



PART I

The Evolution of Marketing in Politics

As we look at presidential elections before 1956, we go back to a point in time when politics operated by the principle of grass-roots efforts (or machine politics). Candidates relied on the national party organization to solicit help from local and state party officials to coordinate a volunteer network of support. (We still see this principle driving campaigns at the local and state levels.) In terms of a marketing orientation, campaigns during this time were driven by the forces of distribution (what we in marketing refer to as the person-to-person contact that takes place as a product is transported from the manufacturer to the wholesaler to the retailer to the consumer). Without the benefit of the

technology of television, candidates and their representatives relied on personal contact with the voter to get their messages out.

During the election of 1956 we saw the first presidential contender use television to get his message out to the people, Dwight Eisenhower. But, even then, television was not used at the same level of sophistication as in 1960 (the year many believe was the watershed year for television in presidential politics). John F. Kennedy incorporated into his campaign the technological advances in television to help him win the election. During the debates Kennedy made the best use of this medium, looking more relaxed and at ease than Nixon, and was able to convey a successful image that would land him in the White House.

Television brought with it the first opportunities for candidates to begin to develop campaign platforms that revolved around the crafting of political images. Unlike machine politics, which did not enable candidates to electronically craft an image, the ability of candidates to use television as a medium allowed them to formulate campaign platforms that could be "sold" to the American people. Without the benefit of visual aids, it was nearly impossible for candidates to rely on imagery as the basis for campaign strategy development.

Candidates did not see the real influence of marketing until the Madison Avenue experts made their way into the campaign organizations. Joe McGinniss's account of how the 1968 Nixon campaign relied on a sophisticated advertising campaign to win the White House brought to light the real impact that television had on the electoral process. There has been a continued evolution of marketing into politics since that time; the power structure of the campaign organization has shifted farther away from party bosses, but beyond advertising executives, to a whole new cadre of consultants with marketing expertise. Although I will detail what takes place at the presidential level, the analysis is applicable to elections at the local and state levels insofar as it provides a working framework to understand the role of marketing in political campaigns.

In Part I, I provide the foundation on which to build the argument that the electoral process in this country is being transformed by marketing. In the discussion of this transformation, I focus on three subjects. Chapter 1 defines marketing and presents a framework that explains how marketing is used as a campaign strategy. I then discuss how the same strategic tools used to market products and services could be

successfully adapted to Bill Clinton's 1992 political campaign. Chapter 2 presents a historical background of the evolution of marketing in politics, with an explanation behind why marketing has become so critical to the success of candidates in the last several presidential elections. The shift in power from the party bosses to the consultants will be analyzed in detail. Finally, in chapter 3, I outline the forces that brought about this change in campaigning. I define who the power brokers are, both old and new, and how the 1992 presidential campaign changed the power structure among these participants.

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The New Political Campaign Technology

The 1992 presidential election was unique in that it went directly to the people and, in the process of doing so, used the most sophisticated marketing techniques found in the commercial marketplace. We have all heard about direct mail and have certainly seen it pile up in our mailboxes. This same technology used to target direct mail to residences was used to target fund-raising letters to voters of various political persuasions; similarly, techniques used to market products in the mail directly to us as consumers were used to market the candidates us to us as voters.

This was the year of the outsider, which, perhaps more than any other element in the campaign, set the stage for the winning theme, namely, "change." The American voter was tired of politics as usual, and there was a great desire for change, particularly in the way presidential campaigns were run. The heavy

reliance on negative advertising in 1988 was repudiated in 1992. Voters wanted more direct access to the candidates, and they wanted the debate to revolve around issues and not personalities. And the candidates gave them what they wanted.

The changing participation in the political process was in response to a new kind of political campaign waged in 1992. Voters became more involved and interested in the presidential election as evidenced by the higher turnout. For some candidates, the infomercial supplemented the commercial. We even saw one candidate talk about issues with charts, graphs, and "voodoo sticks."

What really distinguished this campaign from others was the proficiency and mastery with which the Clinton organization was able to follow the marketing concept (namely, that a marketer must first understand the customer's needs and then develop a product that meets those needs). In this case, Clinton campaign staff understood that people wanted change and were most concerned about the economy (more specifically, jobs). Clinton staff grew to understand the people's concerns and consequently hammered home the themes of change and the economy after their convention.

In addition, the Clinton organization was able to take the best ideas from the challengers as they dropped out of the race and implement those ideas in their own rhetoric, demonstrating a competitive orientation that is practiced in the commercial marketplace. The flexibility and adaptability that one would find in the best-run corporations were found in the Clinton organization. Clinton was constantly integrating and updating his campaign to satisfy voter wants and desires in the same efficient and effective manner as Toyota, who did this for years in the automobile industry.

Anyone running for the presidency of the United States must espouse a political philosophy that represents a vision for the future of the country and the world. In 1992 this philosophy was shaped by the use of sophisticated marketing tools that went beyond the use of polls. Political leadership today is driven not only by political ideology but also by marketing. We need to understand that it is not only the polls but marketing that is driving the political process today. Marketing has become an integral part of the development of campaign strategy.

Bill Clinton was marketed to the American people in much the same way that a doctor's or a lawyer's services are marketed to consumers. Clinton's top strategist, James Carville, used the economy and the impact it was having on the middle class as the focus of their campaign strategy. Clinton attacked the last 12 years of Republican government for its poor treatment of the middle

Clinton
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class. Clinton saw that the middle class was distressed and promised he would tax the rich who rode the wave of financial success in the 1980s. Clinton was able to effectively communicate the message that the middle class was hurting, needed change and jobs, and that Clinton was the man to do it.

Voters during the 1992 campaign were deeply interested in this election. As in elections prior to this, economics was the driving force; voters were interested because they felt it in their pocketbooks. With cable television viewership increasing since the last election, voters were able to watch their candidates come through direct to them on a whole host of cable television programs.

The viewership found it refreshing to see the candidates on shows other than the usual interview programs we had grown used to. Some say Bill Clinton turned around his stalled campaign by appearing on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, dressed up in funky clothes, wearing dark sunglasses, and playing his saxophone to a cheering audience. We all had to pinch ourselves to believe what we were seeing: Here was a candidate running for the highest office in the land appearing on late-night television, looking more like a pop star than a presidential candidate. Both Bill Clinton and Ross Perot were quick to understand the importance and power of this medium, however, and engaged in it before George Bush did. George Bush, on the other hand, was very cautious and only belatedly worked his way into cable programming after he was trailing badly in the polls.

The question is, why all these appearances on live call-in shows? Some say it was due to the appetite of voters who wanted to feel empowered and in touch with a cast of actors usually not seen in person by most Americans in their lifetimes. In 1992 cable reached into more than 60% of television households. On top of that, the three major networks were losing their audience, something that had been happening for close to ten years. Clinton used televised town meeting formats in almost every primary state, honing skills that would serve him well in the October presidential debates. Larry King (the popular talk show host on CNN) may have started this movement of turning politicians into celebrities that swept the political landscape in 1992.²

Another explanation behind the extensive use of live call-in shows was the willingness on the part of Clinton to take the risk of appearing in front of live audiences in an effort to reach voters. As the New Hampshire primary date approached, Clinton found his message about the economy obstructed with the allegations against his personal character. Some have argued that he chose unorthodox and alternative media outlets to recast and promote his

↳ Feeding Frenzy

perspective. Bush, on the other hand, had all the coverage he wanted as a sitting president.

Structural changes in the political process continued to force candidates to rely on consultants. Federal regulations limiting the contributions of individuals to candidates placed more pressure on direct mail and fund-raising specialists to bring in the dollars necessary to run their campaigns. Today, candidates no longer have the luxury of counting on wealthy contributors to finance their campaigns. Couple this with the less-influential role of the political party and we have the seeds for the new electoral system that has evolved in this country.

The 1992 presidential election has shown us how Clinton was successfully marketed, how Bush was unsuccessfully marketed, and why Perot, a great salesman, could not rely on those skills alone in a market dominated by handlers and experts who know the difference between marketing and selling. In the remainder of this chapter, I will formally introduce the topic of marketing, define it, explain how it plays a role in politics, and explain why this "new political campaign technology" is changing the way the electoral process operates in this country.

So What Is Marketing?

Part of the difficulty of understanding how marketing and politics, two seemingly disparate areas, have merged stems from a misunderstanding of what marketing is. Simply put, marketing is an exchange process. The process centers on a seller (the business) who is exchanging a product or service for money from a buyer (the consumer). The exchange is implemented by the seller through the use of a marketing strategy. A marketing strategy is made up of four components: (a) the product (or service), (b) the development of a promotional campaign, (c) pricing, and (d) distribution (the movement of the good from the manufacturer to the consumer).

In more technical terms, marketing is a needs assessment approach to product innovation that relies on information from the marketplace to help guide research and development. This means that the most successful products are molded around the findings from market research studies. Automobiles and gym shoes are just a few examples of product categories that follow a marketing orientation. The development of new car models and innovative gym shoes, such as the pumps, was based on research findings.

product (or service)

↳ development of a promotional campaign
↳ pricing
↳ distribution

NO! candidate = soap
↳ offers service !!!

Some people have likewise referred to a candidate as a bar of soap, suggesting that a candidate is marketed like a product. This, however, is a myth that has circulated in the popular press for some time now; rather, the candidate is a service provider and necessarily marketed accordingly. The first reference to a candidate as a product came from the media people who were brought into campaign organizations to develop promotional campaigns. These people came from the business world and directly applied their knowledge of product advertising to candidate advertising. As this association developed, it became commonplace to refer to candidates as products.

However, the candidate is in reality a service provider and offers a service to his consumers, the voters, much in the same way that an insurance agent offers a service to his consumers. In this case, the insurance policy becomes the product sold by the agent. Although I will make references to the marketing of candidates as products throughout the book, it should be kept in mind that the product I am referring to is the campaign platform. To convey the impression that the marketing of candidates is similar to the marketing of a bar of soap is to oversimplify and minimize the uniqueness of the marketing application to politics.

First of all, consumers of soap do not spend nearly as much time and effort in the decision to buy one brand over another as a voter does when deciding to cast a ballot for a candidate. As a result, a buyer of soap will be less involved in the acquisition of information than a voter is. Second, by taking note that a candidate is really a service provider, the distinction between campaigning and governing becomes clearer. The actual delivery of a service that a candidate offers to the voter does not occur until he begins to govern. I have emphasized the point earlier that this book is about the application of marketing to campaigning, not governing, although Clinton returns to some of his marketing techniques in his presidency.

Finally, candidates operate in a dynamic environment, fast, changing, and full of obstacles that present marketing challenges that require flexibility. Like corporations around the world that alter their services to respond to a more demanding consumer in the commercial marketplace, candidates have to respond to the fast-paced changes that take place in the political marketplace. For example, IBM is working to build up its market share by offering more services to its customers. Companies like IBM have to respond to forces in the environment to be successful; likewise for candidates throughout the political campaign and then in office, as well.

politicians = service
product = campaign

do avoid

do not

Service marketing incorporates a whole host of strategic issues that are not applicable in the marketing of products because services have unique characteristics that products don't have. Services are intangible (they cannot be seen, felt, or heard before they are consumed), variable (depending on the service provider, the quality of the service can vary), perishable (they cannot be stored like products), and they are inseparable (meaning you can't separate the service from the provider of it). The implication of these differences makes the application of marketing to politics very distinctive, but still very comparable to product marketing.

When applying marketing to politics, the exchange process centers on a candidate who offers political leadership in exchange for a vote from the citizen. The product in politics is the campaign platform, and marketing would require that research and polling be done to help shape the platform of the candidate. In addition, the same research techniques are used to craft an image for the candidate. More than the platform itself, the image, or impression, is what the candidate leaves in the mind of the voter. An image is created by the use of visual impressions that are communicated by the candidate's physical presence, media appearances, and experiences and record as a political leader. Once the candidate gets into office, the other characteristics of services (variability, perishability, and inseparability) become more pertinent to the discussion.

There are, however, three glaring differences between marketing and politics. First of all, there are differences of philosophy. In business the goal is to make a profit, whereas in politics the goal is the successful operation of democracy (at least in this country). Second, winning in politics is sometimes based on a few percentage points, whereas in business the difference between winning and losing is based on huge variations. And third, business often follows through with the implementation of actions based on marketing research results if the business stands to profit, whereas in politics the candidate's own political philosophy often shapes the extent to which marketing research results are followed. That is, although a marketing research study may suggest that a politician advocate a specific view of an issue or policy in order to increase the likelihood of election, the candidate may decide not to follow the suggestion because of philosophical differences.³

The differences between marketing and politics have not prevented the practitioners in both areas from working to merge the two. As a result, there are strong similarities between the two disciplines. Both rely on the use of standard marketing tools and strategies, such as marketing research,

market segmentation, targeting, positioning, strategy development, and implementation. The voter can be analyzed as a consumer in the political marketplace using the same models and theories in marketing that are used to study consumers in the commercial marketplace. And both are dealing in competitive marketplaces and, as such, need to rely on similar approaches to winning (but each may have several distinct options).⁴

A Model of Political Marketing

The merging of marketing and politics is shown in Figure 1.1. Here I bring together into a single framework the two campaigns: the marketing campaign and the political campaign. The marketing campaign is the heart of the model because it contains the marketing tools that are used to get the candidate successfully through the stages of the political campaign. There are three parts to the marketing campaign: market (voter) segmentation, candidate positioning, and strategy formulation and implementation. 4.3.

Market segmentation is a process in which all voters are broken down into segments, or groupings, that the candidate then targets with his message. For example, Bill Clinton realized early on in the campaign that one very large market segment, the middle class, was ripe for targeting. The critical decision was finding the right message with which to appeal to this segment. Given the economic problems facing the country, Clinton decided to use various economic appeals, such as the promise of more jobs and better wages. Likewise, the baby boomers were another important market segment identified by the Clinton campaign, and various appeals were targeted directly to this segment. As will be discussed later in the book, the segments that are targeted change as the political campaign moves from one stage to another.

Once the multiple voter segments have been identified, the candidate goes through a process called *candidate positioning*. Positioning is a multistage process that begins with the candidate assessing both his own and his opponents' strengths and weaknesses. For example, Bill Clinton was aware that as a Democrat and an outsider to Washington he was in a good position to criticize the system that Reagan and Bush had governed for close to 12 years. Then the issue of targeting is addressed, in which specific segments are chosen as targets of direct campaign messages. There are several strategic issues that arise in the decision to target one segment as opposed to another.

segmentation politica
posicionamiento candidato (to jak se chce definir

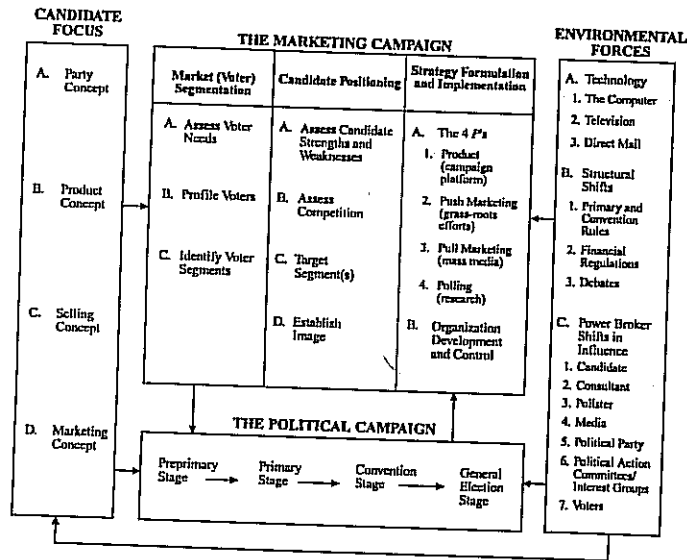


Figure 1.1. A Model of Political Marketing

NOTE: The model integrates four components into a single framework, which will be used to explain how presidential candidates are marketed.

These issues will be fully addressed later in the book, with specific focus on how the Clinton organization successfully carried out its critical targeting task.

What evolves out of this process is the establishment of an image for the candidate. The image is crafted through the media by emphasizing certain personality traits of the candidate, as well as stressing various issues. For example, Bill Clinton created an image of himself as an outsider who would bring about change in Washington through a series of innovative economic programs. From a competitive point of view, he was contending with an incumbent president who was sitting on an economy in recession and not getting results from his actions; Clinton thus capitalized on his strengths and took advantage of his competitors' weaknesses. There were also several other factors attributable to his image as a strong leader that played out during the course of the political campaign. The outcome of this process is the development of a "position" for the candidate.

Once the candidate's position is established, a marketing strategy is developed and implemented. Here, I will explain the "four Ps," namely, the components in a marketing strategy that are used to reinforce the chosen position of the candidate. The four Ps include the product, push marketing, pull marketing, and polling. As discussed at length in the previous section, the *product* in politics is the campaign platform. To be successful, a candidate has to market not only himself but his campaign platform as well.

The campaign platform evolves over the course of the political campaign. It is influenced by several factors, including the candidate himself, the people in his organization, the party, and, especially, the voters. After the campaign platform is developed, there are two information channels through which the candidate can promote himself. One channel is labeled *push marketing*, and the second is labeled *pull marketing*. Push marketing is synonymous with the distribution concept previously discussed. That is, the candidate's message about his political platform is communicated (or transferred) from the candidate to campaign workers before it gets to the voter, who is the consumer. One way of getting the message out is through traditional grass-roots efforts, or local and state party mechanisms. In addition, the candidate must rely on these same people to get the vote out on election day; in the primaries and the general election, it is imperative that a candidate have an effective volunteer network to win. A candidate relies on his consultants to coordinate local and state efforts with the national party leaders.

Pull marketing is the second information channel and focuses on the use of the mass media to get the candidate's message out to the voters. There are several options available to a candidate, including television, radio, newspapers, and other media. The 1992 election was unique in that the candidates relied on very unorthodox promotional vehicles (in addition to the more traditional ones) to convey their information. In a word, the candidates took a more direct route to the voter in this election and, in doing so, bypassed traditional media outlets. This meant that candidates spent less time on network news programs and more time on cable programs. There will be more to say about this later in the book.

The last P is *polling*, which is conducted throughout the political process to provide the candidate with the information necessary to develop the marketing campaign. In politics, as in marketing, there are many tools and devices that are used to conduct the research. Perhaps the most popular and important one in politics is the poll.

This discussion of strategy ends by covering the organizational issues, including the choice of people, setting up a task chart, monitoring activities, and the crucial role of fund-raising. Similar to the business world, political campaign organizations rely on the same fundamental principles to run their operations. Once the marketing strategy has been developed, the important issue is implementation. One of Clinton's greatest strengths as a candidate was his ability to set up an organization that could successfully implement and communicate his vision for the country to the voters.

The marketing campaign is conducted simultaneously with the political campaign and serves to help the candidate get through each of the four stages—preprimary, primary, convention, and general election—successfully. Both the marketing and the political campaigns are influenced by the candidate's strategic orientation (or what I call his "focus") and by forces in the environment. The candidate's focus has changed along with the evolution of marketing practice in politics, that is, with the progression from a "party concept" to a "marketing concept." This discussion will shed light on the theoretical connection between marketing and politics and will show how the candidate has re-oriented his focus from pleasing party bosses to satisfying voter needs.

The second influence on the two campaigns is environmental. Each force represents an area in which there have been dynamic changes taking place over the last few decades that account for the increasingly important role of marketing in the electoral process. For example, the computer has afforded tremendous technological advances in polling and fund-raising. Structural changes in the primary system have further pressured candidates to rely on marketing experts. For example, candidates depend to a great extent on mass media outlets when they attempt to reach the voters in several different states simultaneously on Super Tuesday. Also, the Federal Election Reform Acts (limiting individual contributions to candidates) have forced candidates to call on the expertise of direct mail specialists to bring in the necessary dollars to run their campaigns.

Finally, there have been tremendous shifts in power among the people who have an influence on politics, namely, the power brokers. The party bosses have seen their power diminish, while the media, pollsters, consultants, political action committees, and voters (in this campaign) have seen their power and influence grow in importance.

A Shift in Power From Party Bosses to Consultants

Consultants received a significant amount of attention in the 1992 presidential election, for a couple of reasons. Not only have they taken over as the new party bosses in politics, resulting in a radical shift in power, but they are recruited and sought out like superstar actors for a high-budget film. In fact, candidates are often not taken seriously until they have brought on board some big-name consultants.

There has been quite a change in the presidential election process since Kennedy's day, when the local political bosses ran the show. In contrast to that time, we witnessed Bill Clinton, who ran as the Washington outsider, divorce himself from the powers that be in Washington. Naturally, as the primaries ebbed and flowed, so did the Washington insiders' feelings toward Clinton. Clinton was at first disowned when he began to look, early on in the campaign, like he was carrying too much baggage to be the front-runner. However, as time went on, the Democratic party had no choice but to embrace Clinton to ensure that there would be a unified party. This was the Democrats' first chance at the White House in 12 years, and the party leaders knew by the time Clinton won Illinois that they had nowhere to turn but to him.⁵

The Role of Negative Advertising

Although nowhere as aggressive as in 1988, there still was negative advertising in 1992. On the positive side, Bush emphasized family, jobs, and peace, while Clinton emphasized the importance of reinvigorating the American dream. Clinton pointed out that it was time for a change from the greed and paralysis of the 1980s. However, both of the candidates relied on negative advertising at times to achieve their goals. Bush's attack was based on three overall appeals that painted a picture of Clinton as a waffler: He attacked Clinton's record in Arkansas, tried to portray Clinton as a fast-talking salesman, and emphasized Clinton's inexperience in foreign affairs. Likewise, Clinton's strategy relied on three major appeals: He focused on Bush's lack of vision for a next term and his desire to stay with the status quo, argued that Bush was out of touch with ordinary Americans, and attacked Bush's foreign policy as too timid, especially in the former Soviet Union.⁶

Part of Bush's problem was that some of the negative advertising was directed at him from someone in his own party, namely, Patrick J. Buchanan, who attacked Bush for not advocating stronger Christian values.⁷ But Bush, in his turn, waged a negative campaign against Perot; he accused Perot of hiring private investigators to seek damaging information about him when he was vice president and to cast shadows on his children. Bush portrayed Perot as a candidate who strayed outside the rules that everyone else had to follow. Perot's response to this was a declaration that this was part of the Republicans' dirty tricks. Bush also tried to paint Clinton's trip to the Soviet Union while he was a Rhodes Scholar as a meeting with the Communists.⁸ This attack, however, eventually backfired in Bush's face.⁸

The strategy and tactics that Clinton used to fend off Bush's attacks and to shape many of his own were plotted in what James Carville referred to as their "war room." The attacks on Bush were personal in that they referred to Bush as a man who had evaded the responsibilities of his actions. Bush was described as a man who was the willing tool of the wealthy and powerful and whose time in office had caused Americans shame; he literally was depicted as a president who had mishandled virtually every aspect of his presidency. However, the Clinton camp was careful to connect their attacks to Bush's public record.⁹ Clinton also attacked Ross Perot by portraying him as a candidate who would soon pass from notice as voters realized how little he could accomplish if he were to win the race.¹⁰

Innovative in the use of negative advertising in 1992 was the tailoring of attacks to fit specific states and regions; in effect, candidates relied on a more targeted approach to their promotional strategy. Another innovation was the increased number of locally aired commercials (especially on cable stations), as opposed to targeting national markets. One Republican strategist estimated that as much as half of the TV ad budgets ended up in nonnational outlets, whereas in 1980 only 10% did.¹¹

All three candidates used private investigators to obtain material to put into their advertisements. Their activities (officially called "opposition research") included looking up any piece of information that could be used to the disadvantage of the opposition. In fact, the Republican party installed a sophisticated computer that instantaneously digested and retrieved information, from the content of Clinton's school yearbooks to every article written about him in Arkansas newspapers. In addition, there was a videotape file that included tapes of every television appearance Clinton had made. It was from a similar archive that James P. Pinkerton, an aid to Bush in the 1988

campaign, found a debate transcript during the primaries in which there was mention of Mr. Dukakis's furlough of Willie Horton (which became one of the more infamous commercials of the 1988 campaign). There are, however, certain unwritten rules that are followed in negative advertising: Avoid using inaccurate information, stay away from sex and drugs, and do not lie about one's identity when obtaining information, but, at the same time, do not go out of the way to identify oneself either.¹²

A Historical Perspective on the Merging of Marketing and Politics

There are several reasons behind the merging of politics and marketing. Perhaps the single most influential factor has been the use of television and the necessity of candidates to rely on experts in the field of marketing and related areas to help them master this medium. The televised debates that took place during the Kennedy and Nixon campaign in 1960 increased the pressure on candidates to turn to Madison Avenue experts to craft the "correct" image for the electorate. Candidates who are not telegenic and relaxed in front of a camera find it increasingly difficult to win the presidency today.

The Simulmatics project in 1960 was the beginning of another dimension to marketing, namely marketing research, which opened up to politicians a whole new world of numbers and computers that would forever change the course of events in electioneering. At the fingertips of computer and statistical experts was the ability to break down a whole country into regions and localities, which would reveal differences in demographic and socioeconomic makeup as well as in attitudes toward different issues in the campaign.¹³

If we look back at the Carter presidency, we see the use of a sophisticated marketing approach to campaigning and the ability of Carter, with the aid of Pat Caddell, to appeal to multiple voter groups (or segments of consumers). The emphasis in the 1976 presidential election was on personal character and integrity of the two candidates and how little each owed party leaders for their respective candidacies. It was also a year that earmarked a change in political advertising. Leading up to this election since 1964, there was a growth in the use of carefully crafted ads in which the candidates themselves did not make an appearance or speak. However, ironically, in the 1976 campaign, both Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford returned to the old-fashioned, personal appeals, and personal testimonies re-emerged.¹⁴

In 1980 we saw another significant change toward the marketing approach campaign when the Republican party chose a candidate, Ronald Reagan, who had decades of experience working in front of the camera and knew how to use the medium to his advantage. In fact, this was never more obvious than when he ran against Walter Mondale, who in contrast looked stiff and ill at ease in front of a camera. In addition to Reagan's good camera persona, his campaign organization represented a well-oiled marketing machine that relied on simple themes, such as patriotism and family, to convey a single and consistent image at every campaign stop and in every commercial. This was accomplished partly by always having hundreds of young flag-waving citizens standing behind Reagan.

The Reagan presidency marked the real beginning of the use of several marketing tools, including negative advertising, direct mail, and sophisticated marketing research and polling as well as the planning and implementation of campaign strategy that closely mirrored what business was doing in the commercial marketplace. In addition to the aid of professional advertising people, Reagan utilized the help of a pollster Richard Wirthlin, who more than any other pollster up to that time understood the significance of running a presidential campaign on the basis of information generated from focus groups and nationwide polls. In fact, Wirthlin was integral in the meaningful leap from the use of polling to marketing research, which essentially meant not only using statistical analysis to predict future voting behavior and to get a snapshot description of who this includes but also getting at voters' underlying motivations.

We also saw the rising influence of political action committees with the Reagan era. Through the use of fund-raising by private sources, Reagan effectively doubled the amount that he was legally permitted to spend. Well-organized groups that opposed social welfare programs spent heavily on television advertising in an effort to get more voters who supported these groups registered.¹⁵

The 1984 campaign was a study in the power of rhetoric and incumbency as a way of preempting the Democratic challenges in any area where the Republicans may have been vulnerable. The Reagan organization used every asset of incumbency to ensure that none of the Democratic issues would stick. The Reagan ads paraded backdrops with flags raised, houses built, and autos bought, along with a song asserting, "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free." On the other hand, the Democrats tried unsuccessfully to create a feeling of discomfort about the budget deficit, the

influence of the religious right, the absence of arms control talks with the Soviets, and the financial straits of Americans who had not done well under Reagan.¹⁶

Mondale was blamed for the Democrats' defeat. He was seen as a dull campaigner and a poor performer on television, plagued by an inefficient campaign organization, and hurt by incoherent advertising. In a nutshell, the problem for the Democrats was not the message but the messenger. Reagan, on the other hand, used both issues and personality to his advantage, with the aid of advertising specialists. In foreign policy, Reagan cited the successful American intervention in Grenada and increased military capability as proof that America had recaptured its standing in the world. The success of Reagan in this election was mainly due to an image that was well crafted for him by his handlers. His image was that of a likable person who successfully combined a confident personality, excellent communication skills, and a strong commitment to religion and family.¹⁷

The Reagan re-election campaign organization of 1984 continued to use the talents of sophisticated marketing experts in their packaging of Reagan by relying on simple themes of patriotism and family. Again, there was the extensive use of negative advertising. This particular election also represented old versus new politics in that Reagan operated on the basis of the marketing concept, whereas Mondale operated on the basis of a party concept, continuing to rely on old themes and old Democratic grass-roots politics.

In the 1988 presidential election, the Republicans created images that effectively undermined the Democrats' claim to be the party of caring and compassion through the use of the Willie Horton ad, which drove up Dukakis's negatives or, in other words, highlighted his shortcomings. The Republicans turned the slogan Dukakis had used in the primaries against him by altering their attacks to a single focus, namely, risk. The Willie Horton ad ended with the words, "Dukakis wants to do more for America than what he's done for Massachusetts. America can't afford that risk." Dukakis's slogans, on the other hand, shifted from week to week. His ads closed with the claim "They'd like to sell you a package. Wouldn't you rather choose a president?" Slogans from some of Dukakis's more constructive ads included "Let's take charge of America's future," which then turned into "The best America is yet to come."¹⁸

The success of the Bush campaign was that they attacked early on and consistently and, at the same time, controlled the media and the issue agenda from the convention through election day. When compared with Dukakis's,

Bush's ads were very consistent and tied in well to his debate performance. Dukakis spent much of the campaign trying to counterargue Bush's claims, evidence that Bush was successful in setting the agenda and raising the Dukakis negatives. In 1988 Lee Greenwood's song, "I'm Proud to Be an American" served as an emotional backdrop to the highly charged, flag-filled scenes that made up the Bush election campaign.

Segments from the 1984 *Morning in America* ads were included in the Bush convention film and election eve program. In addition, other ads played on the 1984 themes, such as recapturing the small-town atmosphere in America. Bush dominated the positive side of television air time, playing the role of the parent and grandparent, lifting one of his grandchildren into the air, and preparing a meal in a large kettle, surrounded by the other Bush grandchildren picnicking on the lawn. The Republicans took over from the Democrats their traditional reputation as the party of caring and compassion. In addition, Bush's use of fear was as sophisticated as any since Johnson's use of the daisy in the 1964 campaign.¹⁹

Marketing and the 1992 Presidential Election

It was truly a new era in politics in 1992, with candidates appearing on late-night television programs dominated by celebrities. No longer could candidates rely on the right backdrop and getting onto the evening news to win. This was a different kind of election, one that has started a new type of campaigning never seen before. Candidates circumvented the traditional communication links with voters and made direct contact through live talk shows. Ross Perot even announced his candidacy on the *Larry King Live* show.

The focus group concept became the newest tool to be adopted by the media during the 1992 election. For example, it was not uncommon to see television journalists conducting live focus groups immediately after the debates as a way of analyzing the performance of the candidates. Polls continued to be heavily relied on by all of the power brokers. Hardly a news broadcast during the election went by without the latest results being reported from a poll. These tools overdramatized every speech a candidate made to the point of creating a horse-race mentality in the election.

In 1992 we saw the first telemarketing campaign run by Ross Perot, a candidate who refused to let the media shape him and instead helped shape the media. Instead of making campaign appearances like most presidential

candidates do, this candidate relied on television commercials, videocassettes sent directly to voters, and infomercials to get his message out. In addition, he incorporated some of the latest advances in the direct-marketing area (referred to as database marketing in the commercial marketplace), using an "800" number to solicit a volunteer network and campaign contributions to his organization.

Furthermore, in this campaign issues were discussed more substantively than they were in the 1988 campaign. Modern-day presidential elections are increasingly becoming marketing campaigns. Although modern-day campaigning is not studied as seriously by marketing academics as it is by political scientists and other social scientists, the fact remains that elections today are run by a combination of experts both practicing and theorizing about the influence of marketing on politics.

Conclusion

It has been 24 years since Joe McGinniss wrote his book, *The Selling of the President*, captivating the American public with his account of the role of media in presidential campaigns.²⁰ Since that time, however, we have come a long way in understanding the subtleties of how political campaigns operate. Political campaigns are now centered on the voter, meaning that the candidate must define himself in the voters' eyes in a way that is consistent with their thinking. The challenge to the candidate becomes one of structuring an image consistent with focus group results and tracking polls. This image is then built up around the events of the campaign, which at times can break loose from the control of the handlers and the way they want the candidate's image to be defined.

Views differ about the impact a campaign built around the voter as a consumer will have on the political process. Some argue that viewing the voter as a consumer dilutes the real purpose of the electoral process; it does not allow for a candidate to create a vision for the country but simply means that the candidate says and does whatever is necessary to get elected. In fact, many accused George Bush of saying and doing just that in both of his bids for the White House.

Perhaps the most important question to ask here is whether or not it is conceivable for a candidate *not* to take a marketing perspective as a candidate in the modern age of politics. Clearly the most successful corporations in the

world are consumer driven, such as McDonald's, GE, Toyota, and others. In the last few elections won by Reagan and Bush, marketing has been the engine that drove the organization, with the focus centered on the voter. As I will discuss in more detail later in the book, there have been changes taking place in the political environment that have pushed candidates into the laps of the consultants, who fully understand the significance of this orientation.

Once the candidate gets elected, the next agenda is how to use marketing to keep the candidate on top in the polls, get the candidate's policies enacted, and, eventually, get the candidate re-elected. In other words, the same marketing tools that were used to get Clinton into the White House could also be used to govern. Not even one month into his term, for example, Clinton had to call back his top strategist, James Carville, to deal with public opinion problems plaguing him as a result of "nannygate," a problem labeled as such in the media as a result of Clinton's inability to find an attorney general designate who did not have problems with paying taxes for household workers. Two months after this episode, the same team went to work to put together a marketing campaign to ensure that Clinton's economic package passed in Congress.

In the commercial marketplace, when consumers become the focus of a company, efforts are made to bring them better service and value. Companies maintain this orientation to stay competitive. Likewise, a similar trend is expected in politics as the focus of attention becomes centered on the voter. As this happens, the political process stands to be strengthened because candidates will need to direct more attention to concerns of the voters to keep them satisfied. However, if candidates get elected on the basis of promises that are not delivered to the voter once they get into office, then the political process suffers.

Notes

1. Newman & Sheth (1985), p. ix.
2. *Chicago Tribune* (1992, November 1).
3. Kotler (1982), pp. 461-469.
4. Kotler (1982), pp. 461-469.
5. *New York Times* (1992, March 31).
6. *U.S. News and World Report* (1992, March 30), p. 36.
7. *New York Times* (1992, February 28).
8. *New York Times* (1992, June 27).
9. *New York Times* (1992, August 11).

10. *New York Times* (1992, June 10).
11. *U.S. News and World Report* (1992, October 5), p. 17.
12. *New York Times* (1992, May 7).
13. Pool & Abelson (1961), pp. 167-183.
14. Jamieson (1992), p. 378.
15. Euchner & Maltese (1992), p. 289.
16. Jamieson (1992), p. 446.
17. Pomper (1988), p. 218.
18. Jamieson (1992), p. 468.
19. Jamieson (1992), p. 459.
20. McGinniss (1969), p. 35.