate candidates' competence and likability based on the statement they read. There are six items in total, with three items adapted from Warner and Banwart (2016) measuring candidates' competence, and three items from Reysen (2005) measuring candidates' likability. Participants also report their own emotional reactions to the political statement.

To ensure participants correctly perceive the intended emotional expression by the candidate, two attention checks are included at the end of the questionnaire. Furthermore, they are also invited to provide feedback or suggestions regarding the questionnaire. Lastly, participants are presented with a debriefing form outlining the detailed study objectives and purposes.

Measures

To evaluate the initial attitudes of participants and ensure consistency among the different experimental groups, the study uses validated measurement scales both before and after exposure to the experimental stimuli. Although all key variables in the questionnaire—such as ambivalent sexism, appropriateness of emotional expression, competence, likability, and emotional reactions—are measured using a 7-point Likert scale, all variables are rescaled from 0 to 1 during the analysis phase. Additionally, all multi-item measures in the questionnaire, such as the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, competence, and likability, are averaged to generate composite scores.

In the pre-treatment section, all the items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Among these nine items, six items are adapted from Rollero et al. (2014)'s short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI):

“Women should be cherished and protected by men.”

“Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.”

“Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.”

“When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.”

“Women exaggerate problems they have at work.”

“Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.”

The remaining three items are two items measuring the appropriateness of emotional expression by political candidates (Kisley et al. 2025) and one item adapted from the Pew Research (2015) measuring the attitude toward leadership positions:

“It is appropriate for politicians to express anger in public.”

“It is appropriate for politicians to express compassion in public.”

“Men generally make better political leaders than women.”

Following exposure to experimental stimuli, participants evaluate political candidates’ competence and likability using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Political candidates’ competence is measured by three items adapted from Warner and Banwart (2016):

“The candidate is knowledgeable.”

“The candidate is a good leader.”

“The candidate is smart.”

Similarly, the political candidates’ likability is measured using three items proposed by Reysen (2005):

“The candidate is likable.”

“The candidate is approachable.”

“The candidate is friendly.”

Besides measuring the main dependent variables (competence and likability), the study also assesses participants' own emotional reaction to candidates' statements. Participants rate their current emotions on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning “Not at all” and 7 meaning “Extremely.” The emotions assessed include: "angry, resentful, anxious, scared, disgusted, gross-out, enthusiastic, hopeful, sad, depressed, compassionate, and sympathetic.”

Furthermore, to ensure that the intended emotional expression of the political candidates is effectively perceived by participants, two manipulation checks are included at the end of the questionnaire. Participants are asked to rate political candidates' emotional expression on a 7-point scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 7 indicating “strongly agree”. The manipulation checks are the following:

“The candidate expressed anger.”

“The candidate expressed compassion.”

Analytical Strategy

The study employs ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to analyze how political candidates' gender (male=0, female=1) and their emotional expression (anger=0, compassion=1) influence respondents' evaluations of political candidates' competence and likability. All the variables are rescaled from 0 to 1 during the analysis phase.

Ordinary least squares regression (OLS) is selected because the dependent variables in the study are all measured on a 7-point continuous scale, which meets the assumption of linear regression.

Both models are estimated to test the proposed hypotheses (H1-H4), aiming to discover both main and interaction effects between candidate gender and emotional expression on competence and likability. All the analyzes are conducted using R software.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The recruitment process for this survey started on March 4th, 2025, and ended on May 16th, 2025. In total, 159 participants participated in the survey. However, before respondents were assigned to treatment groups, 1 participant did not provide informed consent, 25 participants reported not living in Austria or Germany, and 11 failed one of the three attention checks. Additionally, 14 participants were assigned to an experimental condition but exited before completing the survey.

As a result, 108 participants' responses were included in the final data analysis phase, with 45 (41.7%) male, 60 (55.6%) female participants, and 3(2.8%) participants identified as "other". Concerning participants' country of residence, the majority resided in Austria (77 participants, 71.3%), while 31(28.7%) participants were from Germany. Participants in the study were highly educated, with 70 (64.8%) participants completing a bachelor's degree, and 25 (23.1%) holding a master's degree. Furthermore, participants were asked to place themselves on a political-ideology scale ranging from 1 (left) to 10 (right); the mean score of the study was 5.84 (SD = 1.87), indicating that the sample slightly leaned to the right on the political spectrum.

In addition to participants' demographic information, the questionnaire also measured several important variables before being exposed to the treatment condition, including the short form of the ASI (Rollero et al., 2014) and participants' perception of the appropriateness of candidates expressing emotions like anger and compassion in public (Kisley et al., 2025). To ensure comparability between treatment groups, all variables were rescaled from 0 to 1. Moreover, the mean and standard deviation for each treatment group are reported in Appendix A1. For instance, the mean score of Hostile Sexism (ASI) was slightly higher for participants

who were assigned to the female x anger condition ($M=0.369$; $SD=0.308$) than those in the male x anger condition ($M=0.345$; $SD=0.229$). Furthermore, the study used the male x anger condition as a reference group to examine the statistical balance of pre-treatment baseline variables, and the results of these comparisons are shown in Appendix A2.

Participants were evenly distributed across different treatment groups, and the distribution of participants across the experimental treatment groups was as follows: 25 participants were assigned to the male x anger condition, 26 participants assigned to the male x compassion condition, 34 assigned to the female x anger condition, and 23 assigned to the female x compassion condition.

Manipulation Checks

Two attention checks are included at the end of the questionnaire to examine whether the intended emotions (anger or compassion) of the study were successfully conveyed to participants.

For the compassion manipulation checks, participants who were assigned to both the female ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.98$) and male ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.01$) compassion conditions scored significantly higher on this condition than those who were assigned to the anger conditions (Female Anger: $M = 1.85$, $SD = 1.58$; Male Anger: $M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.65$). Furthermore, an ANOVA revealed a statistically significant effect between conditions ($F(3,102) = 41.76$, $p < .001$).

Similarly, participants who were assigned to the anger conditions (Female Anger: $M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.65$; Male Anger: $M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.19$) rated the candidates' anger condition significantly higher than those in the compassion conditions (Female Compassion: $M = 1.52$, $SD = 1.27$; Male Compassion: $M = 1.19$, $SD = 0.80$). An ANOVA also revealed highly significant differences between conditions, $F(3,102) = 124.9$, $p < .001$.

The results of the manipulation checks revealed that the intended emotions of the candidates were successfully manipulated.

Hypothesis Results

To comprehensively examine how political candidates' gender (male vs. female) and their emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) affect the public evaluation of their competence and likability, the study proposes four hypotheses. The first two hypotheses (H1-H2) focus on within gender comparisons, that is, how male and female political candidates are evaluated differently when expressing anger and compassion. The latter two hypotheses (H3-H4) focus on between-gender comparisons, specifically whether identical emotional expressions are evaluated differently based on the candidates' gender.

Within-Gender Comparison: H1-H2

Hypothesis 1a and 1b predict that when male political candidates express anger, their competence and likability will increase compared to when they express compassion. To test these two hypotheses, an OLS regression model is conducted using the data from participants assigned to male political candidates who expressed either anger or compassion. Moreover, in both models, emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) is the independent variable, while perceived competence and likability serve as the dependent variables.

H1a and H1b are not supported (see Table 1). H1a finds that when male political candidates express compassion, they are rated as significantly more likable than those who express anger ($\beta = 0.347$, $SE = 0.057$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.46]). H1b is not supported. Male political candidates who express compassion receive slightly higher competence ratings compared to those who express anger, but the difference is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.073$, $SE = 0.049$, $p = .144$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.17]).

Hypothesis 2a predicts that when female political candidates express anger, their likability rating will decrease compared to when they express compassion. Hypothesis 2b predicts that female political candidates who express anger will be perceived as more competent than those who express compassion. Similarly, OLS regression models are conducted using the data from participants assigned to female political candidates who express anger or compassion. In both models, the independent variable is emotional expression (anger vs. compassion), and the dependent variable is likability or competence.

H2a is supported (see Table 1). The results for H2a indicate that female political candidates who express compassion are rated significantly more likable than those who express anger ($\beta = 0.433$, $SE = 0.061$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.55]). H2b is not supported, although female political candidates who express compassion show a slight increase in competence rating compared to those who express anger, but the effect is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.107$, $SE = 0.056$, $p = .061$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.22]).

Table 1. OLS Regression for Within-Gender Comparisons (H1a-H2b)

Hypothesis	Comparison	Dependent variables	β Estimate	SE	p-value	Adjusted R^2	N	95% CI
H1a	Male: Compassion vs Anger	Likability	0.347	0.057	<0.001	0.416	51	[0.23, 0.46]
H1b	Male: Compassion vs Anger	Competence	0.073	0.049	0.144	0.026	46	[-0.03, 0.17]
H2a	Female: Compassion vs Anger	Likability	0.433	0.061	<0.001	0.478	55	[0.31, 0.55]
H2b	Female: Compassion vs Anger	Competence	0.107	0.056	0.061	0.046	56	[-0.01, 0.22]

Between-Gender Comparison: H3-H4

Hypothesis 3a predicts that when female political candidates express compassion, they will appear more likable compared to male political candidates who express the identical emotion. In this analysis, the independent variable is the political candidates' gender (female vs. male), and the dependent variable is likability. To test this hypothesis, an OLS regression model is conducted using data from participants assigned to either male or female political candidates in a compassionate condition.

H3a is not supported (see Table 2). The results indicate that female political candidates who express compassion are rated slightly more likable than male political candidates who express the same emotion. However, the difference is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.042$, $SE = 0.054$, $p = .434$, 95% CI [-0.07, 0.15]).

Hypothesis 3b predicts that female political candidates who express compassion will be rated less competent than male political candidates who express compassion. Similarly, an OLS regression analysis is conducted using the data from participants who are assigned to either male or female political candidates in a compassion condition. In this model, the candidate's gender (male vs. female) is the independent variable, and perceived competence is the dependent variable.

H3b is not supported (see Table 2). Female political candidates who express compassion are rated slightly less competent than male political candidates expressing the same emotion, but the difference is not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.046$, $SE = 0.048$, $p = .347$, 95% CI [-0.143, 0.051]). The model explains virtually none of the variance in competence (Adjusted $R^2 = -0.002$).

Hypothesis 4a predicts that when male political candidates express anger, they will be rated more likable than female political candidates who express the same emotion. An OLS

regression analysis is conducted using data from participants assigned to either male or female political candidates under the condition of anger. Furthermore, the dependent variable is likability, and the independent variable is candidates' gender (male vs. female).

H4a is not supported (see Table 2). Although male political candidates who express anger receive slightly higher likability ratings compared to female political candidates who express the same emotion, the difference is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.043$, $SE = 0.063$, $p = .492$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.17]).

Hypothesis 4b predicts that when male political candidates express anger, their competence will be rated higher than that of female political candidates who express the same emotion. An OLS regression analysis is also conducted to examine this hypothesis, and the data are from participants assigned either male x anger or female x anger. The dependent variable in this model is competence, and the independent variable is candidates' gender (male vs. female).

H4b is not supported (see Table 2). Male political candidates who express anger receive slightly higher competence ratings compared to female political candidates who express the same emotion. However, the difference is not significant ($\beta = 0.080$, $SE = 0.057$, $p = .168$, 95% CI [-0.035, 0.194]).

Table 2. OLS Regression Results for Between-Gender Comparisons (H3a–H4b)

Hypothesis	Comparison	Dependent Variable	β Estimate	SE	p-value	Adjusted R ²	N	95% CI
H3a	Female vs Male: Compassion	Likability	0.042	0.054	0.434	-0.008	49	[-0.07, 0.15]
H3b	Female vs Male: Compassion	Competence	-0.046	0.048	0.347	-0.002	47	[-0.14, 0.05]
H4a	Male vs Female: Anger	Likability	0.043	0.063	0.492	-0.009	57	[-0.08, 0.17]
H4b	Male vs Female: Anger	Competence	0.080	0.057	0.168	0.017	55	[-0.03, 0.19]

Note: The Reference group is male for H3a and H3 b, and female in H4a and H4b. The coefficient represents group differences.

Discussion

This study employs a between-subjects experimental design to systematically investigate how the gender of political candidates (male vs. female) and their emotional expression (anger vs. compassion) affect public evaluations of their perceived competence and likability. The study employs the Role Congruity Theory and Expectancy Violation Theory to test four hypotheses focusing on within-gender and between-gender comparisons.

Main Results Interpretations

The study's findings reveal no significant interaction between candidates' gender and their emotional expressions (anger vs. compassion) in the public evaluation of their competence and likability. However, emotional expression alone has a significant effect on the likability ratings, but not on the competence ratings. Specifically, political candidates who express compassion are perceived as more likable than those who express anger, regardless of gender.

These results do not support the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and the Expectancy Violation Theory (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Both theories suggest that individuals are evaluated more positively when they behave in a way that aligns with their gender role, such as males expressing anger and females expressing compassion. Conversely, individuals who act incongruent with their gendered expectations, such as males expressing compassion and females expressing anger, tend to attract more attention, and these deviations can often result in a negative evaluation effect. Such theorized effects are not observed in this study. Instead, compassion enhances likability across both genders, suggesting that the public may be more receptive to emotional expressions associated with communal traits, such as warmth or care. In contrast, anger tends to elicit more negative evaluations, as it is commonly associated with attack and dominance (Berkowitz, 1993).

In addition, the results show no significant effect on how they are evaluated in terms of competence and likability (see Table 2). The findings align with existing studies suggesting that, despite the persistence of gender stereotypes, evaluations of male and female political candidates do not differ under specific political contexts (van Dijk et al., 2022; Karl & Cormack, 2023). For instance, Karl and Cormack (2023) find that female political candidates are not necessarily punished for expressing masculine emotions and may even be rewarded, whereas male political candidates are likely to be criticized for not performing “manly” enough in a male-dominated domain. Consistent with the study, a meta-analysis of 67 similar experiments finds that female political candidates, on average, receive approximately two percentage points more support than their male counterparts; however, gender is not a primary factor in influencing voters’ evaluations (Schwarz & Coppock, 2022). The result further indicates that in the current political climate, voters’ criteria for evaluating political candidates are slowly moving away from traditional gender roles toward more neutral or context-driven evaluations.

Implications

The study provides several implications for campaign strategies in political communication. Firstly, the study indicates that expressing compassion can increase candidates' likability, regardless of gender. Consequently, if political candidates intend to enhance their likability during a political campaign, they can strategically express compassion. For instance, a study by Renstrom and Ottati (2020) further confirms that political messages containing empathetic communication can significantly enhance candidates' likability. Although the use of this strategy has a positive effect on both male and female candidates, it is more effective for female political candidates than for male candidates. Based on these findings, candidates may consider incorporating emotions like compassion in campaign communication to increase their likability.

Secondly, besides strategically expressing compassion in a political campaign, compassion can also shape their public image. In today's political environment, most voters learn about political candidates through new media, and new media play a crucial role in the electoral stage (Tomin et al., 2020). In this media-driven environment, every behavior or emotional expression of candidates is more likely to be amplified or scrutinized. If candidates constantly express compassion, they can build an "emotional brand" – a public image that makes people feel warm and reliable. This image may help candidates appear more trustworthy and foster a strong connection between politicians and voters.

Lastly, the study finds that voters' evaluation criteria are slowly shifting away from traditional gender stereotypes to more context-oriented assessment. Specifically, when women express anger or men express compassion, they are not penalized in terms of competence. Such a shift contributes to promoting gender equality in a political context. As it enables candidates of different genders to express emotions freely without fearing backlash. This trend indicates

a growing public acceptance of diverse emotional expressions in leadership, implying that voters prioritize factors beyond gender.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers insights into how the gender and emotional expressions of political candidates influence public evaluations of their perceived competence and likability, several limitations should be addressed.

Firstly, there is a limitation in sample selection and diversity. Since this study focuses solely on participants residing in Austria and Germany, it may be challenging to generalize these findings to other regions. Moreover, the study employs snowball sampling through the researcher's network, resulting in 64.8% of the participants having at least a bachelor's degree, thereby limiting the socio-demographic diversity of the sample.

Secondly, the study focuses only on anger and compassion, yet more emotions are associated with gender, and these emotions may manifest differently across genders. Specifically, analyzing only two discrete emotions does not fully capture the differences between genders in terms of emotional expression and may underestimate the potential role of these emotions in the evaluation of candidates.

Thirdly, the study uses an X-format post to simulate candidates' emotional expression, which may not comprehensively capture the richness of candidates' real-life emotional expression in political communication. Especially in a real-world context, interviews, campaign videos, or debates allow emotional expressions to be expressed through multimodal cues, including voice tone, appearances, or gestures. These nonverbal cues are perceived strongly by audiences and may interact with gender stereotypes in more complex ways.

Building on these limitations, future studies should expand the geographical scope to increase the generalizability and diversity of the findings. Moreover, future studies could

incorporate more emotional expressions commonly associated with each gender, such as fear, sadness, or happiness (Plant et al., 2000). Including a broader range of emotions would help to gain a deeper understanding of how the interaction of candidates' gender and their emotional expression influences their public evaluation. Lastly, future research could consider using more realistic experimental stimuli, such as video clips or immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR), to better simulate real-life political contexts.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Summary statistics of baseline covariates

Summary Statistics of Baseline Covariates				
	Male_Anger	Male_Compassion	Female_Anger	Female_Compassion
Gender (1=female)	0.720 (0.458)	0.615 (0.496)	0.484 (0.508)	0.478 (0.511)
Age	0.240 (0.210)	0.212 (0.231)	0.288 (0.259)	0.293 (0.179)
Country of Residence	0.360 (0.490)	0.077 (0.272)	0.265 (0.448)	0.478 (0.511)
Education	0.653 (0.263)	0.744 (0.217)	0.647 (0.306)	0.652 (0.256)
Political Ideology	0.556 (0.195)	0.564 (0.181)	0.505 (0.253)	0.540 (0.176)
Hostile Sexism (ASI)	0.345 (0.229)	0.413 (0.234)	0.369 (0.308)	0.440 (0.291)
Benevolent Sexism (ASI)	0.590 (0.187)	0.546 (0.201)	0.504 (0.211)	0.568 (0.226)
Anger Appropriateness	0.500 (0.220)	0.494 (0.252)	0.569 (0.288)	0.428 (0.240)
Compassion Appropriateness	0.720 (0.183)	0.654 (0.256)	0.697 (0.283)	0.670 (0.214)

Note: All variables in the table are rescaled to range from 0 to 1. Each entry is the mean of the baseline covariate with its standard deviations in parentheses.

Table A2. Table of balance test

	Balance on Baseline Covariates					
	Male_Compassion		Female_Anger		Female – Compassion	
	Difference	p-value	Difference	p-value	Difference	p-value
Gender (1=female)	-0.105	0.452	-0.236	0.079	-0.242	0.094
Age	-0.028	0.653	0.048	0.425	0.053	0.414
Country of Residence	-0.283	0.023	-0.095	0.411	0.118	0.352
Education	0.090	0.229	-0.006	0.929	-0.001	0.988
Political Ideology	0.009	0.883	-0.051	0.376	-0.015	0.809
Hostile Sexism (ASI)	0.068	0.369	0.024	0.732	0.095	0.226
Benevolent Sexism (ASI)	-0.044	0.446	-0.086	0.116	-0.022	0.713
Anger Appropriateness	-0.006	0.929	0.069	0.309	-0.072	0.327
Compassion Appropriateness	-0.066	0.331	-0.023	0.720	-0.050	0.472

Note: All variables are rescaled from 0 to 1. The four conditions (Male Anger, Male Compassion, Female Anger, Female Compassion) are all treatment groups. Furthermore, Male_Anger is used as the reference group for balance tests.

Appendix B

Treatment materials for the experimental study

Now you will read a statement made by a political candidate about tourism.

Male political candidate: Thomas Schmidt

Female political candidate: Anna Schmidt

A. Political candidate expressing anger (English & German versions)

“The tourism industry is falling apart—and not because of bad luck, but because of political failure, broken promises, and a lack of responsibility. I’m angry. And many others are, too. Small businesses have been shut down, workers left behind, and leaders have looked away. People are not just disappointed—they are upset, frustrated, outraged. I feel bitter and resentful about how long this crisis was ignored. This is not just a mistake—it’s a betrayal. We demand action, not more excuses. Leaders must take responsibility, fix what they failed to protect, and finally listen to the people. If nothing changes, the damage will be lasting—and trust will be lost.”

“Die Tourismusbranche bricht zusammen - und zwar nicht wegen purem Unglück, sondern wegen politischem Versagen, gebrochenen Versprechen und mangelnder Verantwortung. Ich bin verärgert. Und viele andere sind es auch. Kleine Unternehmen wurden geschlossen, Arbeitnehmer zurückgelassen, und die Verantwortlichen haben weggeschaut. Die Menschen sind nicht nur enttäuscht - sie sind verärgert, frustriert und empört. Ich bin verärgert darüber,

wie lange diese Krise ignoriert wurde. Dies ist nicht nur ein Fehler - es ist ein Verrat. Wir fordern Taten, keine weiteren Ausreden. Die führenden Politiker müssen Verantwortung übernehmen, das in Ordnung bringen, was sie nicht geschützt haben, und endlich auf die Menschen hören. Wenn sich nichts ändert, wird der Schaden dauerhaft sein - und das Vertrauen in das politische System wird verloren gehen.”

B. Political candidate expressing compassion (English & German versions).

"The tourism industry is suffering—not just in numbers, but in the lives of the people who worked so hard to keep it alive. Every closed business tells a story of loss. Families are struggling, and dreams are quietly fading. We feel for these people and we should put ourselves in their shoes. This is not the time for cold, distant decisions—it is the time for compassion and solidarity. Good leadership means acting with care, understanding, and urgency. Our recovery plan must go beyond numbers. It must reach the people behind the statistics—restoring not only jobs and businesses, but also dignity, hope, and compassion. If we ignore them now, we fail the common values we share with one another.”

“Die Tourismusbranche leidet - nicht nur zahlenmäßig, sondern auch im Leben der Menschen, die so hart daran gearbeitet haben, sie am Leben zu erhalten.

Jedes geschlossene Unternehmen erzählt eine Geschichte des Verlustes. Familien haben zu kämpfen, und Träume verblassen im Stillen. Wir fühlen mit diesen Menschen und sollten uns in ihre Lage versetzen. Dies ist nicht die Zeit für kalte, distanzierte Entscheidungen - es ist die Zeit für Mitgefühl und Solidarität. Gute Führung bedeutet, mit Sorgfalt, Verständnis und Dringlichkeit zu handeln. Unser Konjunkturprogramm muss über Zahlen hinausgehen. Er

muss die Menschen hinter den Statistiken erreichen und nicht nur Arbeitsplätze und Unternehmen wiederherstellen, sondern auch Würde, Hoffnung und Mitgefühl. Wenn wir sie jetzt ignorieren, lassen wir die gemeinsamen Werte, die wir miteinander teilen, im Stich.”