POLITICAL MARKETING

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POLITICAL MARKETING

VOLUME I

Political Marketing: Concepts and Theories

Edited by Paul R. Baines





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Editor's Introduction: Political Marketing

Paul R. Baines

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his work is dedicated to the pioneers of the political marketing discipline, but particularly to my academic 'fathers', Professor Phil Harris, Professor Bruce Newman and Professor Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, eminent mentors, Sir Bernard Ingham and Sir Robert Worcester and academic supervisors, Professor Emeritus Barbara Lewis and (the late) David Yorke. I would also like to thank Delia Martínez Alfonso for persuading me to undertake this project, and her team including Alana Clogan, Alan Maloney and Bhairav Sharma for their patience and support in the production of the manuscript.

Introduction

Political marketing is a sub-discipline of marketing and political science. It has developed in line with commercial marketing and political campaign practice throughout the twentieth century, particularly, but not exclusively, in the West. Although the use of promotional and managerial techniques in political, electoral and commercial campaigning has long existed, the uptake of marketing techniques in political campaigns has rapidly increased in recent decades (Scammell, 1994). Political marketing is, therefore, a relatively new discipline developed in the 1970s (see Shama, Chapter 8) but with much academic progress towards the middle to the end of the 1990s and throughout the 2000s. There are now journals that focus on political marketing such as the Journal of Political Marketing and the Journal of Public Affairs, both specialist journals that were founded in the early 2000s. There have however been a number of special editions of journals including in Revue Française du Marketing (in French, 1978, 2006), the Journal of Marketing Management (2005, 2011), European Journal of Marketing (1996, 2001, 2010), Psychology and Marketing (2002) and Marketing Theory (2009). Political marketing researchers hold an annual international conference and have a political marketing special interest group (see www.academyofmarketing.org.uk). The University of Masaryk in Brno, Czech Republic, also holds an annual conference on political marketing.

Political marketing had become increasingly influential towards the end of the twentieth century. Political marketing can be said to have charted its

way from the study and practice of public relations and propaganda but it is not *per se* either of these. It is an iteration of them and therefore contains characteristics of both, and of neither, of them. Edward Bernays, the founding father of public relations, defined the concept of the 'engineering of consent' (Bernays, 1947), the means by which the support of people within democracies is mobilised both for commerce and for political means. His work, which tended at times to mix public relations and propaganda (see Bernays, 1942), can be seen as the prototype – the precursor – of political marketing¹. Kotler and Levy (1969) hinted at the use of public relations in politics (in fact by the Greek military junta in making their coup acceptable to the world in 1967) in their seminal 'broadening the concept of marketing' article, and Kotler again, later in an article about candidate marketing, makes the link between marketing and politics even more clearly (Kotler, 1975) whilst in Europe, O'Leary and Iredale (1976) outline how the marketing mix (i.e. the concepts of product, place, price and promotion) can be applied to politics.

But, whilst the practice of public relations, for example, is concerned with earning and supporting reputation by influencing the opinions and behaviours of an organisation's public (CIPR, 2010), so is political marketing, given its concern with the reputation of political parties and other organisational actors in the political context. In contrast, propaganda suggests what people ought to believe by manipulation of symbols to modify attitudes (Lerner, 1951) and behaviour, but it goes further than this rather dry definition, because the propagandist 'dramatises our prejudices and speaks to something deep and even shameful within us' (O'Shaughnessy, 2004: 4). But political marketing also often uses such an approach, for example, when candidates suggest their opponents are war-mongers (as Lyndon Johnson did successfully to Barry Goldwater in the 1964 American Presidential) or are manipulative and Svengali-like (as John Major tried but failed to do with Tony Blair in the 1997 British general election 'demon eyes' poster advertising campaign). In fact, political marketing has been likened to a marketing-propaganda hybrid (O'Shaughnessy, 1990), particularly in America where negative attack-style campaigning is rife. Nimmo (1996: 45) beautifully describes the negativity of many modern US campaigns:

'There is the paradoxical confluence in contemporary campaigns of an information overload and missing information brought about by symbolic inflation [which] yields campaigns of play, of fanciful engineering, akin to Machiavelli's *fantasia*. Voters sedated by the spirits of campaigning are involved in the play of information ... they are as small children fascinated by a kaleidoscope, seduced by the shifting transitory play and passage of images in a phantom electronic world.'

Political marketing has become more important with the rise of universal voting systems, the development of broadcast media communications (particularly

television in the 1950s onwards) and the development of national opinion polls by George Gallup from the 1930s onwards. Nevertheless, political marketing has not developed in countries ruled by dictatorships (e.g. Burma under its military junta, Iraq under Saddam Hussein), or by communist governments, given their single party focus (e.g. China, the former Soviet Union), in countries where there is no effective political party opposition (as in Mexico under the PRI for many years in the twentieth century) or in countries where the power resides not in the people but in other institutions (e.g. Iran, the world's only theocracy). What has often occurred in some countries, in an attempt to legitimise the power of often corrupt regimes, is the semblance of political marketing (of taking into account, and meeting, the needs of voters), but which is in fact a simulacrum rather than the real thing. Examples include Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 20022 and Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe in 20083. Nevertheless, political marketing has increasingly moved beyond the West, for example, as we have seen its use in such diverse countries as Thailand (e.g. by former Prime Minister Taksin's, Thai Rak Thai party), Brazil (e.g. in the rise of former President, Lula da Silva) and Turkey (e.g. the rise of the mildly Islamist Justice and Development (AK) Party).

Marketing has also been used in referendum campaigning (Bowler, Donovan and Fernandez, 1996; de Vreese and Semetko, 2004; Harris et al, see Chapter 65). Charities and companies (and other campaigning organisations) are increasingly using political marketing techniques to influence legislation and public opinion. As industries have globalised, marketing and politics have intertwined. As such, marketing methods associated with political campaigning are increasingly used by companies to influence legislators and regulators. Although the origins of political marketing began with the description, and practical use, of marketing techniques by political parties, we are increasingly witnessing the use of marketing in other political contexts, not least by governing parties after winning the election, both so that they could stay in favour with their general public and in order to make it easier to win second and subsequent terms in office. This gives rise to the concept of the permanent campaign (see Blumenthal, 1980, for an early discussion of this term and more recently, Nimmo, 1999). Allington, Morgan and O'Shaughnessy (1999), for example, discuss political marketing in the context of the Thatcher government's pioneering programme of privatisation in the 1980s. The lists of shareholders of those newly privatised industries were then used very successfully to target direct mail in subsequent elections. In the commercial world, in order to lobby government and either change legislation or win lucrative contracts, political marketing techniques have also been used, for example, in the campaign to change Sunday Trading law in the UK (Harris, Gardner and Vetter, 1999) and by defence contractors seeking to encourage public support in particular constituencies in order to win public contracts (Andrews, 1996).

The Concept of Political Marketing

Kotler (1982:38) argues that the underlying exchange in political campaigning is the exchange of promises for votes and this process occurs through the communication of programmes, policies and ideas in return for information relating to these policies, ideas and programmes from the electorate. Political parties and candidates also need to transact with publics other than the electorate. Kotler and Kotler (1981) have suggested that political strategists target six markets including voters, the party (e.g. activists), the candidate, interest groups, contributors and the media. They argue that the role of the media is central to communicating with the other five markets. Sweeney (1995) has also outlined how political candidates have numerous audiences, referring to primary and secondary audiences where the primary audience is the voter and the secondary audiences are campaign staff and volunteers, organisations, opinion leaders, the political party, contributors, allies and friends, and the media. Exactly how a political party or candidate targets its public depends on the nature of the electoral and political system in which those entities are operating. For example, in the UK, political advertising is illegal, so parties target messages and policies at the people principally through journalists in the broadcast media and press. This aspect of the political campaigning process is often pejoratively referred to as 'spin-doctoring', although a more precise and descriptive term is media relations, the product is which is fittingly called 'earned' media.

There are currently numerous definitions of political marketing. Four of these are illustrated in Table 1. However, these definitions are largely focused on political marketing as political campaigning, with the exception of the Lock and Harris reference, which is designed to include lobbying. Yet, these definitions do not recognise that political marketing can take in the use of marketing in other political contexts, not least by campaigning organisations such as Amnesty International, or by militaries operating in conflict environments,

Table 1: Definitions of political marketing

Name of author(s)	Political marketing definition
Shama (1975), see Chapter 8	'The process by which political candidates and their ideas are directed at voters in order to satisfy their potential needs and thus gain their support for the candidate and ideas in question.'
Lock and Harris (1996), see Chapter 4	'The study of the processes of exchanges between political entities and their environment and among themselves, with particular reference to the positioning of both those entities and their communications.'
Henneberg (1997)	'Seek[s] to establish, maintain and enhance long-term voter relationships at a profit for society and political parties, so that the objectives of the individual political actors and organisations involved are met. This is done by mutual exchange of promises.'
Wring (1997) see Chapter 9	'The party or candidate's use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realise organisational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes.'

or by terrorist groups using marketing techniques to recruit supporters or by companies in building up grassroots political support for a business deal or government contract. In the case of lobbying, it is related to political marketing in two senses: lobbying is the means by which strategists of multi-national corporations influence their macro-environment (and government policy platforms) and in exchange (though not always directly) the means by which political parties obtain their funding (e.g. through conference sponsorship, political donations, loans of officers and money, etc.).

Given the increasingly widening remit of political marketing, and given the nature of this Major Work, we provide a more inclusive marketing-centric definition of political marketing as follows:

Political marketing is the range of activities, institutions and processes used for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging political offerings that have mutual value for, and between, citizens, governments, companies, special interest groups, nations, and societies at large.

Nevertheless, despite this wider definition for political marketing, we tend to focus in this Major Work on the use of marketing in political campaigns. and provide brief illustrations of how political marketing is being used in other political contexts. This ensures we have a more cohesive debate about the concept.

Political Marketing in Context

Electoral Law, Culture and Political System

The extent to which specific marketing tools can be used in an individual country depends largely upon the nature of that country's electoral, political and media systems. For instance, political marketing in Australia requires different techniques to make allowances for the compulsory voting system. For example, rather than focusing on get-out-the-vote, the focus shifts to one of persuading people to vote for your party, as opposed to another or spoiling their ballot paper. Countries generally also have different electoral law and regulations operating, which impacts on what campaign techniques can be used. For example, in Britain, political broadcast advertising is illegal. Yet, in America, it dominates political communication. Several major factors have been identified by Baines, Harris and Newman (1999) relating to whether or not the campaign is focused on a national or local level or on the party or the candidate, whether political communication is restricted or unrestricted, whether the party or candidate's campaign is supervised by party officials or external consultants and whether the source of fundraising is provided by the government, privately or some combination of the two (see Table 2). In this Major Work, we do not consider the role of fundraising further, despite its