



# Political Marketing in Morocco: From Theories to Stereotypes, Definition and Comparison

Hajar Makry<sup>1\*</sup>, Houcine Berbou<sup>1</sup>, Badia Oulhadj<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Management and Marketing (LRMC) ENCG, Hassan First University, Morocco, <sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, ENCG, Hassan First University, Morocco. \*Email: [h.makry@uhp.ac.ma](mailto:h.makry@uhp.ac.ma)

Received: 06 April 2019

Accepted: 13 June 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.8110>

## ABSTRACT

At a time when Moroccan researchers still undecided on the appropriate definition of Political Marketing, the debate around this subject is initiated already, whether on their side the opinion makers, the media and the politicians themselves. Among supporters and opponents of the adoption and the use of this discipline's strategies, each one according to his own definition of Political Marketing, few months before 2016's elections in Morocco, the debate around this emerging science, is growing increasingly. Through an exploratory survey, we tried to highlight the common perception in analytical comparison, with what was overdraft, until today by international research. The purpose is an essay of definition adapted to the needs of this particular Moroccan context. Considering that rare are the academic researches that has been initiated in Morocco, around the concept, this paper is an analysis of the gap, among common perception, and scientific conceptual framework of this discipline.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Political Marketing in Morocco, Political Actors

**JEL Classifications:** M31, D83, M10

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The overall research framework (impact of implementing political marketing on electoral performance: Case of the Moroccan political parties) of this article aims to introduce an efficient tool to the political scene in Morocco. Therefore, it's not a matter of redefinition of the concept, but it's a matter of determining a useful definition, that meets the expectations of the Moroccan politician on one side and facilitate the implementation of this tool, on the other.

Political science has different perspectives from which electoral politics can be analyzed. One of these perspectives is the political marketing. Over the past 20 years, the field of political marketing has gained importance as an academic discipline.

Political marketing is a new terminology in the literature of political science. It is used in political democratic systems in which mass

support is significantly important to maintain power. Marketing is increasingly affecting the working style of political parties. However, we believe that the political actors are far from having a global and progressive understanding of not only marketing approaches but also political marketing. This idea is part of one of the sub-questions (What are the barriers that prevents politicians from using the PM's practices and approaches?) of the initial work, that we will try to examine through this research project.

Looking into Political Marketing in Morocco, from an angle of comparison, between the perception of politicians and the conceptual framework of scientists, on this stage of the thesis, attempts to answer one of the thesis questions. This question interrogates the reasons behind the difficulties of implementation of Political Marketing strategy.

Using a qualitative approach, we interviewed political actors, party leaders, political journalists, political analysts, party

communication managers, also trade unionists, on what they mean by Political Marketing, each one according to his position on the Moroccan political scene, his experience and his own perception of the concept. We decided to include Trade unionists, in our sample, because they are involved in the electoral process during the elections of the House of Councilors.

The goal is to accomplish a comparison with what was built up to today as scientific basis and theoretical framework of Political Marketing, in order to find and answer one of our sub-questions? And also to find a definition of political marketing according to the Moroccan context.

What arouses and motivates this research as well is the fact that we are laying the foundation of the Scientific Political Marketing in Morocco, consequently, speaking about a specific Political Marketing in the Moroccan geopolitical context, is supported by the fact that Moroccan left-wing politique has its peculiarities, its own needs and thus the systematic transposition of a definition developed elsewhere under different contextual aspects, would not be worthwhile.

This paper is a response to a fundamental question, which is to bring out the perception gap between what perceive the politician and what highlights the scientist about political marketing. This fundamental question gave rise to set of questions, which were the “guiding path” of our survey.

- What was built until today throughout the world, in terms of conceptualization and definition of political marketing, political marketing strategy and political marketing theory?
- How Moroccan political actors, perceive political marketing approaches?
- Do the left-wing parties have a professional and advanced political marketing strategy?
- Do they have the professional human skills needed to implement a political marketing strategy?
- How do the actors of the Moroccan socialist politics define the political marketing?

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Departure Materials

In order to answer the central question that motivated this research, we proceed initially to a documentary research, to draw up some theoretical definitions of political marketing that marked our readings.

### 2.2. Tasting the Waters

In a second step we carried out an internal exploratory survey. This study was conducted among what is considered as one of the biggest socialist party in Morocco (the socialist union of popular forces [USFP] is considered as the biggest socialist party considering its membership, the number of seats won in 2011's parliament elections and the number of seats won in last regional and municipal councils elections [2015] and considering the number of votes that it has obtained in this last election [2015], compared to other Moroccan socialist parties). Our mission was to find framing elements (the strategic approaches, internal

organizational arrangements, electoral practices, preparations of electoral programs, the allocation of budgets, nominations of candidates etc.) for our survey.

### 2.3. A Qualitative Approach to Achieve our Empirical Objectives

In a third stage and through a qualitative survey, based mainly on exploratory interviews, we sought to bring out the perception of political practitioners and to test the waters of the Moroccan political socialist scene.

Considering, that the purpose of the interview, as an approach, is not necessarily to be representative but to reconstruct the universe in which we are working and the challenge of the qualitative approach had rather a relational dimension than a size dimension and that the interview should be incorporate and embodied, in the frame of the survey, Our concern was not about multiplicity of interviews but rather was about bringing out them with what we have already collected from authors and scientists.

Using semi-structured interviews based on framing elements resulting from our exploratory study, we interviewed stakeholders from Moroccan political scene, socialist practitioners (party leaders, trade union leaders, party communication managers, candidates) and observers (political journalists and political scientists). Our goal, as we mentioned it before, is to bring out the perception (although the interviews had focused on several points, we will only treat the points related to the perception of the concept) that these actors have about Political Marketing, the approaches of Political Marketing strategy and mainly their acceptance of the theory. Our research is based on two main purposes, related to the construction of a definition of Political Marketing that matches the characteristics of the Moroccan political scene.

On one hand we tried to identify the perception that these actors have about political marketing, while pushing them to define the concept, according to their practices as politicians, their needs as candidates, their observations as journalists and their analysis as political scientists.

On the other hand, we sought to examine whether these actors, work with real political marketing strategies, by interrogating them about the tools they use to communicate with voters and citizens, the approaches they adopt to build their programs, the approaches with what they promote their achievements and give credibility to their promises.

Before going to the concretization of our empirical objectives, we strengthened our project by theoretical materials; the idea is that the initial weapons should be theoretical. What is Political Marketing? What is Political Marketing theory? And what is Political Marketing Strategy?

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1. Defining Political Marketing

“The process by which political candidates and their ideas are directed at voters in order to satisfy their potential needs and

thus gain their support for the candidate and ideas in question” (Shama, 1975). This definition of political marketing mirrored its commercial counterpart in that political marketing was seen as a process rather than an organizational philosophy, with the focus on political candidates satisfying voters as the central exchange partners rather than a wider focus on relationships. “Political marketing seeks to establish, maintain and enhance long-term voters’ relationships at a profit for society, so that the objectives of the individual political actors and organizations involved are met. This is done by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises”.

Political marketing is the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations. The procedures involved include the analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in a society. The same principles that operate in the commercial market are valid in the political market: Successful companies have a market orientation and are constantly engaged in creating value for their customers (Newman, 1999).

In other words, marketers must anticipate the needs of their customers and constantly develop innovative products and services to keep their customers satisfied. Politicians have a similar orientation and are constantly trying to create value for citizens by improving the quality of life and create the most benefits at the least cost (Kotler and Kotler, 1999). This definition, presented by Newman and supported by Kotler, who defines the Political Marketing, based on a projection of the concept on the business environment has challenged us to dig a little deeper on the commercial marketing.

Kotler and Levy, who introduced a new way of thinking, expanding the field of the marketing (which concerned only the commercial market of profit organizations) to a marketing which also applies to non-profit organizations, define marketing as a concept designed to serve for the satisfaction of human needs. It is none other than the function of the organization which keeps you in constant touch with its customers, read their needs, develop their “products” while building their adequate communication strategy.

Lock and Harris define the political marketing as both a discipline and an activity. As a discipline, political marketing is the study processes of exchange between political entities and their environment and between themselves. As an activity, marketing policy is, again according to Lock and Harris, more focused on positioning and communications, and the methods through which these strategies may be realized, including the search for information into attitudes, awareness and response of target audiences.

Lock and Harris worked on the differences between political marketing and business marketing and identified seven major differences; we include those who are most adaptable to the Moroccan context (Lock and Harris, 1996).

During any election, voters decide (vote) on the same day (with trivial exceptions such as postal and proxy votes). There are almost no purchasing decisions with same temporal characteristic and certainly none which affect as large a number of people.

While some might argue that there are long-term individual costs or regret (in the economist’s sense) in electoral choices, the fact that there is no price directly or indirectly attached to voting or the choice of party sharply differentiates it from a purchase.

Despite being normally constrained to making only one valid choice, the conventional utility maximizing framework subject to budget constraints fits electoral choice poorly and the link to personal outcomes subsequently is at best tenuous. Although the actual act of voting may not have a price attached to it, apart from emigrating, a voter has to live with the collective choice, even though it might not have been his or her own preference. This shows the sharp distinction between public choice issues and consumer markets.

The political party or candidates are a complex intangible “product” that the voters cannot unbundle. As a consequence, most voters have to judge on the overall packaged concept or message (Lock and Harris, 1996).

Lock and Harris argue that, while there are other complex products or services which consumers are unable to unbundle, the range of concepts and issues in the political bundle distinguish it from such situations. Furthermore, in the case of complex product or service choice, consumers are usually able to change their minds, albeit at a cost, if they believe that they have made a mistake. Voters have to wait until the next election (Lock and Harris, 1996).

### 3.2. Political Marketing Theory

Marketing theory has been influenced by many different disciplines but it has also contributed, in a reciprocal relationship, to the development of other academic areas within management studies. Essentially, the different aspects of political marketing theory can be exemplified by two questions: “How to *do marketing* in politics” and “How to *know* in politics.”

Whilst to first question is focused on managerial aspects of marketing (without implying a purely normative focus), the second is concerned with an epistemological stance *per se* and is therefore not limited to marketing applications. These two questions (and the underlying research activities associated with them) are not independent of each other, rather they are bound in a dialectic relationship: Although one can describe political marketing practice without necessarily employing a marketing epistemology (as well as one can look at political phenomena through a marketing lens without focusing on marketing aspects), the two are intertwined.

Managerial concerns of political marketing management usually imply (consciously or unconsciously) an application of a marketing-oriented epistemology, while theoretical sense making uses the actual explanandum (in this case political marketing

practice and our understanding of it) as a “check-and-balance” system regarding its appropriateness of explanatory efforts. These two elements together, in the dialectical integration as synthesis, provide the core for a holistic theory of political marketing (Henneberg, 2004).

### 3.3. Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a plan of action that is used to implement a series of activities that will ensure success in the marketplace. A successful marketing strategy begins with the recruitment of viable candidates.

Once a candidate has been recruited, a marketing strategy is developed and implemented. The role of a marketing strategy is to reinforce the candidate’s “position” in the minds of the constituencies that will affect his or her success in the political marketplace established; a marketing strategy is developed and implemented. At the heart of that strategy will be the use of political advertising. Recall that the position of the candidate is based on his or her image and the platform that is developed (Henneberg, 2004).

### 3.4. How Political Stakeholders Perceive Political Marketing

The set of semi-structured interviews was carried out all over October 2015. While choosing our sample (Annex 1), we adopted a non-probabilistic approach. We selected units that characterize

our population, namely, Head of Parties (General Secretaries), head of trade unions, communication managers within the parties’ headquarters, candidates, activists, political analysts, political journalists, editors of partisan newspapers, and national and provincial directors of election campaigns.

Our exploratory posture over a period exceeding 18 months, at the socialist political scene, immunized us against the risk of subjectivity that can induce the Purposive Sampling, a non-probabilistic method we have adopted. We assume this method as long as this study is considered as preparatory study in relation to this stage of the thesis and can be compared to pre-testing of the questionnaire.

Using semi-structured interviews (Annex 2) was about encouraging speeches and discussions, especially during interviews with highly specialized politicians. Conducted within central headquarters (headquarter of parties, newspapers, trade unions, faculties) or by email, our interviews have an average duration of 30 min. Confidential but not anonymous, some were accompanied by voice recordings other by writing reports. In total, 20 people contacted, 14 interviewed. Our sample consists mainly of political actors and their attitudes differ from practitioners to observers.

## 4. KEY IDEAS, SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

The axes of investigation	Actors-practitioners	Actors-observers
Political marketing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual initiatives</li> <li>Lack of professional strategies</li> <li>“Volunteering” particularity of the work within left-wing parties</li> <li>Lack of outsourcing and cooperation with experts and specialized companies of marketing</li> <li>Concentration of communication actions, on printed materials and event marketing (strikes, sit-ins, conference-debate, press-conferences)</li> <li>Awareness of the importance of “communication” is recent and up to date</li> <li>Deficiency of departments composed of professional staff trained in this discipline</li> <li>The majority of person in charge of “communication” are journalists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of collective skills and competencies</li> <li>Individual character of efforts</li> <li>They still consider that the only mode of communication is the speeches and the declarations of the general secretary</li> <li>Conservative parties exceed the socialist parties in the use of marketing tools, comparing the USFP (progressive party) to the PJD, a conservative party</li> <li>Traditional moroccan society is not ready for modern trends of political marketing</li> <li>Communication process of the left-wing parties, is a process of actions not reactions</li> </ul>
Digital marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The technological revolution has stimulate the use of communication</li> <li>Using mainly Facebook, but through important individual initiatives</li> <li>individual efforts and initiatives, but not framed by thoughtful strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of left-wing parties do not have a website, and those who do, rarely update it</li> <li>The socialist parties in morocco are late on the strategic and intelligent use of new technologies compared to conservator parties</li> </ul>
Perception of political marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoids pronouncing the term “marketing,” either explicitly rejecting the commercial character of the concept, or implicitly by speaking only about political communication</li> <li>Promotion of candidate’s achievement, party promotion</li> <li>A package of communication actions which aims to help us to have many adherents many militants to defend the moral and material interests of the working class</li> <li>Political marketing is an advertising discourse too; the only difference is at the communication supports</li> <li>A set of measures and communication tools designed to promote the image of the candidate and his achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ordinated Actions to reach the audience and build a new image</li> <li>A new communicative action for the Moroccan political scene</li> <li>A set of tools that allows you to cover a larger geography in longest time possible</li> <li>The politician ability to present his positions and his social project within a framework that attracts the citizen, to be more attentive and more interested</li> <li>Communication actions that produce a persuasive effect</li> </ul>

## 5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Through our literature review, we were able to collect a number of definitions regarding our research issues, which have sprung from different contexts, belonging to different authors. All these definitions focused (each one according to the author expression style) on the section of analyzes and surveys of Political Marketing toolbox, on the characteristics of continuity and durability of marketing actions and highlighted the anticipatory nature of marketing actions. We were unable to find these commonalities during our interviews with political actors. Political marketing has been described during the most progressive politicians' statements as communication actions aiming at enhancing and promoting the History, the accomplishments, the willing and the potential of the political organizations. We insist on the term "communication actions" that during the majority of interviews was quoted (by the interviewers) to describe their marketing strategies and to define political marketing.

We conclude, referring to our literature review, that:

- Strategic analysis tools weren't mentioned within the statements by political actors. The communication actions planned or practiced are instantaneous and contextualized and do not result from a strategic protocol

- The volunteering particularity of activism in Moroccan left-wing organizations, low budgets, inexperience and inability of people in charge of "communication and information" in parties and trade unions headquarters, lead the parties to a situation where marketing efforts do not result from a thoughtful vision and a collective competency
- Research in political marketing in Morocco, must make clear the role of political marketing, which is more than "promotion actions." It must also expose its toolbox and emphasize its category of approaches and tools belonging to the rank of strategic analysis.

## REFERENCES

- Henneberg, S. (2004), Political Marketing Theory: Hendiadyoin or Oxymoron. University of Bath School of Management Working Paper Series, No. 2004.01.
- Lock A., Harris, P. (2001), Political marketing vive la difference. UK European Journal of Marketing, 30, 10-11.
- Newman, B.L. (1999), Review in Political Marketing: Lessons from Recent Presidential Elections. Chicago: DePaul University.
- Shama, A. (1975), An analysis of political marketing. In: Zaltman G., Sternthal B., editors. Broadening the Concept of Consumer Behavior. Cincinnati, OH: Association for Consumer Research. p106-116.

## ANNEX

### Annex 1: Sample of our qualitative study, venue and dates of the interviews...

- Aarif Abdelghani, Provincial Secretary of l'Avant Garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS), Provincial Party Headquarter, Mohammedia, Thursday, October 29, 2015.
- Belrabi Allal, General Secretary of the National Education Union, member of the Executive Board of the Labour Democratic Confederation, Headquarters of the CDT Mohammedia Thursday, October 29, 2015.
- Dafkir Younes, Editor of the daily Al Ah-dath, Casablanca Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup> 2015, Newspaper Headquarters.
- EL Amri Amal, First woman to become General Secretary of the banking sector union, Member of the National Board of the UMT, Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup> National headquarter of the UMT Casablanca.
- Elaziz Abdeslam, General Secretary, National Council Ittihadi (CNI), the party's National headquarters, Casablanca, Saturday, October 31, 2015.
- Erraki Abdelghani, Provincial Secretary of the Labour Democratic Confederation, Headquarter of Mohammedia CDT Thursday, October 29, 2015.
- Jamhri Abdelhamid, Editor of the daily Al-Ittihad, USFP's candidate in 2015 regional elections (Casablanca-Settat) and 2011 Legislative elections (Mohammedia), Headquarter of the Newspaper Casablanca Thursday, October 22<sup>th</sup>.
- Khoufaifi Mohammed, Member of the national board of the UMT, Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup> National headquarter of the UMT Casablanca.
- Manar Slimi Abderrahim, Political scientist, Faculty Rabat Agdal, Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>
- Moukharik Miloudi, General Secretary Moroccan Labour Trade union, Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup> National headquarters of the UMT Casablanca.
- Saddas Fatiha, Member of the Political Office USFP, Rabat Friday, October 23, 2015.
- Sedjari Ali, Political Scientist, Faculty of School, Rabat-Agdal, Friday, October 23, 2015.

### Annex 2: Interview guide (The interviews was conducted in French/Arabic)

Université Hassan 1<sup>er</sup>  
École Nationale de Commerce et de gestion de Settat  
Laboratoire de recherche en Management Marketing et Communication (LRMC)

Guide d'entretien (3)  
Monsieur Elaziz ABDESALLAM,  
October 31, 2015

#### SUR LA STRATEGIE DU MARKETING POLITIQUE

À travers l'observation des méthodes qu'utilisent les partis politiques de gauche, pour élaborer leurs programmes électoraux, les démarches suivantes lesquelles ils choisissent leurs cibles, leurs sorties médiatiques... et à travers la longue et significative expérience que vous avez vécu dans l'un des grands partis socialistes, notamment la direction de la Campagne électorales USFP-2007, Pensez-vous, que les Partis Politiques de gauche aujourd'hui suivent une stratégie de Marketing Politique bien déterminée ?

#### SUR LA PERCEPTION DU "MARKETING POLITIQUE"

Selon votre expérience politique partisane et électorale, quelle définition: des objectifs, de la démarche, des outils du champ d'application, pouvez-vous nous présenter sur le "Marketing politique"?

#### SUR LE MARKETING DIGITAL AND HORS MEDIAS

Pensez-vous que les partis politiques ont su exploiter les opportunités digitales et numériques, pour communiquer autour de leurs programmes, de leurs idéologies, lors des campagnes électorales et autour de leurs causes et positions en temps normal etc.?

#### SUR LA STRUCTURE DE L'ORGANISATION

Pensez-vous que les partis politiques de gauche, aujourd'hui disposent de compétences humaines et d'expertise professionnelle, pour mener de réelles campagnes de communication?

## **SUR LE BUDGET**

Par rapport aux autres rubriques du budget de fonctionnement du Parti: logistiques, subventions des appareils régionaux et locaux, relations internationales, les supports de communication... quelle est l'importance du budget octroyé à la communication?

## **SUR L'ETHIQUE**

Pensez-vous que l'utilisation du Marketing Politique telle que vous le définissez, s'oppose à l'éthique et aux principes de votre Parti et à l'idéologie socio-démocrate?