

The Political Marketing Revolution: is marketing transforming the government of the UK?

Paper for the 2004 PSA Conference,
Political Marketing group panels,
University of Lincoln, April 2004

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Abstract

The paper will explore how marketing is permeating all areas of British politics, potentially transforming a leadership-run system to that dictated by public needs and demands. No longer confined to party politics, organizations including the monarchy, the BBC, universities, local councils, charities and the Scottish Parliament are adopting the tools of market intelligence to understand their market needs and demands. Politicians, professors and princes are using marketing to design their political product in the hope it will satisfy the ever-critical political consumer. Whilst acknowledging some of the limits of this revolution, it will focus on the questions that its possibility raises. These include whether the student or patient really does know best and can decide their own education and health care. It calls for a debate about the movement of the British political system towards a market-orientation and a re-negotiation of the relationship between leaders and the market, one that whilst recognising the need for political leaders to listen, places some responsibilities on the political consumer, a new relationship that might work more effectively for both side of the political marketing relationship.

The Political Marketing Revolution: is marketing transforming the government of the UK?

Political marketing is no longer confined to political parties, much less election campaigns. All political organizations including local councils, universities, GP surgeries and even the monarchy conduct some form of market intelligence whether in the form of focus groups, polls, surveys, citizen consultation, user feedback forms or public meetings. As the UK public appears to become increasingly consumerist, giving rise to the potential development of the 'political consumer' (Lees-Marshment 2004 forthcoming), marketing is being adopted in various forms and guises by a broad range of political organizations. Indeed, it might be argued that the entire political system in the UK is becoming market-oriented: first finding out what the public or their particular market want, then developing a political product or service to suit. Whilst a market-orientation is more complex than the simple following of current demands; and the concept of the political consumer, its existence and the market-oriented response of all political organization is of course clearly contestable, the degree of marketing activities being engaged in by organizations throughout the UK makes it worthy of debate. Moreover, if it has any credence then it raises profound questions. Will a market-oriented political system make voters more satisfied? More democratic? What will the consequences for overall governance of the UK be? To be successful political marketing requires effective management that is often devoid amongst public institutions. It also requires a more effective and mature relationship between political elite and political consumer than has previously been the case. This paper will therefore put forward a number of propositions in order to begin a debate on whether the 'political marketing revolution' (Lees-Marshment 2004) marketing is transforming and thereby improving the government of the UK.

Political marketing: a comprehensive approach

There have been many papers written on definitions and it is not the purpose of this paper to go back over this (see for example Lees-Marshment 2001a, b; Scammell 1999; Lees-Marshment 2003). Nor is it the purpose of this panel to over-intellectualise the topic or to repeat earlier PSA Political marketing group panels. As a senior staff member of the Scottish Parliament said in our panels in 2002, 'political marketing is a very good way of explaining what is happening in the real world and you should just get out and study it.' It is therefore simply suffice to say that, as the field of political marketing now understands; and as the broader disciplines of political science and management are also acknowledging, political marketing is not just about campaigns, but it is also not just about parties.

Political marketing is about the relationship between the political elite and the people. Marketing can be attached to politics is because in essence they share some common tenets: the aim to understand how political organisations act in relation to their market and vice-versa. Furthermore, marketing, being somewhat more prescriptive, provides tools and ideas about how organisations could behave in relation to their market in order to achieve their goals. The idea of a political system that meets people's needs and demands links back to traditional politics: Jones and Moran (1994: 17) argue that British democracy 'means that the people can decide the government and exercise influence over

the decisions governments take.’ Political marketing is simply a way of doing this in the 21st century with a critical, well informed and consumerist mass franchise.

Political marketing therefore encompasses all political organisations – everything political scientists would class as political – and analyses whether and how they use marketing (see Lees-Marshment 2004 chapter 1 for this and all subsequent theory unless otherwise indicated). Organisations we can study under political marketing therefore include the following:

- political parties.
- The NHS
- universities and schools.
- Parliaments – e.g. Westminster and the Scottish Parliament.
- Local government/councils.
- Newspapers and television.
- The Monarchy.
- government departments such as social security.
- Police.
- civil service.
- Charities/interest-groups/pressure groups
- employment offices/job centres.

Whilst this broader definition will no doubt reach some sceptical audiences and, like the previous stretching of political marketing to include influence on the political party product, rather than just the sale, it will take some time to be accepted, and will never be accepted by all. There is one fundamental argument in its favour however: this is what is happening in the real world. Political marketing is, in practice, an increasingly exciting and integrated phenomenon that the majority of significant public figures and political staff are vividly aware of.

Political marketing has various forms, approaches and activities. For this paper, discussion will focus on the move towards a *market-oriented form of political marketing*, defined as an organisation that has creating user satisfaction as its goal. It would attempt to understand those it seeks to serve and deliver a product that reflects their needs and wants. It would be open to changing the way it behaves in order to obtain more support.’

In terms of how an organisation becomes market-oriented, it goes through, in general, a process such as:

- Market intelligence (identifying the market, understanding its demands and behaviour, segmenting the market)
- Product design (in response to market intelligence)
- Product refinement or adjustment (ensuring it is achievable, adjusting to suit internal/individual opinion, taking account of the competition and targeting)
- Implementation (managing marketing - ensuring it is accepted and there is unity and it actually happens)
- Long-term, continual communication
- Short-term campaigns
- Delivery

This process is much more complex in theory, let alone in practice, than there is the space to show in this paper; it also varies from one political organisation to another because each has different products, markets and goals. But the basic concept is that political organisations listen to the public, and change their behaviour in response; being guided by public opinion although not following it slavishly because there is always the need for some professional judgement and leadership, as well as consideration of internal and individual views to ensure smooth and effective implementation of any change.

It is important we discuss this potential change in behaviour, because if marketing is being used by all political organisations in this way, then political marketing holds the potential to transform politics as we know it, and exert a tremendous influence on the way everyone's life is run. Whether that influence is for the good or bad is not clear, but we will only ever reach a greater understanding of the existing and potential consequences of political marketing if we acknowledge and accept the breadth and nature of the phenomenon. The next section of the paper will therefore attempt to illustrate the argument that there is a political marketing revolution occurring in the UK.

The Political Marketing Revolution

Westminster, Holyrood, local government, every political party, doctors, professors, teachers and even the monarchy, cannot command public support and acceptance in the way they used to. Staff within the new Scottish Parliament, councils up and down the land, at every school, hospital and university have realised that the old ways of operating do not work. They are therefore turning to political marketing as the means to better understand and service their 'market' or people. Every organisation needs to understand the people it is trying to serve, to design a service that they will want if it wishes to succeed, even if they are not in the business of making profit. Marketing is being adopted not just by political parties, but by every organisation within the non-profit, political, public or governmental sphere. The UK is experiencing a political marketing revolution that is transforming the way the country is run. The paper will attempt to show how. It does not claim to 'prove' this argument; more detail will be published in *The Political Marketing Revolution* (Lees-Marshment 2004) in July; however even there it is fully acknowledged that further research is needed to quantify and examine the depth of such a possible transformation. If the ESRC gave us £10 million in research funding, this might about cover it, but for now initial "speculation" – albeit taken through the usual peer-review process of academic conferences, presentations and article publications (see Lees-Marshment 2003 a, b, c etc) will have to suffice.

Speculation is however informed by listening to, observing and interviewing staff within a wide range of political organizations. Many staff in local councils, the Scottish Parliament, political parties, the BBC, NHS, universities and the monarchy are conscious of the need to identify and respond to their 'market' and engaged in not just communication but developing a political 'product' in whatever form their particular area. Here are few sample quotes from such staff and organisations:

Examples of acknowledgement of the need to become market-oriented

Quote	Organisation
'The idea that we as politicians can sit in our ivory towers and people come to us I think is generally accepted that it is gone now. There are too many competing factors... in the political system.... we have to go out to them'	Party staff worker
'Society has become more demanding. Consumers expect ever-higher levels of service and better value for money... Three trends highlight the rise of the demanding, skeptical citizen-consumer. First, confidence in the institutions of government and politics has tumbled. Second, expectations of service quality and convenience have risen'	Government department
'The BBC owes its past its present – and this future – to the talent and dedication of BBC staff. What Reich started, others continue. But most important of all are the listeners and viewers. They are the real future of broadcasting'	BBC web-site
It is now 'a buyers market'; 'people exercise a right to choose' and 'fashions in courses and institutions have a big affect. As consumers of education students have a right to expect good quality education'	University Marketer
'18 to 24-year olds....are much more ambivalent about institutions than other generations. It doesn't just refer to the monarchy, it refers to the BBC, it refers to the Church, any of the established institutions'	Former Queen's communications secretary

The other aspect to examine is not just awareness of the need to use political marketing, but how it is conducted. Below are just some examples; firstly how political organisations conduct market intelligence, the first stage in a market-oriented political marketing process, then product design in response and communication.

Political market intelligence

Organisation	Examples of market intelligence
Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour's big conversation, polls, groups • Conservative Party's Listening to Britain • 'In the Scottish Conservative Party we are certainly using polling and focus groups in the run up to the Scottish and local elections' (David McLetchie, MSP, Leader of the Scottish Tories, 2002).
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Aberdeen conducts focus groups, internal meetings, marketing audits and obtains feedback from applicants to inform its recruitment process • Keele University appointed a new market intelligence officer to conduct research into market demands in order to inform their decisions about the development of new courses
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and patient involvement in health consultation
Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MORI research into opinions of the Scottish Parliament, October 2001 • Committees, reports, consultations on problems with lack of media/public attention to the work of Westminster
Local council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stafford Borough Council got MORI to do a residents survey in 2000 • Aberdeen city council holds Planning for Real; Public Meetings; Citizens Panel; Citizens Jury; Focus groups; Surveys; Open Space; Pathway; Video Voxpop; Community Contacts
Charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity groups have also segmented the market to find those most likely to give time, rather than just money; e.g. Arthritis Foundation in America used VISION to improve the response rate to its volunteer recruitment campaign • MI has discovered that supporters fall 'into a broad range of people, from the radical people who will go out and take part in direct action... right down to people who are only really doing it because... they thought "that sounds like a good thing to do'
Monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently built an annual survey of public opinion across a range of issues into the planning process • MORI undertakes confidential research

Political product design

Organisation	Examples of product design in response to market intelligence
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newcastle-under-Lyme produced a 'performance plan' from its market intelligence
Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour pledges 1997 and 2001 focused on middle England and created to be achievable
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manchester University developed a new degree in 2002 called a BSc (Hons) Degree in Audiology (B610); such development is stated to be 'in response to recent proposed restructuring within the audiological profession' Keele dropped ancient history; but developed a new degree in Media, Culture and Communications
Charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charities increasingly membership led: 'they tell us what they want and we try and fulfill it.' E.g. Green peace created a range of membership options, varying financial donation, member participation and information/rewards/magazines given to members, in response to results and analysis from market intelligence E.g. Friends of the earth created a new category of activists aside from general supporters, called campaign express, which was quick and easy action for busy people
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GP surgery, after conducting market intelligence into what patients thought of the service, they found that one major area of concern was waiting times; and so introduced a staggered appointment system so that there were always a number of appointments for relatively urgent cases within 3 days, whilst most would be available for within a week, but a fair number of spaces were kept clear for the most urgent to see a doctor within one day.
Monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recruited new, professional staff with business expertise to both Buckingham Palace and St. James' Palace broadened official duties to reflect changing British society Jubilee Parties designed for public – for TV to reach widest audience More relaxed, less formal style of behaviour
Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New chamber/working hours for new Scottish parliament and use of committee system Changes to working hours for Westminster

Political communication

Organisation	Examples of communication in response to market intelligence
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stoke Primary care Trust has a leaflet for the public entitled 'Your Guide to local services' and produced an internal PCT newsletter to ensure staff were informed of any developments
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2002/3 Keele created a new slogan: love-learn-live with hearts to capture attention to an otherwise not-well known university (named after a village)
Charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the RNID (Royal National Institute for the Deaf) increased the response to its direct mail campaigns by recognising that their donors tend to have a religious and gardening interest and read the Daily Telegraph
Monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2000, budget of £500,000 in order to change the way the Palace communicated Charles new public relations officer, Mark Bowland to improve his image; operation CPB
Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour credit card pledges of promised delivery, to be more achievable
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing use by all councils of e-communication
Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish parliament – excellent web site, on-line discussions about topical issues, and excellent media facilities and access promoting the Scottish Parliament one of its strategic priorities in 2001 Westminster: new visitors center and media access to report from the central lobby

Whilst political marketing practice is much more complex than this, and there would be little point arguing that all political organizations in Britain have become completely market-oriented. Indeed, more detailed research indicates that many have a long way to go before reaching this state; ITV for example might be said to be sales-oriented; there are many barriers to the NHS every becoming market-oriented; and who could claim their university went through a full market-oriented process? But such assessments are necessarily obtuse and require further, more in-depth analysis before they can be accurate. It is also unlikely that any organization will ever be 100% market-oriented, and the most recent party research indicates that some fall between market and sales-orientation (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment etc 2005 forthcoming). What is apparent however is that most are aware of the concepts and tools and have considered if not begun to respond to the need to move in this direction. Political marketing seems to be

sweeping through the British political system. One question is why? Why make this change? The answer lies with the people of the country: the market – and the rise of the political consumer

Political consumer

Significant changes in society (education, communication, class, geographical and social mobility) have altered people's attitude towards all political products, organisations and services and the rise in consumerism in the business sphere has stimulated changes in public attitudes in the political environment. The drop in party identification or strength of attachment to one party, falling party membership, growth of alternative means of political participation are just some factors that cause this. Electoral volatility has also increase, so voters are more likely to decide on their vote just before an election and change their choice from one election to the next. In marketing terms the brand is not working anymore; the consumer is more ready to switch brands/try new products than ever before (see Lees-Marshment 2001a: 14-21 for further details, data and references). Furthermore, the public has always been somewhat critical of government and politicians, but they are also increasingly critical of all public officials (see Lees-Marshment and Laing 2002, Mortimore 2003, 107-121). Non-political changes help support the trend towards a new political market: political information comes from a variety of sources, is usually highly critical of all political elites whether it be party politician, doctor or teacher. An ever-increasingly educated public has better skills to criticise and absorb this information; the population is also more socially and geographically mobile, being exposed to many different points of view in their lifetime. It also means that any failing by for example a doctor becomes well-known across the country or even the world, rather than remaining an isolated case.

The rise of consumerism within the business sphere has gradually permeated the political arena. Collins and Butler (1998: 3) noted how 'private citizens, used to being treated as discerning customers in other aspects of their lives, are beginning to take a more consumerist view of the public service' (see also Walsh 1994: 63). There is a general move in society against simply accepting political rhetoric, towards a greater demand for demonstrable improvements in performances: better schools, health care, transport, police, parliamentary institutions, more efficient and responsive local government. Even the monarchy is becoming subject to citizen opinion. The UK has seen the rise of the political consumer: the public are no longer so deferential and unwilling to complain. They now understand that they are paying, however indirectly, for political services and believe they have a right to determine the nature and quality of those services as well as question the professionals who run them.

Consequently, there has been a general move in society against simply accepting political rhetoric, towards a greater demand for demonstrable improvements in performances: better schools, health care, and better services from the local council. There is a substantial and growing demand for all political organisations to become responsive to public needs and wants and therefore to use political marketing. The British people are more critical, with voices of their own. The British people want results: they want a product geared to suit their needs and wants and they want it to be delivered in a

satisfactory manner. The entire political context in which organisations now operate has been transformed, and with it, has come pressure for the organisations themselves to change their behaviour. Indeed, we now see in Britain citizens acting like political consumers.

The rise of the political consumer represents a transformation in the conditions of the political market in which organisations such as Westminster, the monarchy, the NHS, schools and universities are operating. If parties are to attract votes; hospitals patients; charities donors; schools pupils; local government public support; Scottish parliament visitors; universities students; they need to change their behaviour in response to the demands of those they seek to serve/gain support from. Furthermore, the low turnout in the 2001 UK general election has led many commentators in academia, politics and the media to wonder if voters are so dissatisfied with the political system that they won't even bother to go out and vote anymore. Political consumers are as cautious and critical as those in the traditional economic marketplace or shopping centre, leaving politicians to wonder 'who will buy' like the strawberry seller in the musical *Oliver*. Responding to this is not an easy exercise and organisations are finding that traditional politics no longer works so effectively. This is why politics is using marketing.

Furthermore, there is pressure from governing parties to deliver. If parties become market-oriented in order to win elections (Lees-Marshment 2001), conducting market intelligence to identify voter demands, designing and product to suit, implementing it, communicating it, winning the election and then – Stage 8 of the theory says – they need to deliver. But political delivery means delivering on promises in health care, the education system, therefore getting legislation through parliament, and then implemented right down to the level of the local council. It is not straightforward, and encourages governing parties to look at other parts of the political system and encourage them to use political marketing in order to help fulfill the demands on parties. This is why political marketing needs to move beyond the campaign (Laing and Lees-Marshment 2002, Lees-Marshment and Laing, 2002). Under the market-oriented Labour Government, there has been increasing pressure to deliver or be seen to deliver, especially given the definite pledges the Party made for the 1997 election on education and health.

Indeed, Tony Blair was re-elected Prime Minister in 2001 with a 'mandate to deliver.' Marketing is informing political parties how to behave but also: they in turn are putting pressure on the health service, education, parliament, even local councils to become more responsive to the citizens these political institutions were created to serve. There is pressure on the public services such as the NHS and education to become market-oriented themselves: to identify the needs of users and develop a service that responds to this. The structures of delivery are increasingly important: parliament, the civil service, local government, devolved government all need to work effectively if the Market-Oriented Parties are to achieve success in delivery. Charities are using direct mail to recruit donors. The health service is conducting market intelligence to design a plan of action. Academics have to think about the quality of their teaching and whether it meets student demands rather than simply do what they think is best. Teachers are subject to continual inspection and evaluation. The Scottish Parliament is currently responding to

results from market intelligence that it has not established a public profile. Even the monarchy can think about what it offers to the public and study the results of polls and focus-groups on its public standing. This 'political marketing revolution, if continuous and extensive, has the potential to influence every area of the political system and so transform how the UK is governed.

Consequences for the UK: change in government/governance

If, as argued, the way political organizations and actors behave has or is being completely transformed, then the political system as a whole will be altered and traditional conceptions of how the country is governed are in need of revision. Academics studying pure politics have already observed changes within the political system. For example Peele (1995: 15) noted that beneath the superficial stability of the UK system, 'change was always occurring even if it was not always readily apparent to the naked eye... What is less certain is whether the traditional methods of organising the government of the United Kingdom are still sufficiently adaptable and resilient to cope with the wide range of demands on the system.'

As is usual in Britain, the revolution may be occurring quietly, never completely overthrowing the system because elites respond in time as they have before in the country's history but it has significant implications for the overall way in which the political system works. If all political organisations are conducting market intelligence, designing their product and behaviour to suit public demands then this suggests that the overall governance of the UK is also changing. As Winetrobe and Seaton (2000: 17) noted that the creation of the new Scottish Parliament was conducted by some with the hope that it would result in 'a new form of governance, distinct from, and an improvement on, the forms hitherto familiar in the UK.' Governance is a somewhat nebulous concept, hotly debated, but refers to the overall process of government within society, or 'the processes and mechanisms through which social co-ordination or order is established within a society' (Kooiman 1993, quoted by Laing et al 2002: 53). It is discussed by many (see for example Rhodes 1996; Newman 2001; Kooiman (ed) 1993; Wilson 1976; Rhodes 1997 and Rose 1980) from different perspectives. Political marketing, by changing the relationship and decision-making process between elites and the masses, may affect the overall governance of the UK.

Political marketing is about the relationship between citizens and the state, between the people and the politicians, between the masses and the elite. The notion of a 'self-governing state' where 'the citizens... take part in the production process itself, not only as co-producers but also as citizens deciding what is to be produced and under what circumstances' (Beck Jorgensen 1993: 223) reflects the development of political marketing. Similarly Newman (2001: 179) talks about 'a modern governance' with 'responsive institutions.' The relationship between the political marketing revolution and governance remain to be fully explored, but there is a clear potential implication from the development of former on the assumptions of existing analysis of the latter. It calls for the classical questions of representative/deliberative democracy, political authority and legitimacy, consent, balancing resources, civic behaviour (Rose 1980: 6-26; see also Haalan Matlary 1995) to be re-visited with the acknowledgement of the existence of

political marketing in mind.

Managing the political marketing relationship

Furthermore, the spread of political marketing raises a number of issues. Politics is not a business, and there are many differences. As the following staff members said:

- Universities are not free to offer more places on a course, the targets are set by government (University marketer).
- Health trust 'resources are limited: parliament sets it' (Director of Health for a Primary Care Trust).
- 'In businesses you often just sell your product and the customer leaves. But at [the school], even when the "sale" is made there is so much beyond that. This is where our job just begins' (School marketing co-ordinator).
- It's 'not appropriate to use the word marketing... I don't think you can apply the terminology... it's not a product; it's part of the structure of government' (Assistant Press Secretary to the Queen).
- 'There is no quick delivery on what I'm doing' (Director of Development, political party).
- 'In politics you have to lead and make hard choices that won't appeal to people' (Labour Party MP).
- 'It was a big change coming to this world' (Archie Norman, business man, on working in the Conservative Party).
- 'Dealing with the media at Buckingham Palace is a very different job to working with them at British Airways, or in any PR consultancy' (Queen's second Communications Secretary).

A market-orientation in politics, as well as in business, is not just about following public demands. Political products need to be achievable, realistic and capable of being implemented and delivered. They need to respond to the needs of society as well as the desires of the individual. A market-oriented political system which does not place responsibilities as well as rights with its consumers, and offer rights as well as demanding responsiveness from those who are under pressure to serve us all under difficult circumstances, will be very problematic. There needs to be a rebalancing of the relationship between the elites and masses, and a redefinition of the consumer as a political consumer that incorporates some notion of citizenship.

Rebalancing the Political marketing elite/mass relationship

Patients have the right to be treated well, but nurses also have the right not to be physically and verbally abused when offering health-care. Students have the right to a good degree but not without recognising that their own efforts play a part in the result. And the most elitist of them all, the royal family, should be there to serve us, but I would not like to be chased through the streets by paparazzi and be told who I should marry by everyone in Britain. Indeed, if we want the best people at the top, consulting us, designing the best possible political product, then we need to ensure they will want to be there. Elitism in its purest form is not a nice concept, but to ensure those in elitist positions will give us what we want it is partly our responsibility to support them and attract the best. When living in Scotland watching the selection of Jack MacConnell to be Scotland's third First Minister. It didn't start with a speech about Scottish politics, or what he would do for the people, but with a press conference where he and his wife gave statements about the affair he had seven years ago. Is this really the political product people wanted delivered? I do not in any form suggest a return to deference. But we must create the best working practices and environment if we want the best people to be serving us.

Need for leadership: the consumer is not always right.

The message is simple. Political marketing is important and is certainly no threat to the democratic process. It is simply that it will not prove effective unless it is founded on substance... Political parties cannot just become marketing exercises even if they wish to. Ultimately it will fail because the public won't wear it.... **there will always be a market for conviction in politics** (David McLetchie, Leader of the Scottish Tories, Debate on

Political Marketing and Democracy, 2002).

It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need – and not what they want – but few know what they want and very few what they need (Reith, founding director general of the BBC, 1922).

There is always the need for some leadership and professional input into decision-making, and the *political* consumer is not always right. One area that illustrates this dilemma is war. Can war be subject to marketing and public opinion? Tony Blair, one of the champions of party marketing, who took Britain into war in the autumn of 2002, seemed to think not. At the time of deciding, against the will of his Party and the nation, he spoke of his belief, his certainty, his conviction that it was the right thing to do, adopting a more traditional, product-oriented attitude. Aside from whether the war was right or wrong, it can be argued that at times politics and society need unpopular decisions to be taken by elites in the long-term interest. Maybe the introduction of top-up-fees is another example? This has also been discussed in health where there is a value in professional, trained judgement. Similarly in the media, the BBC arguably needs to develop new programmes that may not be market-led, but driven by artistic creativity, and the public would not know they liked them until they were produced.

The true political consumer: blending consumerism with the citizen

Democracy and political marketing are related and not necessarily different in their goals and outcomes. Political marketing, by placing discussion and focus on the masses rather than the elites, holds the potential to improve democracy and give greater voice to the majority rather than the minority. But does it? There are potential weaknesses with making the entire political design subject to the peoples' demands. Students do not know as much as academics; doctors know more about health care than patients; politicians could at least in theory rise above individual demand and choose what is best for society as a whole. Marketing focuses on the individual, on more selfish wants, for each person not everybody. Walsh (1994: 67) argued that consumer sovereignty perhaps 'does not express the fullness of citizenship, with its basis in community as well as individual rights.' Sturdivant (1981) also criticises marketing itself, because of its focus on the individual, consumer sovereignty and satisfying needs/whims. Arguably, political consumers perhaps need to embrace elements of citizens. Politics exists precisely because resources cannot be simply allocated according to need and demand. Marketing and management also contains those who doubt or challenge the notion of the consumer, even for business products. Gabriel and Lang (1995: 174) noted how citizens are different to consumers:

Citizens	Consumers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizens are active members of communities, at once listened to, but also prepared to defer to the will of the majority.• Citizens have to argue their views and engage with the views of others.• Choosing as a citizen leads to a very different evaluation of alternatives from choosing as a consumer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need not be members of a community, nor do they have to act on its behalf.• Consumers operate in impersonal markets, where they can make choices unburdened by guilt or social obligations.

The idea of the consumer comes from 'economic man, who seeks the good life in markets'; the idea of the citizen comes from politics and philosophy (Gabriel and Lang 1995: 174-5). This brings us back to the usual dilemma with studying and practising

political marketing: it is a blend of two words, of two disciplines, of two aspects, of two ways of doing things. The notions of citizen and consumer, when brought into the political sphere need to be blended in the same way as do academic theories that attempt to describe the empirical phenomenon of political marketing as a whole.

Indications of the need for such a blend are already in existing analysis. For example, the world health organization notes the responsibility of people, not just health professionals: 'Health for all will be achieved by the people themselves (World Health Organization, Alma Ata Declaration 1977; quoted by Hogg 1999: 138; see also Hogg 1999: 45-6) When local councils offer consultation about the path behind your house, if you do not go to the meeting, how can you expect your demands to be met? For political marketing to work, political consumers need to be active to a degree otherwise there is little chance that political organisations will get it right. For this new political marketing relationship to work, patients need to take their rights and responsibilities seriously. Laing et al (2002: 101) contend that they need to exercise their rights but also 'accept the responsibilities given to them' (Laing et al 2002: 101). This may include complaining, voicing their opinion, but also participating in health programmes such as exercise or reducing alcohol intake in order for medical treatment to be effective. As Laing et al (2002: 102) argued that 'well-being is more than simply the outcome of health care, it is a partnership between the individual and professional that requires both to play a part.'

This is true for all areas. Political consumers may need to act in a certain way for the market-oriented political marketing relationship to work. In moving towards a market-oriented model, Britain needs to be careful not to over-balance the rights of the political consumer relative to the political producer. It is not necessarily in the interest of society for us to dictate the personal lives of the royal family, anymore than it would be the other way round. Students should not be able to buy their degree, even though they should receive the best service possible that academics can provide with the resources they are given and obtain. Political organisations are identifying the needs and wants of those they seek to serve and attempting to meet these demands. Political marketing has the potential to improve the representative function of a political system and democracy as a whole. But for this to happen, the political consumer needs to play as much of a role as the political producer. Political marketing, after all, focuses attention on the people, the market, the consumer, the citizen – so it makes sense that for it to reach its potential, not just the political elite but the political market make it work. Ultimately it is up to political consumers to ensure that their political organisations work to the maximum benefit of both the individual and society. It is, after all, only when a change is brought about by the masses that a revolution is enacted, and revolution will always be more of a political phenomenon than a business concept any day.

Summary: is marketing changing politics as we know it?

This paper has argued that political marketing is being used throughout the UK political system, challenging pre-determined notions as to political behaviour and organization, raising the specter of the political consumer, and transforming with it the way that the UK is governed. With it, the political marketing revolution brings fresh perspectives on old questions such as: what is democracy, how is it best achieved, how do political actors organise themselves and what is the relationship between mass and elites and how might

this be improved. The paper therefore suggests a number of hypotheses and initial consequent questions they raise and puts these forward for debate and expansion:

Hypotheses

- Political marketing includes the marketing of all areas of politics
- The public is increasingly consumerised in relation to all areas of life, not just business; therefore the UK is seeing the rise of the *political consumer*
- All political organisations engage in some form of marketing
- The UK political system is moving towards a market-orientation as a whole
- This '*political marketing revolution*' raises many questions

Consequent questions about political marketing

- Is it not true that doctor and teacher knows best, rather than the patient or pupil?
- Will subjecting BBC and ITV programmes to market opinion increase or diminish creativity and development of new services?
- Can people act like fully-fledged political consumers, with the right balance between individual rights, the needs of society as a whole, and understanding of the complexities of government where hard choices have to be made?
- If the political consumer is consulted on every aspect of political life and policy-making, will this make the UK more effective and democratic?
- How do we balance the need for leadership with the need to respond to public demands?
- Can the decision whether to go to war for example be subject to public opinion?
- How do we balance the rights of society to know with the right of political elite to privacy?
- Can political consumers distinguish between want and need?
- How should market intelligence in whatever form be conducted to ensure unbiased consideration of public demands?

This paper has provided a mere flavour of evidence in support of these. The purpose is not to write the definitive work on political marketing, but to broaden its scope, boundaries and interest and raise the many potential issues its practice causes. These will then be opened up for debate in the first political marketing group panel at the 2004 Political Science Association Conference.

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