

Investigating the Impact of Modern Means of Political Marketing on Public Participation

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of modern means of political marketing on public participation. This is a practical research. The statistical population of the study were selected from a group of students in master's degree from Islamic Azad University. The sample included 300 students who were randomly selected. In order to collect the data, a self-made questionnaire was used. In order to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire, the ideas and opinions of researchers, academics and skilled professionals were utilized. Confirmatory factor analysis was used by LISREL software. Results from the analysis confirm the significant impact of modern means of political marketing on public participation.

Key words: Political marketing, modern means of political marketing, public participation, election

Introduction

Political marketing is similar to marketing in the business world in many ways. In business marketing the sellers send their products, services and connections (advertisement) to the market and in exchange, receive money (through the costumers' purchases), information (through marketing researches) and costumers' loyalty. In political competitions too the candidates present their promises, supports, policies and characteristics to the voters and in return, receive their votes and voluntary aids (Kotler et al., 2000). Because of this alignment in different fields of marketing, some of the concepts and tools of marketing between merchandise and services marketing and political marketing are the same and some of the principles of business marketing need adjustment to be applied in politics (Grigsby, 1997).

The issue of the comprehensive political marketing program can be a heavy burden or great responsibility that calls for collaboration between all the teams of communications, marketing and advertisement. This needs a cohesive and unified coordination and collaboration in the programs of marketing and political marketing communications program. Political marketing is a science still to be discovered and there are several aspects of it that are left untold. The fact that presidential candidates in the west use the greatest and the best marketing consultants to improve their cause and make it more effective needs further analysis. What is the responsibility of political marketing? What is the philosophy of political marketing? What can be the ingredients of political marketing? What factors should be given attention in the communications of political marketing? What are the differences between political marketing with other types of marketing?

The appearance and development of different media such as television and other means of social communication and the west's scientific approach toward the subject of elections and political affairs has clarified the importance of the existence of a mutual relation between politics and marketing. In political systems, the competition between the players of politics with the goal to reach power or effectiveness on intraparty decisions largely depends on the way they market themselves and their political, public and social activities for the public opinion. It must be noted that in politics, and especially in democratic systems, the biggest problem is the lack of

environmental trust, which in turn is affected by the high number and great complication of the political environment's elements. Therefore, evaluating one's self, the possibility to succeed or fail in reaching the designated goals and the best strategy to be elected are vague (Naeiji, 2005). Political marketing gives practical tools to face these problems to the political organizations and candidates and using the coherent framework of marketing and by adjusting the main concepts of commercial marketing gives a great help to political propagation and advertising activities that were previously incorporated through the traditional notions and tactics of political sciences in a way that they can be used in political environments and for political parties or personalities.

Theoretical foundation of the study

Political marketing and its concept

Although political marketing has a shorter history than commercial marketing, it has shown notable growth in recent years. The daily development of political marketing consulting centers, the tendency of the advertising sectors of political parties and organizations toward the professional field of political marketing and the great and increasing amount of articles and books that are composed in the field of political marketing are all signs of the bright future of this sub domain of marketing. It should be noted that political marketing is not limited to the short period when the elections take place, but it is a constant activity that continues ceaselessly during the time between two elections. Politicians like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton who ruled over the political domain of their country and even the world for years, always discussed subjects in their speeches that they stressed upon during their election campaigns (Brook, 2003). Johnson believes that more researches must be conducted to understand the activities of political parties and how the theory and techniques of marketing are applied not only in election campaigns, but also in routine affairs and activities of the political world. Future researches can be helpful in understanding the path that has led to the integration of marketing and politics and the impact that the continuation of this approach can have on political systems and societies (Johnson, 2001).

Although the marketing theory is considered to be derived from different fields, in a mutual correlation, it has affected the development of all scientific fields in management studies and more. In the field of social and non-profit marketing, the combination of the marketing theory in the political field is a relatively new phenomenon (Henneberg, 2008).

Recently, unique attention has been given to the concept of political marketing and it is considered as the forming and communicational tool of any political party. This new science is derived from communicational studies, political studies and marketing terminology and has the ability to explain and register the changes in the nature of the elections (Flinders et al., 2000). Today, election campaigns are among the most costly efforts of marketing (Gordon et al., 2012).

If political marketing was to be introduced in effect as the art of convincing, it can be said that its root dates back to the ideas of Aristotle (Flinders et al., 2009). Historical roots of political marketing are vastly mentioned in different sources. For instance, Harris believes that political marketing started at the era of Machiavelli (Harris, 2001). Wring appoints the historical development of marketing methods in the Britain to the early 20th century and introduces the United States as the actual developer of this modern science in the attached structure that he has presented (Wring, 1996). Added to explaining the way election campaigns were used in the early 60s as fields for presenting the candidates, Shama (1976) claims that Reagan in the 80s' election campaigns of the United States, started principle marketing activities in his election campaign.

Political marketing can be defined as the process of analysis, planning, incorporation and selection that are done in order to keep mutually beneficial relations between the voters and political parties to reach the political goals of the marketers. In fact, political marketing is a scientific field

that has found its framework gradually (Ediraras et al., 2011). In this respect, Hughes and Dann have stated a more universal definition of political marketing. They believe that political marketing is a set of processes for creating relationships and evaluating the voters and it manages beneficial connections for the organization and the persons of interest (Hughes and Dann, 2006).

Political marketing and political participation

These days, one of the issues facing the governments, especially those who claim to be democratic, is to attract the people to the polls and increase people's participation in order to have political and public support for a powerful presence in international domains and also applying policies. All countries follow the amount of participation in elections and increase in the number of voters with much sensitivity (Abdollah, 2009).

Increase in the citizens' public participation in processes of appointing public policies and running the affairs of the society in local, regional and national levels is one of the important coefficients in the development of democratic societies (Nader, 2004). One of the research institutions of the United Nations defines participation as "organized efforts to increase control over ordering sources and institutions in certain social conditions by the people, sectors and movements who were excluded from the domain of capability of such control till then" (Qafari, 2001). Based on this definition, all the members of the society have the right to take part in the effective decisions in their destiny. As Robert Dal states, democracy provides the opportunity for real participation (Dal, 1999). In general, public participation can be defined as the amount of the people's knowledge and tendency toward intervening and affecting public policies, running public affairs and determining their future and the future of their country collectively.

Public participation is conceptualized based on the two aspects of tendency toward participation and the act of participation. Tendency for participation is the amount of the people's interest in intervening and affecting public policies, running public affairs and determining their future and the future of their country collectively. The act of participation, on the other hand, is defined as the type and amount of people's participating behaviors in intervening and affecting public policies, running public affairs and determining their future and the future of their country collectively (Monavarian et al., 2010). It should be noted that public participation takes different forms and can be civil or political. In this research, however, political participation is dealt with.

A glance at the factors preventing maximum participation helps political marketers to utilize means of political marketing in a proper way to eliminate these barriers with better knowledge. On the other hand, participation in election processes is not limited to only voting. In fact, political participation is derived from freedom of expression, having the opportunity to run an election campaign, the opportunity to be elected and the chance to take charge of the affairs in different levels of the government (United Nations, 2005).

Pippa Norris, in rating political participation and the voters' behavior for determining political participation presents three theories on a micro level: the resources theory, the motivation theory and the demographic theory. In the resources theory, it is believed that people with more resources show higher levels of participation. These resources can be material or spiritual, but as much as the resources available to the people increases, the possibility of their participation also increases. Among the most important effective resources on participation, education, income, having free time, connections and organizational skills can be mentioned. In the motivation theory, it is believed that although the existence of resources facilitates citizens' participation, if citizens did not have the needed motivation to participate, they will not. This motivation can be material or spiritual. For instance, interest to politics, sense of effectiveness, feeling responsible, political trust and the

people's political values are some of these motivations. In other words, participation guarantees the creation or maintenance of trust, commitment and motivation (Hassani Kakhaki & Zahedi, 2012).

In the theory of demographic characteristics, the most important most basic effective factor on the citizens' participation are demographic factors like age, gender, race, geography and the likes (Abdollah, 2009). With attention to Pippa Norris's model it can be said that the marketers, in order to optimally use means of political marketing for increasing public participation, should pay attention to the demographic theory, motivation theory and resources theory, respectively and they should prioritize demographic factors over motivation factors, and motivation factors over making more resources available for the voters.

Means of political marketing

Traditional means of political marketing

Using famous personalities: It means using people who can transport some of their credit, fame and popularity to political organizations or personalities.

Comparative advertisement: Here, the candidate stresses on his or her own stronger points and the weaknesses of the rival candidate.

Demonizing campaign plans: These are efforts to demonize the rival candidate to improve one's status in a way that puts the rivals and their fans in a defensive position.

Catching candidates red-handed: This involves pedantic analysis of the rivals' characteristics, including declared public positions, private life, military service status and their financial resources with the goals to demonize the rival's credibility.

Pre-election campaigns: These are the plans in which the period for election campaign is extended in a way that the political organization constantly has a comprehensive plan for elections campaign (Kheiri and Abbasalizade, 1998).

Modern means of political marketing

Network advertisement: This is the use of IT network infrastructures, especially the internet, to connect with the voters and also for intraparty communicational purposes.

Artificial polls: This technique involves using unscientific questionnaires for collecting incorrect data and publicly announcing them with the goal to connect to the public or collect financial aids to eliminate an artificial problem.

Video illustration: This means is defined as using illustration techniques and working on images, often using advanced graphic and animation software (Kheiri & Abbasalizade, 1998).

Debate: Debates are bilateral conversations in which each of the parties, try to predominate his or her own ideas and thoughts over the ideas and opinions of the rival party through logic and stating their reasons.

Symbolizing: It includes anything that is a representation of a kind of conscious or unconscious bond with a type of concept or vast meaning (Danaeifard, 2012).

Previous studies

Nargesian et al (2014) studied the impacts of the means of political marketing on public participation of the citizens of the city of Tehran's district 5. Results of the study show that the use of the traditional means of political marketing have inverted and meaningful impact on the voters' public participation, but the use of modern tools of political marketing has direct and significant impact on the public participation of the voters.

In their study, Kheiri and Qolipour Sangelachi (2012) have first defined political marketing and then, by stating the goals of political marketing, define and explain traditional and modern means of political marketing one by one. Then, the impact of the ten means of political marketing is

prioritized. In the end, with regard to the reduction of the public's participation and their lack of interest in participation, it is suggested that the candidates utilize means of political marketing in coordination with the conditions of the society.

In a study, Kheiri et al. (2011) analyzed the impacts of traditional means of political marketing on the voters' behaviors and then, numerically evaluated the impacts of the traditional means of political marketing. Results of this study have prioritized the impact of five different traditional means of political marketing on the voters' behavior. The thought-provoking point in this study is that in political behaviors, it cannot be decided that which act is moral and which one is immoral, but the ethics in the political behavior must be observed based on the values of that society.

In another study, Ediraras et al. (2013) considered political marketing as a winning strategy, apart from the capability to run as a candidate. Results of this paper showed that political parties can use their available resources through political marketing. This research also emphasizes the recognition of the position, state and expectations of the voters.

In addition, Kotzaivazoglou (2011) analyzes the question of the market-oriented nature of Greek parties and how the study's two marketing models (the market-oriented party and the political marketing orientation), in combination with the market's political states can explain Greece's current state. Results of this study showed that the parties should focus on the long term demands of the society that both marketing models (the market-oriented party and the political marketing orientation) emphasized. Furthermore, citizens turn their back to parties that do not live up to what they have promised. And finally, if the voters were to have a short term approach toward politics, they may prefer candidates that believe in sentimental short term policies rather than candidates with long term beneficial policies.

Ahmed et al. (2011), in another study, selected 30 samples in Gujrat, Pakistan in which many political changes were to take place in the elections by the voters through snowball sampling to analyze their mistrust by interviewing them. The results showed the reasons as the following:

- Some voters discriminate in choosing their favorite candidate.
- Candidates set the public's expectations high with their promises and they do not live up to realize them.
- Candidates have weak connections with the public.
- There are few candidates for the public to choose from.
- Because of their commitment to the supporting parties, candidates are not able to meet the public's demands.
- The candidates' personality is too weak to meet the expectations of the voters.
- Increasing awareness in the voters regarding their rights in the age of information has made them pessimistic about elections in this third-world country.

Yanas (2002), with regard to Greek voters and the impact of marketing on them, claimed that the media had great influence on Greece's electorates. According to the findings of the research, private media is seen as influential media. In the end, it seems that the idea that "participants in elections change their vote to gain interests from political parties" rules over the political domain in Greece.

Pistolos (2008), in his study, tried to discover the role of political marketing on decision-making in different parts of the electorates. It seems that in general voters of all sectors of the electorate know that the impact of political marketing is high, but they refuse to accept that they are affected by it. It seems that only polls and television commercials have different impacts.

Research hypothesis

H1: Modern means of political marketing have direct and significant impact on the voters' public participation.

Data collection tools

In this paper, the data collection tool is the questionnaire and to evaluate relations between coefficients of modern means of marketing, a 24-question researcher-designed questionnaire was used. This questionnaire evaluates modern tools in the form of five aspects of network advertisements, debates, symbolization, video illustration and artificial polls using Likert's five-choice scale. Furthermore, to evaluate the public participation coefficient, the questionnaire from the study by Monavarian et al. (2010) was used. This questionnaire evaluates the two aspects of the tendency to participate and the act of participation using Likert's five-choice scale.

Results

Here, the way the variables are distributed is presented in terms of gender:

Table 1. Variable distribution in terms of gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	189	63
Male	111	47
Total	300	100

Table 2: Results from the second grade confirmatory factor analysis (scaling model)

Variable	Question	SD	Sig.
Network advertisements	Establishing websites and weblogs by the candidates	0.63	12.35
	Establishing official and non-official websites and weblogs by the fans, parties and political associations	0.68	11.57
	Forming human chains in support of a certain candidate	0.73	12.34
	Using chat rooms for advertisement and connecting with the youth	0.59	10.28
	Publishing advertisement in popular social networks	0.62	9.82
	Sending advertisement emails in social networks, repetitively	0.60	9.57
Debates	Broadcasting the candidates' debates on national television	0.76	12.23
	Live broadcasting of the candidates' debates on national television	0.83	12.56
	Holding debates between candidates and their delegates in social gatherings, especially at universities	0.58	10.87
	Holding free tribunes in social networks	0.62	10.47
	Introducing the candidates' plans in the debates	0.48	9.24
	Using a special color	0.82	12.67
	Using a special symbol	0.78	14.76
	Transcending concepts through symbols by the candidates and their campaigns	0.80	13.75

Symbolization	Universality and collectivity of the symbol (like the "key" symbol that has a look over all the sectors of the society and can be a solution for all people)	0.67	12.35
	Connection and closeness of the candidates' discourse and characteristics to their symbol (coordination between the candidates' opinions and their symbols)	0.48	9.87
Video illustration	Airing television documentaries on candidates' private lives	0.73	10.45
	Airing television documentaries on candidates' popularity among the public	0.75	9.86
	Airing television documentaries on the political, social, economic and cultural opinions of the candidates	0.66	9.89
Artificial polls	Pre-election polls by valid institutions	0.62	9.82
	Formation of intellectual movements in support of a certain candidate	0.58	8.65
	Announcing the results of the polls in periods close to the time of the election	0.48	7.43
	Incorrect polls and invalid polls	0.43	7.45
	Pre-election polls through guiding the public opinion	0.58	7.38

As the results show, the impact of modern means of political marketing on the amount of the voters' public participation is confirmed, because the "*t*" values are all significant. Furthermore, the reliability of the models also confirmed as the ratio of chi-squared in all the models is less than 3, the amount of RMSEA is lower than 0.1 and both amounts of GFI and AGFI are bigger than 0.9 in all models.

Table 3. The results of chi-squared test

Hypothesis	Sig.	Path coefficient	χ^2	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI
Main	2.347	0.46	38.87	0.073	0.97	0.95

Conclusion

In this study, the main hypothesis "there is a direct significant relation between modern means of political marketing and public participation" was confirmed. The need for tools that have the most effectiveness in the least possible time as well as the tangibility of these tools for most members of the society necessitates the further utilization of these tools by the candidates and parties and they increase the public's tendency for participating in the elections. Since the repliers of this research are mostly from the youth, it can be expected that network tools are the most practical and most effective advertisement tools of political marketing. It is suggested that with regard to the young society of the country and their easy access to and great consumption of social networks, the candidates and parties use these tools more often. Furthermore, debates, symbols and campaign slogans can greatly affect the results of the elections. It is worth noting that the debaters must nourish the culture of debate and use of symbols and campaign slogans in themselves and by patience and observing the country's interest, avoid seeking victory at any price. In political systems, the competition between the players of politics with the goal to reach power or effectiveness on intraparty decisions largely depends on the way they market themselves and their political, public

and social activities for the public opinion. In addition, in politics, especially in democratic systems, the biggest problem is the lack of environmental trust, which in turn is affected by the high number and great complication of the political environment's elements. Therefore, evaluating one's self, the possibility to succeed or fail in reaching the designated goals and the best strategy to be elected are vague. Political marketing gives practical tools to face these problems to the political organizations and candidates and using the coherent framework of marketing and by adjusting the main concepts of commercial marketing gives a great help to political propagation and advertising activities that were previously incorporated through the traditional notions and tactics of political sciences in a way that they can be used in political environments and for political parties or personalities.

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