

A Research on the Determination of Factors Affecting Decision of Voters (Consumers) in Political Marketing

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Abstract: The importance of marketing for commercial enterprises as it is for non profit enterprises is increasing day by day. Depending on the increasing consciousness of the consumers, the need of consumer based service is also increasing. The aim of the research is to determine the factors effecting the voters' decision by importance. Besides, in the research it is aimed to find out the time when the voters decide which party to vote and the communication means affecting mostly their decision making process. According to the results of the research, one of the most important criteria the voters take into consideration about a parliamentary candidate is his/her educational level. On the other hand, the most important factor which the voters take into consideration about the political party is the party leader himself. The essential characteristic of a party leader is honesty. And, it is determined that half of the people taking part in the research make decision at different time periods (a year before the election, 6 months before it, the night just before the election or during the election). The decision of the other half doesn't change. It is also shown in the research that TV is the leading means of communication affecting decision making process.

Key words: Political marketing, political party, party leader, voters, candidate

INTRODUCTION

Most of the people take marketing as a means of advertising and/or personal selling of goods and services. Advertising and selling, however, are just 2 of the entire marketing activity.

In general, all marketing activities are associated with identifying the particular needs of a target market and then going about satisfying the customers in a competitive climate. This involves doing market research on customers, analyzing their needs and making strategic decisions about product design, pricing, promotion and distribution.

The marketing understanding can be expressed as social and environmental consideration of contemporary marketing understanding. As known, marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, services, organizations and events to create and maintain relationships that will satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

The importance of marketing is increasing in political area as being in all sectors.

Political marketing, which is an effective application of commercial marketing to the political process, has been defined in numerous ways by a range of authors. Gronroos (1990) and O' Shaughnessy (2001) defined it as

seeking to establish, maintain and enhance long term voter relationships at a profit for society and political parties so that the objectives of the individual political actors and organizations involved are met. According to Clemente (1992) and Butler and Collins (1994), it is 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. Lock and Harris (1996), stated that the practice of political marketing, concerned with strategies for positioning and communications and the methods through which these strategies may be realized, including the search for information into attitudes, awareness and response of the target audience. Kotler and Kotler (1999) argued that political marketing shares much in common with marketing in the business world. In political campaigns, candidates dispatch promises, favors, policy preferences and personality to a set of voters in exchange for their votes, voluntary efforts or contributions. Less-Marshment (2001), declared that political marketing is about political organizations adapting business marketing concepts and techniques to help achieve their goals. Henneberg (2004) claimed that political marketing is facilitate the societal process of political exchange.

Lock and Harris (1996) identify some differences between mainstream and political marketing:

- Unlike every other purchasing decision, all voters make their choice on the same day. Moreover, although there are similarities between opinion polls and brand shares' tracking methods, the latter are based on actual purchasing decisions while the former are based on hypothetical questions.
- Voting choice, unlike any other purchasing decision, has no direct or indirect individual costs attached to it.
- Political parties and candidates are complex intangible products which the voters cannot remove and thus they have to decide on the totality of the package.

It's known that new marketing techniques are applied in the political marketing field. One of the most important of these techniques is relational marketing. Relational marketing can be defined as applying updated individual information occupied through interaction communication with customers to the product and service design process for developing continuous and long term relations that provide mutual benefit (Cram, 1994).

Nowadays, customers can easily distinguish the differences between the perception of momentary studies that made just before the election and applying continuous marketing perception, namely means lastingly looking from customers' eyes and acting according to customers' expectations.

Development in the political marketing is emanated from conditions and especially increasing customer consciousness. In the political area, competing conditions and instruments differ.

The objective of the research: The objective of this research is to determine the factors affecting peoples' decision whilst voting. The sub-objectives defined in accordance with the main objective are; to determine the parliamentary candidates' needed features by importance, factors that affect voters' political party preference and features that should be owned by a party leader. Furthermore, this research aims to determine the time when the customers decide on the party to vote and communication instruments affecting their decision, by importance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this research, a questionnaire is used as a data collection method. The questionnaire was applied to consumers by using face-to-face interview method between January 2007 and February 2007 in Istanbul.

Sampling size of the research is determined through following formula (Robbert and Daryle, 1970);

$$s = X^2NP (1 - P) / d^2 (N - 1) + X^2P (1-P)$$

- s : Required sample size.
- X^2 : The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level.
- N : The population size.
- P : The population proportion (assumed to be 0.50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).
- d : The degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion.
- s : $(1.96)^2 \times 7200000 \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2 (7200000-1) + (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 (1-0.5)$.
- s : 384.

Target population is determined as total vote number in the election on 03 November 2002 in Istanbul. However, survey is conducted to more people (500) than sampling number (384) determined by the formula above. In this research, degreed gradation technique is used as a gradation technique. For statistical analysis, Chi-Square analysis is used from SPSS for Windows package program (Ergun, 1995).

Hypothesis

H₁: The most important feature consumers expected from the parliamentary candidate is his/her educational level.

H₂: The most important feature of political party preference is the ideology of the party.

H₃: The most important feature consumers expected from the political party leader is honesty.

H₄: Voters' decision time varies depending on gender.

H₅: Voters' decision time varies depending on educational level.

H₆: Voters' decision time varies depending on age groups.

H₇: Voters' decision time varies depending on occupational groups.

Model of the research: The model developed due to the aim of the research and possible relations are shown at Fig. 1. A model has been developed in order to determine the importance level of factors that voters affected when they decide on voting. The model is composed of sub factors such as unforeseen events and social image right along with basic factors such as political product that affects customer decision and candidate's features.

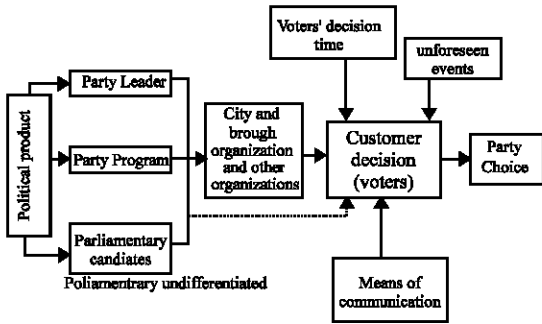


Fig. 1: The model developed appropriately due to purpose of the research

RESULTS

In political marketing, factors affecting voters’ decision on different issues are determined by importance degree. Data about determining features expected from parliamentary candidates is shown at Table 1, factors affecting political party preference is shown at Table 2 and features in choosing a political party is shown in Table 3 Data about voters’ party preference is shown at Table 4 and voters’ demographic differences of voting decisions are shown at Table 5.

As Table 1 is scrutinized, it’s confirmed that educational level of candidate’s is at the top of the factors that affects choosing parliamentary candidates. In the research, the first hypothesis -the most important feature customers expected from deputies is parliamentary candidate’s educational level - is accepted (X = 2.38). After educational level, “Deputy’s past performances” comes as a second tier. Among the features expected from parliamentary candidates, honesty comes at the third place. It’s seen that being acquainted with parliamentary candidate and gender of parliamentary candidate come at the last place. Actually these findings might be associated with voters’ increasing consciousness. About the past elections in Turkey, telling the opposite of this won’t be wrong.

As Table 2 is scrutinized, leader of the party is the first factor affecting voters’ political party preference. Ideology of the party follows that as a second factor. In the research, the second hypothesis -the most important feature at political party choice is the ideology of the party- is refused (X= 3.88).

As Table 3 is scrutinized, it’s confirmed that the first of the factors expected from the party leader is honesty. In the research, the third hypothesis - the most important feature consumers expect from the political party leader is honesty- is accepted (X= 2.14). Understanding of democracy, attitudes against freedom and educational level follow that factor in turn. Family life and clothing style take place at the last order.

Table 1: Features expected from parliamentary candidates by importance degree

Variables	N	X	SD	Rank
Deputy’s educational level	468	2.38	1.63	1
Deputy’s being liked by social environment	405	4.64	1.88	5
Deputy’s past performances	448	3.10	1.79	2
Program that deputy presents	440	4.21	1.96	4
Deputy’s fame	374	5.99	1.99	7
Deputy’s ethnic origin	395	5.08	2.14	6
Deputy’s honesty	451	3.17	2.09	3
To be acquainted with deputy	370	6.85	1.96	8
Deputy’s gender	354	7.87	1.95	9

Table 2: Factors affecting the choice of political party by importance degree

Variables	N	X	SD	Rank
Party Leader	436	3.40	3.03	1
Economic Model of The Party	399	5.14	2.84	4
Ideology of The Party	435	3.88	2.53	2
Party’s ability of foreseeing/analyzing events	386	5.73	2.77	6
Party’s understanding of democracy	422	5.27	2.81	5
General activities of the party	433	4.64	2.72	3
Administrative staff of the party	417	5.89	2.84	7
Election manifesto of the party	387	7.13	2.62	9
Parliamentary candidates of the party	403	6.89	2.80	8
Party’s style on perceiving differences	389	7.41	2.82	10
Performed politics of the party while it was an opposition party	377	7.88	3.09	11

Table 3: Features expected from the leader of the party by importance degree

Variables	N	X	SD	Rank
Leader’ honesty	469	2.14	1.71	1
Leader’s attitude against pressure	404	3.97	1.78	5
The leader’s understanding of democracy	443	3.12	1.64	2
Leader’s attitude towards freedom	421	3.85	1.82	3
Oratory of the leader	383	5.25	1.84	6
Leader’s clothing style	371	6.72	1.74	8
Leader’s family life	393	5.63	1.93	7
Leader’s educational level	440	3.88	2.26	4

Table 4: Determining the time when voters make decision about a political party to vote

	n	(%)
My decision is always stable	257	51.61
About one year to the election	101	20.28
6 months ago from the election	64	12.85
At the evening before the election	36	7.23
At the polling station	40	8.03
Total	498	100.00

As Table 4 is scrutinized, it’s seen that 51.61% of the voters are stable about their decisions, while 48.39% of the voters make a decision around the time of election. It shows that how important are the actions of the political parties which they perform before the election and their further plans.

The polling station: As Table 5 is scrutinized, it’s obvious that at the statistical analysis done to determine voting decision time of the voters, H₄, H₅ and H₇ are refused (p>0.05). However, H₆ is accepted and it’s confirmed that voters’ decisions about voting time differ due to age groups (p<0.05).

Table 5: Due to demographic features, determining whether voting decision differ in point of time or not

	1	2	3	4	5	df	p-value
Gender							
M	141	53	34	16	16		
F	111	44	27	18	23	4	0.438
Education							
Elmtr	61	16	14	9	9		
High school	85	33	14	15	9		
College-university	87	41	28	9	20	12	0.341
Postgraduate	17	7	4	1	1		
Age							
18-30	105	46	27	17	25		
31-40	77	19	8	6	4		
41-50	48	24	18	6	4		
51-60	15	6	5	4	3	16	0.041*
61 and up	7	1	3	1	3		
Occupation							
CVL servant	28	5	5	4	2		
Worker	36	16	7	4	1		
Student	72	29	18	11	18		
Retired	20	5	8	4	4		
Tradesman	23	10	5	3	-	28	0.725
Housewife	36	12	7	5	7		
Self employment	22	15	8	2	6		
Unemployed	9	4	3	1	1		

1: Voters' decisions are always fixed 2: About one year before the election; 3: 6 months ago before the election

Table 6: Factors affecting the voters' voting decision by importance degree

Variables	N	X	SD	Rank
Television	482	1.43	0.04	1
Radio	404	3.54	0.06	3
Newspaper	456	2.70	0.52	2
Poster-bill	389	4.25	0.07	5
Catalog-brochure	405	4.34	0.06	6
Internet	405	4.14	0.08	4
Other	187	6.47	0.10	7

As Table 6 is scrutinized, the first of the means of communication affecting voters' decision is television (1.43), newspaper (2.70) and radio (3.54) follow that.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Changing criteria that voters take into account in decision making process make political parties, which want to be the winner of the election, seek different pursuits.

According to the results of the study, the most important feature wanted from the parliamentary candidate is his/her educational level. The most important factor affecting political party choice is the leader of the party. It is confirmed that the most important characteristic expected from the party leader is honesty.

In the study, it is determined that almost half of the voters do not have fixed decision and change their decision even at the polling station. This result shows how important the activities done by the political party during elections.

Related to the demographic features, considering the age groups, voters differ by only decision making time. Besides, the most important means of communication affecting voters' decision is determined to be television. According to findings of this study and experience gained during the application of the research, the most important suggestion is; since there are significant differences on criteria voters look for, political parties should develop marketing strategies in which some basic features are considered such as education, honesty and leadership. Since the voters do not have fixed decisions and since they decide comparing some basic criteria such as party leaders, parliamentary candidates' features and political party's program, parties should develop selection strategies by determining consumer will and needs.

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