

Chapter 1

The Globalization of Political Marketing: An Introduction

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Marketing developed out of the need to have a communication channel between business firms and their customers: customers should be made aware of the products currently available, and business firms able to persuade the customers of the comparative advantages of their products over those of their competitors (Mauser, 1983: 4). In 1960, the American Marketing Association took the official position that marketing is the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user. The association thus considered marketing merely as a business discipline, whereas others pronounced that marketing should not remain restricted to business functions.

Broadening the spheres of marketing

Kotler and Levy (1969), for example, pointed out that classical marketing tools could also be used in areas other than business, and called for the expansion of marketing to embrace non-commercial entities, such as police, churches and public schools. In their article entitled 'Broadening the Concept of Marketing,' they point out that 'one of the most striking trends in the United States is the increasing amount of society's work being performed by organizations other than business firms' (Kotler and Levy, 1969: 10). Given this dramatic increase and the fact that all these organizations perform classical business functions, such as the production of services and goods, marketing activities should no longer be a function peculiar to business firms. The authors refer to the police department of a major US city, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the public schools in Oklahoma City as examples, illustrating the need for a broader definition of what marketing comprises. In all these cases, the adoption of classical business marketing strategies improved the relationship between the organizations and the public. The police department, for instance, concerned with the poor image it had among an important segment of its population, developed a campaign to polish its image. Citizens were given the opportunity to tour the police department and find out more about the daily operations, including the crime laboratories, police lineups, and cells. The new director of the Metropolitan Museum, confronted with stagnant numbers of visitors, 'broadened the museum's appeal through sponsoring

contemporary art shows and “happenings.” Moreover, state schools in Oklahoma City resorted to television programming to make the public aware of their important function in society and to prevent a deterioration of facilities and exodus of teachers (Kotler and Levy, 1969: 11).

This new marketing concept should also include the marketing of ideas and individuals, which caused resistance from other theorists, such as David J Luck, who considered any expansion of marketing techniques into domains other than business as evil. They believed that only business firms ‘sell’ products: churches do not sell religions and political parties do not sell specific services ‘unless corruptly committing illegal acts’ (Luck, 1969: 54).

Notwithstanding, Kotler continued to speak out for a broader definition of marketing and in 1972 formulated his ‘generic concept of marketing,’ according to which ‘marketing is specifically concerned with how transactions are created, stimulated, facilitated and valued’ (Kotler, 1972: 49). Since transactions are seen here as exchanges of values between two parties, the domain of marketing is all encompassing. It is not only confined to business firms, but also includes the marketing of ideas, people, and places (Mauser, 1983: 5).

In conventional business marketing, there is a set of tools a business firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market. These tools are usually classified into four broad groups called the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. A mix of the four Ps should maximize the profit. From a consumer’s view, each of the four marketing tools is designed to deliver a customer benefit that fits to their four Cs: customer solution, customer cost, convenience, and communication. In political marketing, the four Ps and Cs exist, too. The product includes promises and favors conveyed by political parties or political candidates. The price is electoral support, and the voter is the customer. The promotion plan includes advertising, rallies, TV debates, flyers, billboards, door-to-door canvassing, and other campaign activities (see Figure 1.1).

According to Kotler (1982), conventional campaigning is merely the art of attracting voters by intuition, whereas political marketing is science in action. It developed from an art to partial science because of the substantial growth of improved marketing research, sales analyses and marketing organizations, and their resulting attraction to the political domain. Popular books, such as White’s *The Making of a President 1960*, and scholarly research noting the marketing character of election campaigning, such as those carried out by Kelly (1956), Glick (1967) and Nimmo (1970) further contributed to the growth of political marketing (Kotler, 1982: 461–2).

Over the last 30 years, a new industry focusing on political marketing has emerged. At the end of the 1990s, this new industry was estimated to have employed some 7,000 people who worked for a living on campaigns. For instance, the American Association of Political Consultants claimed at that time to have had over 800 active members who handled campaign businesses worth more than US\$1 billion a year (Scammell, 1998: 257).

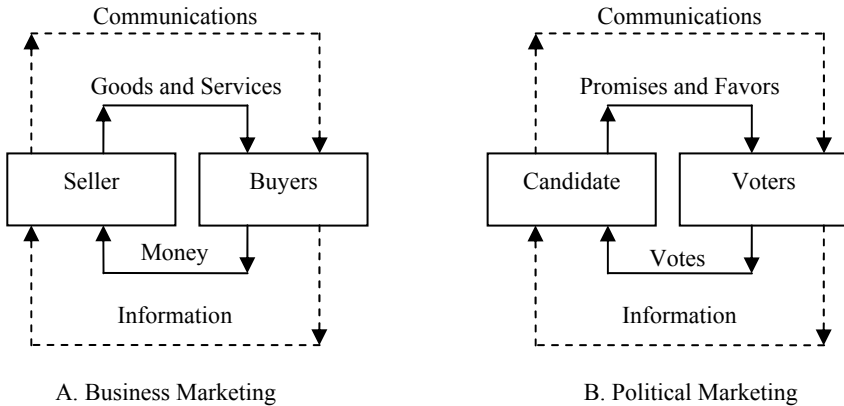


Figure 1.1 Business marketing and political marketing compared¹

Growing competition and the search for new markets led to the involvement of the US consultancy industry in electoral campaigns outside the United States. Latin America, Europe, and Asia have already become profitable markets for them. The true extent of US global involvement is difficult to elaborate, because clients frequently prefer secrecy for fear of a damaging perception that their campaigns are run by Americans (Scammel, 1998).

There is, however, substantial proof that US political consultants have designed electoral campaigns all over the world. The *Global Political Consultancy Survey (1998-2000)*, for instance, shows that 57 percent of the top US political consultants offered their services to foreign institutions in the 1990s. Two thirds of these consultants were engaged in consultancy activities in more than one geographic region. Latin America was the most important foreign market for the US consultancy industry. About 64 percent of the top US consultants involved in foreign electoral campaigns worked there. The second important market was Europe (90 percent), followed by post-communist countries (59 percent). The least important but still profitable markets were in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (28 percent) (Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 45–6).

Tough competition, especially in the Latin American market, led to the paradoxical situation that each of the top candidates sought assistance from different US consultants. In the 1988 presidential race in Honduras, for example, James Carville designed Carlos Flores' electoral campaign, whereas Dick Morris was Nora de Melgar's consultant. Another example is the 2000 Mexican presidential election. Similar situations occurred in other markets. In the 1999 parliamentary election in Israel, James Carville, Bob Shrum and Stan Greenberg advised Barak,

¹ Philip Kotler (1975), 'Overview of Political Candidate Marketing,' *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 2, p. 763.

whereas Arthur Finkelstein advised Benjamin Netanyahu. Two years later, Stan Greenberg worked for Rutelli and Frank Luntz for Berlusconi (Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 43–4). Presidential and parliamentary electoral campaigns are only part of the services offered by US consultants. European consultancy firms, for example, have also requested ‘some tactical advice’ (Bowler and Farrell, 2000: 166).

Although US consultants have successfully entered the global market, they do not have a monopoly. European and transnational consultancy firms have already entered the market and drastically increased their market shares over the last 15 years. DA Conseils, Euro-RSCG and Mediatique International are some examples. German experts, such as Harry Walter, Volker Riegger, Peter Radunski, Dutch consultant Jacques Monasch, and his French colleague Jacques Seguela have been advising numerous political parties and leaders in post-communist countries and South Africa (Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 52). Saatchi & Saatchi is another example of a transnational company based in Europe that has successfully formulated campaign strategies around the world. The agency was the first to be appointed by a political party in the UK to advise on electoral campaigns. The 1979 electoral campaign of the Conservatives was strongly influenced by the advertising agency: ‘Saatchi’s expertise in analyzing qualitative surveys ensured their involvement in the political machinery to a degree unprecedented for an advertising agency in Britain’ (Scammell, 1996: 125). After the 1979 success, other political parties and leaders, such as Boris Yeltsin and Ernesto Pérez Balladares, became their clients.

Apart from the rapid growth of the political consultancy industry, another globally observable development became the subject of international scholarly research in the 1990s. The so-called Americanization of electoral campaigns emerged as a new and promising research area. A growing number of scholars concluded that more and more electoral campaigns in liberal democracies resembled those of the US. Comparative research by Bowler and Farrell (1992), Farrell (1996), Butler and Ranney (1992) and others seemed to prove the existence of such a global phenomenon. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995: 77) wrote:

American-style ‘video politics’ seems to have emerged as something of a role model for political communicators in other liberal democracies. Some of the key features of political communication in the United States—such as the establishment of television as the primary site on which election campaigns are conducted; a preoccupation with ‘image-making’ as a crucial political activity; the tailoring of activity by politicians to fit in with, and hence be picked up by, the media; evolving styles and ground rules of supposedly effective political advertising—all these have become an American political export around the world.

But to what extent has the global involvement of foreign consultants affected electoral campaigning? The worldwide proliferation of the new media and money-driven form of electoral campaigning is partly seen as the result of modernization processes and partly considered as the consequence of a transnational diffusion and implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning.

Modernization theorists claim that structural changes at the macro-level (changing media, political and social structures) have caused adaptive behavior at the micro level (parties, candidates, and journalists), 'resulting in gradual modifications of traditional styles and strategies of political communications' (Plasser and Plasser, 2002: 17). Blumler (1990), on the other hand, argues that the globalization of US-style campaign techniques is primarily the result of a general modernization of the publicity process, which he defines as 'a competitive struggle to influence and control popular perceptions of key political events and issues through the major mass media' (Blumler, 1990: 103). The United States took the lead in the modernization of the publicity process. It, thus, first gained knowledge about political marketing and its application in liberal democracies, and naturally became a role model.

Various institutional differences in areas such as commercial broadcasting, electoral laws, and party system slowed down the modern publicity process in other liberal democracies. Commercial broadcasting with a multitude of stations, for instance, has a long tradition in the United States, whereas it was not introduced in most European countries before the 1980s (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 1995; Negrine, 1994). Moreover, the utilization of mass media for campaign purposes has always been strictly limited or even prohibited in European democracies, whereas a candidate's financial resources seem to have been the only restriction in US elections. Another important difference lies in the electoral system. With the exception of the UK, France and to some extent Italy, most European democracies exclusively use proportional representation as the electoral formula to elect parliament members. Thus, individual candidates play a minor or even neglected role in election campaigning, which in turn leaves the campaign strategy almost entirely to be decided by the party and makes campaigns such as those found in the US unnecessary. Moreover, political parties in Europe generally differ from those in the US as far as their organizational structure is concerned. For a long time, European political parties tended to be deeply rooted in almost all parts of society, even to the extent of virtually monopolizing the social life of their members. Ware (1987: 118) noted that in 'twentieth-century Europe the centralized party, with local branches legally subservient to the center with dues paying members [...] became the dominant form of organization.' American political parties, on the other hand, were 'nothing more than coalitions of local party elites.'

The globally observed changes in electoral campaigning (or Americanization) are thus rather seen as a process of modernization and professionalization than as a consequence of the expanding consultancy industry (Kavanagh, 1996). Supporters of the transnational diffusion theory, however, focus 'on the micro-level of entrepreneurial actors, exporting their strategic know-how to foreign contexts by supply- or demand-driven consultancy activities, thus changing and modifying the campaign practice in the respective countries' (Plasser and Plasser, 2002: 17). There are two common models of the transnational diffusion: the shopping model and the adoption model. The first is more widespread and leads to a hybridization of electoral campaigns. Under the shopping model, 'certain techniques and organizational routines of professional campaigning practice are imported from the United States and are modified and implemented taking the national context of

political competition into account' (Plasser, Scheucher and Senft, 1999: 105). US-style campaigning is only supplementary to the indigenous set of electoral campaign techniques and strategies. The adoption model has more far reaching consequences on future electoral campaigns around the world. Why? Because the adoption model aims at a gradual phase-out of indigenous and traditional campaign techniques and strategies and their substitution by capital-intensive, media- and consultant-driven campaign practices (Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 39). However, a full implementation of US-style campaigning seems unlikely in most countries because of existing legal and cultural barriers, such as election laws, electoral system, media system, and traditions.

But what has influenced the observed global changes more: modernization or the transnational diffusion? The role each of these two factors played in shaping electoral campaigns differs from country to country. Neither of these two factors has alone caused the proliferation of US-style campaigning. Even in the United States, societal, political and technological developments encouraged the political domain to explore new ways of attracting voters, and at the same time entrepreneurial actors at the micro level thought about extending their services to areas outside their original domain. Kotler's 'generic concept of marketing' helped to open the theoretical barriers. In traditional European democracies a similar development occurred. Extensive research on the responses of political parties to changes at the micro level in traditional Western democracies seems to show that the proliferation of a new media-oriented form of campaigning was mainly caused by changes at the micro-level. The involvement of local and foreign entrepreneurial actors only served as a lubricant. To put it differently, societal changes in traditional European democracies forced political parties to adopt new ways of attracting voters or perish. For example, during the last two decades of the twentieth century, there was a decline in party identification among the electorate. Parties were confronted with a significant decrease in the number of 'iron votes,' a decrease in membership and a decrease in their ability to mobilize their members (Dalton, 1996; Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995). Moreover, previously strong party systems, such as those of Sweden, Germany, and Austria, had been eroding since the early 1980s (Katz and Mair, 1994). Whereas socio-demographic characteristics and socio-cultural cleavages had been the most reliable indicators for party preferences, new conflicts and value orientations made predictions on the electorate's voting behavior a difficult task to undertake and the increasing number of volatile voters the most decisive factor in determining the outcome of elections. Under these circumstances, US-style campaign techniques were a feasible option. What if there had not been such dramatic societal changes? Would US-style campaigning have been attractive to European political parties? It probably would have, but to a much lesser extent.

Are modernization processes also the driving force behind the proliferation of US-style campaign techniques in new and emerging democracies? The answer to this question is country specific, and largely depends on the existing environment in the pre-democratizing era. Limited elections, a deeply rooted election culture, a fairly developed media system, and economic prosperity probably lead to a hybridization

of US-style campaigning that is mainly driven by social and political changes. Third-world democracies, on the other hand, are more likely victims of the donor-driven involvement of overseas consultants. Modernization processes will probably play a neglecting role in bringing about US-style electoral campaigns there.

Political marketing in East and Southeast Asia

Comparatively little research has been done on electoral campaigning in East and Southeast Asia. This is not only true for the region's oldest democracy, Japan, but also for its newest democracies, South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines, and emerging ones, such as Malaysia. The language barrier is an often cited reason but certainly not the most important. A more significant problem is the fact that most foreign and local scholars have concentrated their work on issues related to democratization, such as constitutions, electoral systems, corruption, and independent media. Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies hardly exist. Local political scientists see in political communication something that is outside their discipline and professors of communication regard communication studies as something being related to business rather than politics. Even if there were local publications on electoral campaigning available, they would be in the local language and thus hardly accessible to foreign scholars.

This book is an attempt to give international researchers an inside view of how electoral campaigning has changed over the last decades in Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The last chapter is a comparative analysis of the driving forces behind the changes in electoral campaigning in East and Southeast Asia, the transnational diffusion and implementation of US electoral concepts and strategies, and the future directions of electoral campaigns in the region. Is there an Asian style of campaigning? This question should be answered, too.

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