

Political Marketing

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Abstract: Political marketing is a fundamental part of political life. Presidents and prime ministers; politicians and parties; government departments and councils all use marketing in their pursuit of political goals. Political marketing also attracts public attention and debate. It has become the focus of many movies over the years such as Nayak, Satyagraha, Rajneeti which cover strategy, branding, positioning, crisis management, polling, and raise ethical issues of authenticity, targeting ethnic minorities and gender. Political marketing is evolving. Campaigns now rely on political marketing for success in elections. Without the marketing tactics they employ; their messaging would not be distributed to the voting public. As much as we might like to think we vote based on the policy each candidate puts forward before an election, the votes we (and millions of others) place are shaped by carefully targeted and highly optimized political marketing campaigns. From talk show appearances to direct mail leaflets, a wide variety of techniques are used to influence public opinion of a political party, policy or candidate.

Introduction

According to American Marketing Association, Political Marketing is “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”. As a discipline, political marketing is “the study of the processes of exchanges between political entities and their environment and amongst themselves, with particular reference to the positioning of both those entities and their communications”. Political marketing is “concerned with strategies for positioning and communications, and the methods through which these strategies may be realized, including the search for information into attitudes, awareness and response of target audiences. Political marketing strategy is about how parties, candidates and governments think and plan in order to achieve their goals. It requires consideration of many different factors such as the nature of the market, history, culture, governance, stakeholders, competitors, resources and goals. It includes targeting, positioning strategies, attack and defense strategies, sales and market orientations, populist strategies, strategy and the environment, measuring and implementing strategy. Political marketing is most commonly associated with efforts to win an election, but if a politician wins power, they need to deliver if they want to implement promised changes and maintain public support. Citizens now want to see tangible political outcomes. Delivery marketing is not easy in government – either to achieve in its own right or to get credit from voters for that achievement. It includes delivery challenges (the constraints of government and public perceptions of delivery); managing expectations pre-election; making delivery happen in power (through legislation, system changes and working with the bureaucracy); managing problems in delivery and communicating progress and success.

Political market research involves a wide range of qualitative and quantitative, formal and informal methods for candidates, parties and governments to understand the nature of the political marketplace. Such market research is used to understand the attitudes, behavior, needs and wants of the public and other key stakeholders and then inform decisions about strategy, creation of the brand, policies, internal political marketing within organizations, and communication of positions with the view to inform, educate, persuade, change and reinforce existing views. Political market research (PMR) includes quantitative forms of research such as polling, surveys, segmentation (including voter profiling), big data (analytical and experimental marketing); and qualitative forms such as focus groups, co-creation and deliberative research; opposition, candidate and policy research; and informal tools including global knowledge transfer and use of public records and data. Political Branding is about how a political organization or individual is perceived overall by the public. A political brand is the overarching feeling, impression, association or image the public has towards a politician, political organization, or nation. Political branding helps the party or candidate to help change or maintain reputation and support, create a feeling of identity with the party or its candidates and create a trusting relationship between political elites and consumers. It helps political consumers understand more quickly what a party or candidates is about; and distinguish a candidate or party from the competition. Internal political marketing covers the organization of political marketing – the structure, organization, resourcing and staffing of offices in parties, campaigns and parliament or government; the organization and involvement of volunteers and members on the ground; and the implementation of product change and branding. Internal political marketing includes understanding volunteer demands, creating volunteer-friendly organizations, communicating with members and viewing volunteers as part-time political marketers; creating unity; relationship marketing within political parties and campaigns; fundraising; managing political marketing staff and resources. Political organizations and politicians use marketing communications all the time to achieve a wide range of goals, including improving the reputation of a government, launching a new

brand, communicating a message, countering negative attacks from the opposition, educating voters, placing an issue on the agenda and increasing support for a politician or policy. Marketing helps to ensure that politicians understand who they should communicate with, when, on what topic and how; i.e. that communications are conducted strategically. Political marketing communication is rapidly developing to become more interactive and to build relationships, holding the prospect of lifting the citizen from passive consumer to active participant in the communication process and enhancing the public sphere. Communication becomes more about relationship building than product selling; and about maintaining or enhancing support in government instead of just getting votes in the first place. It includes e-marketing; public relations; interactive and responsive leadership communication; voter responsibility communication and reputation management in government. Political consulting, beyond the self-evident definition of consulting in political matters, refers to a specific management consulting industry which has grown up around advising and assisting campaigns. Political consultants act as public relations specialists, salespeople and managers. By using many forms of media, including advertising, and press releases, political consultants make voters aware of their candidates' party platform.

Marketing and Political Marketing

Political marketing is the process by which political candidates and ideas are directed at the voters in order to satisfy their political needs and thus gain their support for the candidate and ideas in question. A cursory comparison between marketing of goods and services, and marketing of political candidates would readily point up at least one common concept promotion. Clearly there is quite extensive use of media by the seller and the candidate for the purposes of informing, reminding, as well as changing attitudes and behavior. Possibly, such a comparison would also indicate that both marketing of goods and services, and marketing of political candidates utilize similar tools such as market research, and various statistical and computer techniques in studying the market. Although these points are essentially correct, they denote only a few of the similarities between marketing and political marketing. Even the terminology that specialists of political campaigns use is basically a marketing terminology.

Similarities of Concepts between Marketing and Political Marketing:

1. Both marketing and political marketing include three main elements: sellers, products, and buyers. Marketing is a process by which sellers offer the buyers products and services in return for something of value (usually money). The same process takes place in political marketing, whereby the candidates offer the voters products or ideas such as "economic prosperity," or "safe society," in return for their votes and support in the campaign period and thereafter.
2. The core of both marketing and political marketing are the consumers. Without consumers, the marketer of economic goods and services does not have a market, and without voters the political marketer does not have a campaign. Because both marketers need consumers to survive, the concept of consumer behavior or voter behavior becomes a focal point of marketing and political marketing, respectively.
3. Both marketing and political marketing utilize the concepts of market segmentation and target groups to increase sales and votes, respectively. Market segmentation is the process by which consumers and potential consumers of the product are distinguished along one or more variables so as to create homogeneous groups, and select some of them as target groups in order to offer a satisfactory product mix, and achieve the company's goals (e.g.: profit, growth, market share).
4. The image concept is not only shared by marketing of goods and services, and marketing of political candidates, but rather is a concept common to many social political candidates.
5. When measured by the degree of attachment to the brand (as indicated by repeated purchase or brand attitude), and related to such consumer's characteristics as age, income, race, personality, etc., brand loyalty becomes equivalent to the concept of party loyalty of political marketing. Furthermore, the concepts of brand loyalty and party loyalty have been utilized as a baseline for promotion strategy for the product and the candidate. Accordingly, the first step of such promotion strategy is to distinguish between voters who are loyal to the party and swing voters and hence design a different promotion mix for each of the two main groups.
6. Both product marketing and political marketing place great importance on the series of integrated activities and research that take part in the process of developing a product that will satisfy the target consumers and voters, respectively. In the case of consumer products, product development is a process through which a consumer-satisfying parcel of ingredients, quality, brand, package, etc., is created. Similarly, the process of developing a product in the political market is one of creating a parcel encompassing a candidate, issues, party, and the like, which will satisfy the target voters.

7. Essentially a part of the product development process, the product concept includes the central idea(s) which serves as the core of the product in the target group's mind. This concept is shared by marketing and political marketing. Thus, an economic product such as a car might be planned and developed to convey "economy" and "dependability," while a candidate might wish to convey "healthy economy" and "zero corruption".
8. In both cases, the product's and the candidate's "location" in the perceptual map of consumers and the voters relative to the location of the competitors is to be determined, planned, and promoted so as to increase consumer and voter preference of the product and the candidate in question. In addition, products and candidates utilize the same research technique in determining and planning their positions in the market in relation to their competitors, namely multidimensional scaling.
9. Both marketing of economic products and services, and the marketing of political candidates make frequent use of market research or public opinion polling for the purposes of measuring product performance, identifying potential consumers, and detecting and solving problems. In doing so, market research and opinion research use similar methods of data collection (panels, interviews, questionnaires). In fact, because rulers and politicians have been very sensitive to public opinion throughout history, it seems that early public opinion gathering techniques were developed before market research, and therefore the latter seems to have followed the-former not the contrary.
10. A technique used in the process of product development and product positioning, concept testing refers to the procedure which is designed to discover consumer reactions to different product concept, develop and introduce it to the market to satisfy the target consumers. Although not to the same degree of sophistication, this procedure is used by both marketing and political marketing.
11. The instrumental use of communication media for the purpose of promoting economic products and political candidates is another characteristic of both marketing and political marketing. Each of these utilizes media schedules, and media mix to effectively reach its target groups.

Thus, the concept of marketing seems to be quite applicable to the area of political marketing.

Consumer and Voter Behavior

Both the voter and the consumer are viewed as individuals receiving information, and possibly seeking out information, processing this information to reach predispositions to respond, and finally responding toward the product and the candidate in question.

The components that are part of the decision process are:

1. Stimulus input variables which originate from the candidate and his party and are targeted at the voters. Such input variables may be related to the candidate's experience in politics, his style of action as a political figure, his stand on issues, and his party identification.
2. Environmental influences on the voter. These relate to such factors as social class, peer group, and family influence on the voter, as well as the influence of the voter's own personality traits, and past experience with the candidate in question.
3. Processing stimulus and environmental information to reach voting predispositions. Such processing is subject to learning and selective screening.
4. Output variables which relate to the decision how to vote, as well as to changes in perception of, and attitude toward, the candidate. One of the most powerful output variables is the voter party identification which, in a manner similar to brand loyalty, denotes an attachment to the party, and therefore also to its candidates.
5. Feedback processes.

Political marketing tactics

Becoming a political marketer isn't simple, but it's far from impossible. Bridging the gap between marketing and politics requires a deep knowledge of political systems and the marketing savvy to achieve your goals using the mainstream media. Some political marketing tactics used by candidates or parties to gain votes are:

1. **Developing a narrative:** The most important aspect of any political campaign is the narrative. The narrative is the story behind a candidate – their history, their beliefs, their personality and all of the traits and characteristics that make them worth voting for. Crafting a narrative that your voter base can relate to is one of the most important elements of running a political marketing campaign. Instead of a product or company becoming a brand, a party or political candidate becomes a marketable brand that people can relate to.
2. **Social media marketing:** Social media is one of the most effective platforms for raising awareness of political issues, encouraging people to vote, and promoting political candidates. Since social media is primarily used by young people, it's a great platform for energizing a voter demographic that's typically uninterested in mainstream politics. Political marketers use a variety of strategies to connect with potential voters using social media. These techniques range from honest and direct – such as operating an independent Facebook page – to misleading, dishonest and manipulative. One of the most effective ways to generate support for a particular candidate using social media is to building a Facebook Page for the party or candidate. This allows a political marketer to reach thousands – or, in the case of a large party – millions of potential voters using status updates, messages and event invitations. By creating viral videos and pictures, one can raise awareness of his candidate – or a hot political issue – organically.
3. **Negative campaigning:** Winning an election requires your candidate getting more votes than their closest competitor. There are two ways to achieve this: bring attention to the good things your candidate will do, and bring attention to the bad things their competitor will do. Negative campaigning is a form of political marketing that focuses on convincing voters not to vote for your candidate's competitor. The most well-known form of negative campaign is the attack advertisement – ads that talk about a candidate's record of dodgy dealings, their questionable history or their political failures. While negative campaigning might seem dirty and unsportsmanlike, it has a wide range of benefits. Since negative campaign is targeted towards those likely to vote for your competitor, it can sway these voters into changing their mind and shifting over to your candidate's side. Negative campaigning usually takes the form of television ads, newspaper columns, political debates and direct marketing. Although it can be incredibly effective when done right, negative marketing can be ineffective without the positive campaign to support it.
4. **Direct mail marketing:** Although social media and television are the best platforms for connecting with the younger generation of voters, many people still respond very well to old-fashioned direct mail marketing. Brochures, leaflets, short form manifestos and other direct mail documents are all excellent tools for persuading people in a particular geographical area to vote for a certain candidate, party or policy. Since direct mail is geographically targeted, it's an extremely powerful marketing tactic for energizing a voter base prior to a local mayoral or council election. With the right amount of leaflets, yard signs and public rallies, towns and boroughs can swing election results and give your party or candidate a significant advantage. It needs to focus on your benefits, your strategies for improving the community, and the advantages you and your party can offer over your competitors. At its heart, direct mail marketing – whether it's for a political campaign or a brand new product – is all about data.
5. **Media and public relations:** Old media platforms such as television and radio attract massive audiences, making them valuable tools in any political marketing platform. Being able to organize radio and TV appearances is one of the most important tasks of any political marketer. With the right pitch, the right person, and the right strategy, you can easily earn massive amounts of publicity for your policy, party or candidate.

Conclusion

Political marketing is a pervasive force in our lives; it influences the policies politicians pursue, the opportunities they give to people to be involved in campaigns and party organizations, the staff they employ, the way they communicate and the way they govern and lead. Political marketing is a strong area of practice, and a number of consultants who have become famous have written their own books and articles discussing their work. The broadened concept of marketing introduced by Levy and Kotler (1969) has suggested that in addition to economic products and services, the concept of marketing is applicable to the marketing of persons, organizations, and ideas. These broadened boundaries of the concept of marketing call for widening other marketing concepts whose boundaries were conventionally set to relate only to marketing of economic goods and services.

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