

## Introduction

Last week, we had a gathering of some friends at our place, and while we were sitting, talking, and watching MBC 4 on TV, we noticed that most TV programs were talking about the political campaigns that Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama are running against each other. They are the two most prominent Democratic candidates in speculation in the 2008 United States presidential elections. It seemed clear to all of us, that both of them are not only using every possible tool to advertise for their merits and political, economic, and social plans, but at the same time fiercely attacking and criticizing one another at any possible way.

It is very obvious, how these two candidates are fighting for people's votes through heavy and intensive marketing campaigns, which made us wonder whether marketing became of significant importance for political campaigns as it is for products and services. We had a debate for almost two hours about the role of marketing in political campaigns nowadays. Some of us were against the idea of using marketing in political campaigns and in presidential elections, while the rest of us considered marketing an important tool for the success of any political campaign these days.

Two days ago there was an interview conducted on MBC channel on Insider show with Michael Lewis, a marketing professor at the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis. He said that "Winning an election is all about selling your brand, And that brand better look good." He also said that political campaigns are similar in many aspects of a regular marketing campaign promoting a product or a service "The reality is that these campaigns are run like marketing campaigns," "They're driven by focus groups, there's a lot of advertising, and people use marketing language, such as 'positioning.'" It has been argued that applying and understanding the basic elements of marketing to be successful not only on the short term but also in the long term.

As it was a very interesting topic to talk about, we decided to extend our knowledge by researching more intensely on this subject in order to support our opinions with real facts. One of these topics were the differences and similarities between political marketing and product or service marketing, another issue is the use of different marketing tools to market for political candidates.

## Differences between Political Marketing and Product or Service Marketing

Based on our research, we found that marketing activities are implemented for, products and services, as well as political activities and campaigns. However, there are many differences in some aspects.

First, all voters in the political elections make their choices on the same day, unlike the usual buying decisions, where you can decide to purchase whenever you want. Furthermore, political decisions are mainly based on hypothetical questions, while buying decisions are based on definite purchasing decisions, although there is a resemblance between opinion polls and brand shares' tracking procedures.

Although voting choices might have individual costs or regrets on the long-run, the act of voting does not charge anyone with money, unlike making a purchase.

Another difference is that some voters have to live with the communal choice, even though it may not have been their personal preference.

Moreover, a winner in the political elections takes all, especially in the UK for example, where the election system is "first past the post".

In addition, unlike the products or services, a political candidate is considered a complex intangible product, which voters are unable to unbundle. Therefore, voters have to decide, based on the overall wrapped impression they perceive. In case of a complex product or service choice, consumers usually have the chance to make up their minds, while voters have to wait until the upcoming elections.

Finally, brand leaders are more likely to stay in front in most marketing situations. This is due to the fact that governments usually have to make hard decisions concerning whether to control expenditures or to raise taxes.

## Similarities between Political Marketing and Product or Service Marketing

There are many aspects where political marketing and product or service marketing are similar. First, brand imaging is an important piece of marketing a product or service as well as political candidates. The brand is the candidate name. In some countries candidates create symbols or logos designed to convey the candidate image.

Second aspect is the appearance of the brand either political candidate or a product/service. A presidential appearance can be crucial to election outcomes. Whether sporting a slick, classic hairstyle or showing a commanding bit of gray, and whether the candidate looks scholarly or masculine, can all impact voter perceptions. Caroline Keating, a professor of psychology at Colgate University in New York, said "style does matter because it's the carrier of those important messages and without that vehicle the good ideas are not heard."

However, Caroline Keating said "I'd love to say that it was all about content and substance and the guys with the good ideas were going to rise to the top, and the candidates with poorer ideas are going to end up at the bottom," which shows that good idea is similar to a good product, and this is the third aspect of similarity.

## The Role of different Marketing Tools in changing Voters' attitudes and behaviors

### a) Television advertising:

The use of television has been considered the greatest medium in changing the hidden/implicit marketing/political relationship to an obvious/explicit one. This change took place in three different time periods.

Pre-1952, the TV was not a catalyst for mass communication of messages, although it was available from around 1930. The political communication methods were mostly limited to print media, and to the radio after 1926. The radio was used to broadcast speeches and marathon fund or interest raising programs. There were hardly few short commercials.

1952-1967. The use of marketing as a political technique was not largely recognized by the general public, political scientists, and legislators, until the presidential elections in

1952, when Dwight Eisenhower used TV advertising as a campaign tool. The TV use then grew rapidly during the next 15 years, as the politicians refined its use.

Post-1967. By this time, the expenditures of campaigns reached very high, basically due to the highly developed use of commercial television through the large number purchase of short blocks of broadcast time.

b) Mobile advertising:

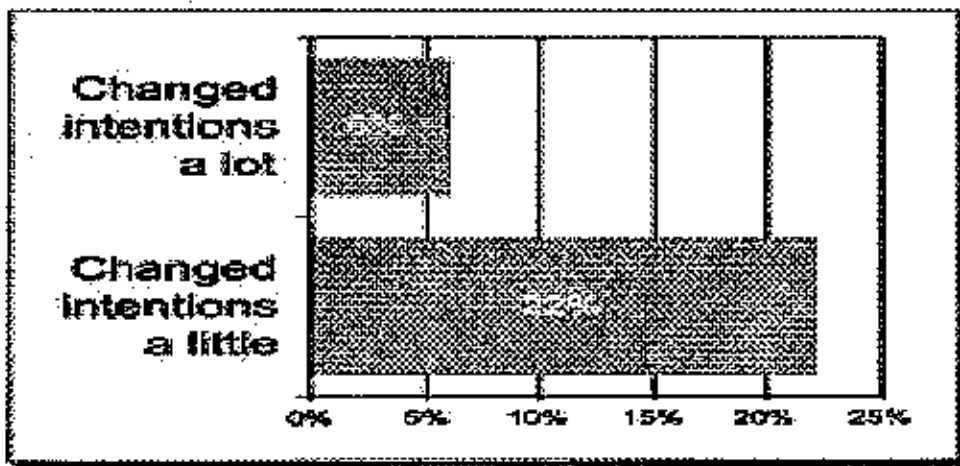
Mobile advertising may be an effective way for candidates to change voter attitudes and voting behavior.

A January SMS advertising campaign the firm conducted for Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama delivered over one million SMS impressions across the two campaigns.

“The campaigns scored 53% awareness, in line with other SMS programs, but higher than might be expected from traditional forms of media. The overall impact was considerable, with 28% altering their voting intentions,” said Limbo

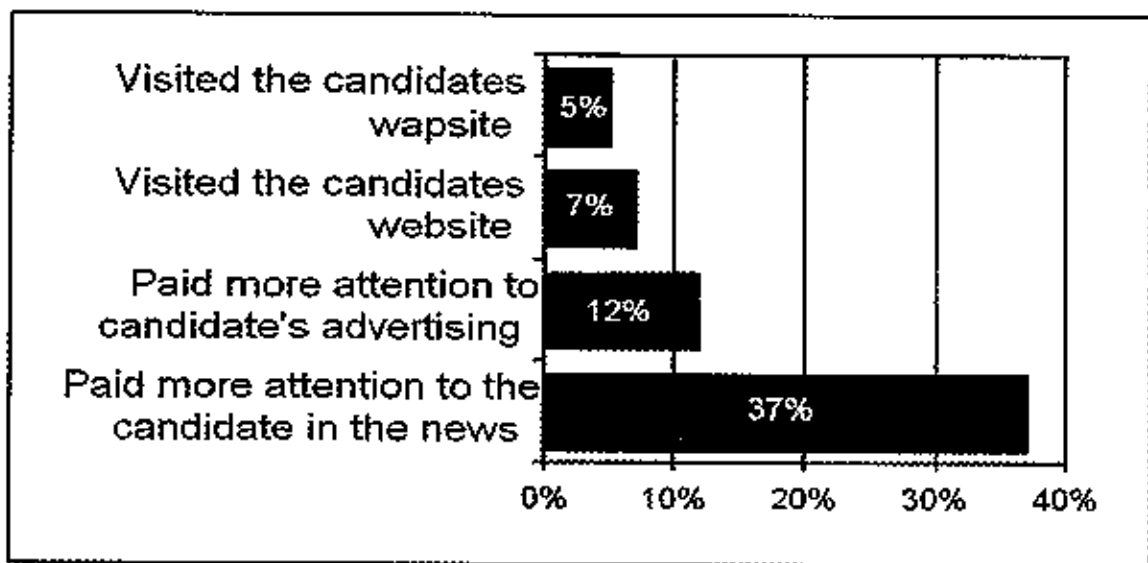
Among the key findings:

**Change in voting intention attributed to the SMS campaign**



- Change in voting intention:
  - 6% of those surveyed after the campaigns said that the advertising had changed their voting intentions significantly.
  - An additional 22% said their intentions had been changed a little.
- Change in perception of the candidate:

## Actions taken after seeing the campaign



- 14% said that their perceptions of the candidate was now more positive than before seeing the campaign, with 4% saying it was now more negative - a net 10% increase in positive perception.
- Barack Obama saw the biggest uplift, with a net gain of 16%.
- As well as changing impressions of the candidates, the campaigns also functioned to drive greater interaction with the candidate across other paid and non-paid media:
  - 37% paid more attention to news coverage about the candidate.
  - 12% became more aware of other marketing for the candidate.
  - 7% visited the candidate's website, with a further 24% intending to do so in the future.
  - 5% visited the candidate's mobile internet site, with a further 9% intending to do so in the future

As SMS is a direct medium, and so prone to be considered intrusive, Limbo also asked recipients of the campaign how happy they were to see the candidates advertised through the service:

- 56% of people said they were happy to have received the ads.
- 13% said they would have preferred not to see SMS advertising from political candidates.
- Men were more comfortable than women with the campaigns.
- The 25-34-year age bracket was the most happy the campaigns.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that there is a strong relationship between political campaigns or activities and products or services. Both of them use marketing as a tool to sell themselves. Political campaigns use TV, as well as mobile messages to reach for voters, just like products or services use these tools to reach for customers. On one hand, they are very similar in many

aspects, as they want to reach the same exact thing, which is customers, and on the other hand they differ in terms of their nature.

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