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“Political Marketing: A New Promising Field for Scholars Interested in Greece”

The 2nd International Conference on Political Marketing (ICPM) was held in Kastoria, 31 March – 2 April 2005. The previous ICPM conference whose aim was to introduce the field of political marketing in Greece was also held in Kastoria in June 2003. Both conferences were organized by the Department of Public Relations and Communication of the Department of Public Relations & Communication and the Macedonian Research Centre of the Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Western Macedonia.

These two conferences form part of activities undertaken by the TEI of Western Macedonia in order to contribute to the burgeoning field of political marketing and to encourage scholars interested in Greece to engage the political marketing literature in the Greek context. The research output of the first ICPM Conference appeared in a special issue (vol. 4, no.1, 2005) of the leading journal in the field, the *Journal of Political Marketing*. The same journal has committed to publish selected papers of the 2nd ICPM Conference in a double-issue scheduled to appear in 2007.

Developments in the field of political marketing have thus far been shaped mainly by the contributions of Anglo-American scholars who have been trained in the field of marketing and have taken upon the task to transpose, adjust and apply ideas, concepts and methods developed in the field of marketing to the political arena. The main research area has been analysis of electoral contests, directing attention to the needs of the customer (citizen-voter) and demonstrating the relevance of market research (surveys, focus groups, interviews, content analysis) in campaign strategy, message development, political advertising, etc.

Besides electoral contests where emphasis is placed on campaigns of candidates and political parties, other research foci include the development and implementation of campaigns by governments, lobbyists, interest groups, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups and movements. The theme of the 2nd ICPM Conference was Political Marketing and Democracy. The aim was to broaden scholarly participation by encouraging besides marketing experts, researchers working in the disciplines of communication studies and political science to engage in a dialogue with their colleagues in marketing.

The conference brought together over 60 scholars affiliated with universities in the USA, Europe, and Oceania. The conference featured a keynote address and papers were grouped and presented in 7 different sessions. Professor Bruce Newman of DePaul University (USA) and editor of the *Journal of Political Marketing* delivered the keynote address where he traced the evolution of the field from its beginnings to the present. The United States does occupy a major part in the history of the field as a locus of attention and Professor Newman shared with the audience his reflections on the campaign strategies of contenders G. W. Bush and J. Kerry in the most recent 2004 U.S. Presidential election.

The sessions that followed concentrated on sub-topics such as theory developments, campaign strategy, marketing research and polling, political consulting, politics and the internet, international aspects of political communication and political advertising. Of course, this brief report cannot be comprehensive and cover all the presentations. In what follows, an attempt is made to highlight some key points raised in each session, with particular attention given to applications concerning Greece.

The session devoted to theoretical developments in political marketing featured two papers that were reflective in nature. Both papers called for political marketing experts to substitute a wider, more societal perspective, an alternative for the restricted managerial perspective that is prevalent today. N. Stasinopoulos critiqued the dominant utilitarian conception of the voter-consumer in political marketing as promoting a certain version of democracy and suggested the republican conception of citizenship as a corrective for a more political and inclusive understanding of democracy. The paper of S. Henneberg pointed out the limitations of the dominant managerial orientation in political marketing and outlined a new research agenda that emphasizes a more holistic attempt of achieving knowledge of politics.

Campaign strategy occupies a central place in political marketing research. Two sessions were devoted to campaign strategy, offering a wide variety of empirical studies drawn from different geographical and socio-political contexts. The first session focused on campaigns by candidates in a number of geographical settings: Belgium (P. De Vries), Cyprus (A. Samaras), Greece (T. Ikonomu, I. Kotzaivazoglou, M. Papageorgiou), Serbia (M. Turajlic), and the United States (A. Tackett; E. Sherman, L. Schiffman, S. Thelen).

The second session concentrated on electoral campaigns by parties in Bulgaria (A. Christov and B. Koutevski), Greece (L. Rori, C. Panagopoulos), Poland (A. Plonski), Turkey (N. Karacasulu Goksel and G. Bayraktaroglou) and of European socialist parties in selected countries (P. Ioannidis). The paper of Ikonomu et al compared elected to non-elected candidates in Thessaloniki for the 2004 national elections. Elected candidates, in contrast to non-elected, adopted a market-oriented campaign strategy, targeted a few groups, and managed to get free media favourable publicity in the local press. Shifting to party-focused campaign strategy, Rori and Panagopoulos concentrated on the recent leadership change in PASOK and explored the impact the electoral campaign had on the party's organization and transformation.

From a political marketing perspective, it is instructive that public opinion polls drove the leadership change from Simitis to G. Papandreou and a lot of new initiatives were positively received from the public, except the broadening of party ballots with neo-liberals and left of centre politicians who had deserted their traditional party bases and a proposal for increasing employment without paying social security fees. My reading of this important finding postulates that had the new leadership more time available to conduct surveys and focus groups among party members prior to the electoral period, these two issues wouldn't enter the public sphere in the first place and wouldn't, as a consequence, hinder the party's transformation.

Polling is an essential component of political marketing work, both for researchers and practitioners. A session was devoted to polling and models of voting behaviour. The papers were diverse in scope. Regarding voting behaviour, one paper (Cwalina and Falkowski) compared electoral results in Poland and the US in an attempt to derive a cross-cultural model of voting behaviour, whereas another paper (Z. Lakatos) argued for taking lifestyle patterns seriously as explanatory variables in models of electoral choice. Using survey research data, one paper compared mail to web-based surveys (Ben-Ur) and the one dealing with Greece and in particular Thessaloniki (Chadjipadelis) sought to derive new axis and dimensions of political competition by grouping candidates by the attitudes of voters toward the candidates.

Media use by candidates and parties, as well as media coverage of electoral contests, are important research foci in political marketing. First and foremost, political advertising is thought to be exerting a potent influence on voter's choice. According to the study of Uztuk and Kutlu, a candidate focus is very prevalent in advertisements for local elections in Turkey. In the case of the 2004 Greek national elections, the paper of T. Doulkeri, N. Panagiotou and C. Kenterelidou, focused on women candidates and found that female traits such as honesty and patience rather than gender issues (equality of access to political office, to jobs, to education, closing the gap of salary differentials, etc) dominated the political advertising of women running as candidates of

the conservative New Democracy party. The agenda setting function of the media in election period was investigated in the paper of I. Konstantinidis and the media's coverage and framing of the 2004 European elections by the Greek press was the topic of a paper presented by I. Kostarella, S. Theodosiadou and G. Tsantopoulos.

Next to traditional media, new media like the internet and SMS (short message system) have entered into Greek political communication during electoral periods. Compared to other media, the internet is cheap and is unique in enabling a two-way communication between candidates and parties on the one hand and citizens on the other. In Greece, both candidates and parties haven't made use of the full potential that the internet provides. One paper (Bozinis and Evaghorou) offered a qualitative assessment of leftist political parties while another paper (Dimitriadis and Zisouli) outlined the online strategy of PASOK in the last five years. PASOK, under its new leadership, seems to have understood internet's potential by renewing its basic site and creating a new website (www.democracy.gr) intended to facilitate dialogue and exchange of views among users.

Turning to candidates, a paper on the 2004 elections (Yannas and Lappas) demonstrated that e-campaigning was concentrated in the Attica Prefecture, casting doubts on the internet's potential to equalize disparities between centre and periphery. There is still considerable distance to cover before candidates «discover» the internet and the time of integrating a political marketing perspective in e-campaigning by Greek candidates is far out of sight. The other new medium, SMS, was investigated by two papers (I. Mylona; D.Dimitrakopoulou) that derived data from questions addressed to members of the Greek Parliament during the first months of 2005. The two researchers, working independently, reached similar conclusions. SMS is used by almost half of the MPs, mostly those younger in age originating from electoral districts in Attica and Thessaloniki.

As the above discussion demonstrates, electoral contests generate a large portion of political marketing's research. The Greek case validates this trend. However, research can and should be expanded to include off-election periods in line with the contention for a permanent campaign as well as to focus on a multitude of actors. To encourage research in much less frequented directions, a session dealt with international dimensions of political marketing. Session panellists examined topics such as the use of political marketing by non-governmental organizations (C.Frangonikolopoulos with M. Pantazidou), the role of the internet in the public diplomacy strategy of the European Union (A. Michailidou) and the utilization of political marketing components like photo-images by the state in producing meaning related to war and violence (K. Gouliamos and A. Theocharous).

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