Political Marketing in Canada

Edited by Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson, and Jennifer Lees-Marshment

UBCPress · Vancouver · Toronto

Contents

List of Figures and Tables vii

Abbreviations ix

Preface xi

PART 1: THE MARKETPLACE

1 Introducing Political Marketing 3
THIERRY GIASSON, JENNIFER LEES-MARSHMENT, AND ALEX MARLAND

2 The Canadian Political Market and the Rules of the Game 22
YANNICK DUFRESNE AND ALEX MARLAND

3 The Diversity of the Canadian Political Marketplace 39
ELISABETH GIDENGIL

PART 2: POLITICAL PARTIES AND INSTITUTIONS

4 Amateurs versus Professionals: The 1993 and 2006 Canadian Federal Elections 59
ALEX MARLAND

5 Under New Management: Market Intelligence and the Conservative Party's Resurrection 76
ANDRÉ TURCOTTE

6 The Impact of Market Research on Political Decisions and Leadership: Practitioners' Perspectives 91
JENNIFER LEES-MARSHMENT

7 "Buyer" Beware: Pushing the Boundaries of Marketing Communications in Government 107
KIRSTEN KOZOLANKA

8 Market Orientation in a Minority Government: The Challenges of Product Delivery 123
ANNA ESSELMENT

9 Does Public Opinion Research Matter? The Marketing of Health Policy 139
LISA BIRCH

10 Selling a Cause: Political Marketing and Interest Groups 156
ÉMILIE FOSTER AND PATRICK LEMIEUX

PART 3: THE MEDIA AND CITIZENS

11 As (Not) Seen on TV: News Coverage of Political Marketing in Canadian Federal Elections 175
THIERRY GIASSON

12 Are We Friends Yet? Online Relationship Marketing by Political Parties 193
TAMARA A. SMALL

13 Double-Double: Branding, Tim Hortons, and the Public Sphere 209
PATRICIA CORMACK

14 Marketing and Efficacy: Does Political Marketing Empower Canadians? 224
ROYCE KOOP

PART 4: CONCLUSION

15 Challenges for Democracy 241
THIERRY GIASSON, JENNIFER LEES-MARSHMENT, AND ALEX MARLAND

Glossary 257

References 264

Contributors 292

Index 295

Figures and Tables

FIGURES

1.1 The scope of political marketing 9
3.1 Disaffection with politics and politicians 41
3.2 Canadians' knowledge of politics 42
3.3 Knowledge of campaign promises 43
3.4 Implications for political marketing in Canada 54
5.1 The five types of public opinion polls frequently used in political campaigns 79
9.1 Evolution of POR contracts and expenditures from 1993-94 to 2009-10 141
9.2 Custom and syndicated government POR in Canada 142
11.1 Evolution of strategic framing in Canadian electoral news 184
11.2 Evolution of political marketing coverage in Canadian electoral news 185
11.3 Association with democracy in political marketing coverage 190
14.1 Canadians lacking internal and external efficacy, 1997-2008 234

TABLES

2.1 Types of market positioning in a competitive political market 27
2.2 Considerations for strategic and tactical marketing in Canada 35
3.1 Electoral volatility in Canada, 1965-2011 45
3.2 Views about the workings of electoral democracy 49
3.3 Affective engagement in politics 50
3.4 Orientations toward political parties 51
4.1 Types of political campaigns by early 2000s standards 60

4.2 Major parties' results in the 1993 and 2006 Canadian federal elections 62
6.1 Interviews with Canadian practitioners conducted by the author 93
8.1 Delivery and implementation units 124
8.2 "Stand Up for Canada" campaign platform, 2006 126
10.1 Ideal types of political marketing by interest groups 158
11.1 Summary of automated content analysis procedure 181
11.2 Horserace coverage in Canadian electoral news 183
12.1 Number of Facebook friends (June 1 to July 30, 2010) 198
12.2 Relationship marketing criteria for Facebook 199
12.3 Publishing of new Facebook content (June 1 to July 30, 2010) 200
12.4 Use of interactive features on Facebook pages 203
12.5 Use of Facebook as part of relationship marketing strategy 204
14.1 The impact of political marketing on citizen efficacy 225

Abbreviations

CES	Canadian Election Study
CIMS	constituent information management system
CPC	Conservative Party of Canada
FAA	Federal Accountability Act
GOTV	get out the vote
MOP	market-oriented party
NDP	New Democratic Party
PC	Progressive Conservative (Party)
PCO	Privy Council Office
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
POP	product-oriented party
POR	public opinion research
SOP	sales-oriented party

Preface

The sophistication and dissemination of communications and research technology, and the competitive pressures to reflect the needs and wants of the electoral market, are changing Canadian democracy.

Although the application of business marketing principles and techniques to politics is nothing new, the progressive complexity of those strategies and tactics is significantly changing how political actors behave. At one time, it was good enough to simply offer a commercial product or service, or to declare oneself a candidate for election, with little need to communicate because sufficient demand already existed in the marketplace. But competition brings pressures to edge out rivals, necessitating product differentiation, salesmanship, mass communication, and perhaps hyperbole. Some products and services find niche markets, as do political parties and politicians, and intentionally differentiate themselves from the demands of the mass market – think of high-end or community-oriented coffee shops or, in Canadian politics, the Bloc Québécois. Those seeking to attract the custom of the plurality or majority of the mass market, and hoping to remain or become market leaders, nowadays must rigorously research the marketplace, understand consumers' preferences, and attempt to appropriately shape the image and market positioning of themselves and their competitors – think of Tim Hortons and Starbucks, and of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. Some organizations, such as the myriad second-tier franchised coffee shops or the New Democratic Party, are market followers given that they successfully service a smaller but loyal customer base. In the consumer marketplace, there are, of course, always alternatives, such as brewing coffee at home or not drinking it at all, just as in politics there are alternatives, such as getting involved with interest groups or choosing not to follow politics and not voting. Moreover, just as consumers' preferences are subject to change, so are electors' – most recently with the 2011 election, when support for the Liberal Party continued to erode and many Quebeckers switched brands from the Bloc to the NDP. A diligent commitment to aspects of political marketing is one reason that the Conservative Party won a majority of seats and why New Democrats – for the first time – became the market challenger in federal politics.

Political marketing is narrower than brokerage politics and it is changing the way political actors operate in Canada, as it already has in other democracies. Yet, we must be mindful that public opinion research and mass communication are merely technological tools, for they alone cannot spur innovation or big ideas, are not enough to excite people and capture their imaginations, and are unable to reshape the marketplace or consumer landscape. Politics is, after all, about people and competing ideas, and even the cleverest sales tactics and marketing strategies cannot disguise a bad product for long. Fortunately, competitive pressures help foster the emergence of viable alternatives. In this way, political marketing is responsive to the electorates' preferences, making it a tool that strengthens democracy, though this assumes that it is used altruistically, that mistakes don't happen, and that the voter is always right. The increasing sophistication and availability of technology does mean that political elites have the opportunity to make more informed, more responsive, and more efficient decisions than they would otherwise.

Patrick Muttart, a Conservative strategist and former deputy chief of staff in the office of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is often mentioned in this book and elsewhere as a pioneer of political marketing in Canadian politics. He observes that during an election, Canadian political parties battle a number of campaigns simultaneously:

- The earned media campaign (e.g., news coverage), which tends to be centred on the leader's tour;
- The paid media campaign (e.g., advertising), which has two distinct but important components: creative and media buy. A well-designed ad needs to target appropriate audiences, and there must be sufficient repetition within the limits of the campaign spending cap;
- The direct voter contact campaign (e.g., voter ID, voter-specific direct mail, voter-specific messaging for canvassers, get out the vote), which is one of the most unreported aspects of electioneering;
- The local campaign, which increasingly is a fused effort between national campaigns and the party's candidates in electoral districts; and,

- The social media campaign (e.g., web and mobile technologies), which is centred on peer-to-peer contact and engagement.

The views of such practitioners illustrate today's methodical, interrelated, and centralized approach to politicking but also a lingering penchant for market intelligence to foremost inform communication decisions and win votes, rather than for designing policy. In theory, political marketing is about developing and promoting political goods and services that the broader electorate wants (see Glossary for political marketing concepts); in practice, it is a competitive tool to win power by targeting segments of the electorate. "Close campaigns are decided by the least informed, least engaged voters," says Muttart (2011). "These voters do not go looking for political news and information. This necessitates brutally simple communication with clear choices that hits the voter whether they like it or not. Journalists and editorialists often complain about the simplicity of political communication, but marketers must respond to the reality that undecided voters are often not as informed or interested as the political and media class are." Given such businesslike pragmatism, readers of this book are advised to balance scholars' idealism of political marketing with its actual practice by party elites.

The idea for the book came about after the first Canadian political marketing workshop held at the Canadian Political Science Association conference in May 2009 at Carleton University. Dr. Jennifer Lees-Marshment, arguably the leading academic in the field globally, was an invited guest speaker and the genesis for urging the development of a Canadian book. Until that conference, political marketing was rarely a topic in Canadian academia and usually appeared under its various subcomponents, such as political advertising, opinion research, or electioneering. With the publication of this book we anticipate that will change as Canadian scholars become more acquainted with the nature of political marketing as an exciting, dynamic, and important genre.

All of the contributors to this volume share this excitement. Thierry Giasson and Jennifer Lees-Marshment have been fantastic co-editors who divided and completed tasks with remarkable enthusiasm, speed, and dependability. The chapter authors have impressively followed guidelines, met submission deadlines, and acted on changes requested by the editors and external peer reviewers. As with any production, there have been many others behind the scenes. The timeliness, efficiency, and professionalism exhibited by UBC Press senior editor Emily Andrew in particular, and by her colleagues at UBC Press generally, including editor Megan Brand and copy editor Judy Phillips, have been emblematic of customer service and product delivery. The editors would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their thoughtful remarks, which improved the quality of the book. Memorial University political science students Sean Fleming and Mark Coombs performed a meticulous proofread to ensure quality control and prepared a thorough index, respectively. Special thanks are extended to Elisabeth Gidengil (author of Chapter 3) for her recommendations about the democracy aspects of the introductory chapter.

The editors also wish to acknowledge a publishing subsidy award. This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The contents of this volume demonstrate that the old model of politicking in Canada has forever changed. For good or for bad, the nature of Canadian democracy is evolving. This book provides a basis for further inquiry into *Political Marketing in Canada*.

Alex Marland
Lead Editor

PART 1

The Marketplace

1

Introducing Political Marketing

Thierry Giasson, Jennifer Lees-Marshment, and Alex Marland

Worldwide and over time, technological advancements change the practice of politics, governance, and electioneering. Politicians no longer need to travel by horse to visit a community where they will stand on an overturned soapbox or a tree stump to give a speech to electors about their priorities. For some time now, office-seekers have been able to zip across the country, a province, or an electoral district by train, car, bus, or air, visiting multiple communities in a single day, and if their speeches attract media attention or are included in advertising, their messages can effortlessly reach millions. The most professional of these packaged politicians and their handlers use market intelligence, such as opinion research, to tailor their political offer to reflect constituent priorities.

The cost of opinion measurement and of communications technologies gradually declines even as the tools' sophistication grows, only to be replaced with newer, more expensive practices. As in commerce, the general diffusion of mass media and research technologies has increased their accessibility to those in the political game. The competition for political power is therefore often a battle for competitive advantages with respect to information collection, analysis, and dissemination, and for the funds to finance such operations. Professionals who embody the spirit and practice of information-based strategic and tactical political decisions are becoming known as "political marketers."

The application of commercial marketing techniques to politics has its origins in the United States, the global leader in such matters. The diffusion of American political strategies and tactics is constant, with the global media reporting on the latest innovations and political consultants selling their knowledge. Political actors throughout the world are inspired by the most recent US campaign, seek to employ successful tactics of American interest groups, and aim to duplicate American government action and hire American experts.

As an academic field, political marketing has grown in size, breadth, and depth with the establishment in 2002 of its own journal, *Journal of Political Marketing* (Haworth Press), and publication in 2009 of the first comprehensive textbook, *Political Marketing: Principles and Applications* (Routledge). Canada held its first workshop in political marketing at the 2009 Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) conference at Carleton University, which led to the creation of a national network of scholars and practitioners and to the development of this book. Canadian interest became more prevalent when, after attending CPSA presentations, Susan Delacourt, the *Toronto Star*'s senior writer in Ottawa, initiated a "Shopping for Votes" blog during the 2011 federal election in which some of this book's contributors analyzed Canadian electioneering through a political marketing lens.

Political Marketing in Canada explores the nature of political marketing practices in Canada. Its chapters investigate a range of political marketing activities, including the use of market research, its impact on political decisions and leadership, communications in government, market orientation and delivery, marketing and interest groups, media coverage of political marketing, online relationship marketing, branding, and the impact on efficacy. Additional chapters set out the nature of the marketplace and institutional rules that affect how marketing can be used in Canadian politics. First, though, this introductory chapter explores what political marketing is, looks at how it differs from political advertising and from traditional conceptual ways of looking at Canadian politics, and sets up the debate on the potential implications of political marketing for Canadian democracy.

What Is Political Marketing?

Political marketing involves the application of business marketing concepts to the practice and study of politics and government. Marketing is not a synonym for advertising, public relations, or telemarketing; those are aspects of marketing communications. Rather, as the Canadian Marketing Association (2010) defines it, marketing is "a set of business practices designed to plan for and present an organization's products or services in ways that build effective customer relationships." In other words, when applied to politics, marketing entails a political organization using business techniques to inform and shape its strategic behaviours that are designed to satisfy citizens' needs and wants (see also this book's Glossary).

Political marketing focuses on understanding the managerial processes and activities associated with the use of market intelligence to design and implement political product offerings (Henneberg 2008; Henneberg, Scammell, and O'Shaughnessy 2009; Lees-Marshment 2001a, 2001b; O'Cass 1996; Ormrod 2005). There is a broad consensus that it has more in common with service marketing than with product marketing – that is, with the marketing of labour and skills rather than with the marketing of durable goods. This is because both service industries and politics entail inherently interactive processes that ideally link consumers/voters and providers/political actors in a cooperative experience (Butler and Collins 1994; Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy 2007; Johansen 2005; Lloyd 2005; Scammell 1999). Moreover, the marketing of intangibles such as policy platforms, party and leader image, and organizational mindset is an integral part of overall management that involves all members of a party in the process of getting the product offering to the electoral market.

In both contexts, the processes of production and consumption are mutually constituted, as opposed to primarily entailing "managing a set of activities in order to persuade the customer to buy a product" (Johansen 2005, 87), and manifest themselves on three levels (Grönroos 1998; Lloyd 2005). First, in each instance, consumer/voter satisfaction is rooted in processes associated with the production of a particular outcome, as opposed to the outcome alone. In other words, there is a need for consumers and citizens alike to feel a sense of attachment to both process and outcome. Second, the notion of promise is central to marketing in both services and politics insofar as once promises have been made, the relationship between consumers/voters and the service provider/political actor can be greatly damaged if they do not materialize. Scammell (1999, 728) aptly summarizes the issues at stake by noting that in each context,

> the supplier must continue to nurse its reputation if it seeks to be a long-lasting player in the market. Reputation can be relatively easily destroyed if promises are not fulfilled and the coasts of re-building considerable.

Third, the practice of political parties establishing manifestos and/or policy statements, which can be acted on only once elected to power, parallels the practice within service industries of implementing a priori preparations for the eventual delivery of a service.

A Market Orientation in Politics

A prominent matter of interest within political marketing research is market orientation and, in particular, its influence on the performance of political parties. According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990, 6; emphasis in original) market orientation may be understood as

> the organization wide *generation* of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, *dissemination* of the intelligence across departments, and organization wide *responsiveness* to it.

This view suggests that market orientation is a continuous, rather than an either-or, construct. That is, the extent to which an organization is market-oriented is a matter of degree and exists on a continuum, as opposed to being either absent or present (Jaworski and Kohli 1996; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Since most professional political parties collect public opinion survey data and other forms of market intelligence, their relative positioning on this continuum is linked in part to how much data they collect and, more importantly, the extent to which this information is diffused throughout the organization and used to influence organizational decision making.

It is important to note that being *market-oriented* is distinguishable from being customer-led or *marketing-oriented* (Gray et al. 1998; Lafferty and Hult 2001; Ormrod 2006; Slater and Narver 1998, 1999). The latter tends to concentrate on "marketing's functional role in coordinating and managing the 4Ps" (Gray et al. 1998, 886) of product, price, place, and promotion and, as such, emphasizes a reactive and/or short-term organizational focus on what consumers/voters want. Political parties with a marketing orientation tend to use market intelligence primarily to inform their advertising and message design strategies, as opposed to the actual design of their product offerings. Their organizational focus also tends to be centred on specific events (for example, the next election or even the next public opinion poll), as well as on specific segments of the electorate.

Equally salient is the need to avoid conflating being *market-oriented* with being *market-driven*. The latter entails a heavy reliance on consultation, as opposed to dialogue. To this end, market-driven political parties risk alienating their traditional supporters, are more likely to adopt policies that parallel those of their competitors, and may fail to clearly delineate what they stand for ideologically. The UK Labour Party under the leadership of Tony Blair was exemplary of a market-driven political party. In relying so heavily on polling data as a proxy for market demand, New Labour managed to design an initial, and ultimately popular, product offering that deviated significantly from the long-standing tenets of the party (Lilleker 2005a).

Being market-oriented, by contrast, entails a focus on internal and external stakeholder relationships and is rooted in an organization-wide commitment to understanding the expressed and latent wants and needs of consumers/voters. This information, in turn, is used to generate organizational learning over the long term that is directed toward sustaining and enhancing consumer/voter value. Market orientation, then, is a state of mind or general organizational will to incorporate the use of market intelligence into the generation of tangible and intangible product offerings that seek to lead consumer needs and wants, not simply to follow them.

Drawing on a similar conceptualization, Lees-Marshment (2001a; 2001b) and Lilleker and Lees-Marshment (2005) have adopted a view of political marketing management that posits that political parties may be divided into three ideal categories. The first, the product-oriented party (POP), is depicted as employing a marketing strategy that is guided by the assumption that voters will recognize the normative value of their ideas and, as such, will vote for it. Hence, little consideration is given to gathering and using market intelligence to design or communicate its product offering. The second, the sales-oriented party (SOP), relies on the use of market intelligence to design strategies for selling or push-marketing its product offerings to targeted segments of the voting population. Here, much emphasis is placed on research for advertising and message design, as opposed to the design of a party's actual product offering.

In contrast with the other two categorizations, the market-oriented party (MOP) is portrayed as actively engaging in efforts to identify voters' concerns and priorities and incorporate them into the design of its product offerings. MOPs are distinguishable from their sales-oriented counterparts by their use of "various tools to understand and then respond to voter demands, but in a way that integrates the need to attend to members' needs, ideas from politicians and experts, and the realities of governing, and to focus more on delivering and making a difference than employing sales techniques to persuade or manipulate opinion" (Lees-Marshment 2006, 122). Although market-oriented parties may also make use of polling data and other forms of market intelligence, they are prone to engage in an array of internal and external communication processes in their efforts to create a more comprehensive and cohesive product offering (Lees-Marshment 2001a, 2001b; Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 2005). It follows therefore that, in theory at least, MOPs engage in far more consultation and dialogue with the electorate than POPs or SOPs and, as such, are guided by and operate in partnership with the electorate (Lilleker 2005a).

Political marketing is also a modern interpretation of the classic questions, how and to what extent do elites understand, respond to, and communicate with the masses? As an area of practice, political marketing offers strategies and tools that political elites can use to help them navigate electoral politics, including polling, focus groups, listening exercises, segmentation, voter profiling, get out the vote (GOTV), opposition research ("oppo"), strategic product development, internal marketing, volunteer management, voter-driven communication, branding, e-marketing, delivery, voter expectation management, and public relations (see Lees-Marshment 2009c). It is a rapidly growing and controversial global phenomenon: political parties and governments around the world are using such tools when developing policies, creating communication, and making political decisions (Bowler and Farrell 1992; Lees-Marshment, Strömbäck, and Rudd 2010; Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 2005). The range of concepts once unique to business are now common in politics as political elites look at marketing to offer new ways of engaging with and responding to an increasingly demanding electorate.

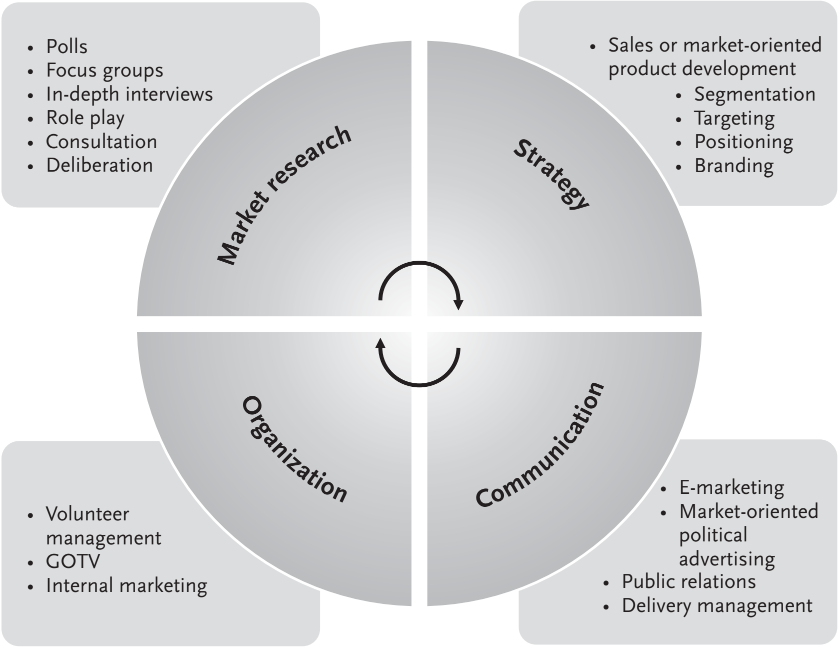
The Process of Political Marketing

Political marketing explores how political elites – candidates, parties, governments, and interest groups – utilize marketing to achieve goals such as influencing election outcomes, as well as advancing policy change and ideology. It focuses on how they relate to their markets, which incorporate not just voters but all stakeholders (Hughes and Dann 2009), including party members, and how the political product they offer and deliver once in power responds to the demands of those markets. The product entails not just policy promises but everything a party or politician does, as well as broader aspects – for instance, how they accommodate, serve, and represent market needs and wants (Lloyd 2005).

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, political marketing studies and utilizes different concepts and activities. First, there are a range of tools to identify and understand the public and other markets, such as market research,

Figure 1.1

The scope of political marketing



- Polls
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Role play
- Consultation
- Deliberation
Market research
- Sales or market-oriented product development
  - Segmentation
  - Targeting
  - Positioning
  - Branding
Strategy
Organization
Communication
- Volunteer management
- GOTV
- Internal marketing
- E-marketing
- Market-oriented political advertising
- Public relations
- Delivery management

segmentation, strategies, market positioning, branding, marketing communications, and organizing. Market research includes the usual quantitative and qualitative techniques such as polls and focus groups, but also consultation, role play, and deliberation. These tools are used by a political organization to gather information on the dominant needs and wants expressed in the electorate. What do electors consider to be the key political issues of the day? What are their conceptions of the ideal candidate, the ideal political party? What solutions does that candidate or party offer to contemporary societal problems?

Strategies include adopting a sales or market orientation toward electioneering, which involves either focusing on using research to create effective communication to sell the product to voters or utilizing the results of research to create a product that voters will want because it meets their needs and wants (Lees-Marshment 2001a, 2001b; Ormrod 2005). Segmentation and voter profiling help to identify, at an individual level, the different voter profiles composing the electoral market and the party's volunteer base in order to connect them into new groups that politicians can target (Bannon 2005a). Market positioning utilizes segmentation and analysis of the competition to suggest that parties and candidates occupy a distinctive and superior place in the political market from which they can attract support (Baines 1999; Butler and Collins 1999). Branding theory argues that politicians need to create a trusting relationship with voters that can sustain itself over the long term through crises and the ebb and flow of political fortune, while offering a differentiated brand from the competition (Cosgrove 2007; Needham 2005; Smith and French 2009). Communication tactics include e-marketing, market-oriented political advertising, delivery management, and public relations, all of which aim to engage in communication that suits both the producer and the receiver and to develop a positive long-term relationship between politicians and the public (Jackson 2005, 2006b, 2009; Jackson and Lilleker 2004; Lees-Marshment 2009c; C. Robinson 2010). It also offers concepts for how to organize effectively, such as GOTV campaigns that identify and motivate supporters to turn up at the polls (including ad campaigns, canvassing, phone or electronic reminders, daycare or voter transportation services), internal party marketing, and volunteer management (Bannon 2005a; Lebel 1999).

Political marketing is now a strong and active field of inquiry that attracts interest from a range of subfields in political science, both because it is an obvious area of practice and because it offers additional perspectives on age-old questions. Although political communication studies have tended to focus on the nature, content, and effectiveness of political messages, political marketing examines the processes and uses of market intelligence data that lead to the production of such discourses. And whereas public policy and party politics look at the nature of policy development and party organization, political marketing explores why elites choose to adopt certain policies or create certain structures to suit actual and prospective members. Furthermore, political marketing explores all factors that affect elite responsiveness, such as internal party culture, leadership ability, and the quality of mechanisms to identify and understand market demands. It also considers how effective political management strategies and tactics are at gaining and maintaining public support in elections.

Political Marketing in Canada: Conceptual Nuances and Distinctions

Political marketing is a dynamic area of study internationally. However, Canadian politics are rarely discussed in political marketing literature, and within Canada there is limited awareness of the nuances of this field. It is not a common expression among political practitioners nor in the mass media (see Chapter 11), Susan Delacourt being the exception. The field has not previously attracted much attention from Canadian academics, though its various components, ranging from opinion research to political communications, have. However, before engaging in the study of political marketing practices in Canada, it is important to establish some conceptual nuances. First, advertising and marketing are not synonyms; the former is a tool, whereas the latter is the framework – the overarching philosophy. Second, in the Canadian context, there is also a need to differentiate political marketing from the practice of brokerage politics.

Political Marketing Is Different from Political Advertising

In Canada, as elsewhere, political advertising commands much attention, particularly during election campaigns. Advertising is clearly a strong feature of Canadian politics. For instance, among the first uses of political radio in Canada was the Conservative Party's advertising agency depicting a fictional "Mr. Sage" in 1935 political broadcasts, which made negative statements about Liberal leader Mackenzie King (Kinsella 2001; Ward 1999). The highest profile form of political advertising is the negative TV spot, which attacks opponents using unflattering images, sinister music, dark colour schemes, and accusations of unsuitability for office (Jamieson 1992; Romanow et al. 1999). The best-known Canadian example of an attack ad, the Progressive Conservative Party's Jean Chrétien face ads, occurred in the 1993 election (see Chapter 4) and, despite widespread condemnation, the very next federal campaign in 1997 featured more negative TV ads, in which the Reform Party decried Quebec politicians. Technological changes have also encouraged online forms of advertising (Small 2010) that reinforce mass media messaging, such as the Conservatives' negative advertising that weakened the brand values of Liberal opposition leaders while indirectly improving Stephen Harper's perceived leadership strengths. Throughout Stéphane Dion's tenure in 2007 and 2008, the Tories organized a media campaign proclaiming that he was "not a leader"; in 2009, soon after Michael Ignatieff replaced Dion, TV spots appeared stating that Ignatieff was "just visiting" – this pre-election campaigning continued until the dissolution of the fortieth Parliament and this theme was used by the Tories as a point of differentiation with their leader in the 2011 campaign. In addition to conventional media buys, some well-researched content was posted in a creative manner on websites such as notaleader.ca and Ignatieff.me, which provided a stable, 24-7 messaging mechanism to destabilize these politicians' public images and their own political communications. Audio and video ads and messaging were disseminated online via the Conservative Party's website, through friendly bloggers, by posting ads on social networking or file sharing sites such as Facebook and YouTube, and by communicating their availability via email and Twitter. Such inexpensive and unflattering websites about the competition often generate mainstream news media coverage and have an impressive reach. Political advertising is also used by advocacy groups (see Pross 1975 and Seidle 1991) and by governments to provide information about new regulations or government services, to promote civic events such as Canada Day and the Olympics, or to persuade the public about a policy such as free trade or taxes (Rose 2000).

The use of political advertising in Canada generates significant criticism. The emotional resonance leads to free news coverage as the advertising is scrutinized by pundits and, eventually, by academics. Supporters of negative ads maintain that they help shape the public agenda, that they weaken an opponent's values, and that they encourage political honesty and accountability. Critics counter that attack ads are unethical, that they are undesirable American imports, that democracy suffers as public attention is further diverted from scrutinizing policy proposals, that the debate is framed about imagery and the strategic game, and that "going neg" turns people off politics. For instance, negative advertising is often blamed for declining election turnout, though there is contradictory evidence of whether this is theory or fact (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Wattenberg and Brians 1999). In addition, in various referendums and after the 2008 economic crisis (see Chapter 7), Canadian government advertising has crossed into the realm of propaganda.

Nevertheless, this is not a book about political advertising. Political marketing is not just about advertising, though it is an exceedingly important communication tactic. Ads are one of several communication options available to political marketers – media relations, direct mail, and public appearances being others. When marketers do develop advertising campaigns, they use marketing concepts and tools (for instance, market research). Computer databases and online research allow parties to produce informative advertising that creates an evidence-based strategic messaging frame, one that can be quickly disseminated in response to emerging events. But studies also explore whether ads reflect voter preferences, how effectively they convey the political product, and if they support the overall brand (see, for example, C. Robinson 2010). Indeed, as with commercial marketing, the aim of political marketing strategy and research is to create a product that the market wants, so there should be less need for persuasive advertising, as opposed to informative advertising, that generates product awareness.

Political Marketing Is Different from Brokerage Politics

Since the 1970s, Canadian academia has looked at party politics through a lens of the electoral benefits of employing a brokerage model, whereby successful big tent parties embody a pluralistic catch-all approach to appeal to the median Canadian voter and to "broker" regional tensions (Bickerton, Gagnon, and Smith 1999; Brodie and Jenson 2007; Carty 2001; Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Clarkson 2005). Forming government and maintaining that position necessitates adopting centrist policies and electoral coalitions to satisfy the short-term preferences of a majority of electors who are not located on the ideological fringe. Brodie and Jenson (2007, 40), for instance, state that since brokerage parties are foremost vote-seekers, there is "no basis for the systematic exclusion of any group" if numbers warrant. For some time, brokerage politicking has been widely considered essential in a country where regional differences and national unity tensions are so pronounced; Carty (2001, 25) refers to this as the "regional accommodation" function of brokerage politics. Regionalism is particularly acute given that the single member plurality (SMP) electoral system tends to exaggerate the seat counts of the market leader and of strong regional niche parties, which are often outlets for populist protests, at the expense of market followers and fringe parties. As national federalist parties, this has pressured the Liberals and Conservatives not only to broker left- and right-wing ideological tensions but foremost to manage various competing provincial interests, as represented by provincial premiers and regional party bosses who act as localized lobbyists for federal resources. In seeking to deal with the challenges this presents for garnering widespread electoral support, Canadian political parties have evolved so that local organizational autonomy, member participation, electoral segmentation, and voter mobilization work as separate yet united franchising activities (Carty 2002, 2004; Carty, Young, and Cross 2000).

Brokerage politics is in some ways comparable to a mass market approach to consumers. Major political parties are like department or grocery stores that offer many products that are needed and wanted by the masses, while simultaneously responding somewhat to local market preferences, but leaving specialized markets to be served by smaller competitors. The brokerage system is said to have foremost characterized Canadian parties between the 1920s and 1950s (Carty 2001; Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Clarkson 2005), followed by a pan-Canadian system enabled by developments in mass media and polling, though others indicate that brokerage politics persisted until at least 2006, when Stephen Harper became prime minister (Brodie and Jenson 2007). One of the authors of this Canadian party system approach, R. Kenneth Carty, has, along with co-authors William Cross and Lisa Young, remarked on the representational linkages between Canadian political parties and the electorate. In *Rebuilding Canadian Party Politics* (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000), they suggest that a new party system emerged with the 1993 federal election that marked the end of the pan-Canadian era of broad national policies. It coincided with the increasing concentration of power in the party leader's office and a shift toward the brokering of the demands of special interest groups. A fragmented electorate resulted in parties offering policy positions "tailored to specific segments of the electorate" (9), and opinion polling becoming "more essential to the parties' electoral strategies than ever before" (189) as such data were used to inform the concentration of resources on swing voters in winnable ridings.

Along with technological advances, Canadian political parties have evolved into a modern form of brokerage parties. National central decision making coexists with some degree of local "franchise" organizational autonomy in riding associations to contribute to electoral segmentation and the simulation of member participation and voter mobilization. Although Carty and his colleagues do not explicitly refer to the notion of market orientation, this franchise model of Canadian political parties strongly echoes the importance that is placed on internal and external stakeholder relationships within political and service marketing literature. Of particular significance here is the recognition that local autonomy and national discipline must coexist, as parties must invest in local resources in order to build "an organization attuned to the needs and demands of the community they serve" (Carty 2002, 730), and national campaigns cannot succeed if "there is no local organization in the constituency to harvest voter support" (743). Equally important is the observation that modern brokerage parties are increasingly defined as targeting and aggregating various segments of the electorate rather than seeking "to catch all the interests" (726). This mobilization function is seen to be carried out by the franchised local party members and riding association personnel and must be in tune with the national promotional campaign aimed at undecided voters. These observations parallel a basic tenet of being market orientated insofar as every member of an organization, not just its leadership or the marketing department's staffers, is viewed as a potential part-time marketeer and a co-producer of the service to be provided to consumers/voters (Johansen 2005).

What Carty, Cross, and Young were describing about the post-1993 era was the onset of political marketing in Canadian politics. This was around the time of the rebranding of the Reform Party as the Canadian Alliance and, subsequently, as the Conservative Party, a political organization that has embraced business marketing techniques more fully than the other parties and yet at times has been constrained by the ideological underpinnings of its leadership, caucus, and membership. In Canada, the earliest adopters of political marketing techniques have been the Conservatives and the Liberals (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000; Marland 2005; Paltiel 1989). But in fact, the influence of inputs such as survey and focus group data on decisions related to outputs ranging from policy products to persuasion tactics has been growing since the Liberal Party first experimented with scientific polling in the 1940s. Often, such innovations have been used to structure targeted fundraising campaigns to finance the ability to collect data, to respond to it, and to sell the party's product(s). Marketing may be used by political parties and their local associations between and during election campaigns, as well as internally, such as during leadership contests and policy conventions and in local candidate nominations. Parliamentarians, governments, interest groups, and non-governmental organizations like charities may use marketing in response to emerging situations or as part of cyclical events such as throne and budget speeches, public awareness campaigns, or fundraising drives.

As this book shows, a new era of political marketing is therefore developing, marking a more sophisticated, if impersonal, model of party politics in Canada. Whitaker (2001) has described the presence of a vacuous "virtual political party" that is leader-driven, employs marketing specialists, and is replacing brokerage politics. He says that "as mass marketing gives way to niche or micro marketing, the 'public' becomes fragmented into many publics, each targeted for votes by parties that tailor and hone their appeals to particular niches" (19). Indeed, in the modern era of successive minority federal governments, we have seen how the practice of niche marketing, as used by the Bloc Québécois since the early 1990s, can create a seemingly impenetrable market share as long as the party remains in touch with its target market. But it is since the 2005-6 federal election campaign, when the Harper Conservatives used micro-marketing with reasonable success, that we have seen the fragmentation of publics forecast by Whitaker. With that election campaign, so meticulously described by Tom Flanagan in *Harper's Team* (2007a; 2009), the Conservatives put the other parties on notice that technological advances in database management, market segmentation, and media targeting have reduced the viability of the old brokerage model of party politics in an era of the virtual political party that is preoccupied with elector segments as targeted through research intelligence. This has increased the competitive pressure on other Canadian political parties and on interest groups to employ a political marketing approach.

Political Marketing and Democracy

Previous research on political marketing has raised a number of concerns about its potential impact on democracy, which this book also considers within the Canadian context. Newman (1999a, ix, xi) warned that American democracy is "on shaky ground" and is "bent on self-destruction" because political leaders rely so much on opinion polls and mass marketing. Thus, the adoption of US-style political marketing in Canada could produce significant democratic implications, such as giving elites the tools to both reflect and manipulate citizens' viewpoints. To practitioners such as Steinberg (1976), political marketing is foremost a management tool used to win elections, whereas to academics such as O'Cass (2009, 204), it raises philosophical discussions about the repercussions for democracy as political parties "develop policies which seek to solve the social, economic and political problems" faced by some electors. There are several areas of potential concern, which this book seeks to broadly identify if they are also relevant in Canadian politics. Concerns about political marketing raised in previous research include:

1 The concentration of political marketing practices in the hands of party outsiders such as political consultants and pollster-led researchers, which

can encourage consultants to have more impact on policy design and in the daily affairs of new governments;

2 The pandering of politicians said to be governing by polls and the consequences of poll-driven leadership;

3 The passage of the political debate from substance (issues) toward image preoccupations;

4 The merchandizing of the political and the consideration of citizens as consumers, and thus the transformation of governance into permanent campaigns;

5 The thinning influence of party members and staffs in campaign organization and governance because of centralizing marketing strategies;

6 The explosion in campaign costs;

7 The implications that segmentation and targeting of voters might have on interest representation; and,

8 The negative impact on levels of political trust and participation in the electorate.

These themes are discussed throughout the book, but it is worth expanding on three areas here: unelected advisers, market segmentation, and treating voters like consumers. For example, Newman (1999a) notes how political marketing has exacerbated the potential influence of unelected advisers, as they provide advice on the decisions made by elected officials, senior bureaucrats, and non-governmental organizations in relation to their potential impact on public opinion. Knowledge, after all, is power, and the ability to respond well to strategic information can make the difference in determining who governs, which public policies exist, and the overall quality of life of a polity's citizenry. This produces debate over the democratic implications of public servants and their political masters employing advertising agencies and opinion research specialists to develop communications programs. In Canada, for instance, there is much vexation about whether the government advertising and polling that result have an educational informative value or whether they are of a persuasive agenda-setting nature (Roberts and Rose 1995; Rose 2000).

Market segmentation encourages political parties, including the governing party, to use opinion research and other intelligence to target groups whose support they need, and thus exclude others, rather than represent the public as a whole. This marginalizes those who are not targeted; Lilleker (2005b) argues that segmentation creates a division between the public whose interests are already represented and those whose interests have been abandoned, and it risks demobilizing non-target groups. Market segmentation also may enable extremist parties to increase their support (McGough 2009). The use of market research to isolate target groups limits the broad appeal of a pan-Canadian big tent party because other parties can narrowcast messages that resonate with target groups. For instance, when the Conservative Party of Canada won a minority of seats in the 2006 and 2008 general elections, its strategists targeted the conservative middle class and dismissed electors who prioritized progressive social values (Flanagan 2009; Paré and Berger 2008).

A broader concern is the notion of citizen-as-consumer (Blumler 1997; Farrell 1996; B. Franklin 2004; Kraus 2000; Newman 1999a). Satisfying needs and wants is much less straightforward in the political realm than in the marketplace. Giving people what they want is not necessarily giving them what they need, individually or collectively. Lilleker and Scullion (2008, 4) explain how politics involves consideration of self and society, whereas consumerism encourages people "to be selfish, vain and individualistic." Needham (2003, 7) argues that political marketing has "turned democracy into a marketplace" and downgraded citizenship; Savigny (2008b) argues that it encourages self-interest in politics (see also Slocum 2004; Walsh 1994). For example, the Harper Conservatives' reduction of the maligned goods and services tax (GST) was a popular political decision. Opinion research indicating that cutting the GST would be a vote-winner trumped the educated opinions of many economists that cutting income taxes would be better public policy.

Yet, the literature also asserts potential positives about political marketing which this book considers, including:

1 Getting politicians to listen and understand the electorate more effectively;
2 Enabling effective targeting, not just of majorities but also of minorities;
3 Making government focus more on actual delivery than rhetorical promises;
4 Elevating citizens' position in the political process;
5 Developing a more mature relationship with the electorate, where political consumers are active players in the political system, understand the complexities of government, and move away from demanding to helping create government;

6 Reducing elite domination of the political process; and,
7 Keeping politicians responsive and accountable.

Political Marketing in Canada considers both sides of the debate. Without exploring what makes a political system democratic – which is a question for other books – we can say that liberal democratic theory is pretty straightforward regarding the centrality of the role that citizens play in its workings: government of the people, for the people, by the people, as Abraham Lincoln famously said in his 1863 Gettysburg Address. As Verba and Nie (1972, 1, cited in Burt 2002, 234) have stated, this means that the nature of a democracy is measured by the participation of the public in political decision making. Political participation of the citizenry is essential because that is what anchors a democratic political system. Citizens' input is needed – and expected – to ensure a healthy democratic life. Yet, political science has been suggesting that post-industrial democracies are experiencing a crisis in representation and participation. Citizens are said to be expressing a malaise toward their political elites and institutions, as measured by indicators such as declines in electoral turnouts, weak levels of political trust, lower levels of party membership, higher public cynicism toward political life, and declines in forms of civic engagement (Cappella and Jamieson 1996, 1997; de Vreese 2005; Patterson 1994; Putnam 2000).

Canada's political system is likewise said to suffer from democratic uneasiness (Gidengil et al. 2004; Nadeau 2002). The last two decades of Canadian electoral studies point to the same democratic decline, as indicated by lower voter turnout figures and fluctuations in levels of public confidence in political actors and institutions (Gidengil et al. 2004, 104-7; Nevitte 1996, 54-58). In addition, public opinion surveys consistently show that a majority of Canadians share a negative opinion of their political class that is expressed by an abysmal trust level of politicians (Angus Reid 2010; Léger Marketing 2006, 2007). Canadian citizens, the primary actors of representative liberal democracy, are voting in lower numbers and have less faith in their electoral system (Gidengil et al. 2004, vii). Simultaneously, and perhaps not coincidentally, political marketers and consultants have become increasingly and actively involved in the Canadian political process, and thus we need to consider whether this has played a part in the democratic malaise noted by non-political marketing studies, while also allowing for the possibility that political marketing may facilitate the electoral transaction by engaging electors in the definition of the political offer and enhance democracy. All the chapters in this book reflect on the possible democratic implications that might be generated by the increasing use of political marketing activities by parties, governments, and groups in Canada.

The Structure of *Political Marketing in Canada*

This is the first book on political marketing in Canada and, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, the practice is both emerging and thriving with divergent democratic implications. Political advisers continually monitor international developments to identify new approaches that can be utilized in Canadian politics, the Government of Canada uses public opinion research data when developing policy, and political marketing is even used in the private sector. This book explores how political marketing is being implemented in Canada, whether its use is similar in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, and if Canada is developing its own unique version. It also discusses whether political marketing, by guiding elites to listen to public opinion, is improving the quality of representation and democracy and whether it is changing the nature of Canadian politics itself.

The material covers a range of topical and Canadian perspectives about political marketing. Its chapters consider the potential and constraints for political marketing in terms of the nature of voters and the rules of the electoral market; the utilization of market research and its influence on politicians' decision making and the strategic approaches that Canada's federal political parties take; branding in terms of parties but also the utilization of popular public locations such as Tim Hortons; the role of e-marketing and the impact of the Canadian media on political marketing communication; the way that Canadian interest groups utilize political marketing; the commissioning and influence of public opinion research by government departments; the scope and effectiveness of delivery management in a minority government; and the impact of political marketing activities on citizens' political efficacy levels.

Political Marketing in Canada therefore provides an informed insight into the way that political marketing is used in Canada. It addresses a knowledge gap in Canadian academia where the rarely mentioned term "political marketing" has tended to be used synonymously with political communication, advertising, media, and persuasion. It demonstrates that Canadian parties tend to be slow adopters of innovations in campaign management and that techniques employed by the Conservative Party of Canada have put pressure on their competitors to modernize. Moreover, it identifies differences as well as similarities with the rest of the world, providing a rich perspective on the way political marketing is developing in the early twenty-first century, which will be of interest to all those concerned about the democratic impact of political marketing around the globe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of Daniel Paré (Université d'Ottawa) and Elisabeth Gidengil (McGill University) to certain sections of this chapter.

© UBC Press 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher, or, in Canada, in the case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a licence from Access Copyright, www.accesscopyright.ca.

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12   5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Canada on FSC-certified ancient-forest-free paper
(100% post-consumer recycled) that is processed chlorine- and acid-free.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Political marketing in Canada / edited by Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson, and Jennifer Lees-Marshment.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
Issued also in electronic formats.
ISBN 978-0-7748-2228-2

1. Marketing – Political aspects – Canada. 2. Political parties – Canada. I. Marland, Alexander J., II. Giasson, Thierry III. Lees-Marshment, Jennifer

JA85.2.C3P64 2012   324.7′30971   C2011-907353-6

Canadä

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
2029 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
www.ubcpress.ca