

# USAGE OF POLITICAL MARKETING IN ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

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**Abstract**— In last decades we are witness of increased usage of political marketing in organization of political campaigns. Almost every successful contemporary political campaign includes implementation of the tools of political marketing. This paper tries to determine political marketing, its scope, functions and academic criticism toward political marketing.

**Index Terms**— Political marketing, Commercial Marketing, Democracy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As Maarek [1] notices, political marketing is one of the tools of political communication and a result of the rationalization of the same. There are many determinations for political marketing, but as Scammell [2] notices, in social sciences there is no consensus about the acceptance of one definition of political marketing. As Kavanach [3] indicates, political marketing is engineering of elections, that is, a series of strategies and tools based on the research of the public opinion made before and during the political campaign, by means of which communication in the political campaign is promoted, as well as its influence on the voters. In this regard, political marketing is an important communicological phenomenon. This is also the determination of Lock and Harris [4], who in their definition detect the audience to which the political communication addresses, that is, the party membership, the media and the voters.

One more specific definition of political marketing would include image building, branding, use of political advertising and complete communication strategy based on the strategic study of a given political entity Smith and Saunders, [5]. According to Harrop [6], political marketing is not only a simple sum of the elements that it is comprised of, on the contrary all these elements are in the function of positioning of the political entity or candidate at the elections of the electoral market. In this regard, political marketing includes planning, management and control of communication of a given political entity [7], [2].

Political marketing as a scientific field has many things in common with history, political sciences and political communication. Namely, according to Scammell [2], political marketing together with history shares the interest to understand the behavior of political leaders, with political sciences it shares the interest to understand the political processes, while with the political communication it shares the interest to understand the art of persuasion of voters.

## 2 RELATIONS BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL

### MARKETING

Political marketing implies use of the marketing tools, its concepts and philosophy that are applied at the field of development of politics, the organization of campaigns and the internal relations in political entities [8], [9]. More precisely, according to the opinion of Lees-Marshment [9] political marketing is a result of the marriage between the politics and the marketing and being familiar with it enables better understanding of the behavior of political parties. One could say that political marketing accepts and adjusts the knowledge of marketing in the field of politics. As such, political marketing is an established scientific discipline which synthesized the knowledge of marketing and politology. This determination of political marketing is based on the perception of politics from the perspective of the liberal market economy. It implies that political parties and the public politics they conduct is a product that should be sold, while the voters are the market where they are supposed to buy the product (the parties) by giving their trust, that is, by voting for them in the elections. Hence, the politicians and the public policies can be sold as every other product. For this reason the political parties and the candidates use the techniques of the political marketing to sell themselves and their political offer to the voters. As Kotler and Kotler [10] indicate, the marketing anticipates the market needs, than develops products and services in order to please the same. In a similar manner, the political entities anticipate the needs of citizens and then they develop public policies by which they satisfy these needs, increasing the quality of life at the lowest price.

Some of the elements of commercial marketing used by political parties and candidates are the market research through research of the public opinion and the focus groups which are often used in political marketing. Namely, in order to create and distribute a product, first it is necessary to have knowledge of the need for such a product at the market, in a similar manner in order to promote and defend certain policy at the political market, it is necessary to get certain knowledge of the need for such policy at the political market by research of the public opinion and the focus groups. Hence, at the elec-

tions in 2000, the political analysts noticed the need to change the politics after eight-year rule of the Democrats. What was left to be done during the campaign was to persuade the voters that George Bush Junior is the man who will bring the changes. Something similar happened at the elections when Barack Obama won, eight years later. The successful marketing goes a step further from identification of the needs of consumer and tries to foresee the future needs. Often the results from these researches are not used only for the political parties and the candidates to sell themselves better i.e. they emphasize certain part of the program and neglect another one, but also in order to adopt programs and public politics pursuant to the market demands, i.e. the voters, as well as for selection of party leaders, candidates at the election, communicators who will present the programs, the politics and the attitudes of the political party in the best possible manner.

It is almost impossible to win elections today without using the tools of political marketing. Even more, political marketing is used for presentation of the results from the implementation of public politics. That is, political marketing is not limited only on winning elections, but it is also used for successful promotion of given public politics.

With all similarities that exist, one can also notice certain differences between commercial and political marketing. Hence, while commercial marketing is directed towards the consumers, the political marketing is directed towards the voters. This on the other hand, leads to the following difference. While consumers are passive, the voters are an active part of the political game. So while in commercial marketing the companies try to create needs for the products they offer on the market, in political marketing, on the contrary, political parties are led by the researches of the public opinion, which means that they do not influence on the formation of the consumers' needs, rather they take them for granted and taking this position and a point of departure they build their product which corresponds to market needs. Butler and Colins [7] also indicate certain differences between commercial and political marketing. Hence, some of the specifics of political marketing indicated by Butler and Colins include the following: party ideology, political programs of parties, leadership of parties, party officials, party electoral candidates and the party membership. Lock and Harris [4] on the other hand emphasize that unlike the consumers of classical marketing which make their decisions in a relatively long time period, voters decide to choose one given political party in one day i.e. the day of the elections. Then, unlike the elections offered by classical marketing, the voters do not pay direct price for the choice they make under the influence of the political marketing. Voters must accept and live with the collective and not their individual decision, even when the collective decision is diametrically different from the individual one. The political parties and candidates are complex products made of many components and the voters must decide on them as an entirety, and they do not have the right to select only certain parts of them, attitudes etc. According to Newman [11], what makes a serious difference between the commercial and the political marketing is the uncontrollability of the conditions under which political

entities compete in the political market. During the electoral campaign many unforeseen things can happen (market breakdown, military intervention etc.), to which political entities must react at the right manner in a relatively short time period. Further on, the personal contact face to face is typical only for political marketing.

### 3 FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL MARKETING

The function analysis is mostly used to clarify the role and the justification of the existence of a given element in the system. In our case, the function analysis should show why the political entities that organize campaigns need political marketing, what is its role and justification in the political communication. Hence, O'Casey [12] suggests that political parties use political marketing to address to the voters in a manner which is most productive for them. The addressing itself implies analysis of the political market, planning and control of communication.

As a protocol for analysis of political marketing, Hanneberg [13] suggests to start with analysis of functions, which has been used as element in marketing for a long time. In this regard, the theory of classical marketing knows four conditions that should be satisfied in order to successfully apply the marketing tool. These four conditions are: product, price, place and promotion – the 4Ps. The product i.e. the political party should be perceived as a brand that provides services to the consumers – the voters. The political party as a product is a combination of few elements such as party leadership, candidates at elections, political ideology, political program, electoral program, public politics promoted in the program etc. Hence, all product elements can be analyzed, such as the leadership which can be strong, responsible etc., so this can be the point of departure towards preparation of an image of the management in the public. The price in the case with political prices is a psychological construct which includes the hopes and insecurities related to voting for a given political party [14]. By voting for a specific party, the citizens pay the price i.e. they invest trust in a specific political entity, putting an important part of their destiny in the hands of the given entity. The hopes and insecurity for the organization of the social life can be greater and smaller depending on the political entity. Thus, from symbolic point of view, also the price that the voters pay is different. The place is the positioning of the product in the range of political parties, ideologies, programs, candidates. On the other hand, the promotion includes the activities of the political communication which is in a function of connection of the product and the consumers. In other words, the promotion is placement of messages of the political party in the best and most effective possible manner.

Menon (2008) indicates eight functions of political marketing:

- *Production function* – Promotion of the product which the political entities sell to voters
- *Distribution function* – Distribution to the voters of all necessary information about the political entity.

The distribution function also includes the spread of program information, policies, ideology and the candidates who are proposed by the political entities at the elections

- *Price function* – In political marketing the price function means that the voters get the information about a specific political product without spending money, as soon as possible and as fast as possible
- *Communication function* – Effective communication with the voters. The communication should be bidirectional, i.e. interactive, and the messages should be adjusted to the voters that political entities address to. This by itself causes simplification of messages and choosing the right media channels through which communication takes place
- *Function of news management.* This function is closely related to the communication function. News management refers to the mediated communication that allows control of messages that are sent through the mass media. Such type of communication includes commercials.
- *Function of increase of the campaign financing.* Political marketing cannot exist without certain budgets required for financing it, and it cannot be promoted without increasing of the budgets.
- *Parallel management with the electoral campaign.* Political marketing has to be coordinated with the politics led by the political entity whose interest is being protected. This implies parallel and coordinated leading of the campaign by politicians on one hand and the people obliged for political marketing on the other hand.
- *Function of internal cohesion.* In order to communicate successfully with the voters and the public, political entities must arrange their internal communication on the basis of professional relations. The internal marketing directed towards membership is of key importance for establishing coherence of the political entity, as well as building its credibility and image in public.

#### 4 POLITICAL MARKETING AND MARKET ORIENTATION OF PARTIES

Although it considers the specifics of the product it sells, political marketing essentially means market orientation of the parties whereby the market is comprised of voters. O' Cass A. (1996) suggests that the act of voting can be analyzed as an act of sale and purchase whereby the voters give their votes and in exchange they get proposals to improve the manner of management of public matters. Lees-Marshment [16] concludes that political parties are in the market of political ideas and programs and in order to get the best sale of their offer,

they use the tools of political marketing. Accordingly, political parties are market oriented organizations. They use different assets and methods in order to research and respond to market needs in terms of the total political product starting from the program, the proposed public policies, and finally the behavior of the representatives of political parties. To be market oriented means to constantly follow and even more, to actively participate in the market modifications, to establish and maintain relations with previously selected target groups. At the same time, parties are not oriented only towards the voters, but also towards the political competition, the products they offer in the market of political programs, the strengths and weaknesses of those products. According to Lees-Marshment [16], market oriented parties develop techniques for research of the political market through:

- use of different media such as research of the public opinion, the focus groups, segmentation etc.
- they perceive the preferences of voters
- marketing takes place also between electoral campaigns
- they include segmentation on the market of parties, in order to identify the market segments which are not part of the party supporters, but they could be in future, especially by focusing on the needs, desires and demands of this part of the electorate
- careful interpretation of the research results

The next step is on the basis of the obtained results from the market research, to develop a political product. Important characteristics of the political product indicated by Lees-Marshment [16] include:

- *successfulness:* to ensure that the promises are realistic and the party team should be able to send them to the voters
- *internal reactions:* to enable acceptance of changes by the leadership, as well as by the party membership, so that they could be implemented, taking into consideration the party ideology, history and the traditional electorate
- *competition:* identification of the weaknesses of the competitive parties and according to this, building comparative advantages and building wider front by development and maintenance of cooperation with the possible partners
- *support:* development of certain product aspects intended for specific market segments

According to Lees-Marshment, market-oriented parties are classified on parties oriented towards sale and parties oriented towards a product [16]. Parties oriented towards sale change the production depending on the requests for surveillance, unlike the parties that are product oriented and insist on the product, the ideas and the attitudes they consider are best transferred, but also believe that

by time and with the real communication strategy, they will get the necessary support.

Although political marketing is used in the work of political parties for a long time, in the last couple of decades, one can notice increase of the importance given to them and accordingly, increase of the influence it has. Some authors notice that political marketing from communicological instrument for conducting the electoral campaign turned into a reference for making decisions and conducting the politics, based on the results from the researches of the public opinion (Menon, 2008). According to some analysts, the change of the importance of political marketing is due to the need of political parties and politicians to respond to the apathy of the electorate and the increased consumerism of the political party. The practical use of the tools of political marketing should help in motivating citizens to actively participate in political life.

Although branding originates from commercial marketing, it is not new in political marketing neither. Still the importance of branding was significantly increased with the growth of the importance of political marketing and the professionalization of electoral campaigns [8]. The importance of branding was increased with the loss of membership of political parties. The parties were no longer engaged with representing of the interests of a given social group they represent, but with the average voter, which is more influenced by messages from mass media, than by interpersonal communication. To a certain point, this can be argued with the public interest which should be satisfied with the politics, at the cost of the group and personal interests. After the increased penetration of the internet and the success achieved by marketing of the electoral campaign of Obama as presidential candidate, increased number of countries started to use e-marketing as an important part of the total communication strategy of the political parties and the election candidates.

## 5 OBJECTIVES OF POLITICAL MARKETING

Starting from the entire variety of objectives which should (or may) be achieved by political marketing, such as the creation of positive or negative representation in the public in provision of legitimacy of specific governmental program, one can say that the successful political marketing is determined according to the degree of acceptance by, or persuasion of the public about the specific political action. Without excluding the imperative of the compliance of every political action with the public good in compliance with the values and principles of the democratic public, many authors when they indicate the objective of political marketing, actually they indicate the measures that lead to success of some political advertising. In this direction Foster [17] also, referring to Lees-Marshment, indicated that political marketing should respond to four objectives:

- To enable their product (the leadership, the manifest, the program of the political party) to be designed so that it will maximize the influence of voters

- Evaluation of all elements that may affect the maximization of the party influence on voters
- Development of strategy for opposing the campaigns of the electoral opponents
- Unity of the party around one goal: getting as many votes as possible at the elections

## 6 CRITICISM OF POLITICAL MARKETING

It is exactly for this reason why insisting on political marketing is subject of certain criticism. The criticism comes from two directions. When political parties use the techniques of political marketing, they are not oriented towards voters, but rather towards marketing agencies. More precisely, in communication with voters they insert another additional subject, which mediates the communication between the political entities (parties and candidates) and the voters. Still, the response to these remarks is that marketing agencies only have a role of facilitators of communication, and not mediators of the same. Namely, they are in the function of research of the needs of citizens and of proposing politics that would please them. Here comes the second and more serious remark which connects the apathy of voters with the neglecting of the new ideological orientation. Instead of the traditional ideological parties oriented to part of the electorate, that is, the segment of the society whose interests it represents, with the professionalization of campaigns and the influence of marketing agencies, parties started to address to the average voter i.e. to the entire population with the right to vote, thereby neglecting their ideological bases. It is exactly this effect of political marketing that could be interpreted as contribution for the consolidation of a homogenous society. Regardless of the interpretations of the role and the influence of political marketing in relation to the political parties and the complete political system, it is obvious that it is a functional part of the political process, which is why political parties use its services.

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