

POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND POLITICAL MARKETING

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Political Marketing

Marketing as “a managerial process concerned with understanding and predicting the needs and wants of key audiences and locating mutually satisfactory solutions (Kotler, 1969)

“The very essence of a candidate’s interface with the voter is a marketing one, and always has been”
(Kotler, 1975, p. 761)

- ▣ Founded on the rational (economic) theory of voter behaviour and political participation
- ▣ Views markets as being selected by those in government or seeking office
- ▣ Exchange as ‘Voting’ or ‘Investment of Hope’

The potential of political marketing

- ▣ Engendering trust and commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994)
- ▣ Relationship Marketing (Gronroos, 1989; Johansen, 2012)
- ▣ Social contract theory and mutual trust (Firat et al, 1995)

The dialectic tensions in political marketing

- ▣ Marketing is applied reactively (and retrospectively) rather than proscriptively
- ▣ Research tends to describe rather than building new theories for political marketing
- ▣ Synergies (rather than divergences) between marketing and political strategy are highlighted to build the discipline
- ▣ Reduces politics to being market-led, so ignoring theories of democracy, deliberation and broader participatory mechanisms

Practical Critiques

- ▣ Economics introduced into politics
 - Product design hinged around key voter segments
 - Campaigns targeted at mobilising key voter segments
 - Leads to exclusion
- ▣ Relational paradigm more that of a one-night stand than a marriage (Bannon, 2005)

Political Public Relations

“the management process by which an organisation or actor seeks to influence and establish, build and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals” (Stromback & Kioussis, 2011)

Advantages for understanding politics

- ▣ Publics are, markets are chosen
- ▣ Enhancing mutual benefit closer to theories of democratic representations
- ▣ Democratic Deliberation recognised in excellence model of communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984)
- ▣ Builds strong relationships which underpin loyalty and trust
- ▣ Reputation management long-term and not simply about winning a campaign

Marketing Paradigms

- ▣ Transactional
 - Prevalent in interpretations of politics
 - Selling
- ▣ Relational
 - Applied to party-systems and the retention of membership
- ▣ Experiential
 - Links to the 'experience' of the contest
 - Activism, Belonging and Participation

Should marketing be the dominant paradigm in politics?

- ▣ IMC versus IC
 - Sell to voters?
 - Communicate with publics?
- ▣ MPR versus CPR
 - Short-termism v Relational/Reputation Management
 - One night stand v Marriage

Concluding thoughts

- ▣ PR highlights the gaps in political marketing
- ▣ Shows how the description of political practice has led to a short-termist, transactional model to be the dominant discourse
- ▣ PR offers a strategic perspective, long-term, focusing on engagement, complementing the use of marketing