

### Using segmentation and targeting in communication

Communication can be varied depending on who it is aimed at – trying to communicate the same thing to everyone can be less effective. Segmentation can help parties and candidates decide on which areas to target. In 1979, the UK Conservatives segmented the market – albeit more crudely than happens now – and focused communication efforts accordingly: see Table 7.2.

Targeting can be used by smaller, new parties, as well as older, more established ones. McGough (2005) illustrated how the Irish party Sinn Féin segmented the market into six different targets in 2002, understanding their different demands and adopting a different strategy for each one, where appropriate:

- 1 North – nationalist Catholics: fanatically faithful to the party; want a socialist, thirty-two-county Republic of Ireland. The party promoted a picture of their voters as barely free from the chains of conflict and still enduring sectarianism and intimidation from various quarters.
- 2 North – Catholic community: attracted by Sinn Féin policies on demilitarisation, policing, loyalist attacks, plastic bullets and Orange parades.
- 3 Alliance and soft Ulster Unionist supporters: the party tried to build bridges to this market.
- 4 Republic of Ireland voters: very different views from the party, so Sinn Féin focused on a socialist list of policies they wanted, rather than contemplating making any concessions to competitors. The party campaigned using an alternative language focused on change and responding to discontent among working class and for the second single transferable vote (STV) of the middle classes.
- 5 Ogra Sinn Féin – the all-Ireland youth wing: building long-term links with the youth.
- 6 Irish-American/international support: careful packaging to the international market.

The Brazilian left-wing party PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party) – led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, changed its communication in the 2002 election to target female votes. Cotrim Macieira (2005) observed that Lula softened his image from a radical left-wing union leader to become more moderate, and Marisa da Silva, Lula's wife, accompanied her husband in the campaign rallies.

Baines *et al.* (2002) developed a strategic planning model for campaigning parties to improve their targeting and ensure they deploy resources most effectively to obtain maximum public support. They argue this should be done at local, not just national, level and develop a model using five factors associated with strategic marketing planning, the aim being to match organisational resources with market opportunities and threats: see Table 7.3.

Table 7.2 Targeted communication by the UK Conservatives, 1979

Target markets	Examples of communication geared to suit them
The skilled working class (C2)	Saatchi and Saatchi created posters with slogans that included the infamous 'Labour isn't working' and 'Britain's better off with the Conservatives'. One newspaper advert was entitled 'Why every trade unionist should consider voting Conservative' and appealed to traditional Labour supporters.
Women	Campaign adverts were placed in women's magazines.
First-time voters	Adverts were run in the cinema to attract support from first-time voters.
The party faithful	Thatcher's speeches appealed to traditional Conservative voters.

Table 7.3 Factors associated with political marketing planning process

Marketing planning function	Political marketing context
Market position analysis	Determine what voters think of the party, and where – opinions may vary geographically. This can include information gathering, such as identifying constituencies most likely to change; conducting market intelligence in various forms, using historical data, census statistics, constituency ranking, canvass records and constituency research. Constituency research should focus on: current level of support; types of people who support particular parties (indicating the major competition); types of people who have changed their support for a particular party since the previous general election; electorate's feelings regarding particular issues and policies; level of tactical and traditional voting; and whether or not the personal vote is significant.
Objective setting	Decide on issues and voter segments to focus on; take into account organisational resources.
Strategic alternative evaluation	Decide which segments to target communication at, and which messages to use, utilising market intelligence and also considering the stability, accessibility and substance of each segment.
Strategy implementation	Allocate resources accordingly, taking into account unpredictable finances and donations if appropriate, depending on regulations in country.
Monitoring and control	Monitor impact of strategy, as well as opposition; including after losing an election, to find out what went wrong.

Source: adapted from Baines *et al.* (2002)

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#### Discussion point 7.3

Think of examples of political communication that are clearly geared to attract target markets. How effective are they?

### Direct marketing

Direct marketing is a common part of marketing communications and includes direct mail, direct email, direct texts and any other form of communication that is sent directly to the individual, making the impact stronger. Direct marketing:

- takes the market directly to an individual consumer;
- is individual in some way;
- is interactive, providing the chance to respond;
- can take place anywhere;
- has a measurable response rate.

Direct marketing utilises data collected in market intelligence. Organisations send their direct marketing to three main types of list:

- 1 *Cold names*: targeted lists of people who have had no contact with the organisation, brought from list brokers; lists of people who have some identifiable characteristic or set of characteristics, such as those on a subscription list to a magazine.

- 2 *Warm names*: those who have already responded to the organisation or candidate campaign, a house list kept by the organisation's own database.
- 3 *Rented or swaps*: the house lists swapped with other organisations.

There are many different forms of direct marketing, all of which can be used in politics for several purposes, including: to increase support; recruit new volunteers or members; ask for donations; or get out the vote (see Sherman 1999 and Johnson 2007).

### *Direct mail*

Direct mail is any form of communication posted directly to individuals, addressed with the individual's name. It consists of an outer envelope, letter, brochure, order form and reply card or envelope. It has several key characteristics:

- 1 It reflects each recipient's individual characteristics.
- 2 It gets the recipient's attention.
- 3 It explains why they should be interested.
- 4 It encourages them to act.

Often, the recruitment package includes some sort of 'free' benefit. It is a cheaper form of advertising than TV and other mechanisms. Organisations test their direct mail to see how effective it is. They establish a control or banker, which is the one that performs the best, and new designs are tested against this.

Direct mail has been used in politics for a long time. O'Shaughnessy and Peele (1985: 115) note how it was used by previous presidential candidates, including Barry Goldwater, George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Edward Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. The UK Conservative Party used direct mail in 1997–2001 to try to boost and widen the membership using the agency Claydon Heeley International and Archibald Ingall Stretton. It profiled existing members and then bought membership lists of names for wine clubs, garden centres and rugby or cricket clubs for a direct mail recruitment drive (Lees-Marshment 2008: 208). Direct mail need not just be in paper form. In the 2005 UK election, Labour produced direct mail and DVDs for particular candidates in key seats.

### *Direct telemarketing*

Telemarketing is often used by parties and candidates utilising call centres for a range of activities, including voter persuasion, voter identification, volunteer recruitment and GOTV efforts. O'Shaughnessy and Peele (1985: 116) note how telemarketing works well in conjunction with a mailing or to approach lapsed supporters or donors: '*Americans for Reagan* in conjunction with a mailing raised seven million dollars by telephone in 1980.' The 2005 UK Conservative campaign set up call centres in the West Midlands, Yorkshire, the West Country and Kent.

The weakness of direct marketing is that each new innovation is copied by competitors and so loses its competitiveness, and the public becomes immune to the methodology after a while. Response rates are often amazingly low, although, when they ask for donations, as long as the money received overall outweighs the cost, the exercise is often deemed worthwhile. Sherman (1999: 366) cites an example from the Bill Clinton presidency after his popularity dived:

In an effort to get increased support, the firm of Malchow, Adams and Hussey was selected to handle the Democrat's direct marketing fund-raising effort. In 1995 . . . a closed-face envelope with a picture of the White House was sent to 600,000 individuals on Democratic National Committee lists. The message stressed that President Clinton said the recipient was a friend and that he or she was wanted as part of the steering committee. It was a soft call for money, with no explicit call for money until the PS at the end of the letter . . . it pulled in \$3.5 million.

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### **Discussion point 7.4**

How effective is direct marketing? How do you respond to direct marketing yourself? What new forms of direct marketing might emerge in the future?

### **Insights marketing**

Insights marketing, where communication is developed in response to understanding people's deepest values and fears, has been used in campaigning in recent elections, namely the Australian 2004, UK 2005 and New Zealand 2005 elections. The public relations firm Crosby-Textor first advised Australian Liberal Prime Minister John Howard to use insights or dog-whistle marketing – called dog-whistle because communication is devised only to be heard by the specific target market at which it is aimed. Such communication plays emotively on people's hopes and fears. Crosby-Textor advised the UK Conservatives and the New Zealand National Party, and in Australia communication focused on immigration; in the UK on crime. In the UK, their election posters adopted the slogan 'Are you thinking what we're thinking?', placed under simplified messages: 'It's not racist to impose limits on immigration', and with the use of handwriting, to connect with ordinary people (see Seawright 2005: 951; see also Gaber 2006).

### **Guerilla marketing**

To maximise message impact, guerilla marketing can be used: i.e. communication that gets attention by being unexpected and novel and 'bypassing orthodox marketing channels and methodologies' (O'Shaughnessy and Henneberg 2007: 262). Careful presentation of the leader is not confined to the western world. Egherman (2005) discussed how Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani ([www.hashemirafsanjani.ir](http://www.hashemirafsanjani.ir)) utilised guerilla marketing to market his particular presidential brand:

Jay Conrad Levinson is often called the father of guerilla marketing. He defines it this way: 'It is a body of unconventional ways of pursuing conventional goals . . .' The methods that the campaign is using are, indeed, unconventional. They are particularly unconventional for post-revolutionary Iran. The Rafsanjani campaign has employed Iran's hip youth as its army of unpaid campaign workers. They wrap themselves in Hashemi stickers, tape his poster on their backs, celebrate soccer success in his name, attend performances at the candidate's Tehran headquarters and participate in skating events. They wear Rafsanjani campaign materials like fashion accessories.

This army of hip youth may be politically apathetic in large part, but that does not really matter. The Rafsanjani campaign has grabbed the image of youth and energy for itself. You might say that the Rafsanjani generation and the Pepsi generation are one. In other words, it may not matter to Pepsi whether the Pepsi generation drinks Pepsi, as long as Pepsi's sales are robust; similarly, as long as Rafsanjani wins the election, who cares who voted for him.

### **E-marketing**

Online, or virtual, or e-marketing is one of the newest forms of marketing communications, as developments in communications technology have opened up new communications vehicles such as websites, email and text.

#### *Direct e-marketing*

E-marketing offers the potential to reach individuals directly, enabling the principles of direct marketing to be applied. Internet advertisements that pop up when the public is browsing are designed not just to reach them but be tailor-made to the recipient in terms of content and time. Additionally, recipients can choose to sign up to e-newsletters, which utilise some of the principles of direct marketing. In the US 2008 presidential nomination campaign, anyone who signed up as a supporter or interested party on the Obama site received emails regularly that asked for both support and donations. Often the attention-seeking element of direct marketing was utilised well, with recipients asked to donate by a certain time to allow Barack to stop fundraising for one day, or before some other deadline. Emotional appeals were also used, with some emails sent from his wife: see Box 7.1.

#### *Relationship e-marketing*

Cryus Krohn, a former Yahoo employee, worked for the Republican National Party in 2007 as E-campaign Director to apply the principles of Internet communication to politics, adding social networking and mobile alerts to the Republican National Committee (RNC) site (*Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 2008). As Jackson (2005: 159 and 2006) notes, websites can be used for long-term communication, offering a combination of direct marketing and relationship marketing, rather than just being used in short-term sales campaigning and one-off transactions. It holds the potential to reach new markets, particularly youth, who are often alienated by traditional forms of political behaviour and communication, but are the first users of Internet and digital tools. It may also enhance democracy, but that depends on how it is used. Geiselhart *et al.* (2003: 216) note that, just because there is Internet use within a democracy, does not guarantee e-democracy. Jackson (2005) has examined the way that UK MPs utilised email. He noted that email offers local representatives a cheap and easy means to contact their constituents in a target manner. It can be used (Jackson 2005: 95) to:

- 1 help them win votes;
- 2 put out unmediated communication over which they have greater control because they can speak directly to constituents;
- 3 as a source of market intelligence, to help MPs better represent their constituents and develop their political campaigns and policy stances;

### **Box 7.1 Emotional email appeals in Obama's presidential nomination campaign**

**From:** Michelle Obama [mailto:info@barackobama.com]

**Sent:** Sat 05/04/2008 01:25

**To:** [recipient]

**Subject:** Yes, they can

[name of recipient]

Today is the 40th anniversary of the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and I want to share a video that reveals how far we've come and how much this campaign owes to Dr. King's legacy.

Students at a high school in the Bronx, who had no real interest in their government, have found new hope. They were surprised by their own excitement and engagement, but to me, they embody so many reasons why Barack and I decided to get into this campaign.

It's truly moving to see young people inspired by a political leader – someone who gives them hope and reminds them that they can be anything they want to be if they work hard . . .

Much has changed in this country since Dr. King's death, and thanks to his life and work we have taken critical strides towards racial equality.

The simple fact that Barack is running a competitive campaign for President is a direct result of Dr. King's legacy – and this movement for change would be impossible without the support of people of all races, ages, and backgrounds.

I remember back in December of 2006, a group of us were discussing the possibility of Barack running for President. And as you might have read, I was hesitant about the idea.

But then Barack started talking about why he really wanted to do this – to bring people together and to change the tone of the way we talk to each other in this country. He talked about the need for people to be inspired by their leaders, and the importance of leadership to chart a different course. He talked about Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy, and their passion to challenge a new generation and provide them with role models . . . He shared his desire to reach out to our neglected inner cities, to strive to be a role model for young people, and to connect with people who are not involved in politics – those who feel their voices haven't been heard, those who have been left behind, and those who have been turned off by all the petty bickering in recent years.

We can change that, by standing on the shoulders of folks like Dr. King who came before us.

Watching these students who are excited about their own role in politics for the first time, and watching Barack as he strives to live up to the challenges Dr. King made possible, I am truly touched.

I hope you'll watch this video and share that feeling with your friends and family:

<http://my.barackobama.com/yestheycaan>

Thank you,

Michelle Obama

- 4 build credibility and a delivery record, of particular use to incumbents seeking re-election;
- 5 offer the opportunity to engage in two-way communication.

Electronic communication provides the market with the chance to communicate with them on their own terms, to build up a long-term relationship with voters. Jackson (2005: 95) therefore assesses e-marketing by the following criteria for an effective relationship marketing approach:

- 1 It is regularly used outside an election campaign.
- 2 Communication is tailored to the requirements of the receiver.
- 3 Communication is two-way and not just one-way.
- 4 Builds 'networks' between an MP and the constituents.

Case study 7.3 examines MPs' websites from a marketing perspective.

### *Network e-marketing*

Websites are an obvious campaign tool, not just to communicate with potential voters, but also to mobilise internal supporters. Online communication is rapidly developing to apply the concepts, not just the tools, of marketing. Facebook, YouTube and MySpace share the same principle of being positive and action-oriented. Such initiatives particularly suit younger voters, whose disengagement from politics is a big concern for political elites and political science. Developments in e-marketing or online activity are not just more means of communication, but hold the potential to reconnect people. Joe Trippi started this trend when he set up Howard Dean's website in his bid for the presidential nomination for the 2004 US presidential election. The thinking behind it is social networking – but applied in the virtual environment. If politicians/parties are clever, they will then use it to mobilise grass roots, bring supporters together and so stimulate actual social interaction through virtual interaction. This is beginning to happen in the US (see Shaw 2002), but it is still a process in development, and no one as yet knows for sure which way it will go. Obama also used the Internet to market volunteers in the primaries. Stirland (2008) observed how the Obama campaign ran a large grass-roots, GOTV effort that utilised technology effectively:

At the center of it all [wa]s a hub of online networking tools enabling a wide spectrum of volunteers all over the country to get together in self-organized groups to help their candidate. From controlling the canvassing operations to corralling e-mail lists, organizing meetings and overseeing national phone drives, Obama's web network [wa]s the most ambitious, and apparently successful, Internet campaign effort in any presidential race in the web's short history . . . Most prominent in Obama's suite of sites [wa]s the social networking tool. Since its launch [in 2007] a little more than 500,000 accounts [were] created and 30,000 supporter-created campaign events listed at the site. Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes work[ed] with grass-roots organizers on the system . . . Many of the more active volunteers in Ohio and Texas note that the social networking technology enabled them, and the campaign, to quickly get up and running in the two states that few realized would be competitive at this stage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season . . . This technology encourages offline organizing, and it's a means for community members to network, and to do all of the old-fashioned organizing that we would never otherwise have had the time or resources

to manage,' sa[id] Ian Davis, another Obama supporter and community organizer in Austin. Davis recently organized a debate-watching party at a German pub in Austin after a year of organizing for the candidate independently. He advertised the event using the social networking tool, and an estimated 1,000 people showed up. He and his fellow volunteers used the event to sign the attendees up for get-out-the vote tasks, like door-knocking, block walking and waving campaign signs on street corners.

### *Limitations to e-marketing*

Like all new tools, e-marketing cannot guarantee success. Such marketing methods are not without their limitations: see Case study 7.4.

The key to successful e-marketing lies in realising that developments in e-marketing are not just another means of communication, but hold the potential to reconnect people, because they are a virtual manifestation of good, old-fashioned, face-to-face social interaction and provision of high-quality service. The communication can also meet criteria similar to those for a market-orientation where user needs and satisfaction are considered. For example, Atkinson and Leigh (2003) set out the following principles for e-communication:

- 1 A focus on the needs of citizens/customers.
- 2 Information and transactions people want, rather than information government wants them to have.
- 3 Putting people in touch with solutions to their problems, not just giving them access to services.
- 4 Information organised around the citizen's needs.
- 5 Interaction with government more convenient, at a time and place to suit the consumer, e.g. tasks that previously required a visit to a government office during working hours can be performed by users whenever and wherever they please.

Most government websites may not achieve such principles. Atkinson and Leigh (2003: 167–9) argue that many factors block positive development, such as websites that promote government being linked to one service area only, being unfriendly to users and containing search engines that don't work. Similarly, campaign sites also fail to meet these principles. Virtual social networking needs to be two-way – one of the reasons it appeals to the youth is that it gives them the opportunity to be involved and be active, on their own terms, in a way that suits them. There has to be thinking behind the communication and interactive behaviour for this to work. The US have grasped the idea that it can be used to mobilise, engage and interact with voters, and even enable them to input into the process of developing political products – not just tell them what to think.

### *Local political marketing communication*

Elected representatives and candidates for office also engage in marketing for their re-election. In some cases, local candidates need, and are encouraged, to develop their own marketing campaigns, divergent from the national plan, where the national party product has particularly disappointed local voters because of the particular needs and conditions in that electorate.

In the US, for example, Steger (1999: 663) notes how candidates employ their own staff and consultants and have more freedom from party control to tailor their positions and issues to suit their market. Incumbents get an informal feel for their market through 'direct

**Task 7.1**

Consider a national campaign and then study a local constituency, electorate or area. How could the national message be, or how was it, adapted to suit the local market?

interactive communication with their constituents to gain firsthand information about their concerns, complaints, and preferences' (Steger 1999: 667). Staff can also track communication from constituents to observe the most salient issues and record those most interested and likely to vote, which creates lists of warm names to send campaign material to. Segmentation is also used, and in campaigning they seek to advertise their achievements and delivery in office.

In countries such as the UK, with party-based systems, local MPs and candidates are traditionally more restricted, as campaigns are national and party-based. Nevertheless, research by Lilleker and Negrine (2002 and 2003) and Lilleker (2005 and 2006) suggests that candidates are increasingly running local marketing campaigns, realising the negative consequences of too much central control (see also Franklin and Richardson 2002). In some constituencies, local voters are particularly important and influential on the vote. Case studies 7.5 and 7.6 illustrate the potential and constraints of local political marketing.

**Market-oriented forms of marketing communications**

Marketing can also be used to devise communication that relates to the concept of a market-orientation. Robinson (2006) has formulated a theory of how political advertising can be devised to suit market-oriented principles: see Table 7.4. This framework could be applied to all forms of political communication.

This is further explained and outlined in Case study 7.7.

**Public relations**

Public relations involves different aspects of political behaviour: as Moloney and Colmer (2001: 958) argue, it 'follows the policy design, adjustment and implementation phases of policy development'. They provide an example from the 2005 UK campaign:

On May 9th the Prime Minister talked to a Mr and Mrs Finnan in the tea room, the Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa about their life over the last four years. The conversation looked natural on TV news but it took the media in its role as scrutineer to reveal how unnatural it was. The Finnans were hand-picked Labour members; the 60 other tea-takers included Labour councillors and Labour PR staff. To avoid distraction, nobody got tea or cake while the cameras rolled.

Planned events are created to be normal, whereas stunts are obviously so and can also go wrong easily, such as when a patient relative harangued Tony Blair about cancer care when he visited a hospital. Paven (2001) list a number of PR lessons from the 2000 US presidential election: see Box 7.2.

Jackson and Lilleker (2004: 512) explore how public relations can be used by local MPs in a symmetrical (two-way) or asymmetrical (one-way) manner. MPs often fall into the trap of only putting out asymmetrical communication and therefore failing to listen to and

Table 7.4 Robinson's (2006) criteria for identification of market-orientation in political advertisements

Market Orientation	Observable form
<i>Voter orientation</i>	
(i) Target voters identified	Images of target audience and environment featured
(ii) Sense, and respond to, voter needs	Images of party and/or leader interaction with target voters, including images of listening and words of togetherness
(iii) Maintenance of relationships with core voters	Evocation of party history and myth; acknowledgement of shared characters, themes and stories Images or words of care for core supporters The co-presence of other texts recognisable to core supporters Kept policy promises Consistent leadership offer from one campaign to another
(iv) Offer in exchange for party vote	Party vote requested, and what policy and leadership offered in exchange
<i>Competitor orientation</i>	
(i) Whether the party behaved as would be expected of a party occupying their strategic market position (e.g. market leader, challenger, follower, niche party)	Competition identified and targeted in messages Policy appropriated from smaller niche parties Concern to increase market share demonstrated Openness to coalition arrangements demonstrated Niche parties remain true to original <i>raison d'être</i>

engage the public; however, they can choose to respond to feedback and alter what they do accordingly. PR can help politicians build positive, long-term relationship to help 'weather the usual crisis and storms that all elected officials face' (Jackson and Lilleker 2004: 514).

Public relations can be used in any country, albeit adapted to the nature of the local system and market. Prasaad and Raghupathy (2005) studied elections in India in 2004 and how a candidate engaged in a number of PR tactics: see Box 7.3.

The aspects of marketing communications that have been discussed here are those that have been studied by political marketing research. Over time, other aspects of marketing communications, such as integrated marketing communications (see Chapman *et al.* 2003, for example), will doubtless be applied to politics and add to both the study and practice of marketing communications in politics.

**Democratic issues**

There are many democratic issues with political marketing communications. It can be argued that utilising market intelligence to make communication as effective as possible helps politicians sell the best, but unwanted messages. It can be seen as manipulative, as research enables political elites to get inside the head of voters. Dermody and Hamner-Lloyd (2006: 128) observe, from their conclusion that UK parties failed to utilise market-oriented concepts in their political advertising, that 'the way in which promotional marketing tools and concepts are being used in election campaigns, with the emphasis on creating distrust and suspicion of the competing parties, does not bode well for the future of democracy in Britain.' The emphasis on professionalism, which seems to accompany the use of marketing in