

Abstract

Political marketing has been developed in Greece, mainly by practitioners, within the last twenty years; however its effect on the voting decision making of the electorate is debatable. This paper attempts to describe the influence of political marketing on the segments of the Greek electorate and to analyse the voting behaviour of these segments. It discusses their opinions, interests, values and ways of thinking. In order to segment the electorate a-priori segmentation has been used having as the first basis voters' loyalty and as the second, time of voting decision making. This paper claims that the influence of political marketing on voters depends, among other factors, on their loyalty and the time that they make their voting decision; that the voters' perceptions of political marketing's influence on them individually and on the electorate as a whole are contradictory; and that most of the generated segments have different opinions, interests and values from each other. These claims are based upon quantitative data that were collected from Greek voters by using the method of self-administered questionnaire. The paper suggests that the parties should introduce a more professional application of political marketing in order to attract the targeted voters, in order to establish a long-term relationship with them. Finally, an examination of the reasons that make the segments to think and act differently from each other is recommended.

Political marketing and its impact on voting behaviour in Greece: An analysis of the Greek electorate's voting behaviour

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Introduction

The aim of this research is to identify the role and effect of political marketing on the voting behaviour of the different segments of the Greek electorate. The importance of political marketing in Greece increased after the “modernization” of the Greek media, in the late 1980’s (Papathanassopoulos 2000; Yannas, 2002). The political parties use marketing tools and techniques since the decade of 1990’s, when the explosion of private electronic media started (Papathanassopoulos, 2000; Yannas, 2002).

This was the time when political consultants, media experts, advertising agencies and opinion pollsters started to be employed by the political parties (Yannas, 2005). The most frequently used marketing techniques in Greece are surveys and polls, and television advertisements (Apospori et al, 2005). Although the use of marketing tools and techniques met a significant increase since their application in the country, “Greek political parties have used these techniques, methods and tools in a sporadic and patchy manner” (Apospori et al, 2005, p.2). Moreover, political marketing seems to be not widely accepted in Greece yet (Monou, 2005 cited in Apospori et al, 2005), mainly because the political parties have not understood the philosophy of it (Apospori et al, 2005). Finally, it should be mentioned that in the beginning, Greek academia has looked with suspiciousness political marketing and therefore it is far behind the practitioners in the contribution of political marketing’s development (Yannas, 2005).

In regard with the Greek voters, it is claimed that the political system is characterize by stability (Lock and Harris, 1996 cited in Apospori et al, 2005). The election results historically show that the left parties receive about 10% of the total votes in all elections and the two main parties 85% of the votes. A reason for this stability can be the loyalty that the Greek voters show to political parties. In the 2000 general elections, the loyal voters represented 50% of the total amount of voters (Demertzis, 2002 cited in Apospori et al, 2005). In addition, in their research (Apospori et al, 2005) have pointed out that 77% of the Greek electorate decide which party to vote for, before the

election period. On the other hand, only 5% move from one major party to the other. These are the swing or floating voters who determine the result of the elections. It is argued that this kind of voters tend to decide which party to vote for during the last days of the election campaigns. Finally, and regarding the voters' perception of marketing tools that are used in political campaigns, it should be highlighted that more than 1/2 of them have negative opinions. (Apospori et al, 2005).

The present research took place during the summer of 2008, less than a year after the general elections of 2007. It has been tried to explore the perceptions of the Greek electorate's segments regarding the marketing tools that the political parties use; the role of loyalty and time of decision making as variables that create homogeneous segments; and the voting behaviour of these segments. More specifically this research study tried to explore the role of political marketing on the voting decision making of the different segments of the electorate and which segments are perceived as the most influenced by it.

Literature review

'The science of influencing behaviour', as political marketing is described by Mauser (Mauser, 1983 cited in Savigny, 2007), is defined by Wring as "the party or candidates' use of opinion research and environmental analysis to produce and promote a competitive offering which will realise organizational aims and satisfy groups of electors in exchange for their votes" (Wring, 1997, cited in Kolovos and Harris, 2005, p.653).

Political marketing has its origins in Aristotle's books, *Politics* and *Rhetoric* (Butler et al, 2007), and in ancient Athens where techniques in order to approach the electorate were used (Baines et al, 1999). In our era, Kelley was the first who used the term political marketing, in 1956 (Cornelissen, 2002; Medvic, 2006). In regard to the application of marketing in politics during the last century, the most recognizable techniques were the use of direct mail by Eisenhower and the use of Saatchi & Saatchi agency by Thatcher (Lock and Harris, 1996; Scammel, 1994; Nor et al, 2006; Yorke and Meehan, 1986).

However, the systematic use of marketing techniques in politics started more recently (Wring, 1999 cited in Baines and Egan, 2001). During the last 25 years, when the political actors started to think in marketing terms and to create marketing strategy (Norris, 2005), political marketing has transformed from a communication tool to a way of managing politics (Nimmo, 1999). With the passage of the time political marketing became in 1990's an essential component of the campaigns (Egan, 1999 cited in Apospori et al, 2005) and by the end of the last century it was used by all the political parties during their campaigns (Wring, 1999, cited in Baines and Egan, 2001).

In regard to Greece, the first use of the term political marketing was by Theodorakopoulos in 1999 (Yannas, 2005). Although marketing techniques, such as opinion polls, have existed since 1946 (Yannas, 2002), it was the restoration of democracy in 1974 that raised awareness of political marketing (Yannas, 2002). The "modernization" of the Greek media, in the late 1980's, increased the importance of political marketing (Papathanassopoulos 2000; Yannas, 2002), and since then, political marketers have become very important in the campaign process (Demertzis, 2002).

The main changes in the political scene which together with technological drivers (Norris, 2005; Henneberg cited in Nor et al, 2006; Stromback, 2007) led to the increase of use and significance of political marketing, during the last decades, are: the lower level of political organization; the decrease of voters' loyalty; the decline of party identification and therefore the lack of the differentiation between the parties; and the increase of electoral volatility (Norris, 2005; Butler et al, 2007; Nor et al, 2006; Stromback, 2007; Baines et al 2003a; Yannas, 2002).

Regarding Greece, the above mentioned changes started in the late 1980's. The globalization of its economy and its entry into the European Union made the leaders of the main parties adopt similar policies (Papathanassopoulos, 2000). Therefore, there was a need for differentiation and the political parties started to use marketing techniques in order to distinguish themselves from each other.

It has to be mentioned here the argument that marketing's application to politics has passed, during this era, to another level that is named strategic marketing era (Newman, 1994 cited in Smith & Hirst, 2001). What differentiates this period from the past is the use of marketing not only during the election campaigns but during a long – period in order to ensure governance (Nimmo, 1999 cited in Smith and Hirst, 2001). Lees-Marshment (2001) goes further by arguing that marketing should be used by the political parties in all their activities. She argues that parties should focus on the way they design their product (Kolovos and Harris, 2005). This approach of marketing is called comprehensive political marketing (CPM).

The aim of this heavy use of marketing in politics, in marketing terms, is to increase market share of the party's product, in other words to make the electorate support the programme of the party and to attract voters. (Lilleker and Negrine, 2001; Cwalina et al, 2004; Baines et al, 2002; Vercic, 2004; Lock and Harris, 1996). This is tried by “offering people hope for the future” (Dermoddy and Scullion cited in Lilleker et al, 2006, p.128).

Moreover, the idea that parties should be market-oriented and its importance have started to be realized by most of the Western European political parties (Baines and Lynch, 2005). This fact which leads to more market oriented campaigns than in the past (Baines et al, 2003a). It is argued that this strategy can bring success to a party (Lees-Marshment, 2001 cited in Brennan, 2003).

In order to target, by using marketing tools and techniques, and to try to influence the voters, a party has to understand their behaviour. It has to understand what the voters want and what they do not want (Newman, 2007). In recent years the political parties started to spend money in researches in order to understand the voting decision of the electorate (O' Cass, 2004).

Voting decision is a very complex process (Henneberg, 2004). As it is mentioned above, voting process is regarded as buying process (Savigny, 2004) where the voters exchange their votes with the product that the party

offers (Nor et al, 2006). Applying buyer behaviour to the voting process appear four categories of voters (Markwart, 1982): (1) the hard loyalists, which are the voters who always vote for the same party and they make their voting decision before the beginning of the election campaign period (Worcester and Mortimore, 2005), 2) the soft loyalists, who are voters that most of the times vote for the same party but there is a possibility to change their vote (Markwart, 1982) (3) the swingers, who are viewed as consumers with no brand loyalty (Hayes and McAllister, 1996), and 4) the non-participants, who are people that do not vote ,(Worcester et al, 2004).

From the above categories of voters the swingers are regarded as the category that can determine the result of the election, and that is why political marketers apply their strategies mostly on this type of voters (Worcester and Mortimore, 2005; Sparrow and Turner, 2001; Hayes and McAllister, 1996). It is claimed that these voters make their decision late in the election period and have less knowledge about politics (Hayes and McAllister, 1996). Therefore, and because the marketers target them mostly than all the other voters, it can be hypothesized that they are the group of voters that is mostly influenced by political marketing.

However, little is known about their psychology and the way that they decide to vote for one party or the other (Arcuri et al, 2008). Hayes and McAllister (1996), claim that floating voters, as a group, have the least knowledge about politics and the least participation in elections from all the other groups. Therefore, it is the least likely group to be persuaded by political marketing. They suggest to political parties to use pre-campaign marketing techniques and target voters who decide one to two years before an election.

The reason why some people are loyal to political parties while some others change their vote is attributed to the different ways in which they judge the leaders of the parties, the parties themselves and their policies (Boyd, 1986). These elements (leaders' image, party image and issues - policies), are also considered as three of the main factors that make voters, to decide on which party to support (Worcester and Baines, 2004).

Other important elements are: 1) social imagery, 2) emotional feelings, 3) current events, 4) personal events, 5) epistemic issues (Newman and Sheth, 1985 cited in Cwalina et al, 2004). Bannon (2003) claims that definition of 'issue important for voting decision making' is not clear enough and it is perceived differently by each interpreter. Another aspect that effects voting decision is the judgement of the incumbents' performance in the previous government (Bartle, 2003). Moreover, voting behaviour research studies have also found that voting decision is influenced by some other factors. Media is a big influence for the voters, and especially television and print media (O' Shaughnessy, 2001; Cwalina et al, 2004). Voters are also influenced by their families' and friends' opinions and moreover, by their social class, geographical environment, occupation and housing tenure (Pattie and Johnston, 2000; Worcester and Baines, 2004).

However, it should be mentioned here that every election is unique, taken place in different global situation where various elements, which are important at the specific time, can effect the voting decision making of the voters (Apospori et al, 2005). For example, the way that the Greek prime minister managed the fires in August 2007 may have given him the victory in the September elections. On the other hand, the terrorist attack in Madrid two weeks before the 2004 elections and the lie of the Spanish prime minister had a negative impact on the voters.

In regard to voting behaviour in Greece, the only research study that has been conducted (Apospori et al, 2005) points out the stability that prevails in the political system. It is claimed that most of the voters (77%) decide which party to vote for before the election period. Moreover, the election results historically show that the left parties receive about 10% of the total votes in all elections and the two main parties 85% of the votes. In addition, only 5% move from one major party to the other. These people are called swing voters and they tend to decide which party to vote for during the last days of the election campaigns. Finally, it has also to be mentioned that the results of this research (Apospori et al, 2005) indicated that more than 50% of the electorate has negative perceptions of the tools of marketing that are used in politics.

Talking about Greek voters and the influence of marketing on them, Yannas (2002) claimed that media have a high level of influence in the Greek electorate since they reflect reality. Moreover, private media are regarded as more influential since the Greek voters do not trust for their information the public media (Apospori et al, 2005). Finally, the opinion that the voters exchange their vote in order to get benefits from the parties seems to govern the political arena in Greece, since 50% of the people consider this exchange as an important element in their voting decision making (KAPA research agency, 1995 cited in Papathanassopoulos, 2000).

One of the reason that voting behaviour has been researched is , as it is above mentioned, to provide the political marketers with knowledge that will allow them to use the appropriate marketing tools and strategies in order to attract the voters (O' Cass, 2004). Message development, positioning of the candidates and the parties and image building are concerned by U.S. and West European marketers as the basic tasks of political marketing operations. The most common strategies of the political marketers are the branding of parties and their candidates and market segmentation (Whitelock & Whitelock, 2008). The role of the latter is the division of a heterogeneous market to homogeneous groups (Nor et al, 2006), which means the creation of groups with members that have similar attitudes (Bannon, 2004). It is used by the political marketers because the parties do not have enough money to target the whole electorate (Baines and Lynch, 2005) and because it is claimed that parties and candidates who target the appropriate for them target groups have more possibilities to win the elections than parties that target the whole electorate equally (Herrson, 2000 cited in Smith and Hirst, 2001).

The main ways for segmenting the electorate are by using demographic, geographic, behavioural and psychographic methods (Smith and Saunders, 1990 cited in Baines et al, 2003b). However, a political marketer should be careful when segmenting the electorate because in order for a segment to be valid it has to fulfil five important criteria. These criteria are distinctiveness, sustainability, accessibility, defensibility and sustainability (Yorke and Meehan, 1986; Kotler, 1997 cited in Smith and Hirst, 2001; Baker, 2000 cited

in Bannon, 2004; Bannon, 2004; Brassington and Pettitt, 1997 cited in Rees and Gardner, 2005, Markwart, 1982).

Taking the literature into consideration, the researcher developed the following objectives:

- 1) To identify the segment that is the most influenced by political marketing
- 2) To find out the major criteria that determine the vote of the electorate's segments

In order to meet the above mentioned objectives the following hypotheses were tested:

- 1) there is at least one segment that is influenced by political marketing (for objective 1)
- 2) Floating voters who make their voting decision at the last moment of the election period are more influenced by political marketing than all the other segments (for objective 1)
- 3) Parties' programmes about issues and the image of leaders and parties are the main criteria that determine the vote of the segments (for objective 2).

3.0 Methodology

For the purpose of the specific research the simple random sampling technique has been used. In order to collect the primary data the self-administered, and more specific the delivery and collection, questionnaires have been used. The targeted sample was 250 people. In order to achieve this number, questionnaires were provided to 305 people. The final sample of this research study consists of 252 people. The demographic distribution of the sample is presented in the following tables.

Table I

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	135	47.9%
Female	147	52.1%

Table II

Education	Frequency	Percentage
High school graduates	102	36.17%
University students	37	13.12%
University graduates	82	29.08%
Master graduates	48	17.02%
PhD graduates	13	4.61%

Table III

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	44	15.6%
25-34	69	24.47%
35-44	63	22.34%
45-54	48	17.02%
55-64	37	13.12%
65+	21	7.45%

Table IV

Income (Euros/month)	Frequency	Percentage
Under 500	39	13.83%
500-1000	54	19.15%
1000-1500	85	30.14%
1500-2000	52	18.44%
2000-2500	24	8.51%
2500-3000	8	2.84%
3000+	20	7.09%

Table V

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
Athens	110	39.01%
Thessaloniki	39	13.83%
Periphery	133	47.16%

The questionnaire that was delivered to and collected by the respondents had included four parts relevant to this research study.

The first part includes a loyalty and a time of voting decision making question. The loyalty question was asked in order to classify the respondents in the following four categories: 1) hard loyalists, 2) soft loyalists, 3) swingers or floating voters and 4) non voters. In addition the time of voting decision making question was asked in order that the respondents' groups would be further divided in: 1) those voters who decide which party to vote before the beginning of the election period, 2) those who decide during the election period and 3) those that make their voting decision at the last minute. The combination of the answers to these two questions provided the researcher with the segments of the Greek electorate.

The second part of the questionnaire includes a group of questions in regard to the respondents' interest in socioeconomic issues and their participation in politics. They were asked about their interest in environmental issues, their opinion about the National Health System (NHS), the economy of the country, and their interest in politics. The results of this group in correlation with the other results provided to the researcher a better view of the respondent's voting behaviour.

Furthermore, it includes a group of questions that have to do with the level of respondents' consciousness in regard to their final voting decision. They were asked to state how much they thought of which party to vote and if they read the programs of the political parties before voting. In both questions a scale from 1-6 was provided to them. The answers to these questions have showed how cognitive the electorates are regarding the voting decision making.

A group of questions in regard to the criteria for voting have been included in the third part of the questionnaire. Several questions, which have been divided in four subgroups, have been asked. The first subgroup is the issue

and ideology criteria, the second one image criteria, the third one opportunity or else 'seek for benefit' criteria and the last one party's campaign criteria. In this group of questions a scale from 1-5 was provided to the respondents, with one to be regarded as the lowest rate for a criterion and five the highest.

The fourth part of the questionnaire includes questions that refer to political marketing influence and to the trust that the respondent show on different sources of information. The respondents were asked to evaluate the impact that marketing has on the voting behaviour of the whole Greek electorate and then on themselves. A scale from 1-4 was used for both questions. The reason that these questions have been asked is to identify if there is any difference in people's opinions about marketing's influence on the electorate as a whole and on themselves as individuals.

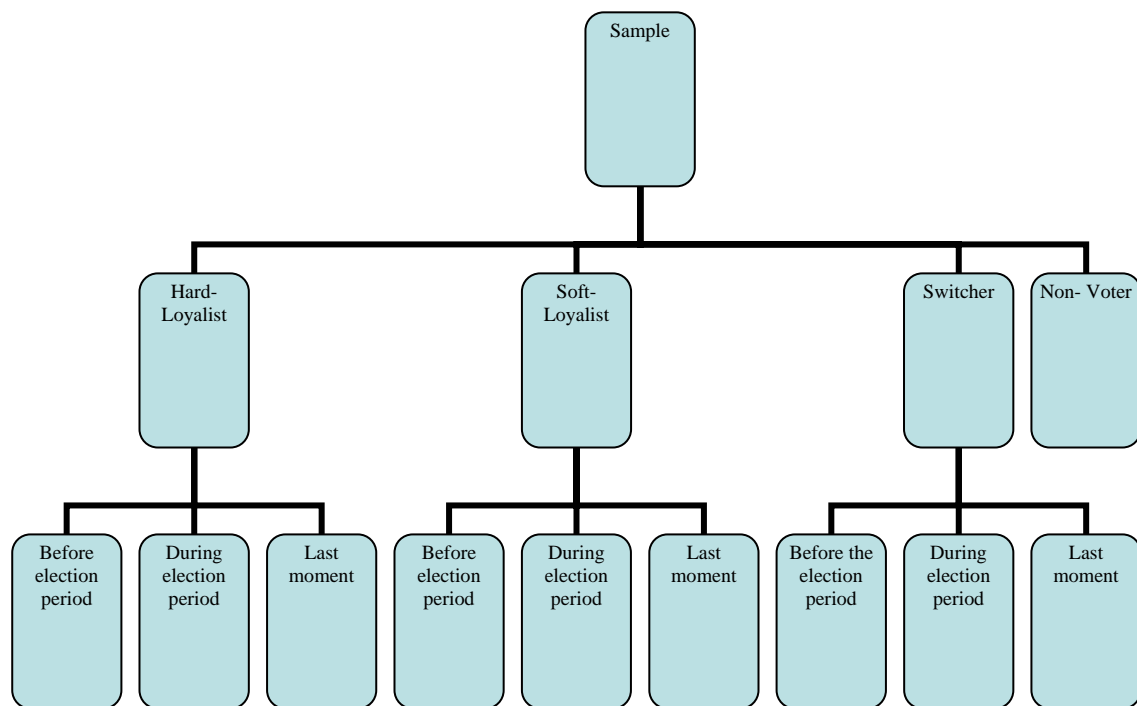
Furthermore, the respondents were asked to state their perceptions about the influence that specific marketing tools have on their voting decision making. The answers of the respondents were in a scale from 1 to 6, with one to be "not at all" and 6 to be "very high influence". The answers on these questions were compared with the answers on the previous questions that refer to political marketing's influence.

Finally, a group of questions was asked to the respondents about the trust that they show in several sources of information in order to decide which party to vote. The sources were given and the respondents were asked to answer in a scale from one to five.

For the purpose of this research, the a priori approach is regarded as the most appropriate since the purpose of the research is to examine the effect of political marketing on specific segments of the electorate and to analyse their voting behaviour.

The basis for the segmentation of the respondents is loyalty. As it is mentioned above, the groups that were generated are the following four: 1) hard loyalists, 2) soft loyalists 3) swingers 4) non voters (See table 1). The

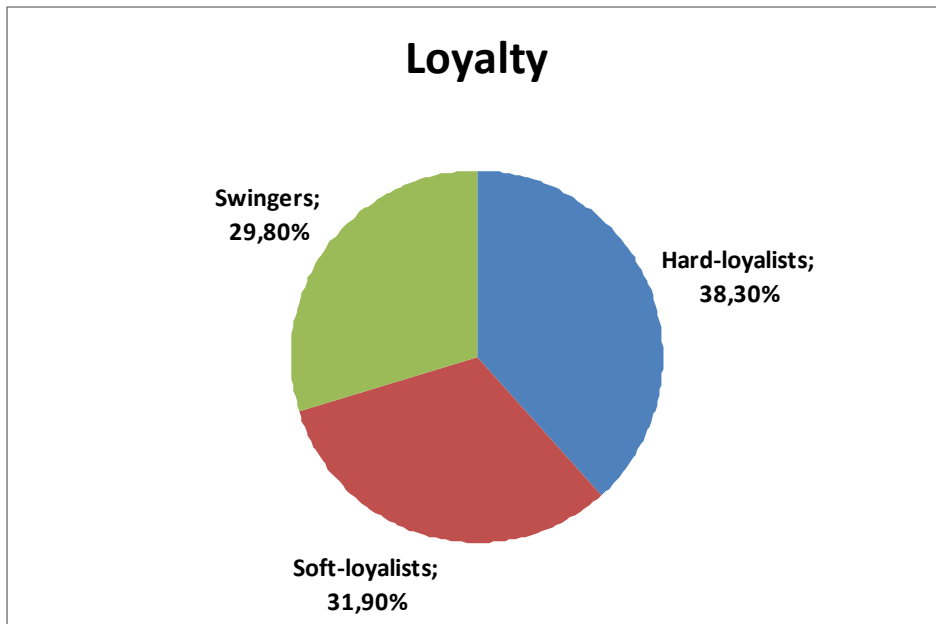
proportions of the whole respondents that belong to each group are according to the answers on the loyalty question. Moreover, these segments were further divided according to the answers of the respondents on the time of voting decision making question. As it is previously stated, the subgroups that were created for each of the beginning segments except the non voters, because they do not vote and obviously they do not decide to vote, are the following three: 1) voters who decide which party to vote before the beginning of the election period, 2) voters who decide during the election period and 3) voters that make their voting decision at the last minute (Table 1).



4.1.2 Results

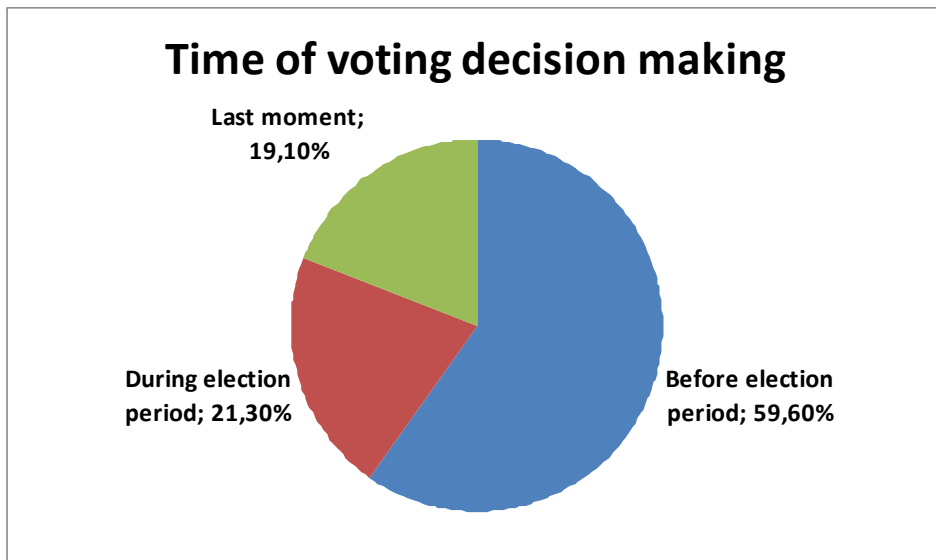
The respondents have been asked to answer if they vote every time for the same party and when is the time that they decide in favor of which party to vote. In regard with the loyalty question, 38.3% of the total sample consider themselves as hard loyalists, since they vote the same party in every election, 31.9% are the soft loyalists, while 29.8% are the swingers, which are people who vote for different party in every election (Figure 1)

Figure 1-Loyalty segments



In regard with the time of voting decision making, 59.6% of the sample make their voting decision before the beginning of the election period, 21.3% during it and 19.1% at the last moments before voting (Figure 2).

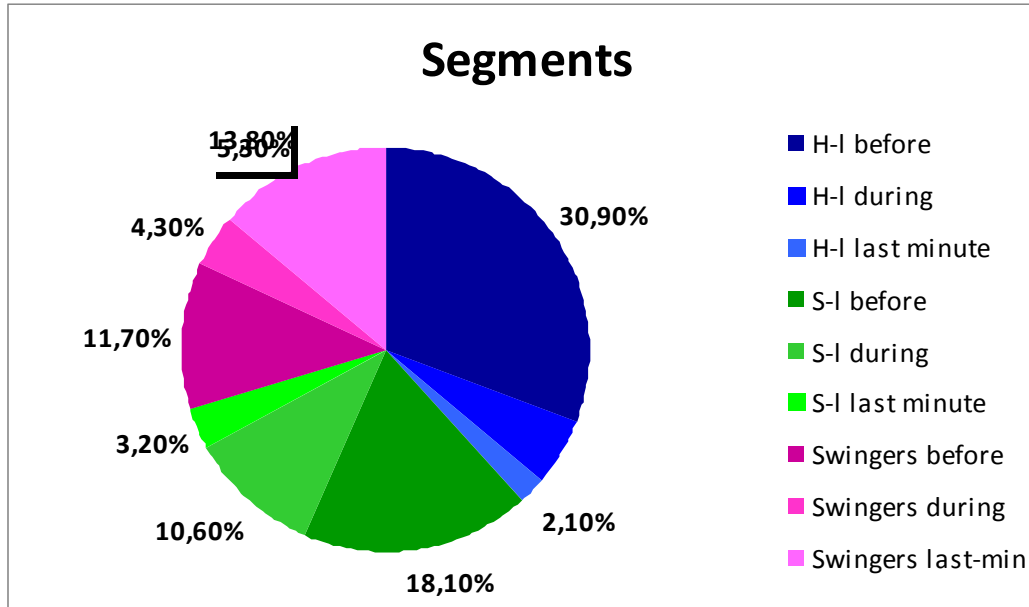
Figure 2- Time of voting decision making- segments



As it is mentioned above, the intention of this research is to separate each loyalty group according to the time of voting decision making and to analyse

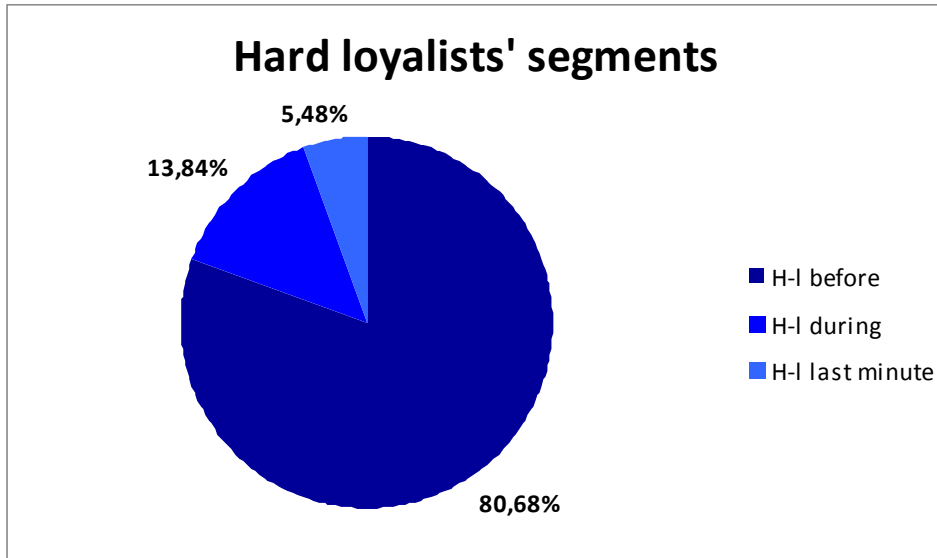
their voting behaviour. Therefore, hard-loyalists, soft-loyalists and floating voters were divided in three segments each one (Figure 3).

Figure 3- Final segments



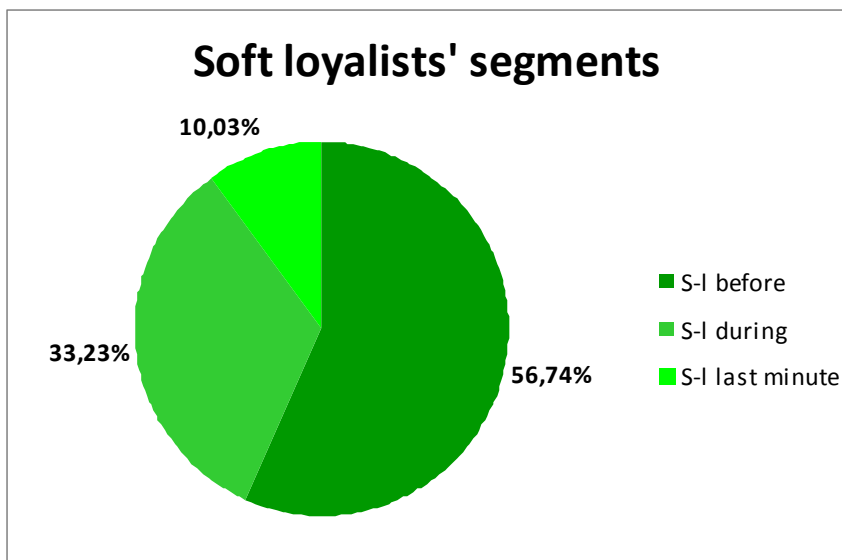
As it is shown below (Figure 4), most of the hard loyalists (80.68%) tend to make their voting decision before the beginning of the election period, while only 13.84% during and 5.48% the last minute of it. That means that the big majority of the hard loyalists do not change their mind because of the election campaign of the political parties.

Figure 4 – Hard loyalists' segments



Furthermore, more than 50% of the soft loyalists tend to make their voting decision before the election period. However, the important to mention here is the increase of the people who decide during the election period for which party to vote, who reach 33.23%. Finally, only a 10% of the soft loyalists wait until the last minute of the election campaign in order to decide which party to vote for (Figure 5).

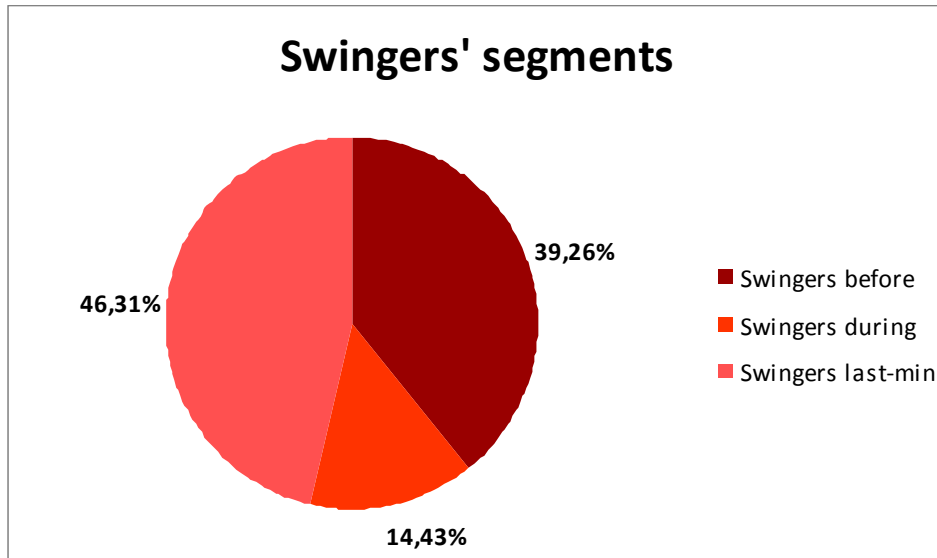
Figure 5- Soft loyalists' segments



On the other hand, swingers are split in two big segments; those who make their voting decision before the election period (39.26%) and those who

decide the last minute (46.31%). The people who make their voting decision during the election period represent only the 14.43% of the swingers (Figure 6).

Figure 6- Swingers' segments



It can be said that as loyalty decreases, the percentage of people that make their voting decision before the election period also decreases, even though it remains the majority, while the percentage of those who make their voting decision the last minute of the campaign increases. It is interesting that people who decide during the election campaign represent equal percentages in the hard loyalists (13.84%) and swingers (14.43%), while there is a big increase in their percentage in the soft loyalists' group (33.23%).

Most of the segments appear to have low interest in politics with swingers and hard loyalists who are last minute deciders to have very low. Moreover, the majority of the voters from all segments have negative opinion of NHS (51%) and the economical situation of the country (62.7%). Only the hard loyalists who make their voting decision during the election period have a good opinion of NHS. The worst opinions have the hard loyalists and soft loyalists who decide the last minute of the election campaign and swingers who decide during it. Finally and regarding the economical situation of the country most of the segments have bad opinion of it.

In regard to the perceptions that people have of their personal and the country's future, it can be said that the results are opposite to each other. 18.1% are pessimist on their future while 48.9% are pessimist on country's future. On the other hand, 45.8% are optimist on their personal future while only 13.8% are optimist on the future of Greece. Most of the electorate's segments seem to be optimist on their personal future, with the last minute hard loyalists deciders to be the most optimist group as they are very optimist on their future. On the other hand almost all the segments feel pessimist of country's future.

In addition, it seems that people think more of which party to vote for than reading the programmes of the parties since, 37.2% of the sample said that they do not think at all or think a bit which party to vote, while almost 50% of the sample do not read or spend little time on reading the programmes of the political parties In contrast, 29.8% spend a lot of time on thinking in which political party to "give" their vote while only 19.2% spend a lot of time on reading the parties' programmes.

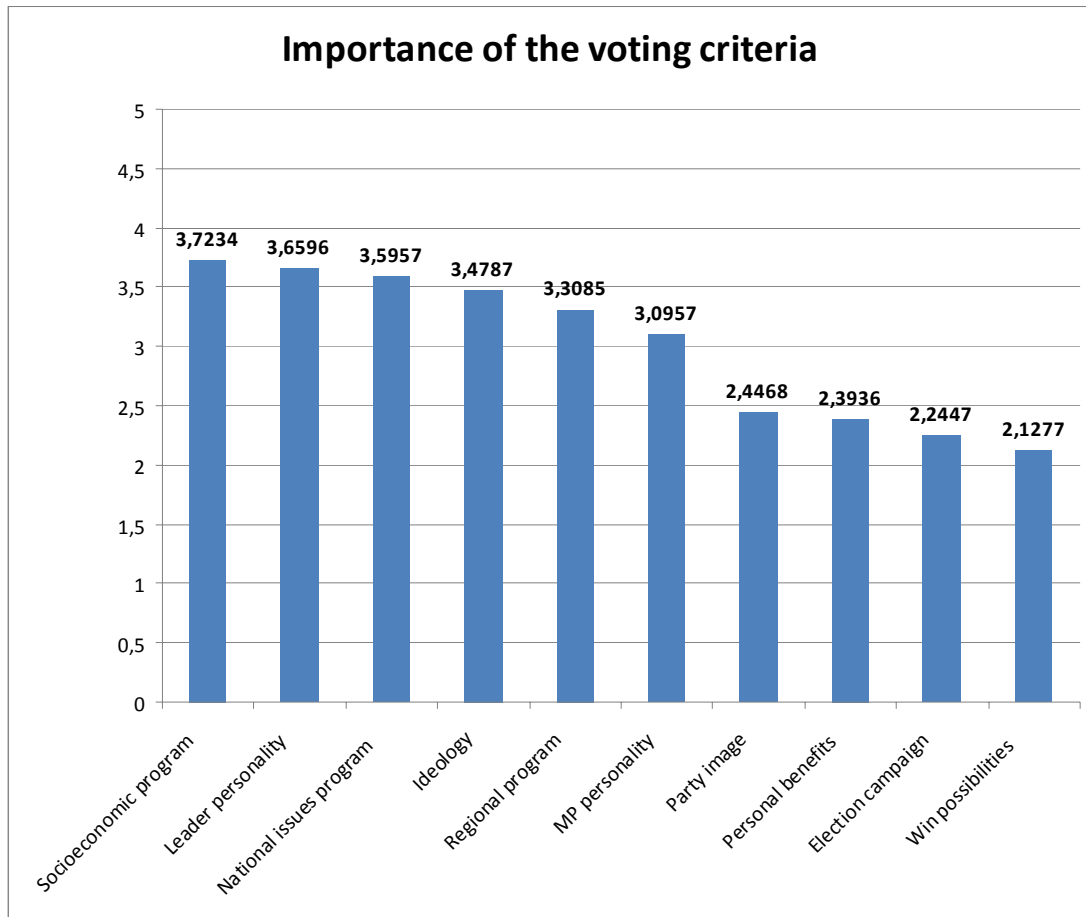
It seems that as loyalty decreases, the time that the electorate's segments spend in order to think in favour of which party to vote increases, as both swingers and soft loyalists think a lot in order to make their voting decision, with swingers to think more, while hard loyalists do not spend much time in thinking. The only exception in this situation is the segment of the swingers who make their voting decision at the last minute of the election period. This segment seems not to spend much time in thinking in order to make their voting decision. Finally, the segment that thinks the least is the last minute hard loyalists, which appear almost not to think at all in order to make their voting decision.

4.1.4 Criteria for voting decision making

The criteria used by respondents appear to fall into two categories. The first one includes those criteria that are considered to be of medium or high

importance and the second category those that have low importance. The most important criteria are: the programme of the parties about socioeconomic and national issues; ideology; and the personality of the party's leader (Figure 7).

Figure 7- Criteria for voting decision making (Importance)



The perceptions of the importance of the different criteria vary between the electorate's segments. It appears that even ideology is a criterion with generally high importance, the last minute deciders do not consider it as so important as other criteria. Furthermore, the parties' programmes about socioeconomic issues have a high importance for the voting decision making of all the swingers' segments and of the last minute hard loyalist deciders. On the other hand, all the groups seem to agree about the programmes in regard with the national issues of the country and they consider this criterion as highly important.

Moreover, the personality of the party's leader seems to have a high importance among all the segments and especially among the soft-loyalists. The possibilities that a party has to win the elections is considered as a very low criterion in order to determine the electorate's vote and it appears as a criterion with medium importance only to hard loyalist who make their voting decision during and at the last moment of the election period. In regard with the election campaign of the parties, even though it appears as a low importance criterion, those people who decide which party to vote during the election period seem to consider it higher than the others.

Furthermore, the personality of the local MPs seems to be highly important for the soft and the hard loyalist with exception the late deciders hard loyalists, while the image of the party has low importance in all the segments of the electorate. Moreover, the benefits that a person can get by the election of a party seem not to play an important role in determining the vote of the most segments. Although, there are some groups that consider these benefits as a medium or high criterion. These groups are the hard loyalists and swingers who make their voting decision during the election campaign period and the hard loyalists who make it at the last minute. Finally, the programmes of the parties about the different regions is a criterion with high importance in order to decide on which party to vote for the soft loyalists and the swingers who make their voting decision during the election period. In contrary, this criterion does not seem to determine the vote of the hard loyalists who decide during and at the last minute of the election period.

4.1.5 Influence-Trust

Regarding respondents' perceptions of political marketing's influence, 86.2% of the sample said that political marketing has a medium to very high influence on the electorate voting decision making, while 65% of them believe that political marketing has no at all or little influence on them individually.

The perception that political marketing has a high influence on the electorate exists among all the segments. In contrary, most of the voters from all segments believe that political marketing has medium or low influence on their personal voting decision making. The exception is the group which includes soft loyalists who decide on which party to vote for during the election campaign. It is important to mention at this point that people from all loyalty segments who make their voting decision during the election campaign seem to be the most influenced by political marketing. It seems that generally voters from all the segments of the electorate know that the influence of political marketing is high but they do not want to admit that they are influenced by it.

Furthermore, and in correspondence with the answer in regard with the personal influence of political marketing, it has to be mentioned that the respondents believe that the influence of the different marketing tools on them is in general very low. Only polls, speeches and television ads seem to have a level of influence.

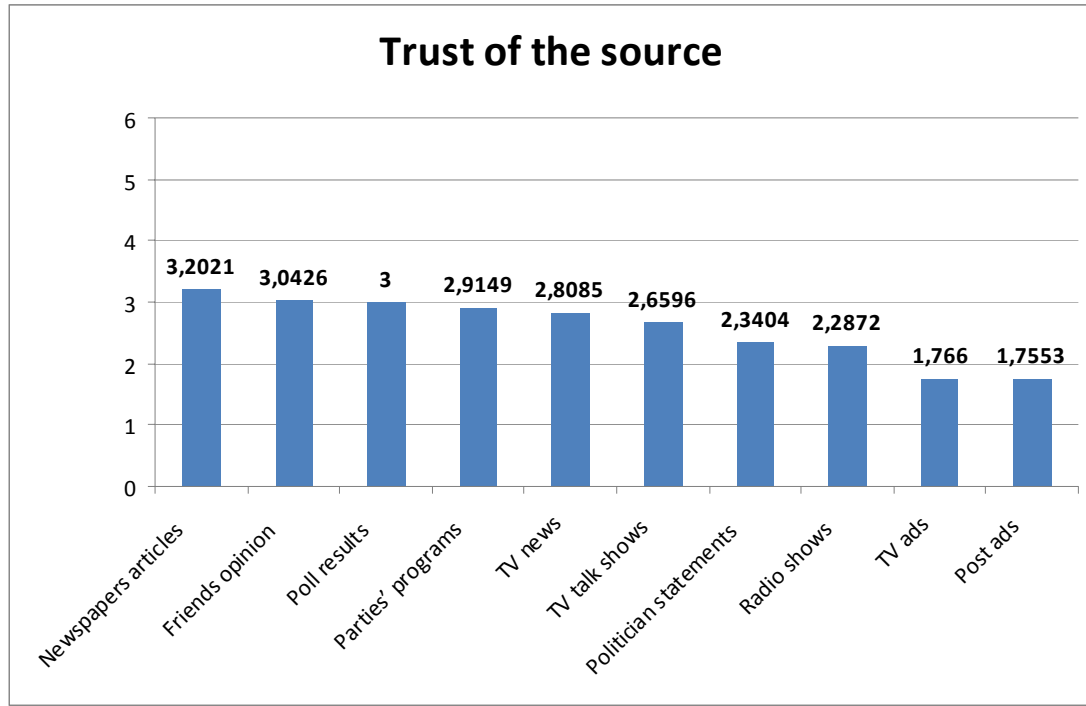
Even though the marketing tools do not seem to have crucial effects on the voting decision making of the electorate, the perceptions of them differentiate between some of the segments.

The most interesting segments are the soft loyalists who make their voting decision during the election campaign and the hard loyalists who decide on which party to vote for at the last moment of it. The first group of voters is the most influenced of all the other groups by all the marketing tools except the outdoor speeches. The other group (hard loyalists – last minute) is the least influenced segment of all since no marketing tool seems to have influence on it.

In regard with the sources that provide information to the electorate during the election period, the respondents in general seem not to trust the information they receive by most of them (Figure 8). In this question also the soft loyalists who make their voting decision during the election period seem generally to

show more trust on the information they get by the sources than all the other segments.

Figure 8- Trust of information provided by the sources



Finally, it should be mentioned that even though the respondents believe that political marketing has very low influence on them and that the most important criterion for them in order to vote is the programmes of the parties; the majority of them -60.6%- perceives these programmes as an outcome of combination of ideology and marketing, while 33% perceives them as a result of marketing and only 6.4% sees them as an outcome of ideology.

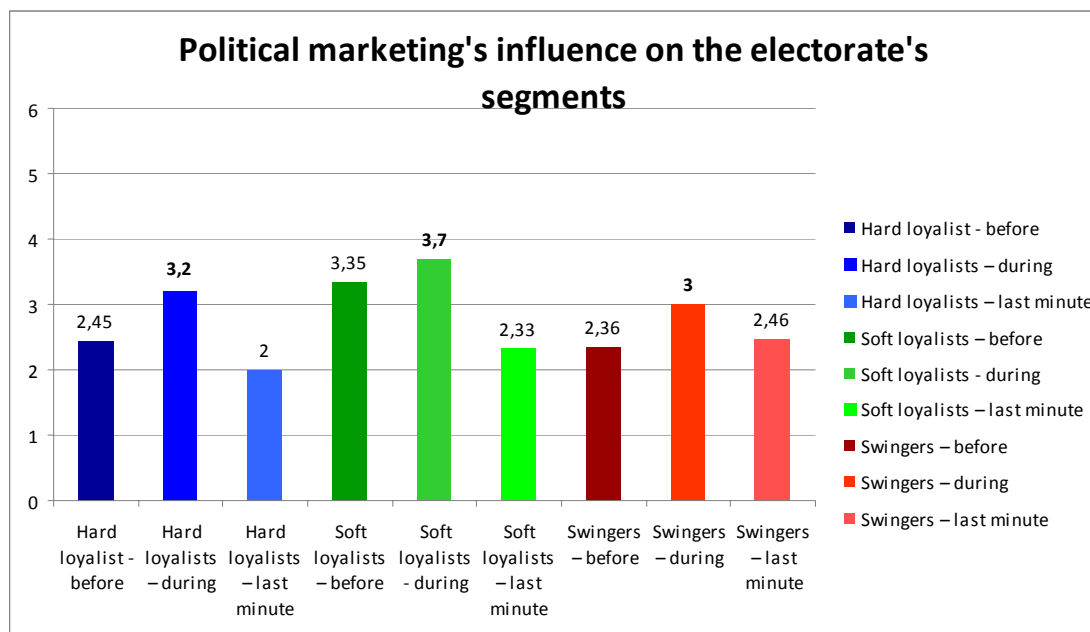
The perception that the programmes of the parties are an outcome of ideology is mostly shared between the hard loyalists, while the perception that they are a product of marketing is popular mostly between the swingers' segments. Therefore, as loyalty decreases the perception that parties' programmes are an outcome of marketing increases.

The results of this research study show that loyalty and time of voting decision making are two important elements that it is possible to reveal the voting

behaviour of the people. The segments that have been created according to the answers on the relevant questions are seemed to be homogeneous and unique. In other words the loyalty and time of voting segments have some specific characteristics that distinguish them from each other.

The analysis of the responses in the relevant, to the research objective 1 questions, has shown that there is one market segment that is by far the most influenced of all by political marketing. This group is the one which includes the people that are soft loyalists and make their voting decision during the election campaign. In the first question its influence by political marketing is ranked with 3.7/6 while the second most influential segment is ranked with 3.35/6 and the third with 3.2/6 (Figure 9). It is characteristic that this group is influenced more than all the others by seven out of eight marketing tools. On the other hand hard loyalists who make their voting decision the last minute are the least influenced by political marketing. Therefore, the first hypothesis is true since all of the market segments are influenced by political marketing. However, the second hypothesis is considered as false since the most influenced segment of political marketing is the soft loyalists who make their decision making during the election period and not the floating voters who decide the last minute.

Figure 9- Political marketing’s influence on the electorate’s segments



Moreover, the analysis of the results indicates that not all the segments value the criteria the same. The importance of each criterion varies according to loyalty and time of voting decision making. Therefore not all the criteria are important for every segment of the electorate. It seems that people from different segments have different beliefs and base their vote on different criteria. The major criteria that determine the vote of each segment is shown below (Table 2). For this reason the addressed hypothesis can be considered as false. However, it is interesting to mention that the three segments that include the people who decide on which party to vote before the election period value most of the criteria the same.

Table 2- Criteria that determine the voting decision of each segment

Segments	Most important criteria
Hard loyalists before	Leader's personality, socioeconomic and national issues programme, ideology
Hard loyalists during	MP personality, personal benefits, socioeconomic and national issues programme
Hard loyalists last minute	Socioeconomic issues programme, personal benefits, national issues programme
Soft loyalists before	Leader's personality, socioeconomic and national issues programme, ideology
Soft loyalists during	Leader's and MP personality, regional programme, socioeconomic and national issues programme
Soft loyalists last minute	Regional programme, leader's and MP personality
Swingers before	Leader's personality, socioeconomic and national issues programme, ideology
Swingers during	Socioeconomic and national issues programme, ideology, regional programme
Swingers last minute	Regional programme, leader's personality, socioeconomic and national issues programme

Discussion and conclusions

This paper has tried to explore the influence that political marketing has on different segments of the Greek electorate. Opinions and perceptions which are considered as connected with the voting behaviour have been employed.

To summarise it should be said that the techniques of marketing that the political parties had used during the election campaign period had no influence on the majority of the Greek electorate, since 60% of them made their voting decision before the election period. Almost 40% of the voters do not change their vote during their whole life, while another 30% votes most of the time for the same party. However, another 30% state that vote different party in every election depending on the specific situation on which the elections are held.

The main criteria that the voters use in order to decide for which party to vote are the socioeconomic, national and regional programmes of the parties, the parties' ideologies and the personalities of the parties' leaders. However, it should be highlighted that the importance of these criteria varies among the different segments of the electorate. Moreover, the results regarding the influence that political marketing has on the electorate are confusing. That is because even though the respondents believe that political marketing has a high influence to the electorate as a whole; at the same time they state that it has a low influence on them.

The segment that seems to be more influenced by political marketing is the one that contains the soft-loyalists. In regard with the time of voting those who decide during the election period seem to be more influenced than the other groups by political marketing. Finally, the swingers even though they are targeted by the marketers of the parties are appeared to be as much influenced as the hard-loyalists are by it. Polls, speeches and television advertisements can be considered as the most influential tools of political marketing, although the latter is not trusted as an information source by any segment.

The segments seem not to trust not only television advertisement of the political parties but most of the sources that they get their political information from. Exception is the segment that includes soft loyalists who decide which party to vote during the election period. The most trusted information sources are newspaper articles, friends' opinions and poll results.

Furthermore, only a 6% of the respondents perceive the programmes of the parties as an outcome of pure ideology. 61% perceives them as a combination of marketing and ideology and 33% as pure marketing result. The latter perception increases as loyalty decreases.

It is also interesting to be highlighted that one very interesting result of this research is the appearance of the soft loyalists who make their voting decision during the election period segment and its difference in opinions from the other segments of the Greek electorate. This segment represents the 10.6% of the total vote population and it seems to be by far the most influenced by the tools of political marketing and the one that trusts the most the political information sources, even though it attracts much less attention by the political marketers than the swingers who do not seem to be influenced - especially those who decide last minute. Moreover, it should be fair to mention the soft loyalists who decide before the election period since it is the second most influenced by political marketing segment despite the fact that their decision has been made before the application of the marketing tools. In addition this segment – which represents the 18.1% of the electorate - comes second in the trust of political information sources. However, much more research has to be done for these two segments in order to find their psychographic and political profiles if political marketers want to target them.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the results of this research indicate the failure of political marketing's use by the political parties in attracting voters and especially the swingers. Voters are very suspicious of its application and they do not trust the sources that promote it.

Therefore, a more professional application of political marketing is essential to be introduced in the Greek political arena if the parties want to approach in a more reliable way the targeted voters. Maybe it is time for the Greek political parties to implement Lees-Marshment's (2001) approach of Comprehensive Political Marketing (CPM) and include its techniques in all their political activities and not only during the election period. Finally, an examination of the reasons that make the electorate segments to think and act differently from each other is recommended.

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