

PRINCIPLES OF COMMERICAL MARKETING AND POLITICAL MARKETING – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCIES

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Abstract

Commercial and political marketing share similar principles, focusing on effective targeting, persuasion, and engagement of target audiences. Both fields use rhetoric and psychological effects to target emotions, often using stereotypes and emotional vulnerabilities. Propaganda tools, such as manipulation, distorted reality, fear-mongering, and idealization, contribute to persuasion. This paper discusses the structure of these marketing methods and their effectiveness in modern societies.

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1 Introduction

In this study, I examine the similarities and differences between commercial and political marketing, placing emphasis on their theories and trends. I examine the fundamental theories of marketing, their concepts, and their development. My research reviews the mechanisms of consumer behaviour related to commercial marketing, and then connects them using appropriate paradigms. The study then transitions to political marketing, clarifying its tools and laying the groundwork for further research. The study also examines political communication, laying the groundwork for my further research in this area. Finally, I will examine the similarities and differences between commercial and political marketing using examples.

2 Definition problems

Marketing concepts emerged in American literature in the early 20th century, with scientific works in Europe, the Netherlands, and England in the 19th century and 1910 respectively. The first definition of marketing was difficult to establish; experts indicated from the beginning that the content and meaning of the created definition must be continuously reviewed, as professionals may encounter different problems in practice during different periods, and these problems continuously affect the changes in the definition [1].

The official definition of marketing was only established in 2007, when a committee of researchers provided the following definition: "marketing is the set of activities, institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." The 2007 definition is no longer valid today [1]. The Vargo-Lusch duo rethought the foundations of marketing, arguing that in the 19th century, physical goods were at the center, while in the 21st century, services took the forefront [2]. Marketing thinking evolved in parallel with commerce, leading to the establishment of fundamental functions and institutions [3].

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According to the American Marketing Association (hereinafter AMA) 2007 definition of marketing, marketing is the process of creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging value propositions for customers, clients, partners, and society at large [4]. The 2007 definition of marketing, outdated in 2017, was revised to reflect contemporary consumer society trends, stating that it involves creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging value-adding offerings. [5]. Over the past 10 years, the market landscape has changed, so I believe that the combined definitions of 2007 and 2017 represent what marketing will be in 2024-2025.

Clearly, the definitional problems of marketing encompass multiple perspectives, including those of the American Marketing Association and Kotler, which are subjective and debatable due to their lack of scientific basis. Philip Kotler provided one of the most well-known definitions of marketing, stating that marketing is a chain of social and managerial steps through which individuals and groups create and exchange products and values, while satisfying their needs and wants [6].

In conclusion, based on the previously known definition, my own definition might sound something like this: marketing is the sum of activities, institutions, and processes that create offerings and value for customers, partners, and society as a whole, in order to initiate the exchange of products or services, facilitate communication and exchange among partners, manage and operate inter-institutional relationships, and generate market competition (my own formulation).

Robert Bartels is credited with defining marketing in his work "History of Marketing Thought" [7]. The book presents the history of marketing thought, discussing early theories, the beginnings, and specialized areas such as advertising, sales management, retailing, and marketing research. Bartels' narrative is dominated by the pre-1960 period, but later editions also include marketing management and areas such as marketing systems, channels, and international marketing. The book divides the period between 1900 and 1970 into seven decades [8].

In recent decades, marketing has evolved into a discipline built on extremely solid foundations, impacting society as a whole. It has been influenced by the emergence of modern forms of trade, the development of commercial industries, the industrial revolution, and the changes in international relations related to trade that have occurred throughout history. Politics has also influenced the development of marketing: the state impacts trade and foreign economy and relations in the same way that we can attribute a role to social influence in the development of trade. Although there seems to be consensus in the process of the development of marketing theories, there are still ongoing debates about what belongs to the theory and practice of marketing research [9].

Now that I have examined the changes and developmental stages of marketing theories, I will turn to the examination of the fundamental concepts of commercial marketing.

3 The development of the basic concepts of marketing

What is commercial marketing? Bauer, Berács, and Kenesei's book explores the roots of commercial marketing, dating back to the 20th century, highlighting its American flourishing. They argue understanding commerce and marketing requires understanding the economy and modern markets. [10]. Marketing development was influenced by market processes, industrial-scale production, and globalization. By the end of the 20th century, the population primarily relied on services, and developed countries had a workforce of 3-5 million. Marketing helped modern people connect geographically distant regions and countries in consumption structures and habits. From the history of trade spanning thousands of years, the map of today's modern marketing emerges, mirroring the functioning of ancient trading societies. Today's thinking is increasingly defined by three factors: demand, supply, and price. Commerce, on the other hand, is a phenomenon that has manifested much earlier and more generally. Commercial marketing can be best defined as a tool created to incentivize consumers in the field of sales [11].

Since my study fundamentally examines the topic of marketing, I will not elaborate further on the mechanism of commerce, as I take this for granted. From the perspective of the study, however, I

would like to highlight three major areas that I believe are related to political marketing, political decision-making, and influencing elections.

Market segmentation, proposed by Bauer, Berács, and Kenesei, is a forward-looking approach to market analysis that focuses on consumer norms and values, helping companies understand changing sales opportunities and relationships, ultimately leading to market success [12].

Target marketing aims to achieve specific goals and influence the target audience, adapted to the modern world. Purpose-driven marketing prioritizes fundamental values and connects with the audience based on shared needs, including support for worthy causes, fostering a loyal customer base [13].

Purpose-driven marketing, also known as marketing 3.0, connects businesses with their target audience through social responsibility, building customer loyalty, and ensuring authenticity for strong brand identity [14]. From the perspective of my research, I will also examine another area, which is consumer behavior. Marketing influenced by sociology, psychology, and social psychology views consumers as individuals seeking satisfaction and pleasure. It employs a human behavior-centered approach to understanding consumer behavior, which includes brand and store choice to increase satisfaction. This approach helps researchers and business leaders better understand consumers and their preferences, thereby promoting the development of a welfare society [12]. To understand consumer behavior, we must recognize that it not only exhibits diversity among individual consumers but also that a specific consumer behavior can vary in different situations, influenced by demographic, cultural, and personality factors [12].

4 The development of political marketing

The following chapter examines the history of political marketing and communication, the tools used in politics, and the pace of development in the field. Its aim is to distinguish between the marketing and brand building of politicians and organizations, and to examine the theoretical and practical development of political marketing.

Joseph Schumpeter's 1942 book, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, introduced the concept of political marketing, in which politicians and companies compete for voters' votes, and which was first used by Stanley Kelly in 1956 [15].

Political marketing has significantly evolved in the 20th century with the advent of mass media and the recognition of the difference between classical and marketing communication. The most important milestones include Eisenhower's television campaigns and Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, which introduced the concept of user-generated content. The two bases of political marketing are America and the United Kingdom, with the British focusing on the royal family's brand. Political advertisements, self-assertion books, and conferences often teach self-reflection and effective communication. For this reason, Plato already considered rhetoric condemnable in itself. In the *Protagoras*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Phaedrus*, he wrote about it as a dangerous art of deception, contrasting it with philosophy, which always seeks the truth. In the *Gorgias*, for example, he said that rhetoric, compared to medicine, is like cooking, and compared to gymnastics, like cosmetics, meaning that in his view, it is an insignificant and superficial thing [16].

Political marketing is an important approach that examines the impact of political actors' activities on responses, while political communication describes the political discourse. Parties, politicians, and stakeholders focus on strategies to achieve their goals. In democratic states, political activities are driven by a marketing approach, as politics is a struggle for power, authority, and parliamentary seats

In political marketing, the service marketing approach can be a good solution, where governance is the subject of the service, but the subject of exchange causes interpretative problems [17].

The political offer can be divided into three parts: politician, party, and ideology. However, the interpretation of a brand remains unclear. A brand is everything customers or stakeholders think about a product or service, including values, benefits, corporate behavior, and culture (Stodocu:n.d.). Schumpeter's logic suggests that political marketing is not limited to election campaigns, as it constantly competes for attention. The chronology of political communication reveals that during the "golden age" of parties, long-term voter commitment, national television, and internet increased competition and media exposure [18].

When discussing the methods of influence, it is necessary to briefly address the concept of propaganda, which was used for centuries to describe this phenomenon, but now evokes negative associations. This may be one of the reasons why it is avoided, and instead terms like advertising, marketing, or public diplomacy are introduced for the types of influence. The word propaganda is of Latin origin (*propagare*), meaning "to spread" [19]. Propaganda is a strategy used to persuade and influence public opinion in politics, product marketing, sports, and attitudes. Its roots trace back to the communication of the Enlightenment and the Counter-Reformation. Since then, it has predominantly carried a negative connotation, with synonyms such as psychological warfare, manipulation, and fake news. Researchers today prefer to use more neutral terms such as political instrumentalization of the media [20].

Chapter 5 Comparing the commercial marketing of Coca Cola and the political marketing of Fidesz
Now that we have familiarized ourselves with the theoretical foundations of commercial marketing and political marketing, I will move on to comparing the marketing strategies of Coca Cola and Fidesz. I will start the comparison with the similarities and differences between commercial marketing and political marketing.

Table 1. Differences commercial and political marketing

<i>Commercial marketing</i>	<i>Political Marketing</i>
Formulate specific value propositions	Aims to engage voters and build long-term support
Communicate with	Effective communicate to voters
Laying the foundations for long-term stability and growth	Enables parties and leaders to reach out in democratic and non-democratic systems
Provides a framework to maximise profits	Provides a strategic framework for political campaigning, enabling political actors to target and mobilise voters
Building relationships based on brand loyalty	Today's modern campaigning has shifted to the online space, with media, influencers and data-driven campaigns becoming dominant
The real goal is to maximise profit	The real aim is to maintain power
	Source: own editing

Both types of marketing aim to influence, but political marketing is focused on gaining and maintaining power. The application of the marketing mix in political marketing: the politician as a product. The art of influence has been a tool in political struggles since ancient rhetoric, which already knew everything about human behavior and the impact of communication. Simplifying this, they were used for commercial purposes, and then these simplified tools were (literally) sold to political actors as well. Both commercial and political marketing rely on effective targeting, persuasion, and engagement, employing rhetorical and psychological effects to reach consumers and voters. The language often relies on stereotypes, emotional vulnerabilities, and powerful messages. Propaganda tools, manipulation, distortion of reality, fear-mongering, and idealization contribute to persuasion. The main point of my study is the comparison of commercial marketing and political marketing examples, such as the marketing of Coca Cola and Fidesz. Coca-Cola is globally recognized for its adept application of brand-building and marketing strategies. The central element

of its marketing is the creation of an emotional connection with consumers. The company employs the following methods.

Fidesz was founded in 1988 by 37 university and college students at the Bibó College, under the name of the Alliance of Young Democrats. In the same year, Fidesz already held a large assembly with 400 participants in a Budapest cinema, where several local Fidesz groups declared their formation [21]. The Fidesz party, which has now transformed into a governing party, naturally employs the tools of political communication. I divided my examination into three main groups:

Table 2. The commercial marketing (Coca cola) and political marketing comparison (Fidesz)

	<i>Coca Cola</i>	<i>Fidesz</i>
<i>Storytelling and emotional impact:</i>	<i>The company's advertising campaigns are based on universal emotions, promoting not only the product but also life emotions such as happiness, love and belonging. For example, the "share a coke" campaign. This is often conveyed through visually colourful and positive advertising that appeals to a wide range of audiences.</i>	<i>Fidesz's political messages are often polarised and aim to mobilise voters and reinforce the party's political line. The messages are often simple and easy to understand, for example in the form of slogans such as "Hungary comes first for us". The party's communication often responds to current social or political events, which provide an opportunity to create a strong emotional impact.</i>
Campaigns – Activities	Interactive campaigns and consumer content that increase brand loyalty and engagement (own words)	Public advertising and government campaigns also play a key role in Fidesz's strategy, which is often criticised for distorting competition in the media market and the independence of public debate - with international exposure
Target audience and reach	Coca-Cola's target audience is global and broad, as its products appeal to all ages. The brand is particularly active on social media and digital platforms to reach younger generations. It is also present at sponsorship events such as sporting events and music festivals to further connect with consumers. The brand balances a global image with advertising and product variations tailored to local markets to strengthen its international position.	Fidesz's political marketing strategy in Hungary focuses on ideological messages and consolidating political support, using populist rhetoric and traditional and social media to disseminate its messages widely.

Source:

<https://www.allresearchjournal.com/archives/2018/vol4issue11/PartD/9-8-34-935.pdf>
<https://telex.hu/komplex/2022/07/27/a-facebookos-propaganda-felzabolja-a-regimodi-kormanyaitot>
<https://www.thestrategyinstitute.org/insights/coca-colas-global-dominance-decoding-the-beverage-giants-business-strategy>
https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/Uncovering_analyzing_debunking_and_researching_sponsored_disinfo_project_summary_2024.pdf
https://21kutakozpont.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Main_Secret_Fidesz_Success_final-2.pdf

Coca-Cola's commercial marketing activities and Fidesz's political marketing strategies operate in different areas, but both aim to promote the brand or political message and engage the audience and community. Coca-Cola and Fidesz's marketing strategies operate with different goals and methods, both effectively utilizing modern media tools to reach their audience and increase brand loyalty or political support. Coca-Cola's positive, emotion-based messages are related to the product and lifestyle, while Fidesz's political marketing uses more direct and often conflict-oriented messages to retain and expand its voter base.

5 Conclusions: The future of marketing

Technological advancement and the information explosion demand new approaches. Marketing must adapt to the challenges of the digital age, especially regarding the credibility of political information. We can see, therefore, that there is a very thin line separating commercial marketing and political marketing; both involve a business-like approach, the intention to commodify the product/politician for business purposes, and the aim to maximize profit/votes.

Political marketing has a greater influence on people's lives, as in parliamentary elections we do not just buy a product, but express our opinion on the leadership of a country and the ideologies of political parties (whether positive or negative), and we can vote our trust in a new opportunity, while in commercial marketing we buy a product and use it as intended until it breaks down, and then we buy a new one. So, the weight of ideology and values in the decision-making process is the most significant difference between the functioning of commercial and political marketing.

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