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Voter Segmentation and Candidate Positioning

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The political systems in operation around the world are different. For example, whereas a preferential party-centered system operates in Australia, a "first past the post," candidate-centered system operates in the United States. As a result, it is likely that certain marketing techniques will be more appropriate than others for use in political campaigns in different countries. The literature comparing electoral systems, their political effects, and the marketing implications is relatively sparse. The differences that exist between electoral systems and their consequences for voting behavior have considerable implications for the type of approach that party strategists take when devising their campaigns (Farrell, 1996; Granberg & Holmberg, 1995).

Scammell (1997) suggests that the factors dictating whether campaign techniques used in one country can be used in another are the electoral system and structure of party competition, whether the campaigning is candidate centered or party centered, the structure of regulation, restrictions on media and paid advertising, the structure of the media, and the strengths and distinctiveness of the national cultures. Although this chapter is written from a general perspective, readers should understand that adjustments should be made for cultural, infrastructural, electoral, and political peculiarities when devising voter segmentation bases and candidate and party strategies. Whereas there are a variety of publics with which the candidate or political party has to be concerned (see Kotler & Kotler, 1981; Sweeney, 1995), this chapter focuses on perhaps the most important group of all—the voters.

The importance of the voters in an election campaign is paramount because ultimately it is the voters who cast their choices with their ballots. Usually, certain groups of voters are disproportionately more important than others in the campaign. For example, for the U.K. political parties to gain a seat, they must

change a seat's allegiance (i.e. the overall partisanship of a particular constituency);[1] they should communicate with those voters that are most likely to change their votes. Thus, in a Liberal Democratic Party seat where the Labour Party is the main opposition, strategists would be keen to encourage Labour supporters to vote for the Liberal Democrats while also attempting to gain tactical votes[2] from the Conservative Party supporters by encouraging them to vote Liberal Democrat because they would not want the Labour Party to gain the seat. Such tactical voting does not tend to occur in a dominant two-party system because there is no alternative for whom to vote. But although this has tended to be the case in the United States in the past (because it has had a two-party system), there are now opportunities for tactical voting with the increase in the standing of third-party candidates (e.g., Ross Perot).

One of the most important types of voter in elections, constantly referred to in both academic and newspaper articles, is the floating voter. The floating voter can be regarded as a voter who is unsure for which candidate or party to vote. Generally, this voter is either an independent, someone who has not previously voted (for age or other reasons), a voter considering changing his or her choice, or a voter who does not know for which candidate or party to vote. In the United States, split-ticket voters[3] would be an ideal category of voters to target (because they also demonstrate less party loyalty), but this category of voters is very difficult to target, and it has been argued that these voters have no specific demographic profile (Kitchens & Powell, 1994).

Hayes and McAllister (1996) state, "From a marketing perspective, floating voters could be considered individuals with no brand loyalty" (p. 139). They suggest that floating voters tend to be less politically aware and, therefore, more difficult to communicate with, and they argue that those voters in the middle of the ideological spectrum (e.g., where far left is communist and far right is fascist) are more knowledgeable voters who might be a better segment to target. Converse (1962) demonstrates that less politically aware voters are just as hard to convert as those voters who are knowledgeable and committed.

Thus, segmentation of voters becomes an important process in political marketing because the voter market is not homogeneous and different voter groups contribute more or less to different campaign outcomes. The importance of positioning a candidate or party correctly can be illustrated, from a British perspective, by Heath, Jowell, and Curtice (1985), who suggest,

> For the floating voter, there is a less close fit between [his or her] own values and . . . perceptions of where the parties stand. The floating Conservative voter was more likely to report that [he or she] lay to the left of [his or her] party, while the floating Labour voter tended to lie to the right of the Labour position. (p. 95)

This argument is supported by Himmelweit, Jaegar, Stockdale, and Stockdale (1978), who state that converts have a stronger stance on their new party's ideological position and that, as a result, political parties should attempt to convert such floaters with political messages designed to maximize this phenomenon.

Thus, in many political campaigns, because there is a need to target specific voters who are more likely to affect the outcome, political strategists should divide the electorate into a number of homogeneous segments of voters. Political strategists should determine which segments are most likely to contribute to a candidate's or party's success in the election and should position the candidate or party with these segments of voters. The basis of this chapter is to suggest how the voter market should be segmented and how parties and candidates should position themselves.

Segmentation and Positioning in Political Campaigning

The acceptance of marketing as a discipline capable of being applied in the political campaigning process has only recently taken effect in Western Europe. The use of marketing techniques has been much more prominent in U.S. presidential campaigns. For example, Dwight Eisenhower is renowned for the 1952 presidential campaign in which he sent out a number of different fund-raising letters to different groups of the population—with each letter containing different issues—and then based his subsequent voter persuasion campaign on the letter containing the issues that received the best response (in terms of donations).

The underlying process in political campaigning is the exchange of promises for votes, and this process occurs through the communication of programs, policies, and ideas in return for information (relating to these policies, ideas, and programs) from the electorate about how parties and candidates can position themselves and segment the market better. Although the exchange relationship does not fit neatly into marketing theory (Lock & Harris, 1996; O'Cass, 1996; O'Leary & Iredale, 1976; Wring, 1997), marketing techniques can be applied if they are modified accordingly.

The segmentation and positioning processes involved in political campaigning differ considerably when compared to segmentation and positioning in the commercial marketing process. The difference between the two arises from the following factors:

1. There is less information from voters than from consumers because the social stigma attached to voting is far stronger than that compared to buying a commercial product or service.

2. The amount of funding available to political parties generally is very limited; therefore, research has tended to be accorded less significance than its counterpart in commercial research. As a result, in most countries, political marketing research is limited to opinion research through questionnaires and focus groups. Some attempts are made by U.S. political consultants to segment voter populations using statistical procedures such as chi-square automatic interaction detector (CHAID), but these tend to be by the more experienced research agencies working with large campaign teams (e.g., those for presidential nominees or gubernatorial candidates).

3. Positioning a product and positioning a candidate or political party are two very different processes. Whereas successful products are positioned such that their images are clear, consistent, credible, and competitive (Jobber, 1995, p. 225), political positioning is more difficult because politicians deal with a higher level of uncertainty, as plans for government policy have a subsequent impact on the corporate environment; companies may attempt to block aspects of the policy from becoming law through commercial lobbying efforts.

4. The intangible nature of the political marketing process, and the fact that the voters' choice in the political process is more emotional, restricts the capacity for image re-creation, although when re-creation does occur, it tends to take much longer and to require more incremental changes (as with Bill Clinton between 1992 and 1996).

There is a need for parties and candidates to formulate policies based on identifying key individuals' interests and enthusiasms (O'Shaughnessy, 1987; Reid, 1988). Smith and Saunders (1990) state that the following four methods have been used for political market segmentation in the past.

Geographic. This method was used by the British Liberal Democrats in southwestern England during the 1997 British general election. Shelley and Archer (1994) point out that Clinton's strategy in the 1992 U.S. presidential election campaign was to concentrate on gaining the 270 electoral college seats necessary to become president by further concentrating on the far western states (especially California), Clinton's home state of Arkansas, and Vice President Al Gore's home state of Tennessee as well as on neighboring Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Other examples of geographic targeting include the use of age, gender, street location, and other census data. Yorke and Meehan (1986) have advocated the use of ACORN[4] as a segmentation base.

Behavioristic. Smith and Saunders (1990) cite Downs (1957), who argued that most voters would not expend a large amount of effort in learning about parties' and candidates' policies and instead would select parties only on the basis of their general propositions; this relates significantly to the fact that U.S. political strategists constantly mention the need to repeat and reinforce one single theme. Perhaps a more common behavioristic segmentation base is loyalty to a party, which can be used to target voters (when they are asked for whom they are going to vote at the next election) with canvassing techniques that can then be used to locate key voters.

Psychographic. Ahmed and Jackson (1979) suggest using this method for segmenting the electorate for the Canadian provincial elections. In their study, they used respondents' attitudes toward welfare to produce different market segments.

Demographic. Robbin (1980) states that traditional methods in political market segmentation use data such as registration statistics, regional electoral history, and census data and that these are much more useful in segmenting voters than are other methods. Hughes (1984) disagrees, arguing that geopartisan data are much

better than geodemographic data. This is likely to be the case because geopartisan data allow the strategist to make the distinctions among voters for particular political parties, which is of more direct interest.

The interactions among segmentation, positioning, and targeting are neatly described in the literature by Baer (1995), who suggests, "Candidates should form a strategy that has an overall theme (broadcast message) and maintains momentum but also effectively targets specialized groups (narrowcast message)" (p. 61). There is a need for political strategists not only to target the small groups of floating voters that can change the pattern of an election result but also to communicate with the wider audience in general. It is of little use to garner the votes of the floating voters if one cannot keep the larger body of voters that voted for the candidate previously.

To successfully market the candidate or party, political marketers should fully understand the reasons why voters have previously selected their candidate and alter the packaging of agendas and the substance of the agendas themselves so as to reflect the changing needs of the electorate. Newman and Sheth (1985) suggest that the following factors effect voter choice in U.S. elections: the issues and policies of the candidate, social imagery and the particular segments of society that support the candidate, the emotional feelings aroused by the candidate (e.g., nationalism, anger, hope), the candidate's image in terms of personality traits, current events in the domestic and international situations, personal events in the voters' lives, and epistemic issues such as the offering of something new.

Strategists should be concerned with those issues that the electorate considers to be important and how to encompass such issues within a coherent theme. To fully design a coherent competitive message, it is necessary to determine the competition within each individual voting district so that an appropriate policy platform can be designed to counteract the opposing candidates or parties. To attempt to convert supporters of other parties, political strategists need to use policies, issues, and reasoned arguments to attempt to win the battle for the minds of the voters. Often, voters support candidates or parties with whom they might not actually agree. This is illustrated graphically in Table 22.1 (Newman & Sheth (1987, p. 135). From the table, it can be clearly seen that candidates have a number of ways in which they need to communicate with their voters. These options led Newman and Sheth (1987) to suggest the following strategies when positioning a candidate.

Reinforcement strategy. This strategy is used for those voters who have voted for the right candidate for the right reasons. The intention of the strategy is to reinforce the voters' choice by communicating to them the message that they have made the right choice, and this would envisage a positive campaign such as targeting 1992 Clinton voters in the 1996 U.S. general election.

Rationalization strategy. This strategy should be used when the right candidate has been chosen for the wrong reasons. Thus, strategists need to communicate carefully with this segment of the electorate to modify these voters' attitudes

TABLE 22.1 Candidate Strategy Options

Candidate	Values	
	Right	Wrong
Right	Right candidate Right reasons	Right candidate Wrong reasons
Wrong	Wrong candidate Right reasons	Wrong candidate Wrong reasons

SOURCE: Newman and Sheth (1987, p. 135).

accordingly or, alternatively, to "connect" with them using other more convergent attitudes. In the United Kingdom, this strategy should have been used to counter the Labour Party charges against the Conservative Party that taxes had been increased 22 times despite the fact that the party previously had campaigned on a tax reduction platform; in the United States, it should have been used when Lyndon Johnson was elected president in 1964 on an anti-Vietnam War platform and subsequently escalated U.S. involvement in that area.

Inducement strategy. This strategy applies to those voters who pick the wrong candidate for the right reasons. Thus, this strategy attempts to explain to voters that their values are consistent with the candidate's or party's values. This strategy was successfully used by Tony Blair and the Labour Party by reengaging the support of the working classes (which had been taken away, to some extent, by the Conservative Party throughout the Thatcher period) in the 1997 British general election and by Clinton in the 1992 U.S. general election when he regained the support of what had been termed the "Reagan Democrats."

Confrontation strategy. This is where the wrong candidate is selected for the wrong reasons. Essentially, the voters are either picking the candidate or party because the candidate or party is the "best of a bad bunch" or are voting *against* the other parties or candidates (a combination of antivoting and tactical voting).[5] This type of strategy is best suited for a negative or comparative campaign such as that used by Perot in the 1992 U.S. presidential election or the campaign run by the Liberal Democrats in the 1997 British general election.

Once the agenda for the constituency has been developed and the political strategists have determined who needs to be contacted (having identified who the floating voters are and how they can be reached), the constituency organization must deliver its message through the various media. Locally, this is achieved using door-to-door and telephone canvassing, political literature, and local meetings. At the national level, different methods are used in the various countries around the world because there are different electoral and political laws, systems, and cultures operating.

The Political Marketing Process and Strategy Formulation

There is a strong relationship between political marketing strategy and the political product. The political marketing strategy process involves the promotion of the candidate or political party, and their associated issue and policy stances, to the electorate. Research affects this process in a number of ways. For example, Kavanagh (1995) states that polling organizations can provide political campaigns with the following relevant marketing information:

- *Election timing:* When the government has the power to determine when to hold an election,[6] polls can be used to determine when the mood is most favorable for commencement of the general election.
- *Image building:* Polls provide parties with a "snapshot" of how the voters perceive them. In the United States, pollsters conduct benchmark surveys to determine the candidate's name recognition level, the candidate's electoral strength vis-à-vis the opponents, and citizens' assessments of an incumbent officeholder's performance (Asher, 1995, p. 104).
- *Policy:* Blair has suggested setting up a "people's panel" to test the viability of future government policy. This panel would involve approximately 5,000 specialist members of the electorate who scrutinize draft government policy (Etienne, 1998). Clinton also has used polls to help in the development of government policy.
- *Tracking:* Parties and candidates can use polls to pinpoint their potential strengths and weaknesses over time. Bob Teeter was the first to set up daily interviewing of voters in 1972 (Moore, 1995, p. 198). Blakeman (1995) argues that a good tracking program allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of a candidate's own—as well as opponents'—strategies and tactics.
- *Targeting voters:* In addition to asking voters questions on issues, pollsters usually include questions to determine the demography of voters for particular parties and candidates. In the 1997 British general election, it was thought that "Worcester women"[7] represented an important target group for the Conservative Party because they were underrepresented in the previous general election and were thought to be Conservative floating voters. To some extent, in the United States, this is analogous to "soccer moms" who were identified as a target through polling.

Candidates and parties also conduct qualitative research into individuals' thoughts and values using focus groups (general discussion groups of between 8 and 12 people) and dial groups (used to measure respondents' attitudes toward candidates' television campaign advertisements in the United States). Such techniques allow strategists to build up a more detailed picture of voters' needs, desires, and wants that enhances positioning and enables the candidate or party to make more educated decisions regarding the positioning strategy.

Maarek (1995) illustrates his version of the political marketing process in Figure 22.1. Maarek states that political strategists first need to determine the "main line of the campaign" or theme. Then, it is necessary to determine what the public's opinion is, what the opposition's "standpoint" (or theme) is, and what resources are available to the campaign.

Figure 22.1. Determining the Main Line of the Campaign
SOURCE: Maarek (1995).

Figure 22.2. Political Planning Model for Local Campaigning
SOURCE: Baines, Yorke, and Lewis (1998).

Strategists consequently identify the target segments and which media need to be used to reach them before finally conducting the campaign. In this model, it is assumed that segmentation and positioning, on the national level, are the political marketing process.

The model shown in Figure 22.2 relates to the coordination of local campaigning activity by the national party to project a systematic and unified message by political parties. Thus, this process attempts to minimize the dichotomy that occurs in British general elections (and, to a lesser extent, in U.S. elections for national office), where the electorate tends to vote on party labels within a localized context.

In the model in Figure 22.2, it is suggested that political strategists collect data on individual voting districts regarding voter registration; collect census data; and conduct constituency market research into voters' attitudes, opinions, hopes, and desires to determine which individual voting districts are most liable to changing their allegiance from one candidate or party to another.

The next stage requires determination of the competition and identification of the profiles of the different segments within each of the marginal voting districts,

that is, those that are most likely to influence the overall result of the election campaign. This, then, allows the candidate or party to establish position and target the relevant supporter groups in each constituency to win the overall campaign.

Finally, the campaign planning team should conduct a postmortem examination of how and where the campaign succeeded and failed. In this model of political marketing planning, political market segmentation and positioning are influenced by competition determination, census data, constituency research, and identification of the relevant voting groups. Again, political market segmentation and positioning are crucial to the whole process.

Newman (1994, p. 12) illustrates a different notion of political marketing (Figure 22.3) by taking into account the fact that there are different candidate foci. For example, whereas one party might focus simply on its policies (product concept), another party might focus on what it feels the electorate wants (marketing concept). Yet another party might focus on getting its image across (selling concept) or simply appealing to the voters' partisan nature (party concept).
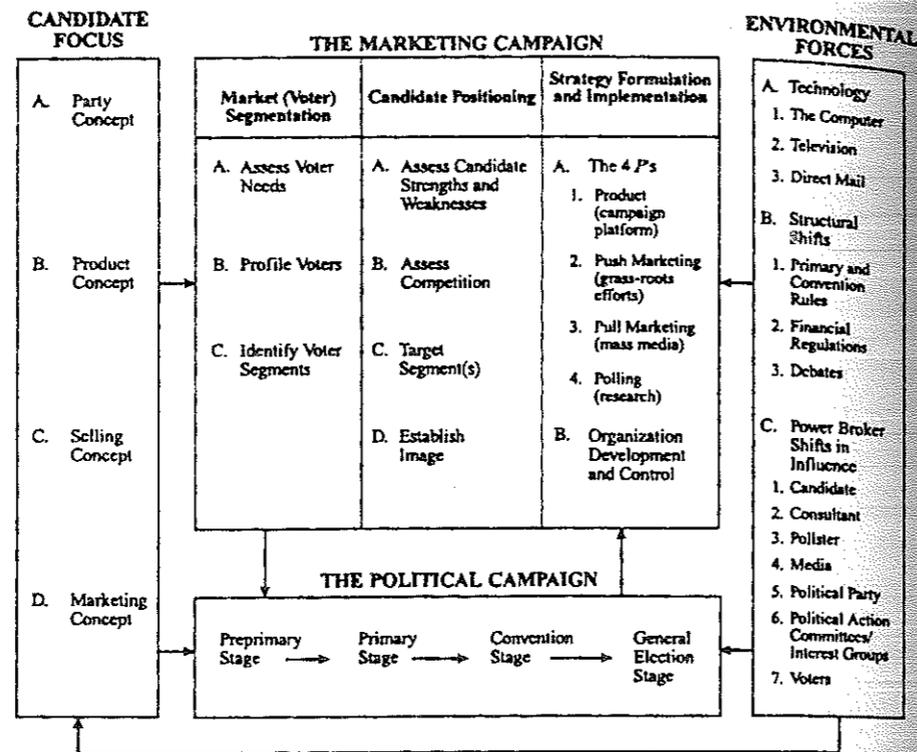
Figure 22.3. Newman's Political Marketing Process Model
SOURCE: Newman (1994).

Newman (1994) also takes into account the effects of the stages in the election campaign that are relevant to the process. For example, he argues that the market segmentation and positioning strategies for a primary campaign would be very different from those for a general election campaign. In addition, he argues that environmental forces such as technology, structural shifts in the political process, and shifts in the influence of power between political agents all affect the political marketing process. Clearly, technology has had a significant effect on segmentation and positioning because sophisticated computer applications can now be used to profile voters (e.g., using neural networks) and the issues they consider important.

The environment has a significant impact on how voters are segmented, targeted, and positioned because different rules and regulations are in force around the world. For example, in the United Kingdom, it is illegal to advertise a political party using broadcast media such as television and radio. Similarly, in France, polling is not allowed to be reported in the final week of the election. Financial regulations also may be imposed in different countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, constituencies have stringent expenditure ceilings (carrying the penalty of an election being declared null and void). As a result, some constituency work is carried out in the party's name and, therefore, comes under national party expenses (for which there are no ceilings).

The models describe different facets of positioning within the political marketing process. Nevertheless, all the models indicate that focused research should be conducted into the determination of the competition and voters' opinions and attitudes, that the electorate should be segmented, and that careful media planning needs to take place if the candidate or party is to be positioned effectively.

It is important to realize that these models are guidelines as to the basic aspects of the political campaigning process. There are aspects of marketing that are pertinent to campaigning in most countries, yet there also are cultural nuances that often must be taken into account. Baines, Newman, and Harris (1998) state that political consultants and marketers need to take account of the differences in political systems when positioning candidates and parties because there often are different factors prevailing on the conduct of political campaigns. Examples of such factors include the electoral system, the campaign organization structure (external consultant or internal party campaign executive), the funding methods available to parties (private, public, or mixed system of funding), and the extent to which candidates' and parties' messages are allowed to be disseminated.

Thus, specific aspects of media planning are different in the various countries. For example, scheduling in the United States is different from that in the United Kingdom because U.S. campaigns run over a longer time period. Similarly, the types of media (e.g., television, radio, press, billboard) available to political consultants and campaign executives in the various countries are different, but the process of positioning (outlined in the previous paragraphs) generally is the same.

Determining Positioning Strategy

The political positioning process is a determination of how best to portray a candidate or party to the relevant segments of the electorate so as to persuade the voters to vote for the candidate or party again or to switch from supporting another candidate or party.

It is important for a candidate or political party to understand its own strengths and weaknesses because this allows the strategists to determine what the candidate or party can and cannot do. Clearly, a small regional party cannot lay claim to governing the whole country because this would not be credible. It could, however, lay claim to managing the local council or other local offices. In the United States, opposition researchers are hired, not just to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition (in terms of voting records, stances on issues, inconsistency of stance, and any relevant personal details that might affect the holding of office) but also to conduct the same type of research on their own candidate. The results of this are fed into the positioning process.

Baines (1996) suggests that U.K. candidates and political parties should determine who their main competition is within each constituency because it is unlikely to mirror the national scene due to differences in partisan allegiance in different areas of the country.

TABLE 22.2 Political Market Positions, Strategies, and Examples

Position	Characteristics	Strategic Directions	Examples
Leader	Highest share Acknowledged orientation point Continuous attack	Expand total market Expand share Defend share	National Congress (India) PRI (Mexico)
Challenger	Chosen to depose leader May be several challengers	Attack leader Attack similar competitors Attack smaller competitors	Partido Popular (Spain) Labour party (United Kingdom)
Follower	Purposeful concentration on target market Imitative rather than innovative Local/regional strengths Broad line	Clone Imitate Adapt	Center party (Norway) Progressive Democrats (Ireland)
Nicher	Leader in narrowly defined market or niche Specialist appeal	Create niche Expand niche Defend niche	Les Verts (France) Yisreal Ba-Aliya (Israel)

SOURCE: Butler and Collins (1996).

Butler and Collins (1996) suggest that political parties should think pragmatically about their electoral prospects and the strategies that are adopted. For example, a "nicher" cannot hope to become leader in a short space of time. A niche party should instead expand the niche before moving into more mainstream politics such as when the Green Party won 14% of the European election vote in 1989. This vote share subsequently dropped dramatically as the major European parties imitated its policies. In this case, the Green Party failed to defend its niche. The range of strategies open to political parties after determining their competitive positions is illustrated in Table 22.2.

Once a candidate or political party has determined who its competitors are, what its own and its competitors' strengths and weaknesses are, and which competitive strategy it will adopt, it is necessary to target the appropriate segments with the appropriate message and policies.

The positioning evaluation tool in Table 22.3 illustrates how candidates and political parties can determine whether their policies should hold a position of strength within the portfolio and the extent to which those policies should be communicated on the basis of the strength of importance that voters attach to those policies and how central they are to the candidate's or party's ethos or mission.

Baines, Lewis, and Ingham (1998) argue that candidates and political parties should determine which issues are of most importance to the electorate. However, this is not to say that political parties and candidates should follow a purely populist agenda (this may be more or less possible depending on the political traditions in the voting district concerned) or that the extent to which policy

TABLE 22.3 Positioning Evaluation Tool

	High	
Environment *	Electorate's viewpoint of importance of issue	Law and order *
	Housing	Centrality to party ethos
Low	Medium	High
* Drugs	Low	* Europe

SOURCE: Adapted from Baines, Lewis, and Ingham (1998).

platforms should be modified (in terms of how much of the future government budget they have allocated to them, how much space they occupy in the manifesto, the extent to which they are being actively investigated by working parties, etc.) and the extent to which the policy platforms should be communicated (how many advertising spots or party political broadcasts and other media should be devoted to the dissemination of a specific issue) depend on the extent to which an issue is part of a candidate's or party's ethos and how important the electorate feels the issue is.

In the case of an issue that the electorate feels is important but is of low centrality to party ethos (e.g., the environment in Table 22.3), the party needs to build up the issue's agenda and hold communications constant until its agenda sufficiently represents the targeted section of the electorate's perspective. Communications can be increased at a later date, depending on the changing state of the electorate's feelings (as determined by tracking polls). With an issue such as Europe, where the electorate views the issue as relatively unimportant,[8] but where the issue was considered as highly central to the party's ethos, there is a need to reduce the policy agenda in this area while building communications until the public comes to recognize the importance of the issue from a political perspective.

The candidate's and party's aim is to move issues from the bottom left-hand sector of Table 22.3 to the top left-hand sector of the table by increasing communications surrounding the issue and increasing the issue's impact on the candidate's or party's agenda, in line with voters' expectations and needs. In Table 22.3, the axes are concerned with centrality to party ethos and the electorate's

viewpoint of importance of issue because certain issues were found to differentiate the parties (Baines, 1996). However, in systems where issues are less able to differentiate candidates or parties, positioning should occur using other axes (determined through polling and research) that allow maximum differentiation on those factors that determine voters' choice.

Candidates and political parties need to determine whether there are any issues that currently are not being covered by any political candidate's campaign. Attempting to uncover new issues that tie in with a campaign's overall theme and allow connection with the voters is the art of political campaign management and tends to be generated through focus group discussions with voters and "brainstorming" sessions.

The central tenet of the political positioning problem is the creation of a consistent image that is centered around a single theme with strongly tied-in underlying issues while the competition is attempting to undermine consistency and credibility. Thus, candidates' and political parties' campaign teams constantly attempt to perform this action through "spin-doctoring" and the use of "rapid rebuttal," where political parties send out press releases either to deny allegations made by competing parties (e.g., the party has presided over the largest decline in spending on the National Health Service for the last x number of years) or to plant stories that shed a negative light on the opposing parties. This process requires considerable computerization because voting records, press releases, manifestos, speeches, and party literature for all candidates and parties over a lengthy period all must be readily accessible.

In the United States, rebuttal tends to occur through the placement of bought advertising spots. In some cases, media consultants may anticipate that an opponent will make a certain claim and have an advertising spot already paid for and designed to deal with such a claim. This "game" between political consultants often constitutes who wins and loses in a close election.

Voter Targeting

The most traditional method of communicating with the voters is the use of political literature. "Direct mail succeeds because, unlike any other media, it can deliver a specialized message to distinctive groups, made personal through the agency of new technology and therefore engendering unique loyalties" (O'Shaughnessy & Peele, 1985, p. 56).

Owen (1992) writes that in the 1992 British general election campaign, "Labour . . . used canvass returns to target categories of voters with computer-printed letters" (p. 7). Owen does mention that this process can cause problems when people are targeted incorrectly. For example, a former Democrat voter might be targeted as a Democrat when he or she has become an Independent. In the United Kingdom, recent research suggests that only around 47% of the people receiving official government pamphlets find them very or quite useful (Marsh, 1996).

O'Shaughnessy (1987) argues that in America, "the low-involvement, high-viewing recipient is most susceptible to attitude change" (p. 61). Rust, Bajaj, and Haley (1984) state that "television viewership appears to be negatively related to voting participation, with the anomalous exception of the lowest television viewership quintile" (p. 185). Thus, it would not seem to make sense to target high-viewing members of the electorate if they do not vote. Political parties and candidates should be careful to ensure that their communicational messages are targeted to the appropriate audiences. In the United States, it is much easier to target voters because broadcasting companies have detailed demographic details of their audiences gathered through research conducted by audience research boards that help to price television advertising slots for both commercial and political advertising. U.S. consultants also advertise their candidates on cable channels, which tend to have even smaller and more highly specified populations (because they operate in smaller areas). Thus, targeting is much less of a problem in the United States than in the United Kingdom, where it tends to occur more through the use of newspaper and billboard advertising (with increasing use of direct mail).

Where candidates and parties cannot afford advertising, or where it is not allowed, they have to attempt to maximize favorable reporting about themselves on the major news network channels through earned media. In addition, they have to adopt significant grassroots efforts to ensure that their messages are disseminated by more traditional means (e.g., door-to-door canvassing, direct mail, town meetings). Most campaigns try to tie the two together so that they are mutually reinforcing. Thus, reporters are invited to join campaigns while in action.

Conclusion

Ideally, voter segmentation and candidate positioning combined represent the process in which political strategists determine who their most influential supporters are, determine how they can be reached, and devise a plan to determine how best to project the image of that candidate or party in such a manner that it is consistent with the voters' ideals, wants, and needs (where these are known by the voters themselves) and the image is consistent with the candidate's or party's ideology and previous policy statements and actions. This process is aided by marketing research techniques that enable the construction of a picture of voters' attitudes and opinions. Where the voters do not know their own ideals, wants, and needs or are incapable of communicating them (as in many burgeoning democracies), the process relies on the anticipation of these factors by political strategists and the determination of a "connection," mainly by intuition.

The electorate is communicated with through broadcast messages (generally policy propositions mainly for name recognition and voter education purposes) and through narrowcast messages (mainly for voter persuasion purposes). It is important that strategists communicate through both media with one consistent

theme. This theme helps to unite the candidate's or party's campaign team and project a consistent message that voters will remember and understand. However, different political systems have peculiar cultures, electoral systems, media structures, and electoral laws, and all of these factors may affect the voter segmentation and candidate or party positioning strategies. Despite this, the general process of positioning candidates and political parties in different countries remains the same. Strategists should pay particular attention to the environment in which they are working, and systematic research is advised so as to take the particular political market's cultural characteristics into account.

Notes

1. A constituency in the United Kingdom generally consists of approximately 70,000 voters. There currently are 659 such constituencies (seats) in the British Parliament.

2. Tactical voting is referred to as "strategic" voting in the U.S. political science literature and occurs when a voter votes for his or her second choice for a candidate to defeat the first-place candidate because this candidate has a better chance of defeating the first-place candidate than does the preferred (third-place) candidate.

3. Split-ticket voters are members of the electorate who vote for one party for one race and another party for another race because voters may be asked to make a number of choices between different public offices on the same ballot. An example of this behavior might be voting Democrat for U.S. Senate and Republican for the House of Representatives.

4. ACORN (a classification of residential neighborhoods) is a system designed by CACI Ltd. in London to classify individuals by the types of houses in which they live (using "postcode" data, similar to zip codes in United States) in terms of their lifestyles and consumer purchasing patterns.

5. The difference between antivoting and tactical voting is that the voter who is antivoting does not necessarily attempt to maximize his or her choice by supporting the party or candidate with the best chance of winning.

6. For example, in the United Kingdom, the government sets the election date.

7. The Worcester woman was a mid-1930s housewife with a couple of young children and a husband in the "C2" category of the social grading scale.

8. The data used to formulate Table 22.3 were generated from a survey conducted in April 1996. For further details, see Baines, Lewis, and Ingham (1998).

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