# Evaluating the strategies related to identifying target market in the victory of electoral campaigns of organizations and political parties in Iran

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**Abstract:** This research is performed with an interdisciplinary approach in two different areas of marketing and politics. In this regard we extract the independent variables, which include undifferentiated, concentrated, differentiated, and customized strategies from the strategies of identifying target market; and independent variable is the victory of electoral campaigns in organizations and political parties, which is extracted completely from politics. Research is in surveying-descriptive and detection methods and is of applied type by goal in which we use questionnaire and concurrent interview. Statistical population include some political experts (n= 69) in Iran, which were selected by improbable, judicative sampling method. Moreover, we use linear regression, Pierson's correlation test and t-test for analyzing information. Research findings indicate that people (addressees and voters) mainly focused on differentiated and customized strategies through which political parties and organizations can assure more their success in the elective campaigns.

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**Key words:** political marketing, electoral campaigns, organizations, political parties

## **Introduction:**

Marketing, as a science, dates back to the first decade of 1900, which was inspired by Germany's economy. In the contemporary literature, marketing is nothing more than identifying the needs of man and creating new ideas for approaching to those needs in suitable time and place. Wring believes that marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives; this definition of Wring titled incontrovertible definition of marketing in marketing encyclopedia is also introduced by Alipour (2010) in the framework of related definition to American Marketing Association (1). Nowadays the range and expansion of marketing is very vast and extended from the markets of goods, services and even ideas to political environment. Personal marketing is another kind of marketing (2). This marketing, as one of the important marketing models, is of main application in political dimension. When presidential or even parliamentary candidates, before doing anything, negotiate with a group of political marketers and finally start their work with a software package related to political marketing, the role of marketing in politics becomes clearer (3). In this paper we consider the application of some marketing parameters in elective campaigns, in other words we study the introduction of marketing strategies as the basis of elective movements. Elective campaigns in Iran are not of logical formula: a slogan is introduced by a candidate and often utilized everywhere in the same manner and its distribution is very primitive and traditional; therefore, promoting marketing science among political movements and practices as political marketing seems necessary. We will present an unrevised definition of political marketing based on the researches' findings in Iran at the end of the paper.

In this research, politicians' behavior in a superficial and somehow conceptual manner is similar to the behavior of producers, distributers and selling and publicizing agencies in business markets. With the assumption that this behavior can adapt to marketing patterns on the basis of people's requirements and society's expectations from candidates, we study and compare the strategies of target market in business in the framework of political marketing with target population and addressees.

Major goals of this research are as following:

- A) Discovering the logical and positive relation between marketing and political campaigns;
- B) Testing each strategy related to target market identification in elective campaigns;
- C) Discovering the manner in which each strategy of target market identification responds with regard to the needs and expectations of voters in Iran;
- D) Prioritizing the abovementioned strategies according to their success in political and elective campaigns in Iran;
- E) Presenting a nativized and applied definition from political marketing strategy in Iran.

Moreover, in this study we must answer to the following questions:

- A) Does the application of common approaches and procedures of political marketing in Iran is in conformity with the approaches and procedures of other kinds of marketing?
- B) Does it is possible to increase the contribution of target population (voters) in elective campaigns with the application of undifferentiated strategy?
- C) Does it is possible to increase the contribution of target population (voters) in elective campaigns with the application of differentiated strategy?
- D) Does it is possible to increase the contribution of target population (voters) in elective campaigns with the application of concentrated strategy?
- E) Does it is possible to increase the contribution of target population (voters) in elective campaigns with the application of customized strategy?

Due to the fact that the subject is placed between two fields, research procedure is quantitative and its

execution is a mix of surveying-descriptive and detection methods. But by goal it is an applied research. The main reason for choosing this research method is due to the novelty of this subject in Iran. Moreover, its literature is not reach enough in other countries of the world. Therefore, by the technique of group discussion, the authors formed a panel from among university professors and some politicians in Iran to discuss about the accuracy of prepared questions. The results, as the main questions, were underwent a final study with surveying-descriptive method. We also modified, manipulated and revised the independent variables in surveying method to test their effects on dependent variable, which is the evaluation of activities related to political parties and Research population includes organizations. university professors and experts in politics and some political activists in Iran. We identify samples from among the aforementioned population and survey them scientifically. Sampling method is judicative, which is one of the improbable approaches in sampling. Due to the technical nature and sensitivity of the study we select 69 individuals. For identifying the subject and entering into the major area of the research we study two groups of information. The FirstGroup includes secondary information, which was collected from panel, researches, related papers, books and internet sites, and finally some documents in the library related to ministry of foreign affairs. Second group include primary data, which must be collected from the major area of research. For collecting the primary information, which formed the basis of analysis, we use both interview and questionnaire concurrently. For analyzing information, primarily we use Pearson's coefficient and then correlation coefficient to perceive the relationships between different variables of research. We use t-test for meaningfulness of variables and linear multivariable regression analysis for presenting the relations between independent and dependent variables; at the end we present regression model.

## Theoretical principles:

Marketing institute of Jarterd defines marketing as: process management, being responsible in identifying and predicting costumers' requirements and gaining their satisfaction (4). We include this definition of marketing for completing the discussions related to political marketing and therefore discuss about target marketing strategies

(target identification). Marketers have outlined four strategies to satisfy target markets: undifferentiated marketing or mass marketing. differentiated marketing, concentrated marketing, and customized marketing. Undifferentiated marketing strategy occurs when a firm focuses on the common needs of consumers rather than their different needs (5). Undifferentiated marketing treats all segments of the population the same, and the strategy is to use one approach that aims to appeal to as many people as possible (6). Therefore, in comparison to political marketing this strategy occurs when the parties, political organizations or candidates perform their activities in an environment with less complexity and even adapt their slogans to the needs and requirements of public or target population (voters). For this reason we use some traditional tactics in political marketing. A differentiated strategy exists where the supplier seeks to supply a modified version of the basic product to each of the major subgroups which comprise the basic markets (7).A firm using a differentiated strategy makes a conscious decision to divide and target several different market segments, with a different product geared to each segment (8). The application of this strategy is possible through the integration of traditional and modern tactics. Responding to the needs and expectations of target population and designing different programs for every level of target population (voters) is the major goal of this strategy in political marketing. In the case of a concentrated marketing strategy the producer deliberately selects one of the major market segments and concentrates all his efforts upon it (9). Concentrated Marketing is a strategy whereby a product is developed and marketed for a very well defined and specific segment of the consumer population (10). In comparison to the function of political marketing, political party or organization seeks to satisfy the needs, expectations or even beliefs and ideology of an especial population of society and present their political marketing programs only to this part of society. By definition when a specific product is tailored to the needs of an individual customer, this is called Customized Marketing. Customized marketing is a powerful and more efficient way to reach your target market (11). But it requires more costs to adjust one's idea with the expectations and operations of political marketing.

#### **Origin of Political Marketing:**

Kelley (1956) is generally credited with the first use of the term political marketing. The emergence of political marketing analysis has its roots in a debate initiated by a pair of leading management theorist over twenty five years ago (12). The rise of political marketing in the recent past has been attributed to the development of an investigative press, declining party loyalty, and changes in the political and electoral systems (13).

Studying political marketing involves:

- Learning the basics of the other discipline;
- Utilizing new journals in an unfamiliar discipline;
- Willingness to learn new concepts and language;
- Being prepared to take on new ideas.

In particular, scholars have identified the expansion of the media, particularly television as having had a significant impact. The political "product" is some amalgam of policy, leader image, inherited memory, promise and it is also a referendum on past performance. Political marketing would appear to be distinguished from publication conceptualization of voters as customers and its subsequent stress on market- research- driven policy. Clinton gave people what they wanted to hear, with just the right language, words and phrases that would oscillate with the American public (14). Most of the electoral markets of the West are mature, the players are established and the positions are set (15).

#### Political Marketing: A New Phenomenon

Political marketing came into existence as a new phenomenon of political activities. It is now a seemingly ubiquitous element of political life. There is scholarly consensus that political marketing has changed the political sphere without a clear understanding of the essence and the mechanism of this change (16). Alas, others argue that what is now called political marketing has always existed (17). Political marketing is only a new name for an established way of political competition in descriptions of historic political campaigns (18). Nevertheless, this view must be qualified. The last phase of political marketing is based on market research and total management of the political offer that is strategic and managerial understanding of the marketing of politics (19).

## Personal Marketing as the origin of political marketing

Personal or Relationship Marketing was first defined as a form of marketing developed from direct response marketing campaigns which emphasizes customer retention and satisfaction, rather than a dominant focus on sales transactions (20). Marketing designed to influence target audiences to behave in some positive manner with respect to the positions, products, or services associated with a specific person. In this research, we can state that Personal Marketing is related to Political Marketing as the political leaders have to influence the target people for getting more votes. Kelly was the first one who uses the term political marketing. The emergence of political marketing analysis has its roots in a debate initiated by a pair of leading management theorist over twenty five years ago (21). Followings is some definitions of political marketing. It is the marketing of ideas and opinions which relate to public or political issues or to specific candidates. In general, political marketing is designed to influence people's votes in elections (23).

It is 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 marketer's objective (24). By exact looking at the abovementioned definitions we can conclude that nearly all political techniques are evolved around commercial marketing. In this regard political individuals and parties apply rapidly the techniques, which their efficacy is proved in commercial marketing. Political marketing is about the integrated activities of social structure, which politicians can utilize for reaching to a set of goals.

# Political communication / tools of political communication

Marketing's unique contribution is the introduction of strategic concern regarding the electorate's wants and needs. The incorporation of strategy in election campaigning will influence goals, policies, priorities and party behavior (25). According to Scammell (1999), this new focus "effectively reverses the perspective offered by political communications approaches. The field of political communication studies the interactions between media and political systems, locally, nationally and internationally (26).

#### Political marketing management:

It is often argued that the application of marketing tools and equipment in politics is not a new phenomenon. We are unaware of its trueness or falseness, but it is clear that during the 25 years ago this issue is not very important for political marketing management. But political activists believe that they perform marketing management activities and try to unify the manner in which marketing tools are utilized for applying a logical and continual marketing strategy. Moreover, political marketing applications have changed from a mere communicational tool to an incorporated tool in political management (28).

## Functions of political marketing:

Functions of political marketing are prerequisite for the success of political marketing management.

According to the theories of political marketing, there are 8 general functions for the success of political marketing (25):

#### **Product function:**

In the process of political marketing, there must be some changes and conversion between political parties and voting in the target markets of voters. In the general process of marketing every political party must presents a series of products, which tries to sell it to voters' market. A party, for example, can promise a suitable Administration as a product for its target market. In some cases a product can be an ideology or adapting some foreign policies, which is in the mind of a candidate. Furthermore, the ultimate stage of marketing process is designing for product's market. In USA, for example, the major function of Democrats' products was to sell Obama's brand and creating a suitable sovereignty on the basis of major changes.

## **Distribution function:**

Distribution function relates to a condition, which is based on accessing to changes for converting commercial sharers. This function includes two aspects: transferring electoral headquarter and presenting it for converting political sharers. Presenting and creating electoral headquarter for the function of distribution provides primary changes for the voters and political shares with the accession to all related information about political product. Moreover, this activity include broadcasting information about major programs and policies of the party, placement of candidates in suitable

channels and assuring that the distribution is adapted suitably to the ideology of the related party.

#### **Cost function:**

One of the main functions in marketing process is selling the product, which is considered as the cost proficiency in comparison to other products in a market in which all customers are very satisfied from the cost. In political marketing the cost function is related to the management of attitude and behavioral limitations of voters through calculating campaigning strategies. Voters most access to all information about the product without paying any cost.

#### **Communications function:**

This function is for providing primary information to political sharers with a simple and accessible method. In most of the cases this function constitutes the heart of political marketing. For a political party, communications not only related to providing political concept, political idea and future programs, but also related to target identification, and concept creation and paraphrasing in a complicated political world. This function of communication prescribes a dialogue with political sharers in a multi-dimensional process of information and allotment of circulars and resolutions.

#### **News management function:**

This function is of very close relationship with the function of communication. But the function of news management is for secondary political sharers or intermediate parts likes media, which follow the major parts of the task. In other words, management plays the role of a section, which generalizes candidates and the related political party. Activities such as public relations, media management, virtual management advertisement, of campaign headquarter etc. are functions of news management. In the age of communicational revolution, news management is of vital role in the success of marketing.

# The function of increasing finance and properties:

In the general process of marketing, increasing of finance and properties are not considered so important. But political marketing management cannot continue without supplying and increasing finance. With regard to supporting political activists

with suitable resources we require a suitable program for performing this function. A political party depends on different resources, which is supplied through membership premium, gratuitous support etc. by the followers.

### The function of managing parallel headquarters:

This function explains that how the requirements related to management activities ofheadquarter in a political party harmonized with parallel organizations. Incremental and uniform use of managerial activities allow to the party to establish electoral headquarter with more efficacy. In addition, using parallel headquarters and support by other organizations increase the veracity and reliability of advertisements.

## The function of managing internal solidarity:

Alongside external managerial aspects, internal structures and functions of political parties require a specialized managerial method. This function includes communicating with activists, members and the spokesman of the party. The function of internal marketing plays a critical role in establishing internal stability and reliability of party on the basis of external conception of the system.

### Political marketing: a new phenomenon

Political marketing came into existence as a new phenomenon of political activities. It is now a seemingly ubiquitous element of political life. There is scholarly consensus that political marketing has changed the political sphere (), without a clear understanding of the essence and the mechanism of this change (30). Alas, others argue that what is now called political marketing has always existed. Political marketing is only a new name for an established way of political competition in descriptions of historic political campaigns (31). Nevertheless, this view must be qualified. The last phase of political marketing is based on market research and total management of the political offer that is strategic and managerial understanding of the marketing of politics (32).

### Political marketing strategy

The study of political marketing is not limited to the surveying of political parties' advertisements in mass media and focusing on elections but it also contains a vast area with more covering: how and where political parties try to take major body of ballots from the target population. Political

marketing involves a number of activities, but one of the first things to learn is that it is also about strategy: how parties, candidates and governments think and plan in order to achieve their goals. Political marketing literature in this area is mostly concerned with how parties or candidates might become market-oriented or exhibit behavior in relation with market or marketing orientation. Applying the concept of market orientation to politics has helped demonstrate that political marketing is not just about selling, but it is also concerned with what politicians and governments try to sell, by examining the relationship between the political product and market demands. It is also controversial and often criticized on ethical and normative grounds, because it elevates the position of the voter in the political decision-making process, a concern, given the potential limits of the voter (33).

#### **What Political Marketers Neglect:**

It is possible to argue that political leaders have tended to neglect some relevant concepts from consumer marketing. Personal marketing is a useful concept: it is not that politicians do not seek to build relationships with party members or with voters. Politicians might realize that their parties, indeed they themselves, function as brands (34). Political leaders' methodologies may also attempt us to use communication to fill the space vacated by ideas and ideology (35).

### **Political marketing limitations**

Political parties and candidates follow a systematic rule in recognizing market. Most of decision makings are done on the basis of insufficient knowledge, which lead to some mistakes in political marketing. Even lack of knowledge in recognizing voter will lead to inaccurate understanding of voter's behavior, another resource of sensitive issues, and as a result inaccurate decisions are made. This is especially the case in developing countries in which analyzing rivals is not of very importance. And this is one of the reasons for ideological conflicts between different parties. Most parties do not consider media and their power which are of eminent role in political activities. One typical mistake in this regard has its emphasis on public relations. While certain aspects of parties' politics have brought critical views, which lead to the arising of other mistakes like miscalculation and incautious behavior of political parties.

According to general conceptions, political organizations establish relationship with public issues, especially when a party does not participate effectively in political activities.

#### Quantitative analysis

Following strategies are effective factors in attracting target audiences:

# Undifferentiated, differentiated, concentrated, and customized strategies

Firstwe calculate Pierson's correlation coefficient between dependent variable of attracting target audiences and four independent variables of undifferentiated, differentiated, concentrated, and customized strategies. Then by means of meaningfulness test of correlation coefficient we examine these relationships. Finally by linear multivariable regression analysis and with the method of least squares of error we will obtain the best equation between dependent variable and independent variables. Moreover, we will identify that from among the effective factors on dependent variable which one is most effective and then we will prioritize them according to their effect on dependent variables.

Table 1. Linear correlation coefficients between independent variables and dependent variable

	Undifferentiated strategy	Differentiated strategy	Concentrated strategy	Customized strategy
Correlation coefficient with dependent variable	0.201	0.688	0.116	0.648
P-Value	0.049	0.000	0.172	0.000

The results from table 1 indicate that there is a linear relationship between the application of strategies related to identifying target market and electoral campaigns of organizations and political parties in Iran. Moreover, all relationships expect the variable of concentrated strategy (with a confidence level bigger than 5 percent) is meaningful at the error

level of 5 percent. Differentiated strategy is of most and concentrated strategy is of least effect on the victory of electoral campaign in political parties and organizations of Iran. Table 2 represents the coefficients of independent variables with standardized and unstandardized coefficients by means of t-test.

Table 2 Standardized and un standardized coefficients on the basis of t-statistics

	Un standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p-value
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
Fixed value	-1.695	0.467		-3.632	0.001
Differentiated strategy	0.364	0.102	0.371	3.569	0.001
Customized strategy	0.579	0.103	0.573	5.621	0.000
Concentrated strategy	0.232	0.074	0.248	3.133	0.003
<b>Undifferentiated strategy</b>	0.214	0.099	0.209	2.156	0.035

With regard to the meaningfulness column the relationships between variables of all coefficients in the model is significant at the meaningful level of 5 percent.

Therefore the independent variables of differentiated, customized, concentrated, and undifferentiated strategies are of most effect on the victory of electoral campaign in political parties and

organizations of Iran, respectively. Therefore, the selected regression model is as following and shows the relationships between dependent variable and independent variables.

 $Y \ (\textbf{Organizations and parties win}) = 1.695 + 0.364 (\ \textbf{Differentiation}) + 0.579 (\textbf{Customized}) + 0.233 (\textbf{Concentrated}) + 0.214 \ (\textbf{Undifferentiated}) + 0.200 (\textbf{Customized}) + 0.200 (\textbf{C$ 

### Conclusion

Political marketing is a kind of marketing, which is not for profit but it is on the basis of reliance, then political leaders must be reliable. The manner of integrating marketing and politics is among the issues which are very important among researchers and scholars who are interested in these two fields. This research tries to identify the manner in which strategies of target marketing enters into the politics for powerful presence and competing in electoral campaigns. Moreover, by means of abovementioned strategies we try to identify voters' tendencies and adapt political marketing behaviors and operations of candidates accordingly (36). The results of data

analysis indicate that there is a meaningful relationship between independent variables (differentiated, undifferentiated, customized and concentrated strategies) and dependent variable (the victory of electoral campaigns in political parties and organizations of Iran). Research findings show that differentiated, undifferentiated, concentrated, and customized strategies with the values of 0.688, 0.201, 0.116 and 0.674 respectively, are of linear correlation with dependent variable, i.e. the victory of electoral campaigns in political parties and organizations of Iran, which is supported by the results from t-test. Therefore, all of four independent variables are of meaningful relationship with dependent variable at the error level smaller than 5

percent (p-value<5%) (37). According to the research findings the other strategy that we can adapt it in the activities of political parties and candidates is customized strategy. For applying this strategy, candidates and electoral headquarters must conduct a lot of researches and surveys on target population and audiences. Therefore, adjusting individual requests of audiences with the programs of political parties or groups for the success in electoral campaigns is adapted for political behavior in Iran. One of the main reasons for selecting this strategy by the research population may be due to the promotion of political intelligence among Iranian people. The notable point in adapting this strategy is that in initiation of the research it was a little possibility for the acceptance of this strategy. But the results indicate the opposite: regardless of extra costs, one of the effective parameters in accession of politicians to target market (voters) is customized strategy. Accordingly, for adapting political marketing strategy following managerial applications and suggestions are presented: With regard to research findings we suggest differentiated and customized strategies for the success of candidates and political parties in electoral campaigns. In differentiated strategy addressing different needs and expectations of voters' population are considered in groups and sections, hence different sections and parts are of different programs. Therefore, differentiating diversifying political marketing programs and operations is primary tasks of electoral headquarters. In the process of political marketing strategy, we must practice the philosophy of marketing adoption, and the comprehensive political decisions must be made with regard to the needs and expectations of voters. Any decision making without regarding voters' needs and requirements can lead to an irrecoverable mistake. Since it will lead to the reduction of people's reliability in a long term process, political leaders must not neglect to follow different introduced policies for the public. Many parties neglect the online effect of social networks; they can exploit existing opportunities for communicating with the present potential and sponsors. But in this regard incorporation of some modern tactics like presenting operational programs of candidates' political marketing through using digital media, multi-channel marketing, and using virus marketing along with traditional tactics such as environmental advertisements and accessing to target market, public speeches and presenting programs and operations through catalogued is adapted. Moreover, with regard to the manner of

utilizing customized strategy in political marketing by political parties and organizations, it is suggested that the individual needs of target market (voters) must be identified and summed up for preventing extra expenditures. For preventing wrong actions both political parties and candidates must regard primarily the attitudes of voters and then relate them to their perception from a perfect activity. According to the research findings and abovementioned suggestions we can define political marketing strategy as following: "It is the analysis, planning, performing and controlling political measures and operations through strategies of differentiating, diversifying, and customizing for target population in electoral campaigns."

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