



Political marketing; An Irish investigation

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MSc GRAD

A research dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of
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September 2008

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Denise Lowe for her support throughout the Msc in marketing; I would have been at a loss without her guidance and advice. I would like to thank all the lecturers in the Institute of Technology Sligo who assisted me in my studies over the research and education process.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my family and my mother and son have acted as a continuous source of motivation to me throughout my years in college. In addition to this I wish to thank my classmates for their friendship throughout the year, and Shane Gilroy and Fiona Gunne for all the patience they have shown to a very stressed author over the last few months.

Finally I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father, Mr. John Gorman, someone I miss dearly but is with me everyday.

Abstract

The following document provides an investigation on political marketing. To facilitate this, a number of areas in the parent domain of marketing are first looked to, as they build the foundations for understanding the origins and evolution of political marketing.

In this particular study there is a concentration on the Irish political domain and while the secondary desk research incorporated a global experience of the marketing typology the primary research is specific to Ireland.

Marketing has received criticism for its validity in the political domain but it was clear in the study its strategic potential is continually being recognised. The internet was a major focus in the research as it was deemed to be pivotal in the marketplace by the researcher.

The primary research took the form of in depth interviews with key personnel of the Irish political parties chosen for the study, namely the Green Party, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. These interviews were recorded and analysed for the purpose of the research. A number of issues were highlighted through the interviews. While countries like America are moving toward a world of political marketing consultants Irelands political scene is still predominantly made up of volunteers and activists and many of the parties are reliant on the expertise of its members. While all parties made claim to having a marketing philosophy and mindset in place, others such as the Fianna Fail respondent were dismissive of voters being involved at every level, which he believed a complete marketing philosophy to entail. The internet featured more in parties such as the Greens while Fine Gael were experimenting with what the internet had to offer, but Fianna Fail were critical of the opportunities in this technology.

The second part of the primary research involved looking to the consumer side of politics. Within this a questionnaire was administered among three samples of voters; one questionnaire was self administered on O Connell street Sligo, another was administered via email to an average internet user group and the third sample involved in the research were respondents to a link to the questionnaire which was placed on an Irish politics site. The three samples were strategically selected so there would be a holistic collection of voter's perceptions. Interestingly while not many respondents agreed they had already used the internet to contact a politician many agreed they would consider it in the future. While the secondary research had identified online news channels as the main source of political information for internet

users, the research specific to Ireland highlighted that Irish users first choice were party political sites, then You Tube and finally news channels. As manipulation of the media and how candidates are portrayed via this external media was a key feature in the marketplace, an opportunity was identified for Irish political party's to reach their target market directly via their websites. As a result of this the author composed the political marketing sphere (adopted from the political marketing triangle Kotler 1994) which illustrates the main marketing uses in Irish politics. The internet can be seen at the middle of the diagram as an interactive, inter connective medium that creates an opportunity for Irish politics.

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Chapter one

Research methodology

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Research objectives

1.3 Research methodology

1.4 Research design

1.5 Limitations encountered

1.6 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

The following chapter describes the methodology used which was applied in order to understand the marketing within a political party. The first part of the chapter deals with the objectives behind the research, following on from this the purpose of the methods incorporated are discussed. The concluding part of the chapter deals with the design utilised and limitations encountered.

1.2 Research objectives

The priority of this study is to distinguish the role of marketing within a political party. In achieving this primary objective a number of secondary objectives must initially be met, these secondary objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To analyse marketing of the twenty first century, mapping its evolution to the current day.
2. To examine and critique the literature pertaining to political marketing, identifying how consumer marketing has infiltrated the political domain and what political marketing now represents in the literature and in practice.
3. To understand the role the internet is playing in consumer marketing and critically evaluate its role in the political marketing arena.
4. To gain insight into the role of the empowered consumer, how this impacts marketing, and how the political consumer is treated in political marketing.
5. To gain a better insight into how both the Irish political consumer and political party interact in political marketing with a hope to identifying the extent to which marketing has infiltrated this domain.

1.3 Research methodology

To gain insight into the role of marketing in politics a number of research strategies were employed that were deemed to be both exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory phase took the form of a literature review, while the descriptive aspect to the study involved a questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

Exploratory research

Initial research into the area of political marketing required the analysis and interpretation of existing academic literature in marketing, political marketing and other related areas which will be identified in later chapters. The desk research conducted provided a solid basis from which to carry out the primary research, as a thorough literature search and analysis took place in order to prevent the duplication of existing material. This exploratory phase allowed the author to fully understand the research topic, and identified the gaps in the existing research, therefore helping in establishing the authors own objectives.

Descriptive research

This area of the research involved a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The research is based around the marketing of the political parties in Ireland as political parties tend to be central to democracy of most countries, and it also took into consideration the political consumer and their role in Irish politics.

The selection of political parties for the research are; Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, The Green Party. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael were selected as they are two of the strongest and largest parties within the Irish political environment. In order to achieve a holistic perspective on Irish political marketing, the Green party are the final party that are involved. Other parties are larger and play a more pivotal role in the Irish political scene, but the Green party are new in Government. The author felt a relatively new party would provide a good comparison to the other parties selected, therefore facilitating a varied discussion about Irish political marketing.

Research design

The descriptive study used survey based methodological routes, in the form of in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. The word survey means to view

comprehensively and in detail, while through another perceptive lens it is also indicative toward the act of obtaining data for mapping. (Denscombe 2004).

Research instrument: personal interview

As identified by Frey & Oishi (pg 1 1995);

“A survey interview is a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (the interviewer) and another answers them (the respondent). It is a directed conversation, the purpose of which is to gather information by means of administering the same set of questions in a consistent way to all selected respondents.”

In-depth interviews were used as they enabled the researcher to guide the questioning and probe further if it was necessary. They were conducted in person as telephone interviews were considered to be too time constraining and personal interviews have a high response rate and also allow the interviewer to interact better and also read the body language of the respondent. According to Denscombe (2004) with semi-structured interviews the interviewer will have a clear list of issues which are to be addressed, but there is flexibility within the interview process which enables the interviewee to develop the issues and topics which are important to them to a certain extent. (See appendix 2). The researcher felt this approach was important as it was then plausible to identify the issues important to each party and the informant's priorities for the party.

Sampling

A sample is deemed to be a portion or subset of the population the surveyor is interested in interviewing and is drawn when it is impractical to survey everyone in the population. (Frey & Oishi 1995). Non-probability sampling was applied in this case, which means that the choice of people included in the sample was not a random selection and purposive means that the sample utilised has been hand picked for the research (Denscombe 2004). Following on from the initial determination of the parties to be studied, the key officials within these parties were then identified as the purposive sample. The General Secretary of each party was identified as the most suitable person to provide expert opinion, so contact was made with these key officials and interviews were arranged.

Format

Each of the General Secretaries were informed of what the research involved and what would be required of them prior to the interview, allowing them to be at ease during the interview process. The researcher then travelled to Dublin to meet with the interviewees at each of the party's head quarters. (See appendix 1). The duration of the interviews ranged from forty five minutes to an hour and each of the interviews were audio taped and later notes were transcribed so as to allow for analysis of the interview. This also freed up the researcher to observe the body language and non verbal communication of the interviewee.

Research instrument: questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered so as to capture the attitude and behaviours of the political consumers i.e. the voters. Denscombe (2004) points to a number of instances where the use of a questionnaire is deemed most appropriate. Some of these include; when a large numbers of respondents are required in various locations; when a social climate is open enough to allow honest answers and when respondents are expected to be able to read, understand and respond to the questions.

A large number of respondents were required for this research, and during the research construction the political climate in Ireland was a topical discussion due to the Lisbon Treaty referendum which was conducted and strongly debated throughout the research timeline. As a result of this a surveying questionnaire was selected to take into consideration how people vote and aid in understanding how effective the Irish political parties current marketing activities are.

Sampling

The author wished to include a wide range of attitudes and opinions from consumers of all backgrounds deemed relevant to the research. Glaser and Strauss (1967) outlined how the sample frame to be used is therefore a discovery element of the research;

"The selection of people, texts or events to be included in the research follows a path of discovery in which the sample emerges as a sequence of decisions based on the outcomes of earlier research."

Therefore three different sampling frames were selected for involvement in the research and these different samples also dictated the means of distribution of the questionnaire. As indicated above the exploratory research dictated the sample frames necessary to the study, namely anyone over eighteen years of age and eligible to cast a vote at an Irish election. In addition to this the research required objective opinions from people of all political views and interests as well as a sample with mixed internet accessibility and capability. Based on this, the following two sampling frame typologies and distribution methods were deemed the most suitable in facilitating the research:

Probability stratified sampling

A stratified sample is defined as one in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected in relation to their proportion of the total population. (Denscombe 2004).

To analyse the voting assumptions and attitudes of those that are likely to correspond with the voting intentions in the wider population of voters two methods of distribution were chosen for the three samples targeted for the questionnaire analysis. Fifty questionnaires were self administered, a further fifty questionnaires were administered via the distribution of an email link to the questionnaire. The online distribution route was used to allow the researcher to analyse the current online political activity of average online users, and so the research would be holistic and therefore provide insight into whether or not those political consumers that do go online, utilise the internet in the political marketing communication and exchange process. The questionnaire was self administered in order to include those voters who may not use the internet.

Non-Probability Purposive sampling

A purposive sample was also chosen to participate in the study. The sample was gathered from the website *politics.ie*. A link to the questionnaire and an explanation about the research was posted on the site. The aim of this was to include active internet users in the study who have an interest in politics. The site was picked for inclusion in this research after an examination by the author showed this to be one of the biggest political forums in Ireland. Over a two month period sixty responses were gathered with ten deemed spoiled and not fit for use.

The hosting and distribution of the online questionnaire

A web site called “free online surveys” was chosen as the hosting site for the online survey. After a fee had been paid to the site and an account created, a survey was composed through the use of a number of questions types and a link to the survey was created. This survey was then tested on a random sample of friends and family whose general use of the internet was varied, and any problems with questions etc were then identified and altered prior to the questionnaires official launch. The link to the questionnaire was then distributed via the authors personal email list.

Research format

The questionnaire was designed with a number of objectives in mind as highlighted previously. (See appendix 3). A wide variety of questions types were selected as being suitable to gathering the information required to answer the research objectives.

The opening question used the likert scale technique to initially gage the interest of the respondent in the political activities of Ireland. Following on from this and to ascertain as to whether the respondent understood political parties themselves, and whether they are engaged in the election process question two to five attempted to identify to build the profile of the political consumer answering the questions.

Question six was targeted at classifying the voting behaviour of the respondent with the use of a multiple choice section, question seven follows on from this with an open ended option for the voter to identify which party they most identified with.

Questions nine and ten were to evaluate as to which party the respondent gave their first preference vote to in the last election and whether this was the same party the voter had noted they most identified with. In order to determine the relevance of individual candidates to the voter question eleven to fourteen attempt to evaluate the importance of the individual party candidates to the voter.

Questions fifteen and sixteen are open ended questions in order to gather feedback about the respondents views on their input into the political processes of Ireland. Understanding the voters perceptions of the political parties was pivotal to the research therefore questions seventeen to nineteen attempt to facilitate an understanding of how the respondents view the main parties involved in the research, while questions nineteen to twenty three aim to understand whether the voter has any active involvement within any party. If there is evidence of involvement the

questionnaire follows on to investigate under what guise it falls under, and how the voter became involved. Questions twenty five and twenty six, and thirty to thirty eight look at the topic of the internet, while twenty seven to twenty nine attempt to understand the voter's knowledge of marketing and political marketing. The remaining questions facilitate the further classification and segmentation of the respondents.

1.5 Limitations

Due to the small scale samples utilised in analysing the voter behaviour, the findings from the research may not be accurate in its representation of the entire voting population as a whole. The researcher strategically selected options upon which they believed they could gain insight into political voting behaviour, however due to the limited research timeline it would not have been feasible to undertake wide enough primary research to represent the entire voting population of Ireland.

From the initial phases of the research it became clear that there is limited academic material on Irish political marketing and also on the internet in Irish politics. The majority of the material in existence is country specific and while there is some academic material specific to Ireland it originates with a narrow number of authors.

Other people were identified throughout the research time line who the author believed would offer significant insight into the study, these key figures included David Cochrane CEO of Politics.ie, and also June Sarpong CEO of the recently launched English site Politicsinthecity.com. Numerous attempts were made to contact these individuals however the author failed to arrange interviews.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for understanding the premise of the following study. The research objectives have been clearly laid out and the research methods discussed and justified.

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Chapter 2: A critical discussion on the marketing domain

Objective:

To understand and analyse political marketing it is first necessary to explore the parent discipline of marketing. This chapter is dedicated to analysing the evolution of marketing and pinpointing what marketing is today.

Chapter outline:

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Evolution of marketing

2.3 Marketing defined

2.4 Services marketing

2.5 Non profit marketing

2.6 Relationship marketing

2.7 Market segmentation

2.8 Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

The face of marketing is continually changing and it has been adapted throughout its history to cater for the dynamic demands of a growing marketplace. It has evolved from being perceived as a pure business related discipline, and has become a practice and philosophy for many different non-related sectors and domains.

In order to fully understand political marketing, the basics of marketing must be first explored. Political parties are non-profit service providing organisations, so the areas of non-profit and services marketing are examined in the forthcoming chapter. In addition to this there will be a study of relationship marketing and the segmentation of markets as these are fundamental elements in both marketing and political marketing.

2.2 The evolution of marketing thought

Evidence of marketing may be traced back as far as 1912, where Shaw is quoted as saying:

“Today the more progressive business man is searching out the unconscious needs of the consumer, and is then producing the goods to gratify them.”

(Shaw, 1912, p. 708, as cited in Svensson 2001)

Brownlie and Saren (1991) believe the roots of the marketing can be traced back to the start of the twentieth century when decision making was based on economic rationale and theory. The authors propose the birth of marketing occurred as scarcity became a post war issue and companies began to recognise it was necessary to understand their consumers and what they wished to buy.

Enright (2002) also argues the marketing concept has existed for over half a century, and Svensson (2005) dictates that while in the 1940s company’s believed production efficiencies were enough for success it was in the 1950s marketers began arguing competitive advantage lay in recognising consumer’s needs.

In their account of the growth of marketing Andreasan & Kotler (2003) also note this new approach to business which began to recognise the consumer as key. Prior to the recognition of the customer they believe marketing progressed through a production, product and sales era. The production era is synonymous with gaining economies of scale through mass production; the product era saw companies continually adding features to their products whereas the sales era saw aggressive selling tactics being employed by companies. The authors go on to summarise the marketing era as follows:

“A customer mindset toward marketing holds that success will come to that organisation that best determines the perceptions, needs and wants of target markets and continually satisfies them through the design, communication , pricing and competitively viable offerings”.

Andreasan and Kotler p43 (2003)

Seminal works such as the work of Drucker (1954) elaborated on the need for a marketing mindset and he proposed the need for businesses to adopt customer centricity into their core value proposition. Practitioners and academics alike accepted this train of thought and it has guided the premise of marketing for some time. This

can be seen in the discussion of works such as “The Customer Is King” (Quinn 1990), and in numerous articles and seminars by practitioners such as Larry Hochman (2008). Although this concept is now widely accepted in the academic literature, customer centricity has come under scrutiny from modern academics such as Stephen Brown (2008). He believes that the idea of the customer as king is now a ubiquitous selling point as opposed to a unique selling point, therefore the author feels there is a need to look at other aspects of marketing and how it is growing.

More recent accounts of marketing indicate this may already be happening with Berthon and Hulbert (2003) stating marketing to be in a metamorphosis. They argue that there is a shift in economic value from physical assets to intangible ones and this is changing the way businesses are required to operate. The authors argue that instead of solely concentrating on the customer that companies need to evaluate their own economic triads which exist between the company, the offer and the customer.

Similarly Daub & Ergenzinger (2005) call for a change in the way in which companies view customer satisfaction. They introduced the idea of the generalised consumer arguing it is no longer sufficient for companies to narrowly view their customers as single entities; instead they must view their consumers as part of a wider body of stakeholders; taking the needs of this wider body into consideration when designing offerings for the market. This view is along the same foundations as the “Triple Bottom Line” theory put forward by Elkington in 1997. Elkington’s theory demonstrated a need for companies to move to a more holistic measure in business and evaluate themselves on a wider basis other than just financial returns. The theory included measuring the company’s success on; economic, environmental and social returns.

To summarise Berthon and Hulbert (2003) have already stated marketing to be in a metamorphosis and this is evident in the progression of marketing theory, for example Mc McCarthy’s (1964) marketing mix; product, price, place and promotion has been extended by Booms and Bitner (1982) to include people, process and physical evidence. Also Shostacks (1982) two dimensional blueprinting design techniques of the service have now been replaced with more recent definitions, such as those proposed by Meyer and Schawager (2007) who talk about three dimensional customer experience management and customer corridors.

2.3 Marketing defined

The term marketing is synonymous with numerous definitions which reflect its dynamic nature and aptitude. As noted by Trustrum (1989), throughout the literature there are many arguments of what marketing is making it hard to create an all encompassing definition.

Brownlie and Saden (1991) portray this difficulty in pinpointing a definition as they cite marketing as acting like an ideological resource and a heavy tool kit which comprises of a sophisticated array of analytical techniques. They build on this definition from their cited revisions of even earlier definitions of marketing, such as that provided by Baker (1988) which states:

“There has a tendency to overemphasise the interests of the consumer, and my own preferred definition is that concerned with mutually satisfying exchange relationships”

(Cited in Brownlie and Saden 1991 pg 41)

In 1997 Gummesson released an article entitled, “The New Marketing” and criticised the traditional premise of marketing as they believed it to be fixated by manipulation, the 4 P’s (McCarthy 1964) and the idea of mass markets. To counteract this critical view of marketing, in 1991 Kotler and Armstrong sought to broaden the view of marketing. Their twenty first century definition attempts to capture the wider role of marketing in society. The authors define marketing as:

“A social and managerial process whereby individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others”.

(Kotler & Armstrong pg6 1991)

The definition provided above introduces the social dimension of marketing to the literature and it attempts to overcome previous criticisms of the narrow perceptions of the profit driven nature of marketing. This new insight stretched perceptions of its disciplinary reach as non-related disciplines began to see its generic applicability.

Woodall (2007) critiques numerous studies based on marketing and arrives at the conclusion that the discipline and practicalities of marketing evolve from a “marketing space” where a continuum of styles exist. At one end of the continuum a quality orientated domain exists which is practiced and lived by part time or non-

marketers. At the other end the author describes an imaginative and “tricksterish” place in which the marketing professional prevails.

Marketing in the twenty first century is interpreted by Ranchhod (2004) as a process of planning and executing activities that satisfy individual, ecological and social needs ethically and sincerely while also satisfying organisational objectives. In comparing this definition with the earlier definition proposed by Shaw (1912) there is elimination of the terminology like the unconscious needs of the consumer. Instead the evolved definition identifies marketing as a process that now incorporates an ecological and social need which in itself shows the growth that marketing has undergone as a science and discipline.

2.4 Relationship marketing

2.4.1 Evolution of relationship marketing

According to Donaldson and O Toole (2007), the main roots of relationship marketing can be traced to the “Nordic School of Services” and the “Industrial Marketing and Purchasing group” (IMP) of the late 1970s. The main contributors of the Nordic school were Berry, Gronroos and Gummesson. These authors investigated marketing and management from a services perspective. Hankanson and Snehota were the seminal authors of the IMP group and they examined marketing relationships from a business perspective.

Since then, relationship marketing is a term now synonymous with modern marketing. Globalisation and mature markets coupled with the fast pace of new technology has intensified competition in business, meaning the mass markets that once existed are now highly fragmented. (Sales Educators 2006a) (Gosselin & Bauwen 2006). The combination of these forces has resulted in the tipping of the balance of the business scales and the balance of power in B2B and B2C relationships has now shifted from the supplier to the buyer. (Christopher 1992). These new market conditions have seen consumer buying power increase which has created a scenario where 20% of company’s customers were generating 80% of their profits, (Gosselin & Bauwen 2006).

In light of these changes, an article published by Svensson in 2001 attempted to re-evaluate the meaning of the marketing concept by providing a definition of marketing which encompasses the relational element of marketing. Later publications carry on

the argument in favour of implementing relationship marketing, with Turley & Geiger (2006) stating, *“Individuals have to be ready to change in tune with the marketplace and be willing to continuously learn about their clients if they want to remain successful.”*

This identifies that the core of relationship marketing is the maintenance of relations between the company and the actors in the micro environment. (Ravald and Gronross 1996).

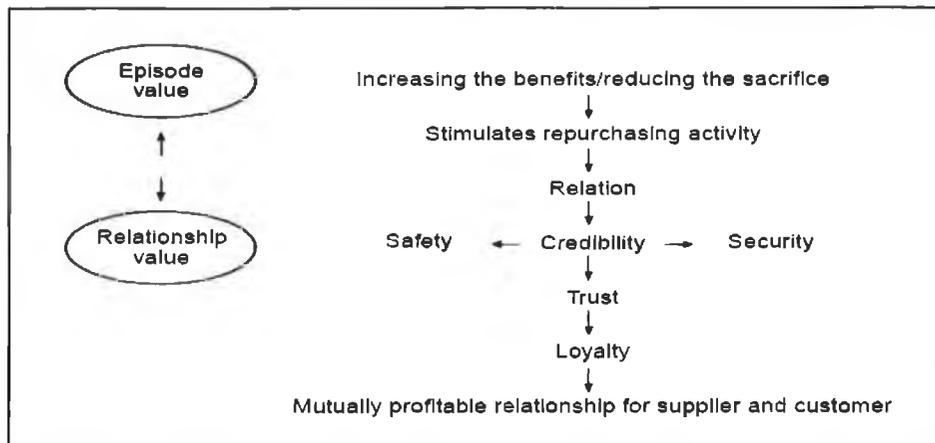
Many back up the benefits of maintaining a relationship, however as highlighted in 1991 by Christopher, Payne, and Ballantyne many companies still maintain a tactical transaction based focus in business. The authors pointed out that, once achieving a sale, most companies then turn their attention and marketing resources to seeking out new customers without appreciating the importance of maintaining and enhancing relationships with existing customers. In his book the “Loyalty Effect” Frederick Reicheld undertook studies to illustrate the benefits of maintaining relationships in business demonstrating that businesses can lose up to half their customers over a five year period. His resulting work showed that it was more profitable for companies to maintain and progress existing relations with consumers instead of investing resources in attracting new consumers.

In the same year Ravald and Gronroos conducted an investigation into how value was created in the relationship domain. According to the authors companies must take into consideration the sacrifice the customer is making when choosing to build relations with them, while simultaneously consider what they are providing to the consumer. Monroe (1991) backs up the need for companies to do this, as this author highlights that consumers are far more sensitive to what they are losing as opposed to what they are gaining.

Traditional marketing exchanges have been based around considerations about the core and augmented product, but the establishment of a relationship means the customer evaluates the relationship in their buying decision. Therefore it will be beneficial for a company to have a relationship in existence when the consumer is at the evaluation of alternatives stage of their buying decision (Ravald and Gronroos 1996). Customer advocacy is another benefit of relationship marketing listed by the authors. This advocacy would mean there would be mutual benefits synonymous with relationship marketing as companies will receive word of mouth promotions from their advocating consumers. The following diagram highlights how Ravald and

Gronroos (1996) propose how a relationship is built and how value is created through a mutual relationship:

Figure 1
: The benefits of having a long term relationship



Source: Ravald and Gronroos pg 7 (1996)

The future of relationship marketing

All the fore mentioned authors were in agreement that market relationships could be better utilised if they moved beyond a basic marketing transaction to engage a relationship sustained over the long term. Businesses now live in an age of rapid technological benefits as identified in the book “one-to-one communication Peppers and Rodgers (1993) indicate businesses could utilise mass customising technology available in the market to maintain and enhance relationships with their stakeholders. Other authors believe it may even be taken a step further to become a cross functional knowledge management process which encompasses the entire organisation with the aim of maximising the interactions and retention rates of customers. This process is better known as “customer relationship management” (CRM), (Injazz & Popovich 2003) (Stefanou et al 2003).

Many arguments are put forward for the incorporation of a CRM into businesses. As marketing is no longer an isolated function as it has become an all-persuasive element of day-to-day business, which has become part of everyone’s job description (Zineldin 2006). Adding to this typical consumer that once dominated mass markets

are disappearing as companies are realising not all customers are equal (Katsiolouides 2007) and Stefanou et al (2003) illustrates that CRM allows companies to gain an indication as to who their economically valuable customers are.

For companies to gain the ability to understand and distinguish their customers there needs to be a creation of a relationship with substance that ultimately leads to customer retention (Nguyen et al 2007). As a result customer relationship management (CRM) has grown in popularity as it combines people, processes and technology in order to gain the most of a company's interactions with its customers. (Injazz & Popovich 2003).

Instead of technology fragmenting the market it can be utilised to digitize a staff's knowledge about his or her customers, that focuses on long-term and sustainable customer relationships that adds value for both the customer and the company. (Nguyen et al 2007). Rowley (1999) believes the internet has revolutionised the potential for gathering intelligence about the consumer as it leverages the potential to increase customer loyalty. The author distinguishes the evolution of database marketing as progressing through a number of stages as highlighted in the following diagram.

Figure 2:

The development of the use of customer databases in marketing				
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Marketing purpose	Separate channel of distribution	Cost-effective measurable communicating	Cross-selling Maximum value of existing base	Maintain and increase customer loyalty
Method	Mail order	Direct mail	Direct mail to customers	Integrated communicating mail, telephone (In) sales staff
Impact of database	Database essential basis for business	Database optional "Junk mail"	Rationalise development for targeting and control	Database essential to manage customer relationships

Source: Rowley 1999 pg 2.

The progression that can be seen in the diagram highlights how the integration of knowledge into the organisation is becoming more important, while database marketing and CRM are becoming strategic applications for competing in today's business world.

2.5 Non-profit marketing

The idea for the use of marketing outside the pure for profit domain was first put forward by Kotler and Levy in (1969). This idea has been taken and written into the literature to broaden the concept and ideals that surround marketing.

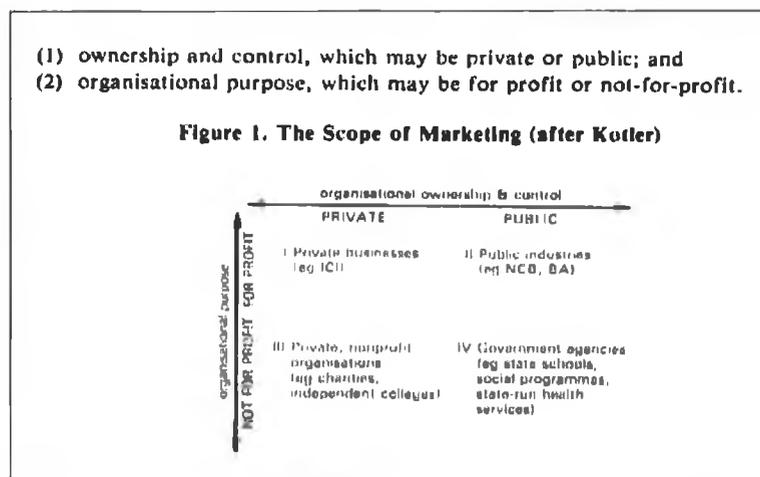
In their book “Strategic Marketing for Non-profit Organisations”, Kotler and Andreasen (2003 pg 39) define marketing management as:

“... the process of planning and executing programs designed to influence the behaviour of target audiences by creating and maintaining beneficial exchanges for the purposes of satisfying individual and organizational objectives”

Ferrell (2002) identifies a trend of many non-profit organisations lying closer to the intangible end of the service continuum which is discussed in the next part of this chapter.

In his work entitled “Marketing Management” Kotler, (p682 1980) (as cited in Gordan Foxalls “Marketing Domain” article 1989) proposes a typology of organisations which are predicted by Kotler as having the capacity to adopt a marketing orientation into their marketing strategies. These organisations are summarised in the following diagram. On the horizontal axis the ownership and control of the organisation is illustrated which it may be public or private. On the vertical axis is the organisational purpose which may be for profit or not for profit.

Figure 3:



Kotler, P. Marketing Management 1980p682 (cited in Foxall 1989)

2.6 Services Marketing

Kotler (2003) proposes that every business offers an element of service but that the source of differentiation and competitive advantage lie in whether a company can put a smile on the customers face. He goes on to define a service as;

“Any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical object.”

Another definition offered by Goldstein et al (2002) summarises services as similar to a product as it involves hundreds or thousands of components. However according to the authors, the main contrast between products and services exists in that service components are usually not physical entities but a combination of people, people skills, and materials that must be appropriately integrated to yield the planned or designed service. Gronfeldt and Strother (p24 2006) illustrate the difficulties in defining services due to their inherent characteristics.

“Services include all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or construction, is generally consumed at the time it is produced, and provides added value in forms (such as convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort or health) that are essentially intangible concerns of its first purchaser.”

Lovelock et al (1980) devised seven ways in which services could be classified and in summarising this classification method Kotler and Armstrong (2003) name the four special characteristics evident in service as; intangibility, perishability, inseparability and variability. To overcome the diverse characteristics the authors enlist the services marketing triangle in order to ensure best marketing practice. (Kotler and Armstrong 2003 pg 319) This triangle illustrates the need for interactive, internal and external marketing. Reflecting on the outlined diversities of services marketing Jacobucci et al (chpt 1 2000) discuss the need for the extension of the traditional marketing mix of product, price, place and promotion, to include people, process and physical evidence which was facilitated by the academics Booms and Bitner (1980).

2.7 Market segmentation and niche marketing

Segmentation is the process whereby there is an identification of customer groups that respond differently from other groups to competitive offerings. A segmentation strategy couples the identified segments with a programme to deliver offerings to those segments. (Aaker and McLoughlin 2007)

Trumstrum (1989) discusses the strategic nature of segmentation in the way in which it allows the strategic application of company's resources. This is as it allows the company to tailor their communications towards the characteristics of the market segments they are attempting to penetrate. Raaij & Verhallen (1994) cite the work of Wendell Smith 1956 as the author who introduced the terms “product differentiation”

and “market segmentation”. The authors believe the works of this author to be the one of the first recognitions in the market that there were opportunities to be found in assuming and treating customers differently.

“Market segmentation involves the identification of segmentation variables followed by segmentation of the market. This leads to market targeting, i.e. an evaluation of the attractiveness of the obtained segments and a selection of the target segment(s). For these target segments, positioning concepts are developed, selected and communicated. The segments that are distinguished must form a sound basis for product, distribution, pricing, and communication strategy. This can only be realized by stable segments of which the buying behaviour can be reliably predicted.”

Raaij and Verhallen pg 1 (1994)

In their analysis of market segmentation and markets in general it is noted by Kara and Kaynak (1996) that the further markets fragment the harder they become to segment and the harder these segments become to serve. To overcome this they propose niche marketing which was first conceptualised by Kotler in 1994. Niche marketing is in the words of the preceding authors; the process of further refining and dividing the identified segments. The authors go on to assume that modern age technologies are enabling companies to build unitary building blocks which enables them to bring out more affordable individualised versions of products to serve the refined niche markets.

According to Dibb & Simkin (1997), market segmentation involves activities designed to aggregate customers with relatively homogeneous buying requirements into groups or segments. This allows a balance to be found between the diverse customer needs with the company’s capabilities allowing organisations to compete more effectively. In addition to allowing the organisation to understand the market better, segmentation also creates opportunities in highlighting under-served customer groups.

2.8 Conclusion

The aim of the proceeding chapter has been to examine the academic literature and analyse the evolution of marketing. The main concepts of marketing have been pin pointed and addressed in order to lay the foundations for the facilitation of a better understanding of the political marketing concept which is now explored in the following chapter.

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Chapter 3 Political marketing defined

Chapter objectives

The following chapter addresses the political marketing concept and its characteristics. The similarities and differences between this concept and the marketing concept are then explored.

Chapter contents

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The evolution of political marketing

3.3 Political marketing defined

3.4 The political marketplace

3.5 Marketing plans and market segmentation

3.6 Internal marketing within parties

3.7 Relationship marketing in politics

3.8 Reputation management

3.9 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline where political marketing has evolved from. To achieve this various definitions of the concept are outlined and the various characteristics of the political marketing concept are explored. An analysis of the marketing techniques utilised in the political arena are then documented and analysed.

3.2 The evolution of political marketing

Analysing the emergence of the marketing in politics, Wring (1999) believes it comes from a connection between three theoretical developments. The first development is due to voter volatility which is a result of increasing voter sovereignty and the abandonment of previous partisan allegiances. The second development comes from wide spread social economic and cultural changes, which combined with commercialism and began to colonise many aspects of civic life. Finally the author touches on the evolution of marketing, as discussed in the proceeding chapter. In particular the author notes the broadening of marketing to incorporate the non-profit sector as an initiating factor of political marketing.

Butler and Collins (1999) cite early political writers such as Downs (1957) who utilised ideas from economics to understand political behaviour, therefore proposing the use of market terminology to describe politics has been in existence before the evolution of political marketing to what it is today. While Wring (1999), believes the term “Political Marketing” was first utilised in a study on professional campaigning by Kelley in 1956.

As cited in an article by Baines and Egan in 2001 political campaigning can be dated back as far as the second century BC when campaigning is documented in elections that were held. Wring (1999) approaches the topic from a political scientist’s perspective arguing that marketing has colonised political campaigning in the latter half of the twenty first century and has remained a major function of political marketing. Baines and Egan (2001), feel while there is historical evidence that dates the use of marketing in politics, the development of the academic side of the discipline is still relatively in its infancy.

In his account of political marketing, Lebel (1999) looks at the changing nature of the political landscape from one that was predominantly based on volunteer participation, progressing onto one consisting of a mix of a declining number of volunteers and increasing number of professional consultants. To add to this the author describes a reality where political campaigns required significant strategic thought which created the need for the cross fertilisation from disciplines such as marketing. As a result a large proportion of financial resources are now invested in emerging technologies as they make it possible to contact the voter directly,

Kotler & Kotler (pg3 1999) distinguish political marketing as a major growth industry which is affecting every institution and citizen, as it makes way for the creation of successful causes and candidates. The authors attribute the absorption of marketing into the political domain as it creates the potential to promote the most effective use of scarce resources, generate valuable information for both the candidate and the voters and promote greater responsiveness in political processes.

To provide an understanding of this phenomenon research on political marketing became an established sub-discipline of marketing and this trend was identified by Perloff (1999), especially in countries such as France, the UK, Germany, Australia, and the USA. The author also notes the need to describe and understand political marketing instigated numerous publications in standard marketing and politics journals (e.g. special issues on political marketing in the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Marketing Management.) These articles attempt to overcome criticisms associated with marketing in politics which according to Bauer et al (1996) stems from the use of the term “marketing” synonymously with the word “advertising”, which the author believes has led to the encouragement of the belief that marketing is a creator of propaganda in politics.

3.3 Political Marketing defined

Political marketing has been defined through an abundance of opposing views, which has led to numerous interpretations about what it represents.

O Cass (1996) refers to political marketing as:

“..the analysis, planning, implementation and control of political and electoral programs designed to create, build and maintain beneficial exchange relationships between a party and voters for the purpose of achieving the political marketers objectives”

This definition is similar to earlier definitions of marketing (provided in chapter 2) as relationships and exchanges are mentioned. Lock and Harris (1996) expand on this including a wider body of stakeholder groups into the political equation. They refer to political marketing as a means of communicating with party members, media and prospective sources of funding as well as the electorate. The authors go on to criticise the exchange element of the process mentioned by O Cass as they believe this element of politics may be absorbed into the political scientist’s area of expertise, therefore eliminating the need for the involvement of marketing. Their own definition of

political marketing fails to expand past the communications aspect of marketing, only later do political marketing definitions deal with the broadening of the understanding of the potential of marketing in politics.

As depicted by Brown and Coates 1996 (cited in Dean and Croft 2001) the modern political marketing process involves:

"...a product to be prepared, packaged and marketed with the appropriate brand image after careful market research by the advertisers and public relations experts into what people want."

This broader definition of the process involves drawing in the practicality of Mc Carthys 4 Ps (1964) into the political product marketing mix and as outlined by Butler and Collins (1994) marketing may now be used as a competitive application in politics. According to the authors marketing as a discipline has developed a wider body of expertise in relation to analysis and persuasion of larger groups of people which is a vital tool to possess in the political market. Himmelweit et al (1985) further the argument on the strategic potential of marketing in their discussion on voting behaviour. The author's detail how the use of market research methodologies will enable opportunities to gain a better understanding of voter behaviour and the methods utilised in politics are similar to those that marketers use to analyse traditional consumer buying behaviour in traditional markets (Lock and Harris 1996). Kotler and Kotler (1999) criticise the limited use of market research in politics as they believe politics relies too heavily on opinion polling as their primary market research into voter behaviour. Dermody and Scullion (2001) are also critical of this topic and they partially blame the growth of marketing in politics for the degeneration of political consumption. The authors cite Kavanagh (1996) and decipher that instead of the marketing mix increasing electoral consumption, it has instead bred familiarity among voters which has resulted in the growth of contempt in politics. The authors portray a circumstance where mass communication techniques have educated consumers so the voting consumer has become a discerning consumer and unless they see benefits directly contributing to them they will not engage in the exchange process, i.e. they will not vote.

Bauer et al (pg 5 1996) oppose this view align the need to communicate with and win over the electorate.

"Political marketing provides a party with the means to demonstrate their vision of the state and society to potential and actual voters, and to put this vision into practice. The parties are thus concerned with winning acceptance for their ideas and values, rather than with securing a material gain."

The proposed view is similar in nature to the non-profit marketing world, while it also assumes a sales era mindset as the party are communicating ideas and policies that are already established. The authors summarise the essence of political marketing as existing in the need for the party to reduce uncertainty for the voter.

Lees-Marshment (2000) discusses comprehensive political marketing to overcome the superficial application of marketing in politics. The author goes on to determine that the correct application of marketing has the ability to facilitate understanding the political audience, while tailoring the party's offerings to meet the needs of the target audience. This definition from the twenty first century stresses the importance for political parties to adhere to marketing concepts as opposed to simply deploying tactical marketing techniques.

While it is not without criticism the popularity political marketing now enjoys was stated by O Shaughnessy in 2001:

"Political Marketing is a term we increasingly see in the newspaper, a part now of the baggage of conventional orthodoxy- has come into its own with popular recognition that it is convenient shorthand for something people recognise as central to the operations of their democracy."

3.4 A comparative analysis of political and commercial marketing

In order to facilitate an understanding of the political marketing concept a comparison of both commercial and political markets that has been identified in the literature is now illustrated.

Referring to work conducted by Butler and Collins in 2001 the following summarising comparisons are identified between the two topologies of the modern day political and commercial markets.

- Both markets contain a set of organisations competing for loyalty in the target market.
- Consumers/citizens are the decision makers and their choice will imply some degree of commitment.
- The channels of communication and persuasion are almost identical, as are their reasoning behind them. In other words in both markets consumers desire some kind of reassurance they are making the right decision and this is where marketing steps in.

Kotler and Kotler (1999) also draw on comparisons between business and political markets. In their study they align the process of dispatching goods and services to the market in return for money, to that of the campaign process where candidates dispatch promises, favours, and policy preferences to a set of voters in exchange for their votes, voluntary efforts or contributions. In addition to this, the authors describe candidates as attempting to create favourable lasting images in the minds of consumers, just as companies attempt to do so with their products, services and brands. However as Kotler & Kotler (1999) identify similarities they also highlight some contrasting characteristics; the political market is highly ideologically charged, politicians only enjoy limited visibility in the minds of the consumers and finally politicians must deal with high-intensity activists while attempting at the same time to engage normal citizens.

Quelch (2008) builds on these differentiating factors when analysing what the author terms, the “vanishing voters” of U.S. politics. The author states that unlike consumer markets, in politics there are a limited number of candidates to choose from so choice is restricted and consumers must live with the majority decision. This is nothing like consumer markets where people can buy whatever brand they wish and they can make this purchasing decision whenever they wish whereas political consumers are required to vote on a specified date

In 1994 Butler & Collins, compiled a concise list of political party product characteristics, which adds to the variance of political and consumer markets. They state the political product consists of; multicomponents, underlying loyalties and mutability. The multicomponents trait entails that a member of the electorate may vote for a particular candidate because they are the sole representative of the individual voters preferred party and not because they actually believe in the individual. On the other hand they may vote for the candidate because of who they are even though they do not support the party the candidate represents. As parties are established on a core set of beliefs which appeal to different market segments, this will maintain underlying loyalty within these segments. The mutability component of the political product can be seen when different and sometimes-opposing parties go into Government together in the form of the coalition. As coalitions are formed after votes have been cast, political consumers may begin to question the credibility of the candidates they voted for if they enter into agreements with opposing parties.

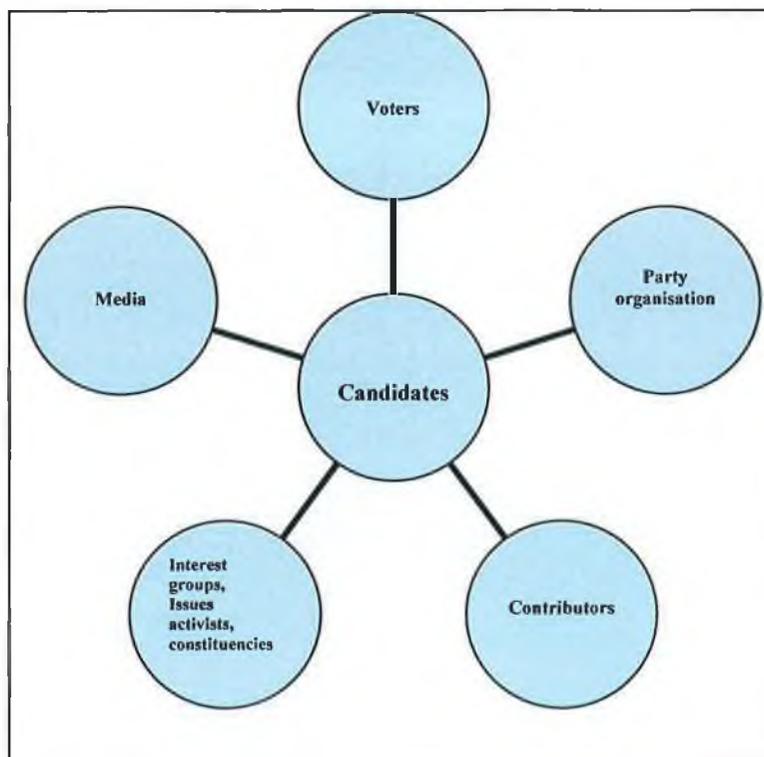
In 1976 O Leary and Iredale suggested that some analysts and practitioners are under the illusion marketing can be directly imported into politics with little adaptation. However this interpretation is criticised by the authors as the varying characteristics identified above deviate the possibility of generic applicability.

3.5 The political marketplace

In the previous chapter the key tenants of marketing were touched on due to their strategic relevance to the political arena. For example non-profit marketing was described and according to Lock and Harris (1996) political marketing may be aligned to this area of marketing as there are numerous audiences involved in the political marketplace.

Kotler and Kotler (1999) came up with an illustration of what they believed the political market audience to consist of. This diagram (illustrated below) comprises of five distinguishable markets, which the authors believe require attention when devising the political marketing strategy.

Figure 6:



Source; Kotler & Kotler (1999) Handbook of Political Marketing Pg 5

The political candidate is at the centre of the activity of this diagram, indicating the authors propose the candidate is at the core of the party politics and not the voter.

This goes against marketing philosophies such as customer centricity which was proposed in chapter two by authors such as Drucker (1954) and the relevancy then debated by Browne (2004).

The party structure

Looking at the composition of the party organisation itself creates a further understanding of marketing in action in politics. Politics has remained predominantly volunteer based, in countries like Ireland where there is a lack of substantial political funding and similar to the non-profit world this creates significant challenges already noted in chapter 2 (Andreasen and Kotler 2003). Identified by the authors in chapter two, is the significant problem in the non-profit sector in attracting, managing and retaining volunteers. This problem originates as the non-profit organisation must market to a third public i.e. the volunteers. The concept of volunteers and their efforts can be summed up as follows:

“The core concept of volunteerism is that individuals participate in spontaneous, private and freely chosen activities that promote or advance some aspect of the common good as it is perceived by the persons participating in it”

Andreasen & Kotler (pg 231 2003)

The problem of attracting and retaining members (Lock & Harris 1996) maybe due to the lack of internal marketing as the absence of internal marketing may result in the deflection of members. This is detrimental to the party’s prospects, as it would ultimately lead to a drop in funding, which leads the party on a slippery slope (Seyd & Whiteley 1992). A recent example of this was noted by Singh (2007) in the English Tory party who’s members charisma and motivation for the party dwindled. In an attempt to manage the crisis level of the situation the party leader, David Cameron even went as far as to getting Arnold Schwarznegger to appear via satellite at a party conference in an attempt to bring back some much needed “sparkle” to the ailing party. (Singh 2007)

In countries where funding isn’t restricted O Shaughnessy (2001) notes the composition of the party is facing new challenges with the emergence of political consultant’s. The author believes the volunteers who were desperately needed in the past to run the party are being pushed to one side to make room for political specialists, which in turn is causing motivational issues within the party’s volunteer

base. According to the author a culture clash is becoming apparent as politics becomes more strategic and human resources are recruited from the commercial markets. (O Shaughnessy 2001)

Market orientation of the party

Market orientation and mobilising the voter is a critical issue of modern day politics but more and more parties are competing for centre position with little differentiation in what they stand for (Butler and Collins 2001).

Sparrow and Turner (2001) stress the importance of a correct orientation in the political marketplace as it is seeing an increase in change and volatility, especially among the power of its stakeholders like the media. Numerous authors have undertaken studies of parties specific to different countries. Their results conclude that the parties involved in the research have evolved through stages similar to those through which marketing has evolved.(Wring 1999)(Lees-Marshment 2001)(Bauer et al 1996). Wring (1999) denotes political marketing to have progressed through propaganda; media and marketing era which is similar to that of the production sales and marketing era synonymous with marketing literature. Dermody & Scullion (2001) addresses the move of modern marketing towards incorporating a societal aspect to its nature and practice. The authors move on to indicate this would then be a desirable marketing position for political parties to engage. This view point indicates that political consumption could be encouraged on a local level, where policies, parties and candidates alike would assume a marketing position that would feed into community identities and therefore localities would see the worth of their vote at election time. In essence there is a creation of a relationship with the community.

The media

The media has an increasing influence on politics. Sparrow and Turner (2001) note the role of party activists and even individual candidates has become “subservient” for a need to construct more uniform and orchestrated messages but this has become increasingly difficult due to the manipulation of the media. As a result of this there is a need for the development of a more intimate and considered relationship with the media and therefore market research professionals are now required. Esser and Spanier (2005) believe there has been a rise in terminology such as “spin doctoring” in relation to political marketing. The authors link this to British politics where they

blame the obsession of the English Labor party with the media as one the main reason that “spinning” has become affiliated with political marketing. Zaller (1999) expands on the media’s changing role in politics stating they are playing a pivotal role in the political arena because individual candidates are becoming more important in election times and while their dependence on the party is as important, they are becoming more reliant on the media and how they are portrayed. This is what Zaller (1999) refers to as “media politics”. The media will be detailed further in the next chapter. Zaller summarises the role of the media within the political marketplace as follows:

Figure 5

- For politicians and their strategists, the goal of media politics is to use mass communication to mobilise the public support they need to gain and hold office, and communicate their policy proposals to voters.
- For journalists, the goal of media politics is to produce stories that attract large audiences and emphasise the independent and significant voice of journalists.
- For citizens, the goal is to monitor politics and hold politicians accountable on the basis of minimal effort.

Source: Zaller (1999) as cited in Esser and Spannier 2005 pg 30

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the critical points of the debate surrounding the political marketing concept. The key authors in the area are mentioned and their discussions and theories on the area have been critiqued.

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Chapter 4

The Internet

Contents

4.0 Introduction

4.1 The evolution of the internet

4.2 Marketing online

4.4 The internet and political marketing

4.5 Conclusion

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to identify the use of the internet in marketing and how this has begun to influence political marketing techniques. Its evolution, advantages and disadvantages are analysed and the second part of this chapter deals with the role of internet marketing in the political domain. As this study attempts to investigate Irish political marketing in particular, Ireland will be referred to throughout the chapter.

4.1 The evolution of the internet

Ngai (2003) describes the internet as a unique tool as it creates both a market and a medium and its significance is noted by Hof and Verity (1994);

“Businesses need to live with the Internet or risk being overwhelmed by it...Some companies are laying the groundwork for entirely new ways of doing business. It is undeniably the new competition”

(cited in Aldridge et al 1997)

The internet’s evolution wasn’t straight forward. It’s progress was slowed when the dot com bubble burst in 2000 (Browne et al 2004) but even prior to this there was anxiety over what could realistically be achieved online (Aldridge et al 1997). Despite this there has been a significant increase in internet growth considering in early 1995 Hanson (2000) noted it would have been possible to store the entire internet on fewer than fifty compact discs. More recent accounts by companies on the internet indicate they expect by 2010 that one third of their sales will be online sales (Mc Kinsey 2007). Hanson (2000) attributes Moore’s law as one of the main reasons the penetration of the internet has become global. Moore’s law describes the falling cost of digital technologies which has allowed people to buy into this modern medium.

4.2 Online marketing

Electronic marketing laid the foundations for the use of internet marketing when it was first used in the nineteenth century (Ngai 2003). The author defines electronic marketing as *“the transfer of goods or services from seller to buyer that involves one or more electronic methods or media.”* A more modern account comes from Imber and Betsy-Ann (2000 as cited in Ngai 2003). They describe internet marketing (I.M.) as the process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, and services that satisfy the goals of both buyers and sellers. Chaffey et al (2003) extend this definition by disclosing their discussion on integrated marketing communications. The role the internet is playing in marketing is continually developing and this can be seen looking at the progression of the definitions proposed by Ngai (2003), Imber & Betsy-Ann (2000) and Chaffey et al (2003). Grosso et al (2006) extend the debate into how this is affecting marketing practice, stating;

“Marketers must build the capabilities necessary to thrive in an environment where audiences and vehicles are highly fragmented, prices change quickly, and advertising performance differs by customer, vehicle, brand offer, and message. This transition will require not only new management skills but also a detailed understanding of the marginal economics of products, customers, and customer conversion.”

Grosso et al (2006)

This statement recognises a number of important points which are necessary in understanding online marketing; the internet is fastening the pace at which markets are fragmenting and companies need to recognise this if they want to survive.

Ranchhod argued in 2004; the basics of marketing involved matching an organisation’s offering with the customers needs, and while this basic premise stays the same, the way in which the organisation can communicate with customers is in a state of constant flux. The author believes that advancing technologies and the evolution of the internet presented several paradoxical situations in marketing. For instance although the internet offers the opportunity for customers to receive a faster and more cohesive service, there is also an existing danger that the service offered may become depersonalised. Cova (1996) adds to the challenges of the internet noting the post-modern individual is paradoxically isolated yet in contact with the whole world electronically.

Herbig & Hale (1997) contradict this idea of the consumer being in isolation as they believe the internet allows interactive dialogue and Mc Kenna (2008) agrees with this as it is no longer effective for businesses and marketers to observe one way monologues. Hanson (pg20 2000) further develops the idea of interactivity and the consumer, citing a new concept of marketing is emerging; namely the individual marketing concept. This concept is defined by the author as holding the key to effective marketing as it enables the consumer to be treated as an individual.

An interactive dialogue will help in providing personalised products and services, improve quality, membership in communities and to provide support (Cova 1996), but it can create further challenges for marketers. The emergence of social networks and user generated content is creating further interactivity among consumers online. This interactivity is in the form of online conversations and communications which include discussions on company’s products and services and companies can lose control of their brands message online (Simmons 2008). Some argued social networking was a fad but it is experiencing such a significant growth online, that it was placed as the theme for the Irish Internets Association annual congress which took place in May of

2008. The aim of this congress was to present how businesses could strategically use social networking sites, online communities and new media in order to enhance their current business ventures. These emerging platforms are seen as innovations to marketing as opposed to traditional routes (O Byrne 2008).

Another element of marketing seeing a change online is online advertising. A report cited by O Mahoney PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) predicts there will be a significant rise in the money spent in online advertising globally; 24.8% growth this year which will drop back to 11.5% by 2011, with Irish figures outpacing growth in any other formats of advertising. There is significant potential online for organisations to raise the profile of their brands through the strategic usage of online vehicles like paid for advertising and online videos (Grosso et al 1996).

A study conducted by An Post and Amarach Research (2008) confirms there is a formidable change noted in the attitudes of the people of Ireland towards the traditional communication and marketing techniques, specifically that of direct mail. Noted in the report is the rise in Irish online users (see the diagrams on the following page). The diagram illustrating advertising exposure is an indication of the changes taking place in advertising, with website advertising receiving more exposure than traditional newspapers.

Deshpande (2002) identified four accelerating trends which summarise the challenges and opportunities mentioned:

1. The democratisation of technology means that information communication technology is becoming accessible to everyone.
2. Social and technological leapfrogging trends reflect unwillingness by emergent markets to accept older generation products.
3. Knowledge transparency due to the widespread communication means there is an inability of businesses to price discriminate across segments.
4. Knowledge is now power, so customer empowerment reflects consumers' enhanced ability to access, understand and share information.

Figure 6:

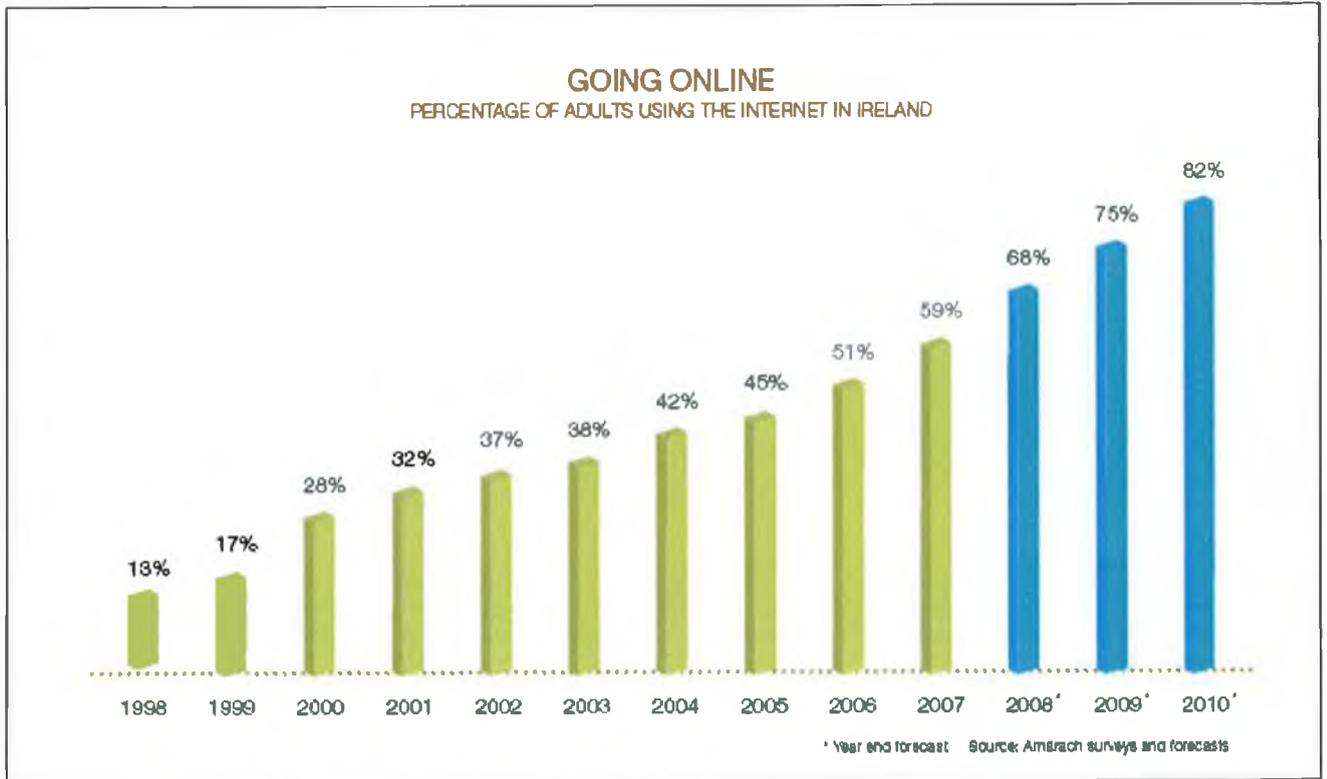
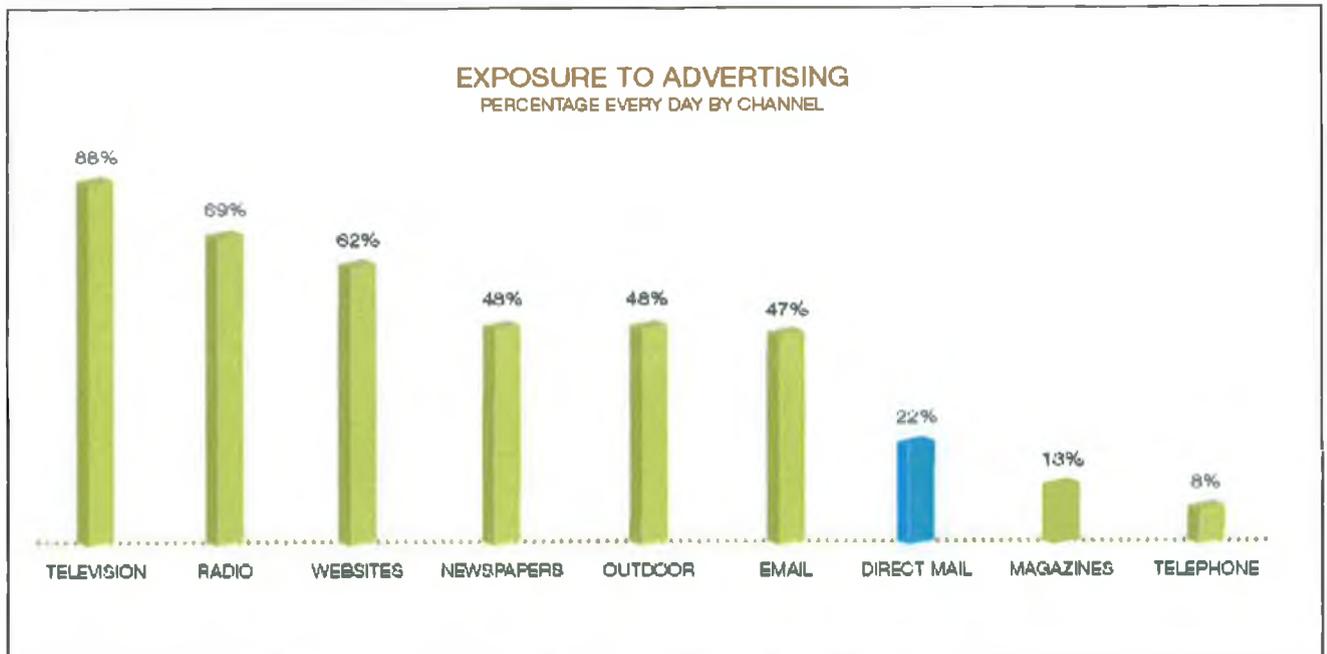


Figure 7:



4.3 The role of the internet in political marketing

The emerging role of the internet in politics is highlighted through the diverse studies that have been completed in relation to the potential relationships between the internet and politics.

Hanson (2000) notes many political observers believe digital technology has played a crucial role in the demise of communism, the spread of democracy around the world and has also enabled economies to grow at a more rapid pace while at the same time sustaining low inflation. Auty (2004) has a similar take on the issue applauding the internet for widening the democratic process through its ability to allow smaller players to compete on a level playing field, while facilitating the spreading of information.

"Many of the politicians don't actually understand the phenomenon of the internet very well. It's partly because of their age . . . often what they learn about the internet they learn from their staffs and their children,"

(Eric Schmidt cited in Eaglesham 2006)

As chairman of one of the worlds most successful search engines, Mr. Schmidt believes while politicians may recognise the importance of the internet, many have yet to realise its strategic implications and the power that it is putting in the hands of the voter. Reid (1988) notes new technologies are rarely perceived for what they are and are usually regarded as corrupt or degrading. As a result of this the author believes there is significant time lost before the the true potential is made of the media. Looking at the communications aspect of the internet, a recent article analysing the internet and politics (Economist 2008 a) cites that although the main parties in the major countries have party websites they offer a narrow scope for users to get involved and offer nothing beyond signing up for email distribution lists. The major English parties are cited as lacking interactivity while some American Party sites are very successful in their successful communication online- with one former U.S. candidates raising nearly \$6 million online. The premise of the article surrounds the idea that the internet has become a bigger part of U.S. politics as Americans have more fianancial resources available to fund internet investments there. In addition to this the author believes English voters still source a relatively large proportion of their information from newspapers. This is a contrasting trend to that note by Jackson (2006) who states there is an increasing number of American citizens using blogging sites to source their political information. The author believes there is a threat for the

political landscape in the growth of the “blogosphere” as there is the creation of a mass group of people, bloggers, whose equivalent does not exist offline. The world of blogging distorts the traditional top down communication of politics, as it encourages communication between citizens which then creates a power from the bottom up, through this new vertical communication axis.

These online conversations are seen as marketing opportunities in American politics as research has shown citizens involved with presidential elections online were seven times more likely to become opinion leaders on political issues among friends and family (Darr et al 2004). The authors believe if political parties work on engaging these online citizens, they are tapping into a new method of filtering their message to the market. Taking this into consideration these social networking sites are growing in importance in U.S. campaigns as they offer the tools to move away from standardised user content and engage the user on a personal level. It is a means of interactivity and inclusion between the party and the voter (Williams et al 2008). In the U.S. the major parties have come together and set up an online community known as “Hotsoup”. This site is modelled on social networking sites such as Facebook and the aim of the online community is to bring people together and give them a platform in which to discuss political issues. The founders of the site includes Bill Clintons former Press Secretary; Joe Lockhart, Mark McKinnon George Bush’s advertising campaign manager and Al Gores 2000 chief campaign strategist Carter Eskew. The premise behind the site is that, one on one voters will not be as expressive with their opinions, but the internet breaks down this barrier and enables an open dialogue and as identified by the earlier report by An Post and Amarach Research this two way dialogue is the way of the future. Social networking sites are also being used in Irish politics, with the major adopter of this route being the Young Green party of Ireland. The websites of the parties involved in the research were analysed by the author. Of all the parties the Young Green party were the only party actively pursuing the social network marketing strategy.

These accounts of political marketing online indicate it is advanced, but British parties cyber-space efforts were deemed unimaginative and in 2001 Auty & Cowen (2001) detailed that political parties still had a lot to learn about the potential of the internet. They note the success of third party political sites such as The Guardians politics site which has proved to be accepted by voters as a valid online source of political information. A study conducted by UCT France also found that the roles of

media websites were now deemed to be authoritative in the world of politics online (Financial Times 2005). A report by the Pew Research Centre found more consumers stated that they got their political news from msnbc.com than any other online site. (cited by Wash 2008) . The success of the media site is contributed to its in-depth reports, interactive features, exclusive video footage and real time analysis of the political landscape from reliant sources such as reporters from The New York Times and Newsweek, they also have a “*Candidates + Issues Matrix*” which has received over 17 million page views. The idea behind this innovation is people can interact online with candidates on specific issues, rate their agreement with the response given then the site will match up the voter with the best suited candidate to their interests. Academics have already begun to investigate how the internet is impacting on politics and in an article published in The Financial Times (2005) a study conducted by two researchers at the University of Technology Compiègne showed that websites had played an important role in swinging the public opinion to vote no in a French Referendum;

“The No campaign set up 161 of the 295 sites focusing on the constitutional debate, helping redress a bias towards the Yes campaign in the mainstream media. The No vote eventually won the referendum on May 29 with a 55 per cent majority.”

Franck Ghitalla was one of the researchers who undertook the study and from his analysis of the campaign he stressed, politicians need to look beyond the traditional television and newspaper communication as the internet was becoming a political territory that must be used.

Conclusion

The internet is a strategic opportunity already utilised in some areas of political marketing. In some countries online efforts are more advanced but as web 2.0 continues to grow in significance online political marketing efforts will develop accordingly.

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Chapter 5:

The political consumer

5.1 Introduction

5.2 The evolution of the empowered consumer

5.3 Political consumer behaviour

5.4 Results and discussion on primary research conducted on the Irish political consumer.

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to gain an understanding of consumers in the political environment. To achieve this, the relevant academic literature will be reviewed and voter behaviour will be looked at.

The concluding part of this chapter addresses primary research conducted by the author into the behaviour of the Irish voting public. This research was conducted through the distribution of a questionnaire both online and offline

5.2 The concept of the empowered consumer

“Consumer power has become a cliché of modern consumer culture. Marketing practitioners routinely refer to it by pointing to a consumers’ ability to ignore, resist and adapt even the sleekest and most costly multi-media assault”

(Dengri-Knott et al 2006 pg950)

Davies and Elliott (2006) argue that marketers still lack an understanding of the various arguments, understanding and discussions on consumer empowerment and go on to identify an empowered consumer as one who will be a maker and not an adapter of spaces and goods. Other authors add to this illustrating the empowered consumer as individuals that reflect their beliefs and values in what they do and do not purchase (Dickinson & Hollander 1991), in otherwords consumption can fill the hunger for a space in which to construct a sense of ones self and what is important (Kozinets 2001). Davies and Elliott (2006) describe the evolution of the empowered consumer as originating from a number of changing themes in society which began with the proliferation of brands into society. If this view is aligned to that of the view of Andreasan and Kotler (2003) which was illustrated in chapter 2, it can be seen why empowerment may not have been an issue associated with the production era of marketing.

Consumer empowerment is portrayed in marketing texts as originating from competition in the market (Wright 2006) and the 1985 works of Michael Porter are referred to heavily throughout the academic literature. Porters five force analysis displays how bargaining power and increased competition impacts on the market. Porter dictates that the actions made by consumers through their various abilities to exercise choice is the essence of consumer empowerment.

In modern day account of consumer empowerment Shaw et al (2006) discuss how there is a growing trend whereby consumers are seeking to engage and influence the actions and practices of their producers and suppliers of their goods and services and the consumer’s empowerment is manifesting itself in boycotts and protest towards unethical companies with the aim of changing traditional marketing and business behaviour. Drawing on the political domain as a metaphor for empowerment, voters are seen to be empowered as they are the creators and shapers of society as they possess the ability and power to influence their environments through casting a vote in an election.

To summarise empowerment and its influence in marketing Byrne (2003 as cited by Wright et al (2003 pg 927)) states consumers who do not like a product or service will punish the producer who hasn't fulfilled their expectations, and reward those who meet their demands. In turn the author believes this is what increases competitiveness. Looking to Byrnes definition there are traces of empowerment in the idea of "the anti political consumer" presented by Butler and Collins (2001).

5.3 Political consumer behaviour

In a discussion prompted by consumer empowerment, Putnam (1995) proposed that the traditional form of political participation is now changing as confidence the electorate once had in many political systems and western democracies is now on a decline. This decline comes from the inability of Governments to reflect the values of society (Shaw et al 2006). Stolle et al (2005) argues empowerment has changed the way in which the electorate are now participating in political processes and an alternative political consumerism is evolving where voters are lifestyle driven.

Due to this electoral volatility, Cubitt (2003) looks at the increase in those voters deemed to be floating voters. The author suggests that there has been an increase in attention given to British political marketing ever since the infamous Saatchi and Saatchi campaign in Britain which was entitled "Labor isn't working". However although there has also been a growth of marketing in politics there has been a noted increase in apathy among voters which has increased the numbers of potential consumers for different parties from the mass floating voters. The author suggests that mass marketing no longer reaches the political consumer so instead British parties are engaging database marketing in attempt to reach the floating voter.

Manners determined in 1996 that the voters were no longer susceptible to being treated as one mass market and political parties were under pressure to utilise emerging technologies in order to personalise the message reaching the political consumer. Walker (2001) cites an example of this, when the conservative party of England had significant resources investing in profiling floating voters, who were then to receive personalised mail from the party, this was deemed to constitute relationship marketing by an expert interviewed on behalf of the party. Even further evidence was presented in a report by Media Eye a Government agency in England, which indicated in 2001 that over 1.3 million people would access the websites of the main political parties in search of information to help them make their voting decision.

The report concluded that of these 1.3 million people, 95% of them would leave the sites still undecided as the existing websites of the parties were lacking in any clarity for voters.

Quelch 2008 also notes the declining numbers of voters turning up to elections in America and details limited choice and knowledge as one of the main reasons this occurs. The author states that on average there is already \$20 spent on each vote, but as the decline in participation continues the author feels this money could be more wisely invested. The author looks to the internet as a potential solution as it will enable under funded candidates to create grass roots campaigns.

5.4 The political consumer and the strategic application of marketing for political best practice

Identified in the marketing literature of the present day is the recognition of a strong correlation between successes in marketing with the strategic application of a S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, accurate, realistic, and timely) marketing plan. To undertake this strategic planning and in order to facilitate tackling the hybrid of issues in politics it is necessary to understand the electorate who are the target market.

Himmelweit et al (1985) conducted analysis on British politics and found that there was a decline in the consistency of people voting for the same parties across elections and in order to overcome the changing foundations of the marketplace that there is a need to utilise the marketing application of segmentation in order to appreciate the changing marketplace (Smith & Hirst 2001). According to the authors, segmenting the market will highlight the different target markets in the constituencies enabling political parties to focus on the key issues of their target segment of the electorate. This in turn may gain parties a unique selling point and a point of differentiation for parties.

Figure 8:

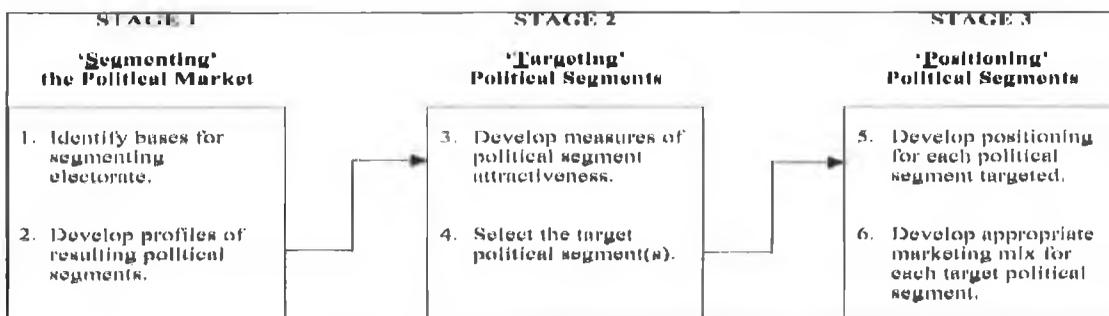


Figure 8: segmenting the political market (Smith, G. & Hirst, A. (2001))

Contradicting Smith & Hirst (2001), some analysts believe party's should abandon any ideological baggage and set its strategy to go straight down the middle, so as not to upset anyone and maintain the traditional voters (Dean & Croft 2001). While other authors such as White (2003) believe that without tailoring their offerings, political parties are in danger of alienating some of the voting public. White's research specialises in the area of the youth vote and her findings are summarised as follows:

"Young people are not unique in their response to politics, as much of the electorate seems to share their views... politicians need to give more consideration to establishing forums that facilitate a dialogue between them and young people."

In her article White (2003) outlines three key areas that require improvement to attract back the voting public. These three proposed solutions may resonate with the core problems that marketers need to address in politics.

1. Politics need to be made more interesting and explained to the market in terms the electorate can identify with.
2. The political candidates need to be representative of the electorate so the market believes they will adequately represent their needs.
3. Politicians need to provide more opportunities to young people to become involved in politics in order to stimulate interest.

The research is limited in the area of political consumer behaviour, from a marketing perspective. In order to further the author's knowledge in the area the next part of this chapter is tailored to gaining a better understanding of the political consumer and the role they play in the exchange process. The required market intelligence was gathered via questionnaires and the results of this are now presented and discussed.

5.5 Results and discussion on primary research conducted on the Irish political consumer

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix 3. The main themes that were identified in the questionnaire are now discussed in order to provide a holistic understanding of the political consumer in Ireland. The themes are now listed as they appeared in the research.

The Irish political consumer's knowledge and understanding of the political processes of Ireland

The interest in politics was predicatively higher among the purposive sample gathered from the internet site politics.ie. Those respondents from the self administered questionnaires came in with the second highest interest and then the average internet users came in last. Those who expressed a strong interest were limited across the results spectrum, indicating there is a weak interest in politics demonstrated among this voting public sample. Knowledge of Irish parties was mid scale with only 2% of the average internet users stating they had a strong knowledge. No other segment had respondents expressing a strong knowledge. This is a further indication of the disillusionment among the voting public.

Political consumer buying process

The next area of the research was targeted at understanding how the political consumer makes their voting decision. Party policies and beliefs were listed as the main influence on voting decisions by both the politics.ie sample and also those involved in the self administered survey. The average internet users cited their vote was determined by a mixture of the elements and following the most frequent cited reason as party policies and beliefs. The sample from the politics site stated they had a good knowledge of Irish political parties but when it actually came to stating the differences between the parties only a small number of respondents were able to do so. Of the responses gathered people found it hard to see a clear distinction between parties such as Fianna Fail and Fine Gael however among the average internet users clear distinctions were made by those who had previously expressed a strong political knowledge and understanding.

It was clear across all segments that voters have an identification problem with Irish political parties. If consumers are failing to distinguish between one party and another there is a fundamental flaw in existence with the unique selling points of each party, and therefore a flaw also lies with their different market orientations.

The Lisbon Treaty debate

A clear divide existed between those who voted yes and those who voted no in the Lisbon referendum. Those voters who cast a yes vote clearly stated they felt it was in the interest of Ireland's future to be in the European Union. Many who gave detailed

answers regarding their yes vote clearly had an understanding what they were voting in favour of. Some of the sample that stated they voted no to the treaty, cited their reasons as being against its principles, but it was clear throughout the results that lack of understanding and knowledge regarding the treaty acted as a deterrent from casting a vote in favour of the treaty. The credibility of the pro-treaty side's marketing campaign also came into question and numerous voters criticised public figures for openly admitting they had not read the Treaty, yet they wanted the public to vote for it. This stresses the importance of credibility and reputation in facilitating marketing exchanges.

Voter loyalty and floating voters

Fianna Fail was the most cited answer for the party receiving the most first preference votes in each of the segments but there was a large proportion of voters who were in agreement that they did not vote for the same party at each election. No more than 21% of any of the segments answering they voted for the same party at elections. This may indicate traditional partisan support has begun to decline. Loyalty in voting for the same party was highest amid the politics.ie segment which was to be expected as the users of the site are actively engaging in politics, hence their selection for the research. With loyalty currently appearing scarce, the number of floating votes in the market is quite high.

The importance of the candidate/friends/family in Irish politics

There was a lack of knowledge among the majority of voters about each party stood for but many suggested they were able to distinguish one party candidate from another part candidate on a local level. This indicates Irish politics is still very much a personality based market. The next chapter shows that the political parties of Ireland still rely heavily on the work of their candidates and it would appear this is exactly how consumers are remembering the service.

Door-to-door canvassing was overwhelmingly the highest point of contact yet even though some analysts portray this to represent relationship marketing a limited number of voters actually felt they had a relationship with their candidates. In addition to this while candidates claim to gather research and feedback calling door-to-door only the politics.ie sample felt they had adequate opportunity to give feedback. This

was the only sample expressing they were satisfied with feedback opportunities and this sample was the only one contacting politicians online.

Of those who identified themselves as supporters or members of parties, the majority said they had affiliated through friends or family.

Political party membership

There were a limited number of responses from political party members. From those who did engage in the survey the most cited reason for party membership was due to family and friend affiliation and many admitted they did not regularly attend meetings. Ezine communication from the party itself rated the lowest among the political website respondents.

The internet and the Irish political consumer

As to be expected the internet use and competence was highest among the segment from the politics website with the average internet users coming in second and the self administered questionnaire respondents third. Quite a large majority of the self administered questionnaires (81.3%) and average internet users (69.4%) had not used the internet to contact a politician. These figures are a sharp contrast to the 59.2% of the politics site sample who had used the internet to contact a politician. Due to this internet use may appear limited in the Irish political market, but an overwhelming number of respondents right across the sample spectrum indicated they would use the internet to contact them in the future.

Yet again those who had accessed a political party online were highest among the website respondents (68.8%) with all the major parties referred to in the answers. (77% of self administered users and 67.3% of average internet users had not accessed a party online). One major theme for those who had accessed parties online was that the party's official site was cited as the most frequent option of online access with You Tube following a close second. The average internet users segment were the only ones to have an equal amount of people selecting You Tube and News channels tying them in as the second highest contact points for this segment. This may have occurred because average internet users may already access news channels as a general point of interest online. This result contradicts what earlier authors in the literature review have suggested that news channels were becoming a vital tool for accessing information on political parties. It would appear from these samples selected that the

middle man is not as big an element in the Irish political consumer's consumption and party sites and user generated sites like You Tube are forming the new means of modern Irish political marketing.

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to understanding the role of the consumer in the political market. To determine this role a synopsis was provided on the evolution of the empowered consumer and the primary research was conducted in the Irish consumer market. The primary research allowed for an in-depth analysis to take place on Irish marketing, tying in with the objectives laid out in chapter one.

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Chapter 6:

Political marketing in action in Ireland

6.1 Introduction

6.2 The Green Party

6.3 Fine Gael

6.4 Fianna Fail

6.5 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter has been written following in-depth interviews with the General Secretary's of the Green Party, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail. The Labor party would have been a bigger political party in comparison to the Greens but the author felt, there would be a better opportunity to gain holistic insight into the political marketing world by comparing established competitors with a significantly smaller party recently new to the marketplace.

A copy of the questions that were used in the interview can be located in Appendix 2 and the name and addresses of the key personnel of the party's that were interviewed can be located in Appendix 1.

6.2 The Green Party

6.2.1 The role of marketing in the party

Marketing is perceived in the Green Party as playing a promotional and communications role as Mr. O Coamhanaigh describes it as a tool enabling the party to get its political message across. The continuous use of the word “communication” throughout the interview reinforces the fact that the primary role of marketing within this party is for a communications purpose. They have seven full time employees working within the party headquarters, three of which are working in a communications role within the party but resource constraints appear to limit marketing throughout the party.

Mr. O Coamhanaigh believes that other parties are over concerned by what voters think and as a result politics is becoming more about competing for various political positions and not running the country effectively. The interviewee blames this trend for the creation of similar party offerings, which is making it difficult for the political consumer to differentiate between the current political parties. As General Secretary of a party in Government the interviewee takes the stance that political policy should be structured on how the country can be run correctly and not how parties can tailor their messages to suit the voting electorate.

It would appear from this synopsis of the interview that the General Secretary of the Green party adopts a selling approach to political marketing.

6.2.2 Marketing techniques of the party

The primary method of marketing utilised by the party remains the traditional political marketing technique of door-to-door canvassing. This method is significantly time consuming but the General Secretary of this party argues this direct marketing method is the best way of alerting the public to the Green Party. When questioned whether this direct marketing technique may add to the cynicism of the public, Mr O Caomhanaigh stressed their party attempts to motivate candidates to maintain a consistent presence among the voting public by encouraging them to canvass both during and outside election time. The party representative realises that the public are becoming critical of this marketing technique but believes that in providing a consistent communications platform they are fighting this criticism on the door steps of the voters.

The second most important method deployed by the party is the distribution of party information leaflets to the voting public. The party rates this technique highly as it eliminates third party manipulation which may be generated if mediums such as the media are deployed. In an attempt to encourage interaction with the party and in attempting to measure the success of leaflet distribution, candidates place a special offer inside the leaflet for the voter. For example this offer may come in the guise of the competition where the voter fills in their details in attempt to avail of a competition or special offer. The party believes this encourages interaction with the party and while people may now be inundated with leaflets in their doors by offering something to the voters it is encouraging them to read it and not discard it.

The internet rates behind these marketing mediums for the Greens as the party still believe that unlike other countries Ireland's political landscape is still very much personality based, with their research indicating that over 75% of voters will have met the politician that they cast their first preference vote for. In an attempt to be innovative about their approach to the internet the party encourages the recording of the videos for the website to be recorded at alternative venues which may appeal to different segments of the public. For example they have recordings from farmers markets and they also intend to record at up coming events such as the Pride Parade.

6.2.3 Market research used by the party

Already mentioned is the lack of funds within the party and from speaking to Mr. O Caomhanaigh, marketing research appears to be an area of marketing suffering from the lack of funding. The party has undertaken a small amount of polling in the marketplace; but they are still only considering the use of focus groups as they are quite expensive to run. The party keep a close watch on the traffic to their website and when launching any initiatives via the website the party ensure they analyse the statistics generated by this.

6.2.4 Segmenting the market

When it comes to deciding on how best to segment the market the party's primary reference is the tally votes of the previous election. The party will concentrate on areas where they have rated highest in an attempt to extend their share in this market. Door to door canvassing further complements this market research technique as the candidates will canvass, find out what issues are affecting these segments and then

follow up these issues and make the voter aware of their efforts. Integrated communications are also used as candidates include on information leaflets, how they are fighting the corner of the voter issue or how they are approaching the issue for the voter.

To capturing the youth vote Mr. O Coamhanaigh believes their use of the internet has been a good stepping stone with the party concentrating on the use of popular sites such as You Tube. He relates how they realise they must think out the box in order to reach these voters but the party is predominantly reliant on the expertise of their volunteers to leverage their efforts in the marketplace. Limited resources are overcome by tapping into the knowledge of their volunteers and a recent example where this cross functional use of talent was used was in the party's election political broadcast. The party's research had identified that a lot of the market wouldn't watch party political broadcasts so the party attempted to think outside the box. The composition and delivery of the broadcast is quite unique and as a direct result their broadcast received a lot of web traffic on You Tube.

College campuses and schools are also targeted in an attempt to tap into the youth vote and the party currently have one full time employee whose role is to create a Green presence on college campuses during college events such as freshers week. Mr O Coamhanaigh also stated in an attempt to attract the youth's attention to politics, there has been the generation of the "Green Flag" awards, where local political candidates are encouraged to attend for the presentation ceremony and interact with the children and their families.

When probed as to the reason as to why there is a declining participation among the youth vote in politics, Mr. O Caomhanaigh takes the view that the youth are quite idealistic and can be turned off by the pragmatism of politics and may not have yet decided where they stand on the political spectrum.

The major issue for the party in segmenting and then communicating with the market is in contacting those voters who do not access the internet and who do not attend an educational institute. Yet again door-to-door canvassing comes in as a marketing strategy as candidates will bring the electoral register with them and encourage anyone who is not registered to register, also helping them in the process.

Discussing floating voters, the Green Party believe that they are more likely to get the floating vote as they are a relatively new party but this may now change as there may be an element of protesting voting linked to their votes now as they are in

Government. The Green Party vote is a lot more transient to that of the other parties as only one quarter of their voters remain consistent and the rest of the make up of their votes changes at each election.

Non-national voters are continually making up a larger body of voters for local elections and therefore Mr. O Coamhanaigh believes that they are not a segment to be ignored. After the authors initial analysis of the three political party's websites the Green Party were identified as the only party who hadn't incorporated translated pages into their websites but Mr. O Coamhanaigh explained this option on the site had been delayed due to technical difficulties. The party currently has one inner city candidate compiling a strategy in order to tap into this latent non-national market demand, part of this strategy includes the translation of the direct marketing material into languages such as Mandarin, Polish and other languages. If it is successful it will be rolled out around the country.

6.2.5 Internal Marketing

The major problem with the internal workings of the party is the ability of getting people involved. The primary way in which members are recruited is through candidates bringing family and friends with them when they join the party.

The Green's have established a new initiative whereby people interested in becoming associated with the party, but not become a fully pledged member can join their supporters list, accessible via their website. This is an attempt to get people like certain civil servants involved who may be alienated by traditional party membership, as it is predisposition of their job not to be associated with certain political parties.

Another attempt of the Green Party to encourage membership is through the collection and storage of email addresses collected door-to-door by candidates. These emails are stored and the data is mined on a local level for the issuing of e-bulletin updates that alert voters on how they have tackled the voters concerns.

Internal marketing is again perceived in a communications role with the party representative stating it is achieved via their quarterly newsletter "Green Voice" which all members receive and the monthly lists to members of what they have achieved in Government. The interviewee believes these publications motivate members of the party. If the party needs to gather people together they find in addition to phone calls that email appeals are also quite effective in rallying people together.

Local branches of the party are the most effective means of getting new people into the party with getting people they know involved. There are some national initiatives used by the party like the establishment of recruitment stalls but most internal activities happen at a local level and this is where people get most involved.

6.2.6 Current political marketing issues

Discussion on the defeat of the Lisbon Treaty which had occurred the week prior to the interview, Mr. O Coamhanaigh proposed the defeat was an issue of trust not an issue of marketing and there was a deeper issue at hand other than the marketing of the Treaty.

Discussing the 2008 American Presidential election, the interviewee commented that apart from similar election time lengths there were limited similarities between the Irish and American electoral systems. In his opinion once the four year term of Irish Government is complete, people realise an election is imminent therefore campaigning is starting earlier every time. In contrasting the two political markets the interviewee stated that in America it is similar to “a war of attrition” between two main candidates, where as in Ireland political parties must be conscious of a number of parties any of which have the possibility of making an impact on the election turnout.

Concluding Green Party remarks

In concluding remarks the interviewee states that niches are becoming more important in the Irish political marketplace, especially for the Green Party who is finding the use of niche marketing quite effective for the growth of their party.

Also noted in the interview was the Green Party are currently experiencing some problems with voter perception’s of the party brand as people believe they solely represent the environment. The party feel this perception ignores the coherent policies in which the party believe they offer to the political arena.

6.3 Fine Gael

6.3.1 **The Marketing of the Party**

Mr. Tom Curran (General Secretary) was selected for an in-depth interview on Fine Gael. When asked to define marketing, Mr. Curran proceeded to discuss its role in the “production and packaging of a message...which was vital in the success of Fine Gael as a franchise and a brand”. The interviewee was adamant in stressing the importance of packaging the message before its delivery to the voting public.

The marketing structure of Fine Gael comprises of; a press team, advertising agency and a design team. The press team deal with all the external communications of the party, the advertising agency source and buy their advertising space, and the design team create, design and complete all of the advertising for Fine Gael.

6.3.2 **Marketing techniques used by the party**

Mr. Curran contributes door-to-door canvassing as the best and most important marketing technique used by Fine Gael. Even though this may be the most traditional form of marketing employed by parties Mr. Curran still believes this is the most effective form of marketing. Candidates of the party are encouraged to canvass all year around, and after discussing whether this actually happens, Mr. Curran could only name one candidate who did.

Fine Gael candidates have begun to use mobile clinics, where they use a caravan or camping van to host clinics and they then move among different housing estates allowing people to come to them with problems. Prior to arriving they will drop leaflets in people’s doors to alert them to their presence in the area which allows people to come to them, without the voter being disturbed to answer the door.

Although door-to-door canvassing was considered to be the most important marketing tool, it was clear from the discussion that the internet is becoming an integral part of the marketing strategy for the future growth of this party. In recent internet incentives the party posted informational videos of all female representatives of the party videos on You Tube and Mr. Curran was keen to stress that the party will be devoting a significant bigger proportion of resources to researching the effective use of the internet for the party. At the moment they are creating internet television on their website, so that it will be more interesting for people to access and so they will have

reason to return to the site, which will in turn drive up the traffic to their site creating more effective use of the website as a marketing technique.

One innovative marketing endeavour the party undertook was the establishment of the “opinion-ater” in order to measure voter’s opinions in the Lisbon Treaty. What was involved in this project was the establishment of two interactive sites at two hot spots in Dublin in temporary accommodations similar to bus shelters. On these sites were computerised polling machines where people could cast their vote and see it come up on an electronic billboard above the opinion-ater. The idea was to reinforce Fine Gaels stance on the Lisbon Treaty, while creating a technological savvy and modern perception of the Fine Gael party.

6.3.3 Internal Marketing

Fine Gael is organised into 1,200 branches around Ireland which holds over 35,000 members. New candidates bringing new people into the party with them when they join is the most effective form of recruitment for the party. There are also recruitment drives whereby the party go out and drop leaflets in the doors of people, telling them what the party stands for. This allows people the opportunity to express their interest in joining the party.

In order to keep members interested in the party activities Fine Gael will send out text alerts, emails and snail mail alerting members to party activities. As well as this every member will also be invited to constituency meetings throughout the year.

6.3.4 Market research

Fine Gael engages numerous market research techniques which have been adopted from commercial marketing. It is clear the party are adamant about discovering what their voters expect from them and the interviewee relates that the party engages in at least four years research into elections, this includes focus groups, questionnaires, polling etc. One technique they have tailored specifically to the political market includes test canvassing. Here the party are in fact engaging in test marketing where they select a certain area for testing, they canvass the area and from communicating with voters they identify the key issues in the minds of the political consumer. The party will then devise policies to deal with the issues raised and they will either return door-to-door or they will establish a number of focus groups to test out the devised policies.

6.3.5 Segmenting the political marketplace

In discussing voter turnout at elections, Mr. Curran believes that people lack an interest in politics and it is only when times are tough that they will look to the political marketplace for answers. The interviewee agreed there is less and less divide among what the main political parties stand for as there is no extreme party dominating the political domain at present. Another feature that Mr. Curran notes about the traditional voter in Ireland is that if voters that vote for Fine Gael decide to deflect to other parties the majority will go to Fianna Fail and vice versa. In Mr. Curran's opinion this means that while literature does suggest that the traditional voter's loyalty is changing it may not be to the degree as some research would lead people to believe. This may also indicate the little differentiation in existence between the fore mentioned parties.

Addressing the diversification of the population, Fine Gael have approached the international challenge by employing a Polish member of staff who's sole responsibility is to deal with non-traditional and new community segments. As part of this strategy the party now has Polish translation option available on its website and in addition to this there is a marketing strategy being deployed in order to reach out to and package the parties offering in other languages such as Portuguese, Russian and Polish. Fine Gael are also looking at identifying a candidate within these majority constituencies to run for election.

The interviewee relays this new marketing strategy could also present some negative connotations. Relating to the defeat of the Lisbon Treaty Mr. Curran believes a lot of backlash to the treaty was due to the defiance of Irish people to accept more immigrants into the country when many Irish citizens are struggling to find work with the current down turn in the economy. While this new marketing strategy may risk alienating some of the traditional voting public the party see this new marketing strategy as a way of capturing the vote from a large emerging latent market.

6.3.6 Current political marketing issues

Discussing the Lisbon Treaty defeat Mr. Curran believes that it easier to put across a negative message than it is to put across a positive one. In terms of the defeat the No

campaign won the defeat as they did a better job of bringing their message to the market.

Relating to the American presidential election Mr. Curran also agrees that Irish politics is far more personality based and that in Ireland it is a lot more about knocking on doors than reliance on expensive advertising spends by the parties.

In concluding remarks Mr. Curran stresses that the marketing of the party predominantly rests with the candidates themselves as they play the most important influence at a local level.

6.4 Fianna Fail

In order to maintain consistency in the research the General Secretary of Fianna Fail Mr. Sean Dorgan was interviewed. In discussing the term marketing Mr. Dorgan highlighted that in his opinion there was both a philosophical and a theoretical understanding of what marketing is. For Fianna Fail it is about understanding the needs and wants of the voters and ensuring that they are at the centre of the party's activity. While Mr. Dorgan believes there are similarities between political marketing and commercial marketing, the differences that exist between the two make it hard in his opinion to fit it into the generic text book descriptions of marketing theory. He cites the main difference in the political marketplace is that it is not a consumer led market; therefore the marketing mix in its traditional form is not applicable. In b2b and b2c markets the marketer may be able to pick and choose from many ingredients in which to entice the consumer to buy into a product or service but in politics the interviewee believes the basics that work best in stimulating demand for the party as opposed to competitors in the market.

Fianna Fail lacks a designated marketing department but the interviewee described an organisation where a marketing philosophy is adopted throughout. It was clear while there was a lack of a specified marketing function within the party, market intelligence played a vital role and an unofficial marketing information system appears to be vital in the success of this particular party.

In relation to the marketing objectives of the party Mr. Dorgan referred the author to the objectives of the party outlined in the Fianna Fail Constitution. The interviewee stated that as the party had been re-elected to Government the electorate were happy with the work they were doing as an organisation and therefore the objectives outlined and the work carried out was considered to be what the voting public wanted.

6.4.1 Marketing techniques utilised

Direct marketing through person to person contact was again illustrated as the major aspect of communication exchange between the party and the electorate. Door-to-door canvassing is held as the most important way of conducting the marketing of the party. Mr. Dorgan believed that it was these traditional and uncomplicated techniques that were the best in winning the votes of the electorate. The party offer a service and so the best way to market this service is in ensuring it is provided correctly to those in the various constituencies. When the candidate travels around the voting public and

devotes time to meeting the electorate it shows that they are working for their customers needs.

In segmenting the market Mr. Dorgan expressed the view that it can be very difficult to segment the market and he said that if this was a route that the party went down that each individual voter may become a segment in their own right. He recognised that there is a change in loyalty among voters but maintained that the party's reputation and track record allowed them consistency in voting patterns for the party.

6.4.2 Internal marketing

Fianna Fail adopt similar techniques to the other two parties which are detailed in the proceeding research and this seems to work effectively for the party as there are currently three thousand representative branches of the party throughout the country holding up to 65,000 members. Fianna Fail has managed to keep up its retention rates of its members where other parties have fallen behind. Again the franchises throughout the country are stressed as vital in the attraction and retention of new members but recruiting volunteers is becoming considerably harder as people are more time poor and therefore have less time to volunteer. Other methods of drawing new members into the party involves recruitment leaflets.

6.4.3 Market research

Throughout the interview with Mr. Dorgan it was clear that Fianna Fail are a clear example of services marketing in action in Irish Politics. The candidates are the primary source of research on behalf of the party as they work at the frontline and the market intelligence that they gather all gets fed back into the party system. While the party do conduct a limited amount of polling, the interviewee believes that the media conduct a significant amount of research and therefore it would be pointless to duplicate their findings at a cost to the party. The General Secretary of the party also said he felt it would be pointless conducting polls throughout periods in the electoral cycle when the findings would be sure to change prior to an election. The interviewee believe people will only show an interest in times when they must become active in some form, like in the run up to an election when voters must decide who they want to represent them. Outside these time periods the interviewee believed voters will

become lethargic with the Irish political domain if they are continually hassled as to their opinions etc.

6.5.4 Current Political marketing issues

In speaking about the American Presidential election, Mr Dorgan stated that there were numerous restrictions in the political marketing practices in Ireland in comparison to the ongoing US presidential election. In America they have the unlimited ability to advertise as financial resources allow them, but in Ireland candidates are not allowed to adopt paid advertising strategies on television or any other medium. The interviewee recognised that the internet had become a strategic medium in reaching the electorate in America, however he disagreed this would be the case in Ireland. The interviewee created a political scene in Ireland where politics is a very personal thing. You can meet any of the senior figures of the main parties by travelling to any of their local clinics in their home constituencies. This was more unlikely in America therefore there was a requirement to increase the use of marketing as the parties messages had to travel quite a distance.

Critiquing the weighing importance of the internet it was clear in the interview, Fianna Fail are adopting similar techniques as the other parties with You Tube videos. They also track the traffic to their site however Mr. Dorgan believes that the validity of this information may be questionable as the people that may be accessing the site or videos in question may not necessarily like the party and they are as likely to be accessing it for negative reasons. He also noted that while there has been an increase in the diversity of the sites available online, for example the increased interest in social networking sites, he questioned the applicability and plausibility of these sites as a platform for a discussion on politics. The interviewee believed people accessed these sites in order to talk about their lives, and not about politics as he reiterated the fact that people are generally busy and will only be interested in times when needs must like in the run up to elections. Despite this criticism of the internet, Mr Dorgan said the party are open to incorporating the internet more in the future but at the moment the internet did not drive the party and instead more traditional techniques mentioned are still the hard core ingredients required to win votes.

6.6 Conclusion

While there have been some innovations in how parties are marketing to the voting public, traditional direct marketing conduct such as door to door canvassing is still one of the major marketing techniques evident in this marketplace. Relationship marketing appears to be key in the strategies of each party that was interviewed.

Chapter 7

Discussion and analysis

Introduction

As outlined in chapter one a number of objectives were selected to create the road map for the research. Due to this the following chapter will detail each of the stated objectives and detail the analysis and results that were found.

Discussion

The initial objective of this study was to understand the role of modern marketing and exactly what practices it involves. This was achieved through an exploratory literature review that identified the key stages which marketing had evolved through, namely the production, product, sales and marketing eras. It was clear the face of marketing is again changing and consumers are becoming more interactive in the buying process. Older literature debates how the balance of power originated with the producer but now the consumer is more empowered in the exchange process. This change is reflected in the introduction of marketing terminologies such as the “prosumer”. As there was to be an analysis of marketing in politics a number of other areas were selected for further analysis as they were deemed to be key in setting the stage for understanding political marketing.

The second part of the literature review looked to political marketing. As noted in the limitations section of the research methodology the mass literature in existence on the area is country specific and the body of the material was written about the political marketing processes of countries that are far more advanced than Ireland. The author decided tailoring their research to be representative of a country who hadn't been over researched would create an opportunity to add the academic body of knowledge.

As stated by the initial objectives there was a need to understand the role that the internet now plays in any marketplace and this was identified through critiquing numerous reports and academic literature. To back up this analysis the primary research included an examination of internet penetration among the voting consumers with specific attention given to understanding how the consumers behave online particularly in reference to Irish political parties. Key findings originated from this analysis, namely the direct communications occurring between consumers without media intervention and this fed into the author's composition and interpretation of political marketing which will be discussed in the recommendations of this study.

The primary research also served to open a discussion point among political consumers as to how they felt they were treated as consumers and this was then compared to the primary research into the political parties and the political marketing activities they claimed to perform and adopt in the in-depth interviews.

In critiquing the information gathered throughout the in-depth interviews it is clear that all three parties maintain similar traditional marketing techniques, mainly in the form of door-to-door canvassing. Each party appears to recognise the growing

significance of the internet; however some parties seem to be more proactive in sourcing the internet as a marketing medium. Both the Green party and Fine Gael appear to be looking to alternative and innovative ways of reaching the public, while Fianna Fail maintains that the traditional way of doing things is the best option.

It is clear from speaking to these key individuals there may be significant changes in the Irish political scene through the diversification of the market and other challenges mentioned, however they all seem in agreement that these changes may originate more so in the diversification of the electorate base as oppose to the changes originating in the growth of the internet throughout Ireland.

While each speaker agreed that the American political processes are significantly different from that of Irelands, each of them was aware of what was happening in the American Presidential election. When the author probed the interviewees further on the marketing skills adopted in the U.S. political domain, the discussion became quite limited as they felt there was too big of a gap in the relevance between what Irish parties practice and what is currently happening there, even though evidence was put forward by the authors that the internet was a key marketing and communications tool and the electorate were actively engaging in online discussions regarding political issues.

To conclude, it is apparent that even while some of the interviewees were more forthcoming with their information, that each party maintains traditional approaches to marketing as they believe this is what is required to reach the market. As Mr. Dorgan of Fianna Fail outlined people are becoming increasingly time starved and the author proposes this may threaten the relevance and suitability of the direct marketing that is currently deployed.

Conclusions and recommendations

The objectives set out in the research have been to understand and describe the essentials of political marketing with particular reference to the marketing of political parties in Ireland. Throughout the research it is clear that political marketing activity in Ireland is still relatively primitive, even though many parties are claiming they implement marketing techniques and philosophies. The author believes there is a clear lack of political knowledge among Irish political consumers and this maybe as a result of poor marketing by Irish political parties.

Market orientation

The consumer research has shown people are finding it difficult to distinguish between the different political parties and this is having a direct impact on electoral participation. There were very few respondents in the research identifying themselves as loyal supporters of any party and a large proportion of respondents admitted they did not vote for the same party at each election. This would indicate in political terms that there is a large number of floating voters in existence in the Irish political marketplace, yet the parties have no marketing strategies in place to deal with this. The defeat of the Lisbon Treaty appeared in the research as a prime example of how the lack of consumer education is affecting market outcomes, with the questionnaire participants indicating their no vote was down to a lack of understanding about the Treaty itself. This issue was highly debated throughout the research timeline, but from the findings of this study the author feels that the overall marketing in the political arena in Ireland is currently insufficient. If voters are failing to distinguish between the main parties in the political marketplace then a core marketing problem is evident, as across two of the consumer samples used in the research party policies and beliefs were stated as the main factor taken into consideration when making a voting decision. The political parties need to look at the brand they are selling to the market and establish whether they are pursuing the correct market orientation and strategy.

Relationship marketing

All the parties involved in the research identified themselves as engaging in aspects of services and relationship marketing. Door-to-door canvassing was cited by the General Secretaries as the most common way they delivered this to their markets. Each of the party representatives agreed that the public was cynical towards politics

but went on to defend this direct marketing technique. Findings from the consumer research indicate that this method of delivering the service is adding to peoples cynicism as respondents believed politicians were only interested in hearing from the public when they were looking for their vote. Each of the General Secretaries said they aimed to combat this by encouraging ongoing canvassing outside election times, however when questioned whether this happened only one candidate over the three parties was identified as doing so.

Some academics contribute door-to-door canvassing as relationship marketing but an overwhelming majority of consumers involved in this particular research dictated they did not consider themselves to have a relationship with their local politicians. On the other side of the research the minority who expressed themselves as supporters or members of parties, had become so through friends or family being affiliated with the political party. This seems to be a common trend evident throughout the research so while the majority feel they do not have a relationship with candidates others would possess quite a close affiliation with them.

The future of Irish Political Marketing

The internet has infiltrated many political markets globally but it is currently not a major issue in Irish politics. Irish political parties marketing strategies are instead focusing on penetrating the diversifying market base in Ireland. There is an inclination the parties may be suffering from marketing myopia (Levitt 1960) as they are concentrating on targeting new segments without first identifying and fixing problems within their current market.

One chapter in this study has been dedicated to the role of the internet in politics as the author feels there is a significant opportunity to be identified by Irish political parties. The chapter dealing with the internet highlights the way this technology can be used to further marketing's role in making political marketing more successful. As shown earlier impressions of political marketing are portrayed by Kotler and Kotler (see page 50) the authors like many other academics in the area place the candidate at the centre of political marketing activity, however following this study the author proposes political parties may perceive political marketing to operate within a sphere. (See figure 9). The premise behind this interpretation of political marketing is that the voter should remain at the top interactions but interactivity should continue between each of the main bodies in political consumption, i.e. the voter, the candidate and the

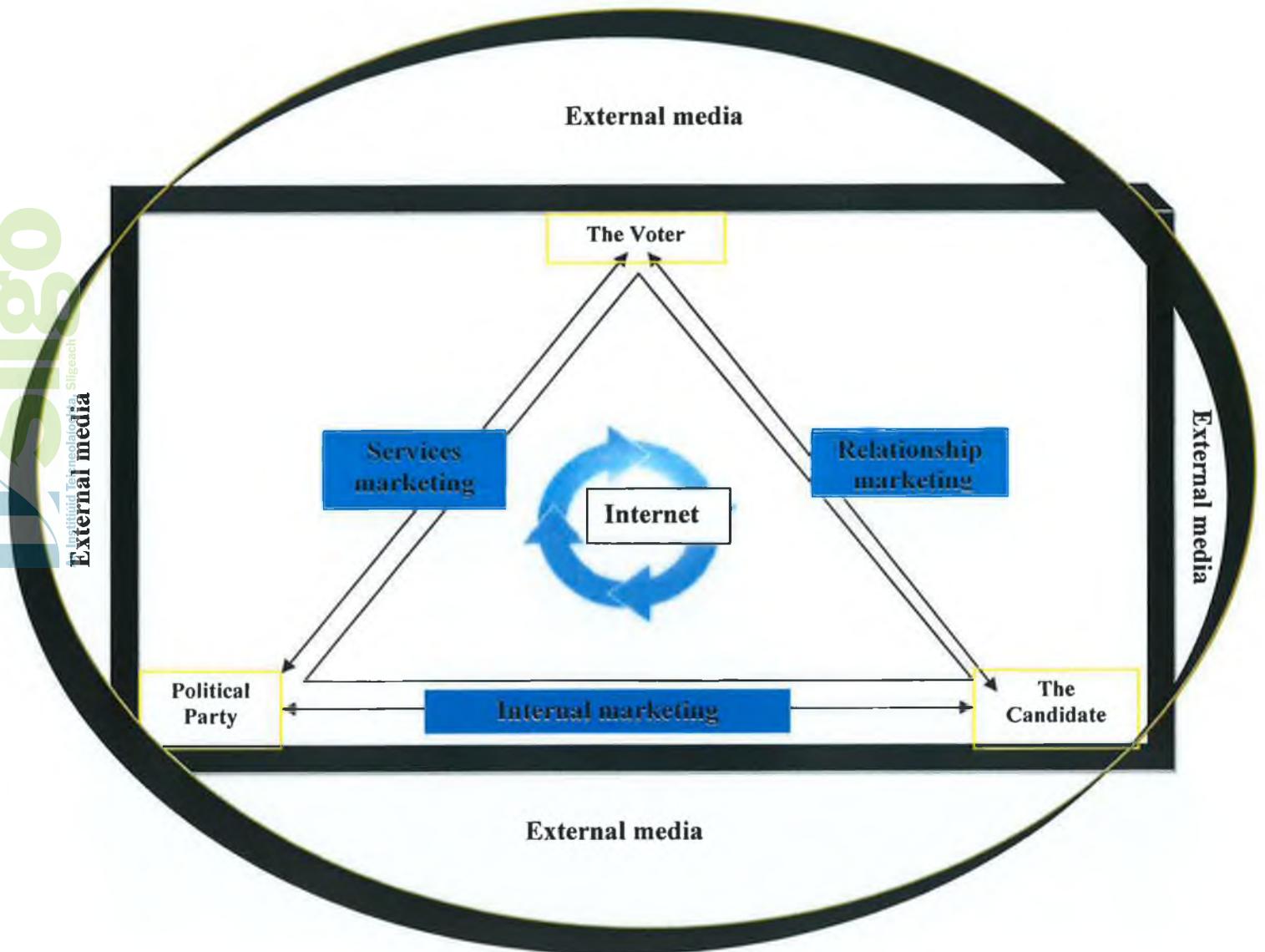
political party. The main type of marketing that occurs between each of the parties is highlighted in blue and the two way arrows are an indication that there is a dialogue in place as opposed to a traditional one way monologue. The media have been identified as a key influence in the political processes and this is depicted by the three dimensional bubble surrounding the whole process. The key to this diagram is the interconnecting internet illustration inside the political marketing triangle. Here the author is illustrating as the primary consumer research revealed; political parties, candidates etc have the opportunity to contact the voter directly via their websites, email etc eradicating the manipulation and bias of the external media.

The interactivity of the diagram is hinting to the ongoing process of gathering and processing information by each of those involved. Other marketing elements have been excluded from the diagram such as market research etc, but this is implied in the indication of feedback from voters. It has been identified in the research that with the inclusion of the internet there will be more of a flow to the processes involved in each marketing stage and therefore there is the possibility of improving the current political marketing processes. For this to happen there needs to be clearer market orientations of the political parties to improve the voters understanding of the market. This in turn will better equip voters in their political consumption decisions as without a clear distinction between the political parties people may find it hard to find value in casting a vote as the primary research identified numerous voters see no difference between the Irish parties unless they are actively involved in politics.

Figure 9

Political marketing sphere

*Designed by the author
Adapted from services marketing triangle (Kotler 1994)*



Future research:

The consumer base within the country is significantly diversifying and international marketing techniques may heavily weigh in future elections of the country. This area is fundamentally under researched at the current time and while this area was touched on in this dissertation this type of marketing is currently only emerging in the political environment as the electorate is continuing to diversify.

The full potential of the internet has not yet been realised in Irish politics and there is scope for further research in identifying how growing internet applications such as social networking are affecting the marketplace.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been compiled around an analysis of marketing within the political domain. It is clear there are significant marketing problems occurring within the Irish political scene and the parties included in the research may be deemed market myopic. Currently the majority of marketing measures being used are tactical in nature, which is adding to the cynicism of the public. As a result loyalty for specific parties is declining and the number of floating voters available is quite high. As election time is drawing closer, political parties and candidates should pay heed to the potential the internet can offer their campaigns and ultimately leverage their credibility among voters. With large numbers of floating voters in the market, competition for these votes will increase and parties will be forced into innovative ways of attracting voters. Instead of being re-active parties should be pro-active and this is possible by actively seeking out successful political marketing strategies elsewhere and learning from them.

The political sphere is proposed by the author to give an up to date understanding of the political market and the forces operating within the political arena.

Appendices table

- 1: List of interviewees
- 2: Interview questions
- 3: Questionnaire

Appendix 1

List of interviewees

Mr. Colm O Caomhanaigh
General Secretary
Green Party Headquarters
16-17 Suffolk Street
Dublin 2

Mr. Tom Curran
General Secretary
Fine Gael Headquarters
51 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2

Mr. Sean Dorgan
General Secretary
Fianna Fail Headquarters
65-66 Lower Mount Street
Dublin 2

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Marketing

1. What do you understand by the term marketing?
2. How important is marketing in your party? What are the objectives of marketing in your party?
3. Has the party a specific marketing department or how is marketing dealt with throughout the party?
4. What marketing techniques do you consider the most important in communicating with the public?
5. How do you keep your marketing strategies consistent?
6. Do you conduct on going market research? What are the primary methods research techniques used?
7. How would you compare political marketing to commercial marketing?

Voters

8. Do you think generally there is some confusion among the voting public as to what party stands for what beliefs values and policies?
9. Many political parties claim that voters have a significant input into the creation of policies of their political party,
-what is your view of this statement
-how is this input received?
10. Do you think that because you are offering a service that its makes it harder to market your party?
11. What do you do to cater to the different categories of voters in your district?
12. Would you consider the voting public to be more cynical of politics now?
13. There has been a global trend where the youth vote is declining, why do you think this is? What are you doing to capture this market?
14. Do you think loyalty to parties is changing among voters?
15. Do you segment the market? Do you have a primary/secondary segment?
16. What do you think about floating voters? How do you deal with this market segment?
17. What innovations have your party introduced in order to reach the public?

18. Do you target non national voters with the right to vote in campaigns? Will this be an important factor in your opinion with future elections as the population continues to diversify?

The party

19. How does your party go about attracting new active members in the party?
20. Do you engage in any internal marketing within the party to motivate members?
21. In other countries there is a significant rise in the role of the political consultant as opposed to being predominantly volunteer based, do you think this is how things will go in Ireland in the future?

The Internet

22. How has the internet impacted on your party?
23. What internet marketing techniques do you use?
24. Have you been following the American election? How do you think this compares to Irish election time?

Current Marketing issues:

What is your view on the defeat of the Lisbon Treaty? Was it a marketing problem?

What is your view of the American Elections in comparison to that of the Irish election time?

Have you any involvement in the Festival of Politics in October?

Appendix three; Questionnaire

1) On a scale of 1-5 (1 being no interest and 5 being extremely interested) how interested are you in Irish politics?					
	1	2	3	4	5

2) How would you describe your knowledge of Irish political parties?	
Very little	
moderate	
strong	
Other (Please Specify):	

3) How often do you turn up to cast your vote at elections?	
Every election	
80% of the time	
50% of the time	
25% of the time	
Never	

4) Did you vote in the Lisbon treat referendum?	
yes	
no	
5) If you did vote please state did you vote yes or no, and the main reason:	

6) When you cast your vote at elections do you base your vote on?	
A particular party	
Party policy and beliefs	
A particular candidate	
An individual you know through personal reasons	
Other (Please Specify):	

7) Which Irish party can you most identify with, please give reason why?	

8) On a scale of one to five how strongly do you identify with this party 1 representing very strong, 5 being very weak identification with the party?						
	1	2	3	4	5	Other (Please Specify):

9) What party did you give your first preference vote for in the last general election?	
Fianna Fail	
Fine Gael	
Green Party	
Labour Party	
Cant remember	
I did not vote	
Other (Please Specify):	

10) Do you vote for the same party in every election?	
Yes I vote for the same party	
No it depends on current issues at the time	
No it depends on a number of reasons	
I do not know if I vote the same every election	
I do not vote	

11) At a local level do you clearly recognise what candidate represents which party?	
Yes	
No	
Sometimes	
If you answered "no" please state why you think this is	

12) Have you met any of your local candidates?
--

Yes	
No	

13) If you answered "yes" to the previous question, how have you come into contact with these candidates?	
Door to door canvassing during elections	
Organised clinics	
Door to door canvassing outside election times	
The candidates constituency clinics	
Mobile Clinics	
Other (Please Specify):	

14) Do you have a relationship with your local representative?	
Yes I know them personally	
Yes I know them through their canvassing	
No I do not have a relationship with them	
Other (Please Specify):	

15) As a voter do you feel you are given a proper opportunity to express your views to your politician?	
Yes	
No	

16) In your opinion how can this be improved?	

17) Could you distinguish between the main values, beliefs and policies of the main political parties in Ireland?	
Yes	
No	

18) Please state in your own opinion what you understand each of the stated parties to represent and please state any others of which you are aware:	
Fianna Fail	
Fine Gael	
The Green Party	
Other (please specify)	

19) Are you a loyal supporter of a particular political party?	
Yes	
No	
I am undecided who I support	
Yes (Please Specify):	

20) If you answered "yes" to the previous question, how did you end up supporting this party?	
Through a friend/family	
From the party recruitment campaign	
Through a youth group	
I am in agreement with their policies	
Other (Please Specify):	

21) Are you an active member of any political party?	
Yes	
No	
(Please Specify what party):	

22) How did you end up becoming a member of this party?	

23) What does your membership involve?	
I am a member but I do not regularly get involved	
Attending party meetings	
Volunteer work for the party	
Other (Please Specify):	

24) If you are a member of a party, what contact do you receive from the party in order to encourage your involvement?	
Newsletters	
Ezines	
Email	
Snail mail	
Text messages	
I am not a member of a party	
Other contact (Please Specify):	

25) Have you ever used the internet to contact a politician?	
Yes	
No	

26) Would you consider using the internet to contact your local representative or politician?	

27) Please state what you understand by the term marketing?	

28) Are you aware of any marketing conducted by any of the main parties in Ireland?	
Yes	
No	
I am not sure	

29) If you answered yes to the previous question please state, what this marketing is and what party undertakes it:

30) How often do you use the internet?	
Daily	
Weekly	
Monthly	
Never	
Other (Please Specify):	

31) How competent is your use of the internet?	
I have never used the internet	
I know very little about the internet	
I use the internet to use an emailing service but for no other reason	
I regularly use the internet for a number of different reasons and I am quite confident going online for numerous purposes	
Other (Please Specify):	

32) Where do you most use the internet?	
At home	
At work	
At college	
At school	
Other (Please Specify):	

33) Where you would mostly use the internet, what type of internet access do you have there?	
No internet connection	
Dial up	
Normal Broadband	
A wireless broadband connection	
I am not sure:	

34) Have you ever accessed a political party online?	
yes	
No	

35) Please specify which party or parties?	

36) How did you access the party online?	
The party's official site	
News channels	
You Tube	
I am not sure	
I have never accessed a party online	
Other (Please Specify):	

37) Have you been following the American Presidential election?	

38) Do you follow the politics of any other country?	
Yes	
No	
If you answered yes please state the country and why:	

39) In your opinion is there anything Ireland could learn from the politics of this country?	
--	--

Yes	
No	
Yes (Please Specify):	

40) Are you:	
Male	
Female	

41) What age are you?	
18-24	
25-34	
35- 44	
45-54	
55-64	
65 +	

42) What nationality are you?	

43) What is your occupation?	

44) Are you?	
Single	
Married	
Co-habiting	
Divorced	
Widowed	
Other (Please Specify):	
45) Any other comments?	

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