The impact of local political applications on voter choices
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Abstract. Voters are under the influence of several factors when they vote at the local elections, so they determine the color of their vote and realize the act of voting considering these factors. Undoubtedly, the most important of these factors is the practice of political marketing. The concept of political marketing is a conceptual and factual matter entering into life of people and gaining importance with ever-increasing competition in globalizing world, personal differences, diversify of expectations and requirements. This understanding, differently from the traditional marketing, aims at developing ideas and internalization of these ideas by the targeted group. Because this understanding constitutes the base of political marketing practices, in which ideas and opinions are marketed.

Since political competition is very intensive at the present conditions and political parties struggle to create awareness in the minds of targeted voters by taking advantage of these political works, at the present time there is practically no party that doesn’t put into effect its political marketing works in an effective way. It seems to be utopic to achieve success for political parties which don’t use effectively these practices. Because political marketing sociology is fed with such science disciplines as psychology and social psychology that research and try to explain human and human behaviors. To understand voters and make acts and promises which will meet their expectations and requirements are the main indicators of political marketing practices.

The conceptual and institutional framework for local political marketing is represented in this work, but the influence of political marketing practices on voters, which were applied at local elections, is tried to be determined by a public survey conducted in Isparta province.

Keywords: political marketing, local elections, voters.

JEL codes: P19, Z19.

1. The concept of political marketing

There are various factors helping political parties and candidates get electoral votes and win the elections. Voters, especially during the election periods, are made the centre of attention by both political parties and candidates. Politically, creating awareness for voters is among the requirement of the global world. The use of several political marketing practices has become compulsory to realize that awareness. In

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this context, political marketing, pleasing the voters and thus getting their votes, is an effort to create awareness through public opinion researches and environmental analyses in order to get their votes (Wring, 2002: 173). As seen, creating awareness in the voter is one of the main objectives of the marketing concept. Furthermore, political marketing, in its broadest definition, is an effort to determine the voting preferences of the voters during election periods by influencing them (Butler and Collins, 1994: 19).

From a historical perspective, political marketing is a relatively new notion (Lock and Harris, 1996: 22). Although there are some disputes among political marketers over the appearance and evolution of political marketing, it was not until the early 20th century that it emerged and developed as a discipline in USA in the modern sense, followed by political marketing practices applied in Western countries. That democratization rate is higher in USA than in the countries may be the most significant factor that makes these practices emerge in USA (Polat et al., 2004: 17-19). For instance, in the presidential elections in 1952 in USA, Dwight D. Eisenhower, nominee of the Republican Party, made an agreement with an advertising agency for political marketing and propaganda. The first political figure to cooperate with an advertising agency was Dwight Eisenhower (Gegez, 1990: 39). Believing that this type of advertising would be no different than the detergent advertisements, the Democratic Party considered that political propaganda-oriented advertisements during election period would not work. What the election brought about was a victory for the Republicans and a defeat for the Democrats (Gürbüz and İnal, 2004: 17).

It could be said that political marketing practices appeared in an effective way in Britain during the election in 1970. The slogan "Yesterday's Man" by the Labour Party towards the Conservative Party failed as it was hard and degrading even from a positive standpoint and very scornful from a negative standpoint (www.bbc.co.uk), which, in turn, became one of the reasons behind the defeat of the Labour party in the elections, however, the slogan became a very remarkable one in the world of political slogan (Özkan, 2009: 291).

Political marketing began end of World War II and continued to be practised in the light of scientific data. Following these years, the practices of the parties such as advertisement, slogan and anthem were considered to be necessary concepts in the politics, rather than only being accessories. Along with this process, political parties and candidates realized the importance of the advertisement, and they thus began using the advertisement as an effective propaganda tool in marketing activities in cooperation with advertising agencies (Bauer, Huber and Herrmann, 1996: 154-155).

Jean Lecanuer came up with the image concept in presidential elections in France in 1965; besides he was the first presidential nominee to broadcast his election campaign on television, which, in turn, creates a basis for the realization of political marketing practices for France. Furthermore, "Great Regional Newspapers", competing with the circulations of national newspapers, were used for the first time in this election (Bongrand, 1992: 8-10).

Compared to the USA and other European countries, it was only later in Turkey that political propaganda activities were realized in cooperation with professional institutions. The main reason lying behind this was that party's top administrative staff considered such activities to be unnecessary and probably they were reluctant to hand over their authority to the professionals. Moreover, due to their suspect attitudes, politicians in these positions remained reluctant to perceive and learn the developments in the political marketing and prevented these practices from developing, which, in turn delayed them to find a place in political arena (Tan, 2002: 31).
The first and most important political marketing movement in Turkish political history was the Democrat's Party victory and accession to power in general elections in 1950 with the slogan "Enough! Nation has the word!" appearing in posters and radio (Özkan, 2002: 32). During the ongoing process, political marketing as a concept began to emerge in the late 1970s and to develop in the early 1980s. Afterwards, it was observed that political propaganda practises were directed by mainly national advertisement agencies as well as by foreign agencies. Later on, political marketing practices took their place in the political literature as the most striking tool for influencing voters used in Turkey in both general and local elections.

Political marketing practices optimize the political party and candidate for the voters. This situation is known to have existed in the United States for many years and now it is accepted that a similar situation affects the Europe today because voters are loyal to the political parties they vote for, however, they tend to vote for politicians whom they feel emotionally close to themselves (De Landtsheer, De Vriesve Vertessen, 2008: 233).

In a nutshell, first appearing in the United States and later being practised in Europe and Turkey, political marketing practices were adopted and used by both political parties and candidates. The political parties and candidates demanding to influence the voting preference of the voter benefited to a great extent from the volunteers who visited houses, from public relations units, non-governmental organizations and advertising agencies.

2. The basic elements of local political marketing

The main purpose of the local political marketing is to satisfy the voters, consumers in other words, owing to their voting preferences. In order to create and sustain this satisfaction, political marketing elements should be utilized. These are product, price, place and promotion. These four elements were symbolized as "4P" based on the four initials in English (Cemalci, 1987: 23). These elements were utilized in an effective way by political parties during the election periods (Alın, 2009: 87).

2.1. Political party leader and mayoral candidate as product

The political leader is a person who leads a political community, channels it towards purposes, ensures the coordination of the purposes of the members with those of the community's and attempts to get higher positions within a political community through creating a common consciousness among the members (Arkan, 2006: 48). Leader is the one who directs and melts the individuals in the same pot. The leader should be credible to the voters and have an effective vision. A leader might be a reason to vote for the party. It is observed that the voters in Turkey are under the influence of the leader to a great extent. When asked voters for which party they voted, they tell the names of the party leaders rather than party names (İslamoglu, 2002: 117).

Leadership is an important factor for voters to determine for which party or candidate they vote during election periods. A research has been carried out on the political preferences in 1995, 1999 and 2002 in Isparta. The sample group contains young housewives, unemployed and freelancers at 18-25 age groups. The most important factor influencing the political preferences of the young people in this sample group was found to be the ideology and the second most important factor was the leader of the party. The same study also found out that part leader came first for the political party preference of housewives, unemployed and
freelancers (Sitembölükbaşı, 2004: 165-169). The effective leader influences voters and leads them vote for his/her own party. Because it is not the ideology but the leader himself/herself who wins the elections (Özkan, 2002: 115).

Candidates act as the political brands of the parties (Newman, 2006: 199). To ensure this branding, candidate need to have an image known to the public. The candidate image, the whole impression left by the political actor in the mind of the voter, contains components such as the physical appearance of the candidate, lifestyle, and his attitudes towards various issues and problems (Güllüpunar, 2010: 59).

One of the product mixes giving an idea concerning the identity of a political party, ideology, image and party showcase all together is the candidate nominated by the party itself before the election. During the elections, the candidate never loses its importance no matter which campaigns are employed by the political parties. A face to face study has been carried out in 14 provinces by GENAR which is a survey company and it has been revealed that candidate is twice as much important as the party itself. In the conducted study, the voters have been asked which one is more important to them; the party or the candidate, in the elections which will be held in on March 28, 2004. While those who said candidates are of 63.8 %, it was party which is important when voting for those and they were of 32.3 % (Özsoy, 2004: 25). The candidate is quite significant in local elections because the voter votes for the candidate rather than the party, for he chooses the person who would rule him in the first place.

Although the role played by candidates is high in the preference of parties, this may vary according to the situation (İslamoğlu, 2002: 129). When the voter chooses a party with a single candidate, he may not feel sympathy or trust for that candidate personally. However, he will vote for him as he is the candidate of the party he supports or although he likes the ideas of a particular candidate he may not vote for the party of that candidate as he doesn't want that party to gain strength in the government. At the same time, the voter may vote for the party although he doesn't like it (Butler and Collins, 1994: 23-24). As seen, voter may change during the decision-making process, and at this point party leaders or candidates should be engaged in the process and channel the voters by making an effective propaganda.

2.2. Political party program as a product

The party programmes which tell the voters its promises are among important factors influencing the preference of the voters in election periods. These programmes are even assumed to shape the candidate in the form of a product. However, this case is presented as a completely trivial detail in countries where individuals are important. Party programmes may shape the elections in countries where party programmes and party orientation are intensive (Schröder, 2004: 52). The importance of party programmes varies according to the countries in which political parties operate.

Political parties do not only pay attention to their own programmes. They analyse the programmes of the rival parties, find their weak points, make counter moves and may eventually take part in a discredit process. For this reason, preparing a party programme requires a serious preparation, effort, and also scientific analysis and synthesis, for the party programme functions as a directive that shows the diagnosis of the problems, the proposed solutions, the importance of the problems and their priority and the way how and with what resources these problems could be eliminated (İslamoğlu, 2002: 123).
2.3. Image as a product

Image from the point of political sense means that the personal and professional qualifications of the political candidate should be received by the voters both perfectly and correctly. What is important is how voters perceive this. Accordingly, image may have its function in partisanship or in voters’ perception to some extend (Damlapınar and Balcı, 2005: 65).

Candidate image, which develops covering a number of characteristic features of a candidate from his posture to speech, from education degree to religious belief, from success in family life to success in career, from youngness and oldness to wealth, is among the main qualifications requested by the parties as high qualifications (Canöz, 2010: 96).

Candidate image is more effective on voters’ preference in local elections than in general elections (Doğanve Göker, 2010: 163). That is to say, there is a general acceptance that in local elections people are more important as a person.

2.4. Party identity as a product

Party identity is an expression used to represent people who met in different classes of society that the party stands for such as so-called working class, religious sections. Party identity must be on the same line with the party’s position. The political history of a person nominated by the party as a candidate is directly associated with party identity (Uztuğ, 2003: 5).

Party identities in Turkey are classified in a number of way; Nationalist, Conservative, Social Democrat, Conservative Democrat, Socialist, Ataturkist, Islamist etc. Some of these identities are represented in right political spectrum (Islamist, Nationalist, and Conservative etc.) and the other part is in left political spectrum (Socialist, Social Democrat etc.) (Görmez, 1999:13). Identification that is predominantly used in Turkey as “Rightist” (right wing) and “Leftist” (left wing) is common in U.S.A as “Republican” and “Democrat”.

3. Effects of local political marketing practices on voters / example of Isparta province

3.1. Aim, importance, scope and method of the study

3.1.1. Aim and importance of the study

This study was made with the aim of measuring the effects of political marketing practices realized during local elections campaign on electorates. It is important from the point of revealing factors and actors of local political marketing that has an effect on voting behavior of electorates. The results of this study may serve as a contribution for mayoral candidate to determine political marketing practices to be followed in order get electorates votes which is an absolute goal during the campaign.

3.1.2. Scope and limitations of the study

The study was conducted on people living in the city center of Isparta province. The scope of this study covers only local people living in the city center of this province who were available to make contact (with
whom a contact was possible to make). Participants were not willing enough to answer the questions as they were related to political issues.

3.1.3. Sampling of the study

The sample of this study includes people living in the city center of Isparta province. The participants of this study were chosen randomly and the questionnaire study was conducted by using convenience sampling method.

3.1.4. Data collection tools

A multiple-choice form consisting of eight parts was used in the questionnaire study. The study reached over 580 participants. 12 question forms were not evaluated because of various reasons. The evaluation was performed (conducted) on the other 568 question forms. Following the entry of data to SPSS 15.0 statistical packet software descriptive analysis and hypothesis tests were made. A questionnaire form was tried to be generated using the data obtained in the light of literature search. Afterwards, while a pilot study was practiced on 40 people with these questions, some corrections were made in the latest version of the questionnaire form.

3.1.5. Hypothesis of the study

Hypothesis tests indicated to factors effecting the decision of voters of Isparta province during the elections campaign were performed in the hypothesis section of this study. Questions in the questionnaire form were evaluated in the light of these hypothesis tests.

H1. Socio-economic qualities (factors) make the difference when political marketing practices are applied in local elections, and they effect the decision of voters.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-27</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-35</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-43</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>34.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-41</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>Master's Degree and Doctorate</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52-</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>85.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>500 and below</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above is about participants and their genders, education levels, marital status, incomes and ages. We have encountered some problems when obtaining data due to the reluctant participants while answering the questions.

Table.2 Determinants of party preferences in local elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the ideology of the party</td>
<td>3,67</td>
<td>1,32673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the leader of the party</td>
<td>3,49</td>
<td>1,32004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the candidate of the party</td>
<td>3,72</td>
<td>1,21607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the doctrine of the party</td>
<td>3,56</td>
<td>1,22390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the past activities of the party</td>
<td>3,95</td>
<td>1,13756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vote for the past activities of the candidate</td>
<td>4,02</td>
<td>1,13440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That the evaluation of each factors' averages are carried out one by one is more meaningful here. Therefore, the factor "I vote for the ideology of the party" is close to "agree" trend (3.67). With a rate of 3.49, the factor "I vote for leader of the party" is close to "agree" trend. The factors "I vote for the candidate of the party" and "I vote for the doctrine of the party" are close to "agree" trend as well. Likewise, the factors "I vote for the past activities of the party" and "I vote for the past activities of the candidate" are close to "agree" trend all the way.
Table 3  Hypothesis test for gender and marital status (Mann-Whitney U)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig. (Mann-Whitney U)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.646</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  Hypothesis test for age, education and income (Kruskal-Walls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig. (Kruskal-Walls)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If sig value is <0.05 for Kruskal-Walls and Mann-Whitney Tests, there are differences between the groups. Accordingly, the results for mentioned factors are below.

For the factor "Election campaigns performed with mass media (newspaper, TV, radio, internet) affect my vote choice", socio-economic factors did not make any differences.
Because the factor "Election campaigns performed with mass media (newspaper, TV, radio, internet) affect my vote choice", is not <0.05 for all socio-economic factors, hypothesis one was rejected.

The factor "that the candidates call the voters personally affect my vote choice" makes difference in income out of socio-economic factors.

Because the factor "that the candidates call the voters personally affects my vote choice" is <0.05 in terms of "income", hypothesis one was accepted, however, for other factors hypothesis one was rejected.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Political marketing which has been in practice extensively since the beginning 1900s in Europe, is but a new concept for our country. Although there are some political marketing practices employed by Justice Party in the 1950s, the exact and proper usage of these applications in elections can be traced back in the late 1970s. In particular, in General Elections conducted in 2002, primarily Justice and Development Party which participated in the elections for the first time and won it though, took benefits from these applications extensively and so did Young Party. When examined the vote rates of these two parties (Justice and Development Party 34.43%, Young Party, 7, 24 %), it has once again been understood how important political marketing practices are.

In the first two parts of my work, political marketing practices and basic elements of local political marketing, in the last part; the impacts of these practices on voters are mentioned respectively.

According to the data obtained from the survey; election buses, election songs and folk songs, posters and flags which are indispensable tools all together for political parties and candidates in both general and local elections, have been come out not to hold great significance for the voter. Besides, it has been observed that, that the short messages or letters bearing the signature of the candidate and prepared automated phone calls are send to the voter turned out not to have much importance in the eyes of the voter. All these efforts which are regarded as vote enhancing ones can sometimes create a negative attitude towards the party, as well. In this point, my humble suggestion to both political parties and candidates is that they should especially be sensitive concerning election buses; they should send their short messages timely, and they had better not to make the voter listen to the automated phone calls.

In addition, it has also been observed in the survey that the voters determine their vote preferences in the local elections by taking into consideration "Party candidate and the past actions of the candidate". In addition to all these factors, party leader is another prominent factor affecting voter choice. Party leader never loses its importance even if it is a local election.

In summary, based on the survey results, it can be commented that political parties and candidates should employ different political marketing applications for the voters having different opinions and different socio-economic characteristics. Because that the voters are influenced by the political applications varies according to the socio-economic characteristics of themselves.
5. REFERENCES


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