

New Political Communication Practices: No Budget Events Management. The New Challenge

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Abstract: *In this paper we focus on the development of politicians' fame and image connecting politics, public relations and socially directed practices with financial characteristics such as budget. We examine how socially directed practices with minimal or no budget can become a useful tool for the "advertisement" of political persons as a modern tool of political communication. In this paper we use a dynamic model of simulation through no budget event management in order to combine all these practices. Through concrete action we annihilate the economic cost and break away the advertising campaign from companies sponsoring that so much in the past as today can influence political decisions. Our basic purpose is the effective organization of events with social orientation and social sensitivity. We aim, through the social sensitization and help, at increasing a political person's fame and popularity so that he will be supported by more voters and finally elected without and away from companies' sponsoring and interests.*

Keywords: *Political communication, Management, public relations, Corporate social responsibility, Budget.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The way in which today the electorate shapes the personal and political preferences has changed compared with the past and given the changes in the social, economic, political and cultural context.

In this paper we investigate the formation of politicians' public perceptions and the increase of their fame connecting politics with public relations and corporate practices with financial characteristics. We consider that the socially-oriented practices of financial institutions, with little or no cost, can be a useful tool for politicians.

II. THE CONTEXT

A. Commercialization of Politics

The economist Joseph Schumpeter (Corner and Pels 2003) focused on a different common point between politics and commerce; both follow the law of market. Success in business and success in politics means to produce a "product" which the consumers want to buy. If firms, for example, negotiate the sale of oil, politicians deal votes. Both obey to the law of supply

and demand. The competition shows that the best politician wins. Politics is advertised, people are the target – group, political parties are the brands and the politicians their image.

What means ultimately being a politician? According to Schumpeter (Corner and Pels 2003) politician is someone who is asking for power and succeeds in selling the public a "product" superior to the "product" of others. This approach is based on the rejection of the idea that voters choose based on the common good.

Ideology operates more like a brand giving a general context to the political party. The voter is less motivated by the ideology than in the past. So the voter takes less into account the obligation or the habit to be loyal to one party, but focuses on the political product like the consumer (Newman 1999; Newman and Perloff 2004). So during the elections time the voter has to choose between brands. The choice of a political party or a candidate is the result of successful political marketing, attractive advertisement, attractive and charming image.

Once again, therefore the idea and practice of market are placed at the heart of the democratic process (Yannas 2002). So nowadays politics is not only connected to market rules but it is based on practices and procedures of the market (Ormrod 2005). This is directly related to what we call political marketing that works in three different directions: the product orientation, the sales orientation and the market orientation with four key dimensions: product, price, promotion and place.

On the other hand, the commercialization of politics is open to two types of reviews. Firstly there is the economic theory of democracy and the way with which we invest in media and communication strategies on purpose. There, goals and objectives are combined. The second criticism focuses on political communication as a marketing tool and politics as consumption with ideological perspective. Many academics have expressed strong opposition to address the politicians as commercial brands. (Luck 1969; Newman 1994). But certainly the use of corporate technical and marketing tools have proven to be very effective on politics (Smith and Saunders 1990; Butler and Collins 1994; O'Cass 1996). Especially in the construction of the image and the development of a strategy in politics. (Kavanagh 1995; Kotler and Kotler, 1999; Schweiger and Adami

1999). In that way many important issues relating to managing and shaping the public image of politicians raise: trust, values and competitive advantage play the important role (Aaker 1991). An easy example: during the 1997 elections, the youthful and full of energy image of Tony Blair was a clear electoral advantage. Because of the fact that politics is different from other products and business services, no cost events shape the image of politicians and political parties far more than in businesses.

The image is therefore affected by what kind of contacted information we give out and how (King 1991). Of course this involves simultaneous promotion, sales, advertising and public relations (Jobber 2001). All these practices have as target to pass through information. The management and the behavioural evolution of that information is a crucial part of political communication methodology. This is not only information production but also influence via a long-lasting evolution process. That is why we have to see information management and behaviour too close interrelated with information production as presented by Spink and Cole (2007,2006).

B. Politics, Public Relations and Formation of Public Opinion

Nowadays, political and public relations have been directly connected and focus on their basic function to connect and match the orientation of an organization or a person with a social connotation and sense (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2000). The formation of fame and the increase of recognition, as part of public relations, cannot be disconnected from the concept of public opinion that is directly connected with politics.

Especially for no budget events is obvious that the combination of these factors and the creation of such relations and contacts improve access to people and places. These accesses could help to create events with no cost and have them exploited by the politicians in order to extend their reputation for their advantage.

The formation of fame and the increase of recognition, as part of public relations, cannot be disconnected from the concept of public opinion that is directly connected with politics.

Public opinion plays an important role in politics, framing the relationship between government, public opinion and electoral behavior. The public provides the necessary tools in order to measure political opinions on important issues such as to explore the role of specific social groups, to organize the government policy and propaganda.

The formation of public opinion several times was triggered by the existence of an event named trigger event but known as pseudo-events. Their target is to attract attention and provoke the diffusion of specific information through interpersonal contact or media. The survey of Wilcox et al. (2007) gave great emphasis on these events taking place during the formation of public opinion reaching the following conclusions:

- The opinion is particularly sensitive to events that affect the general public or a specific part of the public.
- Typically, the public does not anticipate events. Only react to them.
- The facts are the impetus for the formation of public opinion.

The image on the candidate is based on these three points. We investigate how we can use the characteristics in order to attract the attention and the interest of public opinion to certain political figures. Through charitable events with no or low cost a politician could be a point of reference for the development of their political advertisement, the consolidation of their political personality and finally their political election.

C. Formation of Public Imagery – the fame

The concept of reputation is an element of the modern society associated with social references from the past (Kurzman and al. 2007). The public image according to Burstyn (Mayer 2000) is a contrived, artificial product. A person is presented as a sum of properties that in the moral context of a community seem particularly valuable. It is also a set of characteristics relating to the candidate as personality, as politician, as active person. All the images perceived by the citizen from the activity of politicians they largely determine their political image. The image and reputation of the politician is a key choice element for the 45% of the voters (Kyriakakis 2000). Biocca (1991) showed that the electorate focuses firstly on the image to form his opinion about candidates. So we understand that the image of a politician is something broader. The philosophy of no budget stories for political events, which negotiates this project, aims to support the image of the politicians and develop it for their advantage.

The fame of a person includes a set of a wide range of information, connections and social values. The fame has three main features: one related to rational thought, it is a social characteristic and connected with institutions, associations, feelings and social values. The fame plays an important role in politics because it is both commitment and implementation and also partnership with social and political tie. Therefore, the image or fame of a politician should:

- offer something unique and differentiated from their rivals
- build a strong brand name
- have values and rules
- be based on trust.

For the configuration of political preferences it is very important for the 70,2% of citizens a politician to be a good citizen ready to offer for the public good. (Political attitudes and perceptions in early adolescence. Political socialization in the context of Greek political culture 1987).

The concept of fame was connected with the political psychology, the social theory of personality and the political marketing. Politicians participate on processes of social interaction which aim to increase their reputation and fame (Elliott 1998).

The truth is that the traditional practices for the development and the evolution of a politicians' fame have lost their hegemony. They give their position in more socially-oriented and interactive practices, as there are various events organized for this purpose. It is also important to mention that the time for the realization of these events it is not only a pre-election period but an overall activity (Lilleker and Darren G. 2005). The practice showed that events can significantly influence the political image of a candidate. But, it is not always easy to prove that these events can completely change the image of some politician to the public (Smith and Gareth 2001).

D. Politics and Corporate Socially-oriented Practices

As we have already mentioned, politics are for years included in an operating system where a politician or a party operate as organization with several business and financial characteristics. The socially-oriented practices and social responsibility is a key area for institutions. Through corporate social responsibility an organization undertakes voluntary commitments beyond common regulatory and contractual requirements. Therefore it puts at the center of his growth higher standards of social development, environmental protection and respect for fundamental rights. The aim of the whole effort is a total quality approach and sustainability through the development of new connections and fields of action. The action of social responsibility promotes the social dialogue, and is related to change management protecting at the same time the social cohesion. Social responsibility does not substitute or replace any legal regulatory framework, but support, cooperate and work with it in parallel.

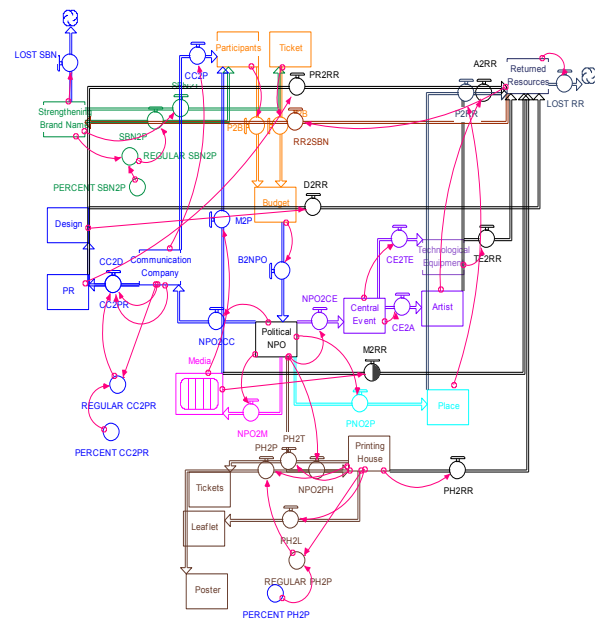
These guidelines are an important parameter and a key strategy to achieve specific objectives such as progress, growth, increased recognition and reputation. The current political reality, as it is configured today, is related with numerous scandals connected with economic interests, which then affect the politicians' decisions. The recent scandals, such as the scandals in Greece, with the involvement of huge multinational companies in the financing of political figures and parties, which had as aim favorable political decisions for them, make necessary actions such as no budget stories for political events.

E. Problematic

As we see the image and the fame of politicians is a set of many different factors and practices. It combines political action and thought with rules and practices of marketing, social action and a framework for building the reputation and the public image.

Our research will try to combine all these data into a specific action. We want to eliminate the financial costs and disconnect the political campaign from business sponsorships that in the past and nowadays can influence political decisions. It is therefore our basic research assumption how the effective events' organization with social orientation and social sensitivity can lead to that aim. We aim through social awareness and charity events to develop a politician's fame and popularity. Thus politician will be supported by more voters and eventually he will be elected without the till now necessary support from "business" interests.

F. The Model



The present dynamic simulation model (Konstantopoulos et al. 2007) works as follows:

- We choose as action with social offer: the organization of a concert. The proceeds of the concert will go to a charitable non-governmental organization.
- In our research model, the politician is responsible, through the action of a group of supporters, to contact and build bridges of cooperation with the central person of the event. That person will attract as much as possible the public to come to the event.
- The main character of the event, in this case the artist that should be convinced to participate in the event selflessly given the social nature of the event trough which his own fame will also be developed. This is in fact a negotiation win to win.
- The event, in order to take place, requires technical support, equipment and extra human

resources. These costs are covered by the tickets sold to the public who will assist at the concert. This is a form of indirect payment.

- This indirect payment is crucial and should not show in a clear way exactly how the money is managed. The "clear" indirect payment, through tickets, can destroy the philosophy of the no budget event. So if, for example, the chosen concert venue is a courtyard of a school rather than another private space, it is evident to the public that the money is directed to the organizers of the event.
- The event highlights the nature of social responsibility, which is presented as a result of awareness from the political person.
- Before the event, the advertisement is essential in order to gain publicity and attract the public. This advertising campaign is undertaken by a communication services company. Here, the role of the media and all promotions practices are of prime importance.
- During the event the candidate is able to project himself through this initiative to demonstrate his social sensitiveness, his 'political' work and personality.
- After the event the advertising campaign continues: publications, press releases, press conference are some of the subsequent promotions to develop the reputation and recognition of the political personality.
- The completion and success of the event has attracted voters. Voters have become shareholders of an action of social responsibility which increases the availability for support to the political person.

III. CONCLUSION – DISCUSSION

As we see the no budget event management for political persons combines different practices from marketing and communication to fame and budget management. We demonstrate all the necessary elements of the simulation model and for future research our challenge is to complete it taking into account as many as possible contextual or societal characteristics.

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