POLITICAL MARKETING in a TURKISH CONTEXT: VALUES and PRACTICES

Ekmel GECER[1]

ABSTRACT

Political marketing shares much in common with marketing in the business world and benefits from sociology, political phycology and of course mostly takes advantage of communication almost at its all levels. At its very simple description, politicians through political marketing just as done in the business marketing, tells what they have for people, why they should elect them as their representatives and explain them their future promises and guarantees if the follower faces any problem. The communication managers at this publicising process, direct the marketing steps, tell the politicians which services to use and what communication methods (e.g. advertising, social media activities) to practise. At the same time, they have a further strategy which depicts the support they might have in return and the voter loyalty they will receive if their strategy works. Throughout the election campaign, runners convey their promises and explain their future performances in exchange for the votes and supporters' contributions. However, although political communication strategies look similar in different countries, the local culture, traditions and values force politicians to develop new ways of election campaigns special to that indigenous demands which will attract the voters and make them feel that the politician is one of them. Therefore, this conceptual paper while giving mostly a theoretical background for political marketing in general terms, it also tries to explore the relationship and benefits gained by practicing cultural traditions and the local outlines the politicians mostly apply in their communication campaigns. The outcomes of the study suggest that the political communication campaigns in Turkey have local patterns but also are particularly carrying the similar futures of American strategies.

Keywords: Communication, political communication, political marketing, political culture, voting behaviour, Turkey.

BİR TÜRKİYE KONTEKSTINDE SİYASAL PAZARLAMA: DEĞERLER ve PRATİKLER

ÖZ

Siyasal pazarlamanın, iş dünyasındaki pazarlama yöntemleriyle ortak birçok yanı vardır ve sosyoloji, politik psikoloji ve elbette bütün seviyelerinde iletişimden çokça faydalanır. En basit tanımlamasıyla, politikacılar siyasal pazarlama yoluyla, ticarette yapıldığı şekliyle, müşteriler için neleri olduğunu söyler; neden kendi ürünlerini seçmeleri gerektiğini ve gelecekte herhangi bir sorunla karşılaştıklarında ne türlü garantilere sahip olduklarını anlatırlar. Bu kampanya sürecinde, iletişim koordinatörleri, pazarlamayı adım adım yönetir ve politikacılara hangi mecraları ve iletişim yöntemlerini (reklam, sosyal medya aktiviteleri gibi) kullanmaları gerektiğini anlatırlar. Aynı zamanda, bu yöntemler karşılığında, her şey yolunda giderse, nasıl bir desteğe sahip olacaklarını ve ulaşacakları oy oranını öngörebildikleri stratejileri olur. Seçim kampanyası boyunca, rakipler, vaatlerini aktarır ve oy vermelerine ve katkılarına karşılık seçmenlere gelecekteki icraatlarını açıklarlar. Ne var ki, siyasal iletişim stratejileri farklı ülkelerde aynı özellikleri gösterse de yerel kültür, gelenekler ve değerler; siyasetçilerin, yerli halkın taleplerine özel, onların oylarını cezbeden ve politikacının onlardan biri olduğunu hissettiren, yeni seçim kampanyaları

[1] Lecturer (Asst. Prof.) at Sakarya University Communication and Media School, ekmelgecer@sakarya.edu.tr,
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3367-2236.

geliştirmelerini gerekli kılar. Bu nedenle, elinizdeki kavramsal makale; genel anlamda siyasal pazarlamayı daha çok teorik olarak ele alırken, diğer yandan politikacıların, iletişim kampanyalarında, kültürel gelenekler ve yerel motifleri kullanmalarıyla elde ettikleri avantajların nedenlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlar. Çalışmanın sonucu, Türkiye'deki siyasal iletişim kampanyalarının yerel öğeleri kullanmakla birlikte özellikle Amerika'da uygulanan stratejilerden etkilendiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişim, siyasal iletişim, siyasal pazarlama, politik kültür, oy verme davranışı, Türkiye.

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL MARKETING

Political marketing (political management, packed politics, promotional politics, modern political communication) is a worldwide phenomenon, which parties in all democratic systems are developing in order to seek a political success based on the results of qualitative and quantitative marketing research. It refers to use of professional management techniques in political communication; such as advertising, public relations, promotion and image development (Mayhew, 2007; Scammel 2007). The marketing takes form around the voter's demands; therefore, all parties around the world look for the best marketing system from other countries to persuade their voters. They develop models to produce more effective strategies in order to stay as a market oriented party. These models are not just concerned with communication techniques of campaign but a guide on how to design realistic policy and organization (Lilleker and Marshment, 2005).

Although some other factors such as promises and political performances are also important, especially for gaining people's support and keeping it, a professional way of communication is essential for a sustainable political success. Through communication, parties seek for information, reassure and persuade their voters. Hence, communication is mostly mentioned along with the politics and it is possible to state that there have been a vast literature examining the relationship between communication and politics (McNair, 2017; Kenski and Jamieson, 2017; Brants and Voltmer, 2011; Cap and Okulska, 2013). However it is still difficult to see an actual definition of political communication. But it is possible to define it, as all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives (McNair, 1995: 4). Thus, political marketing, as one aspect of political communication (Scammel, 2007), can employ most existing tools of communication, traditional ones, audio-visual ones, new media technologies and

direct marketing methods (Maarek, 1995: 87; Lees-Marshment, 2014: 5). It calls for democratic choice of people and differ from campaigns with being continuous not merely for election times. Both at the time of elections and remaining times, political parties can communicate directly or indirectly with their activists, supporters and voters. Direct communication implies some degree of personal interaction between the party and the receiver of its message. It also includes the meetings, direct e-mails, phone marketing, doorstep canvassing, leaflets and rallies. Indirect communication has a third part to pass on the messages. This third part may be journalists, celebrities, community workers or the broadcast media. Therefore, even sometimes communication strategies of a party are better known than the actual result as it is an innovation model in communication and shows the effect on the voters (Jackson et al, 2006; Frame and Brachotte, 2015).

Yet, better to emphasise that the rapid developments of new media technologies have changed the political communication strategies. They are being transformed by diffusion of new technologies and social media courses which shapes modern political process and communication (Moog and Beltrao, 2001; Huggins, 2001; Enli and Moe, 2015). New media also explodes the limits on the information, makes possible to exchange experience, increases and decentralizes the control and brings interactive capacities (Wring and Horrocks, 2001; Surowiec and Stetka, 2018). As a result of these changes; internet, as a political campaign tool, has been, although not very dramatic, upward curve. But he first parties which set up web sites for their online communication were UK's political parties. However, it was more effective in US candidate-centred elections. Although many parties, at the very beginning, have ignored the interactive possibility of the internet, it enables parties to market their products (leader image, the party program, structure, proposals to problems) to the voters both directly and indirectly (Farrel et al, 2007; Stromer-Galley and Jemieson, 2001; Jackson, 2006; Wring, et al. 2017). Hence, along with the traditional political marketing strategies, new media courses have been catalysing the news communication technologies (Cankaya, 2015: 301). However, these new methods also caused alteration in values in both negative and positive terms as will be examined in detail below.

1. Political Marketing: Globalism vs Localism?

Political marketing refers to the use of marketing tools, concepts and principles within the policy development, campaigning, internal and external relations and organisations (Maarek, 1995: 28; Lilleker, 2006: 151; Steger et al, 2013). It is what democratic parties and candidates do, to get elected (Scammel, 2007), what viewed as the selling of the candidates and finding candidates who best fitted the voter's desires (Wring, 2005: 6), what creates the difference from the rivals and what includes all the strategies for winning the elections. It has been considered more, after rise of political consumerism where the voters are more engaged in political choice and collapse of partisanship in Western democratic societies (Jackson et al, 2006). It is premised upon an analogy which says parties behave as business, voters as consumers and all operating in a political market place (Savigny, 2006). Thus, when to plan a political marketing strategy; it is vital to consider the coherence with all other rival campaigns and then to decide on the strategy, on the tactics and applications (Maarek, 1995: 31).

Political marketing is the use of business marketing concepts and techniques in political process. Still, it possesses methods specific to its field and it observes several guidelines of communication (Maarek, 1995: 25; Lees-Marshment and Cosgrove 2014). Marketing is concerned with how organisations behave in relation to their customers. On the other side, politics deal with how political institutions perform with regard to their citizens. Therefore political marketing is used in varying forms with different consequences. While political organisations differ from business in many ways, yet they may apply basic business marketing concepts to convince the citizens. Marketing starts at the design stage of a product and modifies its design according to its perception of costumers' needs or to desire it has created (Maarek, 1995: 26). Within this context, politics conduct market intelligence to identify citizen concerns. Consequently, their relations with the citizens described as selling or advertising (Dermody and Hanmer-Lloyd, 2006). So that, it is possible to suggest that, political marketing studies the relationship between a political organisation's product and the demands of its market (Lilleker and Marshment, 2005) as the table below suggests, though has local (Turkish) elements too:

Table 1: Business Marketing and Political Marketing Compared (Adopted and modified from Schafferer, 2006: 3).

| Political Marketing		Commercial Marketing	
Party Concept	An internally driven organization runs by party bosses/leaders and centred on the political party.	Pre-industrial marketing	Products are selected by distributors and delivered to consumers generically. When something sells out, more is ordered.
Product Concept	An internally driven organization run by group leaders and centred on the candidate. Stresses finding the best possible candidate.	Product Concept	Sells the quality of the product through the brand.
Selling Concept	Attempts to create favourable impression of the candidate by the voter.	Selling Concept	Companies like create markets for new products. They begin to experiment with image-based advertising.
Marketing Concept	An externally driven organization run by marketing experts and centred on the voter considering the timely public opinion. Polling determines the message sent to the voter.	Marketing Concept	Companies first identify consumer needs and then develop products to meet those needs.

As the table above suggests the similarities, political parties, while marketing themselves they behave as a professional businessman and try their best with selling the products, namely the leader, the performances and the activities. They have many *goals* but winning the elections is their very first target. Though, while gaining this they also want to represent the ideology that they are for (Savigny, 2006; Savigny, 2011: 31) and meet their voters' demands. Therefore, while analysing political marketing it is important to understand party's goal because it is the starting point from which all its behaviour is observed, and its marketing effectiveness is measured. They also have a *market area*, which their supporters may contribute. The market's size usually changes according to the groups they represent. This market has its own *product*. The owners, politicians, need to hear what the political consumer demands in order to analyse how that may be designed, communicated and sold. As a political term, the *product* here refers how a party behaves; it is permanent and offered to the supporters at all times as the orientation table below demonstrates (Lilleker and Marshment, 2005; Lees-Marshment, 2012: 47):

Table 2: Political Marketing Orientation (Adopted and modified from Wring, 2005: 7)

Commerce	Politics	Strategy	Target
Production	Propaganda	Exposure	Voters
Sales	Media	Market Research Market Segmentation Advertising and PR	Voters
Marketing	Political Marketing	Market Research Policy development Positioning Market Segmentation Advertising and PR Direct Mail	Voters Members Affiliates Donors Mass Media Opinion Formers

Political parties while arranging their political communication they usually have problems with delivering their programs, maintaining a market-oriented method and directing internal democracy and organisation (Jackson et al, 2006). The first difficulty emerge as to question is how to communicate with the voters as they are the most important "part" of political marketing for an electoral success. Voters seek out the best party that will represent them and which more closely matches their personal ideas and values. They do not merely look for the best "management team" but the squad that most closely reflects their own vision of society. This information states that political parties should well organise their political marketing not only to meet the demands but also to discover what motivates voters when they are considering politics (Clarke et al, 2004).

Figure 1: Organisational Schema of Political Marketing (Source: Adapted and modified from Lilleker, 2006: 154).
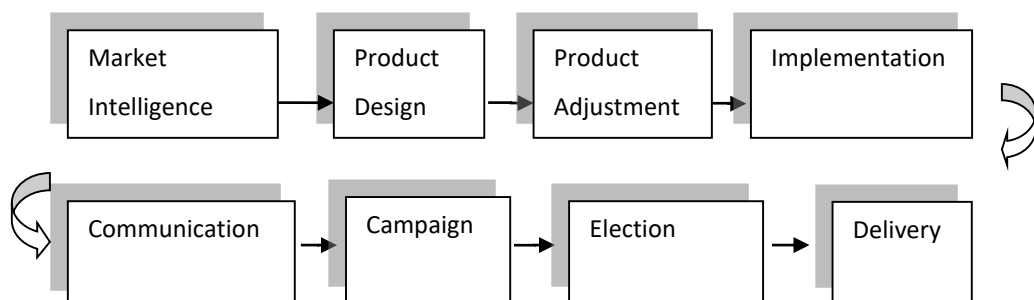
For that reason, as presented in the figure 1 above, the key to market orientation is the use of market intelligence to design party behaviour and so to gain a competitive edge. Then adjustments; that have achievability and competition and support analysis; will organise the internal and external party communication and will also designate the implementation and so the marketing process will go through. Communication is important for the success of market oriented party and it should feature a number of key elements such as professional marketing strategy and intelligence, stress competence and policy, branded symbols which will be familiar to the voter and media organisations (Lilleker, 2006: 155).

2. Communicating Politics in Turkey: An Overview

The development of political communication in Turkey has very close relations with the evolution of freedom of the press and expression in the country. Turkey first experienced political communication campaigns when the first multi-party election was held in 1950. Before this, there was no sign of political communication as there was no opposition leader or no competence between the politicians (Tokgoz, 2010: 37). As the only official communication tool in the 1950s was state-owned radio, the parties were confined using personal political communication methods such as face-to-face conversations and meetings. Posters were also used and all village chambers and streets were decorated with notices, which included party slogans and pictures (Hizal, 1997: 15). Leaflets and brochures, which were added to political communication tools besides posters, were delivered to the people at the city centres where the literacy rate was high. The political communication strategies used by the Democratic Party brought chrominance to the political life of Turkey and took the party to power. The motto of the DP was "that's enough, let the people speak!" is still regarded as the basics of political communication in Turkey (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2008).

After the first *television broadcast* in 1968 by Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), from the 1970s newspapers played a role in political communication and covered political advertisings and slogans. During the 1980s, political communication strategies were not much used because of the political chaos and the military coup in Turkey. After the 1980s political campaigns increased when

all parties used effective political communication strategies (Akay, 2012: 17). While there were just state-owned radio and television before, after the 1990s the private sector started to own media groups which allowed political communication strategies to move to another phase and the media in general experienced greater efficiency thereafter (Doruk, 2015: 162). The first private TV channel in Turkey - Magic Box (then called "Star TV") was established by an entrepreneur in 1989 and had close relations with Ahmet Ozal, the son of Turgut Ozal who was the President between1989-1993; this caused an unfair competition in politics (Atal and Gemici, 2004). However, after increasing numbers of private TV channels, political leaders had opportunities to operate their political communication campaigns through the new private TV channels (Tokgoz, 2010: 33).

The new era for political communication started in 1991 when the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi), which ruled Turkey between 1983 and 1991, 'imported' French *Jacques Seguela* to arrange the party's political communication strategies. (Algul, 2004: 3). Along with the globalisation process, communication has become the focal point of politics and Turkish political parties. Almost all the parties who participated in the 1995 and 1999 elections used professional political communication strategies and in the last elections the methods became more professional (Kentel, 1991: 40). Especially in latest election campaigns the global motifs increased in Turkish political communication campaigns which are also described as *Americanisation* (Sobaci, 2015: 271). As a sign of democratic progress and communication campaigns, parties now in Turkey endeavour to reach all groups and ideologies. Thence, the *Turkish model* is a very important example in terms of political communication-democracy relations as the professionalization of the communication campaigns has a parallel development with the democratisation in socio-political culture of the country which still has some ups and downs depending on political atmosphere. Despite of the complex democratic culture in the country, this development in political communication has provided politicians to use propaganda methods to persuade the voters; helped people to construct ways of communication with the politicians and forced politicians to be more careful with their promises since the people now have possibilities to control them after the elections (Stepan and Kuru,

2012). Keeping the severe conflicts in mind between different ideological groups in Turkey before and after the 1980s, it is possible to state that election campaigns and political marketing strategies of the parties have contributed to the mutual understanding and democratic progress of the country (Kilicaslan, 2008: 29). Once it was impossible to think that right and left wing parties would be together. Now they are together and forming the coalition government. In a country such as Turkey where political conflicts are usual, it is important to reiterate here that political communication can reunite poles are apart.

2.1. Political Marketing in Turkey

Political marketing strategies are carefully followed by scholars and politicians. Because parties, particularly those in Britain and America, utilise political marketing well and design the political product to be sold, they get and copy them into their marketing systems with their socio-politic cultures. Thus, the most recent political marketing scholarship has focused on the use of political marketing in Britain as Labour Party Marketing (Negrine, 2007; Wring, 2005: 137) and America. They are both "leader centred" marketing (Kavanagh, 1992). Particularly American political parties, president candidates (Hellweg, 2004), are widely acknowledged to have pioneered many of techniques that currently applied within modern election campaigns in major democracies (Knuckey and Marshment, 2005). The genesis of modern political marketing is rooted in the history of political communication in the USA (Lilleker, 2006: 31). The methods of the USA marketing have been imitated through the world (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), western democracies being the first to adopt them (Maarek, 1995: 7) and this brought the "Americanization" in political communication (Negrine and Stylianos, 2007; Plasser and Plasser, 2007). Nonetheless political marketing strategies have different motifs according to the cultures and voters' demands they are implemented in. Therefore, it is important to study carefully the history of political communication in the USA and Britain, in order to have "well designed knowledge" about political marketing and communication (Plasser and Plasser, 2002).

Table 3. The Structural and Process Characteristics of Political Marketing
(Adopted and modified Butler and Collins, 1994)

Structural Characteristics	The Product Person / party / ideology Loyalty Mutability The Organization Amateurism Negative perception of marketing Dependence on volunteers Internal democratic issues The Market Ideologically charged Social affirmation Patriotism works
Process Characteristics	Style versus substance Advertising and communications standards News and media attention Social media usage Political polls

As all other countries, after rising effect of media and *Americanization*, politics in Turkey also started to get "leader impact" as priority in political marketing. However, this is not as clear as other "leader centred" countries, since there are differences between the "election systems" and political cultures. While technological progress is about to change the political marketing in Turkey, on the other hand traditional strategies still keeps their positions such as meetings and face to face persuasions. Furthermore religion, nationalism and patriotism keep their influence on voters' decision and the politicians who are aware of this affect may sometimes go for misuse them for the sake vote. Along with the worldwide political marketing and Americanization, on the other hand Turkish political parties have also started to hire "campaign advisors" and new politic actors such as PR experts, academicians and advertisers (Topuz, 1977: 7).

Turkey first met political marketing after passing multiparty system as a sign of democracy and after 1980s campaigns have increased. Especially in last general (2014) and local elections (2016) all parties used political marketing strategies to gain

political success. Certainly, while examining the political marketing it is also important to consider election time conditions and cultures as the achievement just not come with a "successful campaigning" (Ozkan, 2016: 7).

Despite all professionalism in communication methods, political marketing is still under development in Turkey. However, the slogan of Democrat Party (Stop it! It is people's time) in 1940s is accepted as the starting point of political marketing as it is also a sign and slogan of democratisation process. Accordingly studies on political marketing have been increasing in recent years. They have showed that citizens in Turkey behave sensual while voting; do not like show off and look for the candidates like themselves. They want transparency and naturalness. According to the voters the most important characteristic of parties was their ideologies as well as the honesty of party leaders and their parliament members. It was also determined that the voter's political preference was heavily influenced by promises and parties ideologies (Çağlar and Özkır, 2015).

Politics is associated with ideas and ideologies and political parties are united around a body of core ideas that bind together their members (Jackson et al, 2006). This can be seen well in Turkey's political view. As the figure (2) below suggests politics is constituted around the ideology both in terms of the parties and the society. Here it is necessary to note that religion (Islam) is also regarded as a strong ideology within the right-conservative community which cause the politicians to have a religious discourse and performance though sometime look as misuse. In this regard, while the performance of the political party is considered at the very end, the voters seem to look at the ideology of the party such as secularism, conservatism or religion and vote without looking or being affected by the communication campaigns although it would be meaningless to completely ignore the influence of communication campaigns especially after the new media technologies and social media courses such as twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Nevertheless, recent studies suggest that ideology is not the only way to convince the voters and that they want more through political communication strategies as the economic, social and educational demands of people increasing along with the influence of the globalisation which ends up with social

movements. Yet, the view of ideology in political communication strategies seems as below in Turkey:

Figure 2: The view of ideology in political communication in Turkey
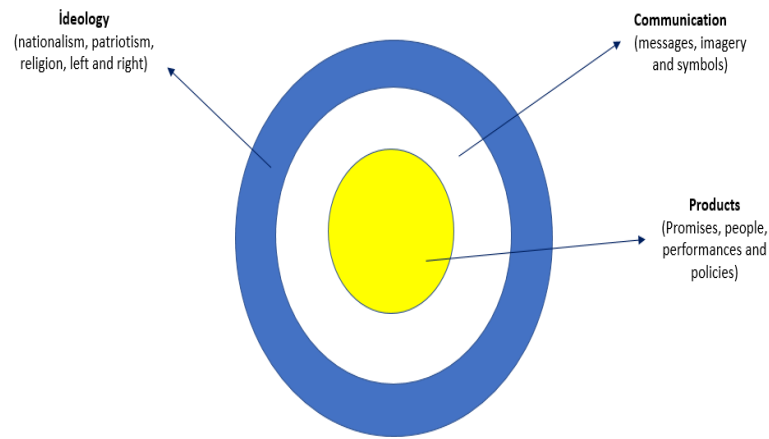
On the other hand the common point of all the marketing methods is the image of the leaders or candidates which stresses on the charisma or the personal specialities (Bowler and Farrell, 1992). This is clearer in Justice and Development Party's (AKP-the party in power now) political marketing as whole marketing is based on the leader's image. Mass media especially television plays the most significant role in building and generalizing leader's image that has been created according to the time. Therefore, political marketing in the country is arranged and edited as a television program and the "show fact" has been considered more. Nonetheless it is possible to order the most used political marketing methods in Turkey as following (Göksu & Birol, 2017; Ozkan, 2007: 103):

Meetings and Rallies: They are the leading marketing methods. All party leaders use them; sometimes candidates speak before the party leader at the same arena. In meetings and rallies the leader and the candidates communicate people directly. The arena is decorated with colours of the party, slogans, the leader's pictures, party flags and the party jingle, which is done by a professional musician, is played loudly before the leader's speech for preparing and warming up the supporters in the arena.

Advertising and Propaganda: Parties want specialists to advertise for them and have them broadcasted on radios, TVs and through internet. Usually they use regional motifs and cultures which find life in hands of the candidate or the leader. They call the voters' wishes and promise to realize them using propaganda and slogans.

Face to face interviews: Party leaders rarely but MP (Member of Parliament) candidates usually, in Turkey, walk around their election territory and talk to people, listen to them and get immediate feedback. This is also a common used method as Turkish people like the politicians to come and talk to them.

Election Manifestos: It is what written by politicians in order to be read by voters and includes parties' promises, programs and discourses. They are important as they give voters possibility of checking the promises.

Billboards and Posters: They are the most used advertising tools by politicians which includes the candidate's or the leader's pictures, party's slogans and promises. They are hanged around the country and help with introducing the candidate/leader/party to the people and sometimes affect the uncertain minds.

Direct Posting, Leaflets and Brochures: They are papers or letters which are sent to the voter's address or given by hand and include slogans, promises and candidates resumes. They are considered by the voters as they give voters feel of being private.

Internet, web sites and social media courses: New media technologies are used by parties for political marketing although people still have doubts about them and local political culture slows down the interactivity between the politics and the voters. Parties use direct mailing, set up web sites to communicate better. In their web pages they present all about the party, their social media accounts, the background web-home is painted by the party colour(s) and it opens by the jingle. They also prepare trailers and people watch them in meeting arenas or get them as CDs.

There are many other methods of political marketing in Turkey. Political parties need to take the government in account as it may sometimes end with losing the basic equal rights if the government is ignored. Moreover, it is always important to consider

the rival, as the success will come through to the method which determines their weaknesses and strengths. It is also vital to consider the bureaucracy, national approaches and values as they may sometimes prevent the whole strategy to function well. Pressure groups, technology and environmental issues are some other factors which are need to be considered while preparing the marketing strategy in a Turkish context.

CONCLUSION

Communication between the ruling organizations of a society and the citizens is central to any political system and in a democracy, it is seen crucial as it will provide the connection between the people and the government. As a way of special communication system political marketing strategy an activator which allows people to feedback and encourages them to participate in political life for a better democratic functioning. Political parties have different goals, programs, markets and products, all of which affect how they market. They all use political marketing to present their programs. Therefore, political marketing has put into question not only the communication but the entire political sphere. In this regard, the progress of political marketing in Turkey strengthens the idea that the political communication is strongly related to democracy perceptions in countries. But the local traditions, values, polarisation and ideologies seem to slowdown the political marketing applications as a democratic process.

Furthermore, political marketing is not merely adopting the concepts drawn from the world of consumer, product development and associated communication; but it is the adoption of marketing philosophy. However, marketing as a discipline means about more than communication. It offers a rational economic theoretical for explaining party and voter behaviour that is broader than political communication. In political marketing parties sell themselves as being consumer focused. If they try to understand why voter-consumers externalise electoral politics and act in a way to reverse these trends of disengagement then a renewed interest in political marketing can emerge.

Although there are problems in deciding whether political marketing's contribution in democratic development is essential, the emergence of political consumers is challenge for all democratic political systems and political marketing help the parties, the leaders to respond those new demands of the electorates which also refers to the democratic rights. Therefore, both practitioners and academicians are supposed to contribute this new phenomenon to answer politic consumers' demands. Thus, the democracy will improve better as the citizens will be better represented and their needs will be met, or they will know how to follow if electoral promises are carried out or not. Still, further studies might also be undertaken to understand the antecedents that lead to the integration of marketing into political parties and the effect on performance and democratic orientation considering the home-grown dynamics.

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