

POLITICAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF CYPRUS AND THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Constantinos Constantinou

PhD Cand. in Business Administration at the European University Cyprus

The political marketing war is well underway in view of the imminent presidential elections in the Republic of Cyprus. Admittedly, the political party leadership of the center appears to expedite the latter process. Suffice for one to merely follow what is happening on the social media to get an overall idea. A case in point, the political party leaders of the Democratic Party (DIKO), Citizens' Alliance alongside Solidarity Movement pursue a line premised on the Cyprus Problem [1]. EDEK and the Green Party seem to follow a parallel line. As for the political parties between the left (AKEL) and the right (DISY), there is no doubt that they will put forward a different strategy in regards to the Cyprus Problem whilst, the current (DISY) President and the AKEL candidate shall play the 'solution' card [2]. Populism then, is what some characterize the upcoming elections on social networking websites such as, Twitter [3].

The purpose here is to aid the readers immerse into the political marketing and communication realm. To this end, a basic analytical toolkit that is pertinent within the context of the upcoming presidential elections will be provided. Beforehand though, it is of outmost importance to define the term of political marketing: *the party or candidate's use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will help realize organizational aims and, satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes* [4]. Moreover, political marketing may actually be described as the application of marketing concepts to the study of a strategic procedure concerning voters/politicians along with, their parties [5].

With respect to the salience of the subject-matter at hand, political and marketing procedures play a major role in nearly all societies, with politics and marketing influencing all aspects of life [6]. In addition, political marketing manifests itself through a political campaign, that is, an organized effort to influence the decision making process within a group; in democratic nations, a political campaign often brings to mind elections – with campaigns being present ever since there have been informed citizens to campaign amongst [7]. All in all, somebody may view political marketing and public relations as lubricants that enable the political machinery to run smoothly [8].

Furthermore, studies have shown an increased association between business and political marketing; for instance, as noted in the findings of Thrassou *et al.* [9]. Direct/multilevel selling -also known as network marketing-, involves organizations selling door-to-door or at home sales

parties [10], analogous to how politicians knock on doors when nearing elections to directly sell/promote their idea/ideology or, door-to-door canvassing as part of voter group targeting [11].

In a similar vein, living now in a digitalized era, politicians (via their teams of communication experts) knock on peoples' social media "door" by targeting potential voters on Facebook, LinkedIn and, so on. Finally, it is significant to turn the heed to yet another angle germane to the topic under discussion. That is, the adoption of more silent (political marketing) strategies regarding certain issues/people, like the one exhibited by mainstream media/political leaders concerning the far right group (ELAM). Put differently, the aforesaid group goes more unnoticed than the rest of the political players. So, the communications strategy comprises a determining factor in respect of the outcome of the 2018 presidential elections; more specifically, electoral campaigns are called to reach/convince the various population groups through targeted actions, say, via the use of social media (particularly, Facebook) so that to attract the ages between 18 and 35 [12].

In synopsis, the current situation may broadly be characterized as chaotic at worse and uncertain at best, thereby, one may only hope that the next President will be proactive. In other words, s/he will see ahead the security challenges (in view of say, the ongoing war in Syria rendering the refugee crisis) in conjunction with the Cyprus Question as well as, economy. Albeit the aim here comprised of providing to the reader a brief introduction about what political marketing entails, it is noteworthy realizing that Cyprus must turn a new page by employing a comprehensive governance roadmap for its national survival [13]. Consequently, the local political leaderships/communication experts looking for potential consumers (voters) to buy their 'nationalistic' rhetoric need to realize the gravity of the extant situation. Specially, since it transcends any political communication games and, their subsequent clientelistic relationships.

Notes

[1] Politis News (19 February 2017), "Proedrikes 2018: Ta kommata tou endiamesou se theseis mahis", <https://politis.com.cy/article/proedrikes-2018-ta-kommata-tou-endiamesou-se-thesis-machis> (accessed 4 April 2017).

[2] Tsouroullis, C. (5 April 2017), "Proedrikes ekloges: akoustike to "lavete theseis", *SigmaLive*, <http://www.sigmalive.com/blog/tsouroullis/2017/03/2033/proedrikes-ekloges-akoustike-to-lavete-theseis> (accessed 9 April 2017).

[3] Twitter, "#proedrikes": <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23proedrikes> (accessed 9 April 2017).

[4] Wring, D. (1997), "Reconciling Marketing with Political Science: Theories of Political Marketing", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 13: 7, pp. 651-663 (653).

- [5] Moufahim, M. and Lim, M. (2009), "Towards a critical political marketing agenda?", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25: 7-8, pp. 763-776 (764).
- [6] O'Cass, A. and Voola, R. (2011), "Explications of political market orientation and political brand orientation using the resource-based view of the political party", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27: 5-6, pp. 627-645 (627).
- [7] Papageorgiou, G. (2010), "Toward a System Dynamics Modeling Framework for Effective Political Organization Management Strategies", *Journal of Political Marketing*, 9: 1-2, pp. 55-72 (57).
- [8] Newman, I.B. (2002), "The Merging of Public Relations and Political Marketing", *Journal of Political Marketing*, 1: 2-3, pp. 1-7 (3).
- [9] Thrassou, A., Vrontis, D. and McDonald, H.B.M. (2009), "A marketing communications framework for small political parties in developed countries", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 27: 2, pp. 268-292 (286).
- [10] Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2009), *Marketing Management*, Pearson Education, Inc., New Jersey (484).
- [11] Baines, R.P., Harris, P. and Lewis, R.B. (2002), "The political marketing planning process: improving image and message in strategic target areas", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 20: 1, pp. 6-14 (11), MCB UP Limited.
- [12] Sykas, N. (29 March 2017), "Ahartografita nera oi proedrikes ekloges 2018", *E Simerini*, <http://www.sigmalive.com/simerini/analiseis/417523/axartografita-nera-oi-proedrikes-ekloges-2018> (accessed 13 April 2017).
- [13] Theophanous, A. (7 April 2017), "I Kypros enopion kathoristikon prokliseon", *SigmaLive*, http://www.sigmalive.com/news/opinions_sigmalive/420482/i-kypros-enopion-kathoristikon-prokliseon (accessed 10 April 2017).