delivery marketing
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nation branding
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mobile marketing
direct marketing
reputation management
celebrity marketing
political branding
crisis management
focus groups
voter profiling
co-creation

POLITICAL MARKETING

PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS

JENNIFER LEES - MARSHMENT

SECOND EDITION

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Written by a leading expert in the field, this textbook is essential reading for all students of political marketing, parties and elections and comparative politics.

Jennifer Lees-Marshment is an Associate Professor at Auckland University, New Zealand, and is an international expert in political marketing.

Political Marketing

Principles and applications

Second edition

Jennifer Lees-Marshment

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This book is dedicated to my graduate students at Auckland University in New Zealand, who kept my faith in the importance of teaching political marketing, stimulated new thinking with their own ideas and maintained my passion for the field between 2006 and 2013. This provided the energy to complete this revised second edition.

They include Edward Elder, Sophia Blair, Phillip Wakefield, Laura Young, Lisa Kemp, Renisa Maki, Rachael Crosby, Thomas Seeman, Nicholas Mignacca, John Wilcox, Jack Davies, Elijah Pear, Matthew Jackson, Melanie Tuala, Bailey Duggan, Shawn Moodie, Fraser Nicholas, Michelle Craig, Glenn Lamont, Randall Potter, Daria Gorbonova and Jamie Turner.

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7 Relational and interactive political marketing communication

Political marketing communication is rapidly developing to become more interactive and to build relationships, holding the prospect of lifting the citizen from passive consumer to active participant in the communication process and enhancing the public sphere. Recent technological developments in Web 2.0 and social networking change communication from a means for elites to sell a product to the public to the opportunity for the public to provide input and feedback before, during and after a politician gets into power or a political product is designed and delivered. Communication becomes more about relationship building than product selling; and about maintaining or enhancing support in government instead of just getting votes in the first place. This chapter will look at e-marketing; public relations; interactive and responsive leadership communication; voter responsibility communication and reputation management in government.

E-marketing

Practitioner perspective 7.1 on creating volunteer-friendly and online forms of field experience

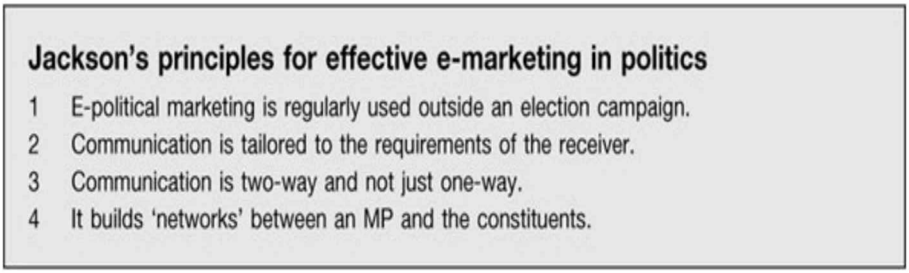
When you walk into a field office, you have many opportunities … You can knock on doors, and they'll have these stats there for you … 'here's how you compare to the rest of them'. But it's all very offline … so what we set out to do was create that offline field experience online.

Harper Reed, CTO for Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign, 2013

> *I didn't care where … what time … how you organised, as long as I could track it … [so we built] a piece of software that tracked all this and allowed you to match your friends on Facebook with our lists, and we said … 'so-and-so is a friend of yours, we think he's unregistered [or undecided], why don't you go get him to register [or be decided]?'*
>
> Jim Messina, Obama 2012 Campaign Manager, 2013
>
> Source: Balz (2013)

E-marketing is communication via digital devices such as mobile phones and the internet that integrates understanding from market research and other marketing concepts. The success of the 2008 Obama campaign wasn't just that he used Facebook but that online mechanisms made it easy for volunteers to get involved in and help the campaign, applying principles from internal marketing and mixing online with old-fashioned field activity as Practitioner perspective 7.1 suggests.

Jackson (2005, 95, 159 and 2006) argues that effective e-marketing combines direct marketing and relationship marketing concepts over the long term, rather than just being used in short-term sales campaigning and one-off transactions. Individual politicians can use websites and email as a cheap and easy means to contact their constituents in a targeted manner to put out unmediated communication over which they have greater control because they can speak directly to constituents; as a source of market intelligence to help MPs better represent their constituents, develop their political campaigns and policy stances and build credibility and a delivery record for re-election. He suggests four criteria for effective e-marketing: see Figure 7.1



Jackson's principles for effective e-marketing in politics

1 E-political marketing is regularly used outside an election campaign.
2 Communication is tailored to the requirements of the receiver.
3 Communication is two-way and not just one-way.
4 It builds 'networks' between an MP and the constituents.

Figure 7.1

Source: Jackson (2005, 95)

E-marketing needs to be two-way – one of the reasons it appeals to the youth is that it gives them the opportunity to be involved and be active, on their own terms, in a way that suits them.

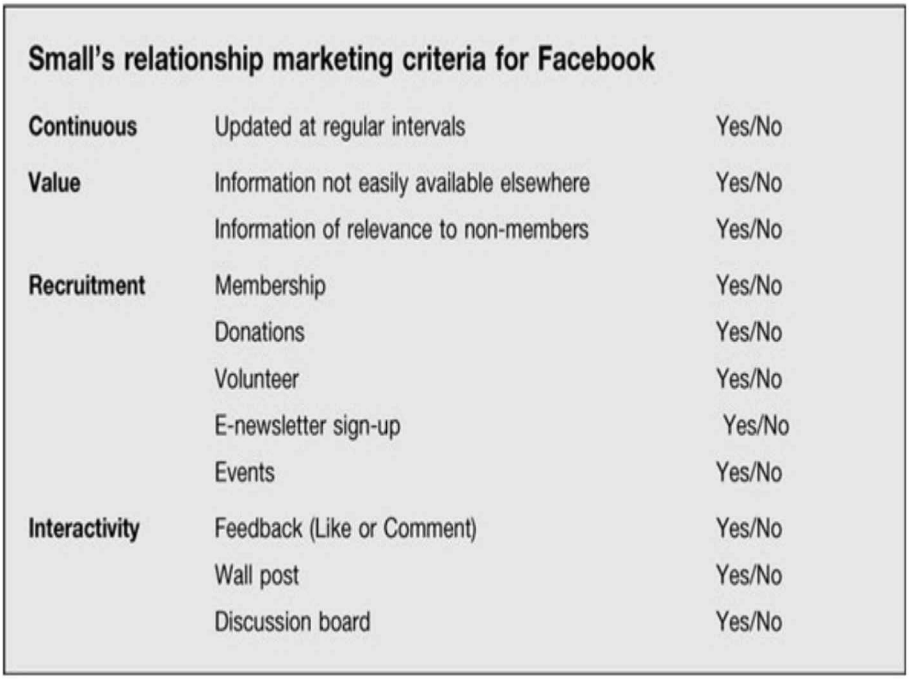
Jackson and Lilleker (2014) argue that in 2008 Obama employed effective e-marketing with interactivity that built relationships to help support the brand. Obama's 2008 marketing built on that by earlier candidates such as Howard Dean's 2004 nomination bid for which his advisor Joe Trippi created complex features to track users on his blog. Dean went on to become Chair of the DNC in Washington DC and implemented such features and principles to build up the party's organisational structure in every state so that the party was able to engage in continual communication with the public. Working with state parties, he sought to ensure there would be a team of people who were committed, trained, experienced and constantly organising at all times, creating and maintaining an ongoing relationship with voters by talking to them in between elections. Maintaining a level of organisation everywhere helped support all candidates at all levels including governors and state legislators. When Obama became the Democratic presidential nominee he had this machine already in place to build on, which he used to recruit volunteers.

In 2006, data was placed online for volunteers to access so they could run canvassing operations, organise meetings and oversee telemarketing themselves. Stirland (2008) notes that it enabled the same old-fashioned organising to be carried out but using fewer resources. Such initiatives particularly suit younger voters, who had previously been disengaged from politics. They also used this to expand their volunteer base: Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez (2011, 200) identified how they asked for volunteers' contact details during rallies, then sorted this information geographically, working with their regional co-ordinators to communicate directly with them after the event to get them more involved. The Obama team did grasp the idea that it can be used to mobilise, engage and interact with voters. Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez (2011, 203) observed that the 2008 campaign created web-facilitated, hosted meetings, peer-to-peer political campaigning and public education, and raised donations. Jackson *et al.* (2012, 293) found that the 2008 Obama campaign 'adopted key innovations where my.barackobama.com (MyBO) created literally thousands of participatory opportunities.' Obama further increased interactivity in 2012 (Jackson and Lilleker 2014).

Practitioners should therefore make sure they build this into their design and avoid less effective one-way communication mechanisms.

However Jackson and Lilleker's (2014) analysis of practice in US presidential politics suggests practice has been mixed; the McCain and Romney campaigns failed to use interactivity to its full potential, using online communication to sell their product instead of involving voters in its creation and dissemination. Given that Obama won the election, it could be argued that this suggests political marketing as a whole will move towards a more relational than transactional approach. Jackson and Lilleker also found that Obama's campaign sought to move volunteers up the political loyalty ladder from being passively engaged to becoming active community members and evangelists. It also helped maintain and enhance the President's relationship with his supporters, demonstrating the importance of relationship marketing. This might have democratic positives by increasing deliberation within political communication and democratic engagement in participation, though it is not without practical problems as it reduces elite control.

Small (2012)'s study of the extent to which Canadian parties' use of Facebook met relationship marketing criteria shows similar findings. Small adapted Jackson's 2006 principles: see Figure 7.2.



Small's relationship marketing criteria for Facebook

Continuous	Updated at regular intervals	Yes/No
Value	Information not easily available elsewhere	Yes/No
	Information of relevance to non-members	Yes/No
Recruitment	Membership	Yes/No
	Donations	Yes/No
	Volunteer	Yes/No
	E-newsletter sign-up	Yes/No
	Events	Yes/No
Interactivity	Feedback (Like or Comment)	Yes/No
	Wall post	Yes/No
	Discussion board	Yes/No

Figure 7.2

Source: Small (2012, 199)

Small applied this to Canadian parties in 2010, and found that the first criteria of continual updating was only met by the Liberals. Facebook was rarely used for recruitment by the Canadian parties with only the Liberals and the Greens featuring a ‘take action’ tab with links to activities including donating, becoming a member and signing up for an e-newsletter. Small (2012, 203) notes that Facebook’s how-to guide for politicians states it ‘is a culture of conversations, giving politicians and political campaigns/organisations a huge opportunity to get immediate feedback on various issues’. Comments were allowed on all Facebook pages of the Canadian parties but they were not interactive – the political elites did not respond to comments made by the public. Only three pages operated a discussion board. The Liberals were the most open to interactivity, offering discussion boards and allowing friends to post their own content on the party page. Thus the overall pattern was mixed in terms of following a relationship marketing strategy; some did, some did not.

Online communication by individual politicians has been less effective (see Jackson *et al.* 2012). Such principles seem not have to filtered down the different levels of the political system as yet, or perhaps the infrastructure in terms of volunteers, staff and data collection and analysis is not easy and cheap enough for all levels of politics to use it. Jackson’s study of UK politicians’ websites found they failed to meet these principles, as did Papagiannidis *et al.’s* (2012) analysis of political candidates’ websites in Greece. In the US, Williams and Gulati’s (2014) analysis of congressional-level online communication concluded that politicians failed to realize – or at least to operationalise – the potential to build long-term relationships. E-marketing was not being used permanently to build relationships, or interactively, or to build social networks. Whilst some candidates and staff recognised the need to use social media more strategically, most needed to integrate marketing principles within their online communication, such as conducting market intelligence with feedback to the campaign and segmenting the market to target campaign messages to specific groups. This research suggests that non-presidential campaigns face challenges in using the full potential of e-marketing.

Turcotte and Raynauld’s (2014) work on the use of Twitter by the populist Tea Party shows how online communication may be used to enable political movements to engage in marketed messages amongst the grass roots. Movements can use Twitter to generate highly targeted, emotive communication amongst individuals at the grass-roots level and to build up grass-roots support. Social media enables and encourages followers to communicate between themselves to build up a movement, instead of relying on one charismatic leader: a hyper decentralised network of individuals and organisations. Other movements may use e-marketing in this way to bring attention to, and increase support for, neglected issues amongst the general public and elites – such as interest groups advocating gay marriage or wanting to raise awareness of child trafficking; or increasing public support for policy measures such as emissions trading schemes and carbon taxes to halt climate change.

Like all new tools, e-marketing cannot guarantee success unless it is placed within the context of an effective strategy and product or brand. Middleton (2009) argues that 'while technology makes it possible to run large campaigns effectively to niche audiences at low cost, it is not a sufficient condition for electoral success'. He worked for the ACT Party in New Zealand and oversaw the use of technological tools to reach voters including weekly email newsletters, online petitions, website forums and subscribable subject-based news lists which allowed voters to register their interest in particular issues and receive updates; and a customer relationship management (CRM) database approximating Voter Vault with information on every registered voter derived from public and party data sources, including residential and postal addresses, an occupation group and socio-economic code, age range, presumptive gender and residential mesh block. Communication was then sent to target groups and any feedback added to the CRM database to create voter profiles to which were sent low-cost, targeted, policy-related communication. However, such efforts were to no avail when the party's strategic position was challenged by National, the main party, moving to the right of centre and adopting positions which attracted ACT voters. Faced with this threat, ACT reverted to traditional campaigning – doorknocking, candidate speeches – to win an electoral seat and return two Members of Parliament. Middleton therefore warns that although technology helps to maintain a group of warm supporters and data on them informs communication, contextual and strategic considerations can prove more important in an actual election.

Jackson *et al.* (2012, 296) contend that comprehensive e-marketing may be more suitable and more effective when political elites use it to forge positive relationships with their supporters. Their research identified that some parties, such as the Conservatives and Lib Dems in the UK, offered community-oriented forms of online communication to their members. Thus more traditional communication which is aimed at persuasion and providing information is more appropriate for voters who know little about the party or candidate, whereas relational forms of communication are suited to the internal market who already have high levels of knowledge and interest. Turcotte and Raynauld's (2014) work also suggested that different elements of political marketing – segmentation, targeting, internal marketing, e-marketing – can be combined to create powerful volunteer support building mechanisms on key political issues, which might be used by parties, interest groups or movements. Thus e-marketing helps to reinforce existing relationships, and it is effective within the long-term context.

Public relations

Public relations (PR) is about initiating a series of communication events designed to build and maintain a positive relationship between a political organisation/figure and its/their stakeholders. It is carried out over the long term, involves multiple events, and is not confined to an election campaign or a single piece of communication such as advertising. As Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011, 1–2) note, although the academic study of political PR is relatively new, the practice is old, going back as far as 64 BCE, through the American Revolution and to the work of Edward Bernays in the mid-twentieth century. However, most literature on PR is about the corporate sector so their book, featured in Authors' corner 7.1, sought to outline the nature of the field and the practice of political PR.

Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011, 4) review definitions of PR and note that there are several key characteristics running through such definitions, and thus PR is about:

- the management of communication between an organisation and its publics (or stakeholders);
- the relationships between an organisation and its publics which should be mutually beneficial;
- the management of the reputation of an organisation.

Political PR goes beyond media management and encompasses interactive, ongoing communication to develop long-term relationships. Political PR is therefore defined as 'the management process by which an organisation or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals' (Strömbäck and Kiousis 2011, 8). Because PR should be mutually beneficial, it is about organisations and their publics understanding each other's interests and reducing the conflict between them and is thus more about creating trust, satisfaction, openness and involvement.

Authors' corner 7.1

Political Public Relations: Principles and Applications

Edited by Spiro Kiousis and Jesper Strömbäck
Published in 2011 by Routledge

While political marketing, political communication, and public relations have always been closely intertwined, public relations strategies and tactics are more ubiquitous today than ever before. Still, there is neither much theorizing nor empirical research on *political public relations*, which can be broadly defined as the management process by which an organisation or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals.

Much public relations research is focused on the use of public relations by commercial businesses, whereas much political communication research neglects or only briefly mentions the use of public relations. Furthermore, political communication scholars seldom display any deep understanding of public relations theories, whereas public relations scholars seldom display any deep understanding of what makes political communication and policymaking different from other areas of inquiry. Thus, although there are exceptions, the general rule is that there is not much theorizing and research that manages to bridge the gap between political communication and public relations theory and research.

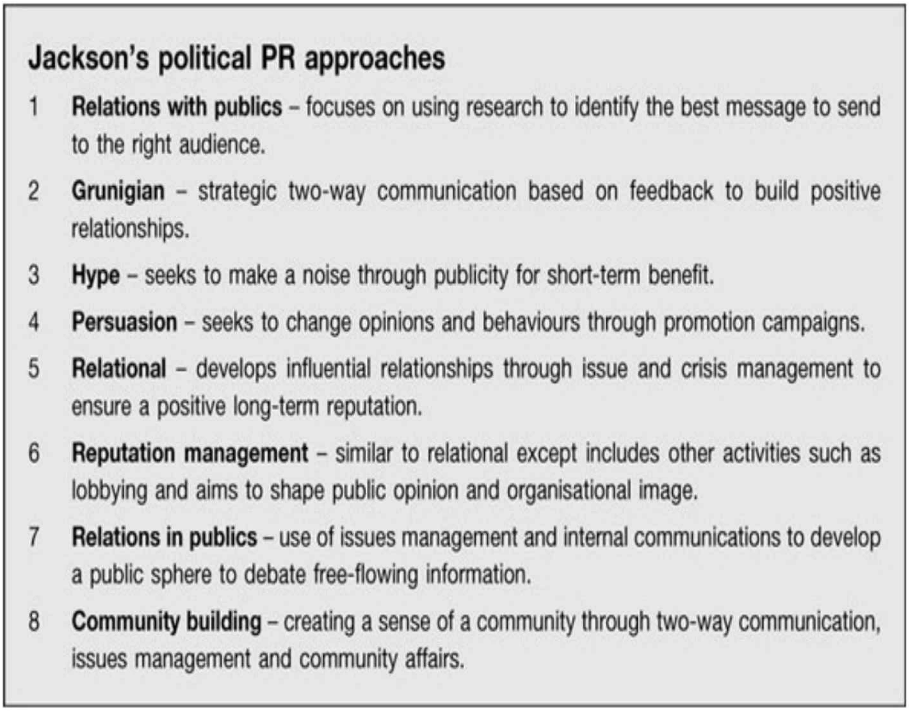
To remedy this and advance the field of *political public relations*, this book sought first to map and define the field; and second, to bring together scholars from various disciplines who study different aspects of political public relations. Major topics covered in the edited book include the history of political public relations, news management and media relations, agenda building, presidential public relations, corporate issues management and political public relations, political marketing, strategic framing in political public relations, political crisis communication, relationship cultivation and political public relations, government communication, public diplomacy, global political public relations, digital political public relations, and political public relations and the future.

In general, the review of political public relations in the book suggests that it is a noteworthy topic meriting scholarly attention for theoretical development and empirical testing. Unlike many other areas of inquiry, it draws on a rich interdisciplinary foundation from fields such as public relations, political science, political marketing, and political communication. The most important shortcoming within political public relations research is that most public relations theories and concepts have seldom or never been applied in the context of political public relations. To do so, and extend political public relations to domains seldom investigated, should be one of the most important priorities in future research on political public relations. Not only would it increase our understanding of political public relations per se; it would also test the validity of public relations theories beyond traditional contexts. In conclusion, it is hoped that the book can serve as a springboard for future research on the emerging area of political public relations research.

There are a range of different publics: situational publics, non-publics, latent publics, aware publics and active publics. Lieber and Golan (2011, 56) explain the difference:

- non-publics are those that don't face any similar problem, or if they do they don't recognise it or organise to do anything about it;
- latent publics are those face the same problem but do not recognise it or do anything about it;
- aware publics have the problem, are aware of it but fail to act on it;
- active publics are those who have the problem, recognise it and seek to do something about it.

Marketers therefore need to identify and monitor the behaviour of these different publics in order to decide how to use PR to build beneficial relationships with them. Jackson (2012, 271) notes that it is not about promoting a specific political product, but building and maintaining positive relationships with key audiences through dialogue, consideration of the receiver of communication and reputation management. There are several aspects to PR which Jackson explores through identifying the different schools of thought in the literature: see Figure 7.3.



Jackson's political PR approaches

1 **Relations with publics** – focuses on using research to identify the best message to send to the right audience.

2 **Grunigian** – strategic two-way communication based on feedback to build positive relationships.

3 **Hype** – seeks to make a noise through publicity for short-term benefit.

4 **Persuasion** – seeks to change opinions and behaviours through promotion campaigns.

5 **Relational** – develops influential relationships through issue and crisis management to ensure a positive long-term reputation.

6 **Reputation management** – similar to relational except includes other activities such as lobbying and aims to shape public opinion and organisational image.

7 **Relations in publics** – use of issues management and internal communications to develop a public sphere to debate free-flowing information.

8 **Community building** – creating a sense of a community through two-way communication, issues management and community affairs.

Figure 7.3

Source: Adapted from Jackson (2012, 273–4)

The pragmatic and democratic implications of these vary; some are closer to more conventional views of PR as short-term persuasion, whereas others are more about fostering true dialogue, debate and free information and, through this, positive long-term relationships. Parties, candidates and governments may choose different approaches at different times – reputation management may be more useful for governments than opposition parties, for example. Jackson (2012) applied these concepts to candidates standing for 12 seats in Devon, a region in south-west England, but found that there was very little evidence of the more relational or community building types of PR, with greater focus on persuasion but also reputation management, whilst less indication of hype forms of PR.

Political PR includes a range of tools such as information subsidies, agenda building and message framing. Information subsidies make it easy or low cost for people to get access to information. Lieber and Golan (2011, 60) discuss how the Obama presidency used social media to make information about the health-care bill easy to access; given it was available 24/7 it helped ensure anyone could access information whenever they liked and thus help create a consensus towards supporting the legislation.

Authors’ corner 7.2

Public Relations and Nation Building: Influencing Israel

By Margarlit Toledano and David McKie

Published by Routledge in 2013

Public Relations and Nation Building: Influencing Israel tells the previously untold story of the role of PR, and its interplay with nation building, in the birth and evolution of Israel. Achieving nationhood in 1948, Israel is still a relatively new state established by Jewish immigrants from around the world who have been settling there since the end of the nineteenth century, when it was part of the Ottoman Empire. We argue that the Zionist movement succeeded in establishing the state thanks to a phenomenally persuasive, and international, communication campaign. It included motivating diaspora Jews to immigrate, enlisting the support of international public opinion through professional lobbying, and uniting new immigrants from 70 different cultures into one society. It also involved inventing new Israeli traditions, language and identity rooted in the Jewish culture and faith. Pre-state and post-state Zionist institutions used PR and Hasbarah (literally ‘explanation’ in Hebrew, meaning a form of soft propaganda), to enlist the Israeli population in the huge nation building challenge. Professional communicators employed by Zionist institutions staged events and provided narratives, resonant symbols and emotional messages to inspire the sacrifice of individual goals, and sometimes lives, for the sake of the Jewish state. As well as analysing the effort of the Israeli government and national organisations to enlist the support of internal publics, the book describes how they used branding, strategic communication and public diplomacy to influence international public opinion and to try to improve the image of Israel in the eyes of the world. Nevertheless, we call into question the ability of even the best professional communication to satisfactorily explain such difficult realities as 45 years of occupation and the denial of basic human rights to the Palestinians.

As a result, we caution that, in any strongly nationalistic climate, PR can be too easily pressed into the service of government propaganda and urge PR practitioners, activists and media workers to contribute jointly to more democratic societies: we actually describe how the values that characterized the Jewish public sphere in the diaspora, before the establishment of the state, were intensified by the nation building effort led by the Zionist institutions; and how then, later on, these were taken up by the government of Israel and carried over to the present. More positively, we identify how specific circumstances in Jewish disaspora and Israeli life enabled strong fundraising and lobbying functions in advance of PR in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, that early and heavy emphasis on solidarity, exclusiveness and unity as well as the blurring of the lines between Israel's journalists and politicians, encouraged uncritical support of the national institutions and government. It actually inhibited the development of open liberal democracy, tolerant of dissident voices and respectful of individual human rights. This interdisciplinary study embeds PR in Israel's cultural, economic, political and social environment and draws heavily on biographies, histories, journalism, media, memoirs, politics and social studies.

Message framing tries to influence how an issue, event or situation is perceived amongst elites as well as the public. Hallahan (2011) notes how linguist George Lakoff trained the US Democrats to use certain works, narratives and metaphors to convey the desired story over the long term; and after worldwide international talks world leaders will speak in public to convey their interpretation of events. Governments can also frame attributes, such as a rising number of homeowners being a good sign for the economy; or they can frame the size of a risk. Framing can also influence perceptions of responsibility such as whether the public should blame a political leader for a bad situation. Hallahan (2011) points out how, when there was a big oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, framing was used so that BP was to blame not President Obama although there was critique the US government should have regulated the industry more heavily and enacted greater attacks on BP with regard to fixing the leak.

However Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011, 18–19) argue that the political environment is more contentious and may present challenges to this more positive form of PR. Furthermore, it does not always succeed. Tedesco (2011, 84) discusses US presidents' ability to influence the media agenda and notes that, despite the central position of the president in political discourse, their scope to control the agenda is constrained; even after the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001 the president did not demonstrate agenda building capacity. Such capacity depends on the president's approval ratings and personality, and the issue, amongst other factors. Similarly Eshbaugh-Soha (2011) notes how the US President utilises a communications office, press office and office of public liaison in order to engage in political PR. Such extensive staff enables strategic and planned communication to reach out to different publics and respond to public expectations. This helps the president manage public expectations, convey the work the president does and build support for policies. However the evidence suggests the ability of such staff to influence the agenda has been limited and recommends that presidential PR needs to become more targeted to narrow groups.

Additionally, the practice of political PR is often very limited and narrow in scope. Xifra (2010) notes that political PR is also not just about media management or a set of techniques despite practitioners they interviewed in Spain claiming so, thus indicating that one barrier to effective political PR is the limited understanding of party staff involved in communications. Baines (2011, 116) observes that the UK Blair government 1997–2010 was criticised for engaging in more persuasive forms of PR to influence its image through symbols rather than substantive behaviour. The book on PR and nation branding by Margalit Toledano and David McKie discusses how PR has been used in public diplomacy to try to build a more positive perception of countries such as Israel but with questionable intentions and impact: see Authors' corner 7.2 for a summary of their arguments which raise a number of normative issues.

Interactive and responsive leadership communication

A recent section of political marketing research suggests that leadership communication needs to become interactive and convey responsiveness more effectively. Lloyd's (2012) analysis of communication in the 2010 UK general election concludes that voters thought there were more opportunities for two-way communication with their politicians such as by Twitter, telephone and email, talk radio and radio phone-in. Political leaders need to engage in meaningful dialogue with voters and so communication should be designed in to enable this and show that politicians have listened, reflected and acted on it. Robinson (2012) argues that it is important that political communication shows voters interacting with leaders as this can impact on how voters perceive politicians. She analysed non-verbal messages conveyed by images of leaders, such as through face-to-face address, exploring the clothes on the leader, the setting of the communication and the distance between the leader and the camera lenses which impacts on how close the viewer feels to the leader. She cites the example of UK Conservative Leader David Cameron being pictured, in the 2010 election, with a shirt but no tie, in a middle-class family backyard, talking directly to camera. Such communication is designed to suggest a politician is honest and friendly and voters can trust them. Other forms of communication – such as when a leader is one-on-one with a journalist, being interviewed in a studio, or in a small or large group – can also be analysed. When politicians are in small groups they can try to convey leadership using hand gestures like handshaking and waving, making physical contact (e.g. hugging) and facial expressions (smiling). Robinson advises that, for example, images of leaders in small groups suggest they can relate more widely to and care for others.

Elder (2014) puts forward a framework for how to convey a market-orientation once a leader is in power. Political leaders need to adopt more reflective forms of communication, especially where they are showing leadership, to maintain public support. Rhetorical indicators of qualities include listening, leading, honesty, common goals and governmental context: leaders need to convey that they are listening through responsiveness and reflectiveness; they need to show leadership; yet be honest and authentic; convey the common goals and benefits of their decisions and the context of social and governmental variables. In Case Study 7.1 he analyses the use of such communication by President Obama in his first term. In government, communication of the context as well as leadership is important as politicians can't simply research the market and offer voters what they want. Modern political leadership, within a marketised environment, thus calls for a more modern form of communication. Leaders cannot just get into power then do what they like – not even when they had a clear mandate for their proposals. Consider the case of George W. Bush who ran in both 2000 and 2004 on Social Security reform as a policy offering yet never managed to ever implement it. More hierarchical and authoritative forms of leadership communication such as: 'I *am the leader, I need to follow my conviction*' no longer prove effective. This is an important lesson for political leaders in the US and indeed all around the world. Thus leaders need to find new forms of communication to convey the realities and challenges that leadership in government necessitates. Obama's mini-documentary called *The Road We've Travelled* did this: it was a groundbreaking piece of communication which discussed the difficulties of being president to help remind voters so their judgement on performance could be conducted within the right context. This is also important for delivery marketing, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Voter responsibility communication

As outlined in the first chapter, there has been a move from transaction-based campaigning to transformational whereby voters are called to action to get involved in campaigning and government. Obama used the word ‘we’ – *Yes WE can* – in his 2008 campaign but also in his 2012 re-election campaign where he said: ‘If there’s even one thing we can do – even one life we can save – we have an obligation to try’. When calling for volunteers to get involved again in 2012 a series of ads were launched saying ‘Are you in?’, and supporters talked about how Obama could not do it all himself, he was President; it was up to his supporters to take the lead to win re-election. Similarly he issued an advert in the election called *Young Americans are Greater Together* that discussed the achievements of Obama’s first administration which they themselves should be proud of. Johnson (2012, 211) notes that campaigns are becoming open-sourced in that volunteers are getting involved in campaign design and implementation, and this holds the potential for voters to feel they are participating in the campaign. They can share their ideas online with candidates, talk with others, share their experiences and feel a sense of ownership.

Reputation management

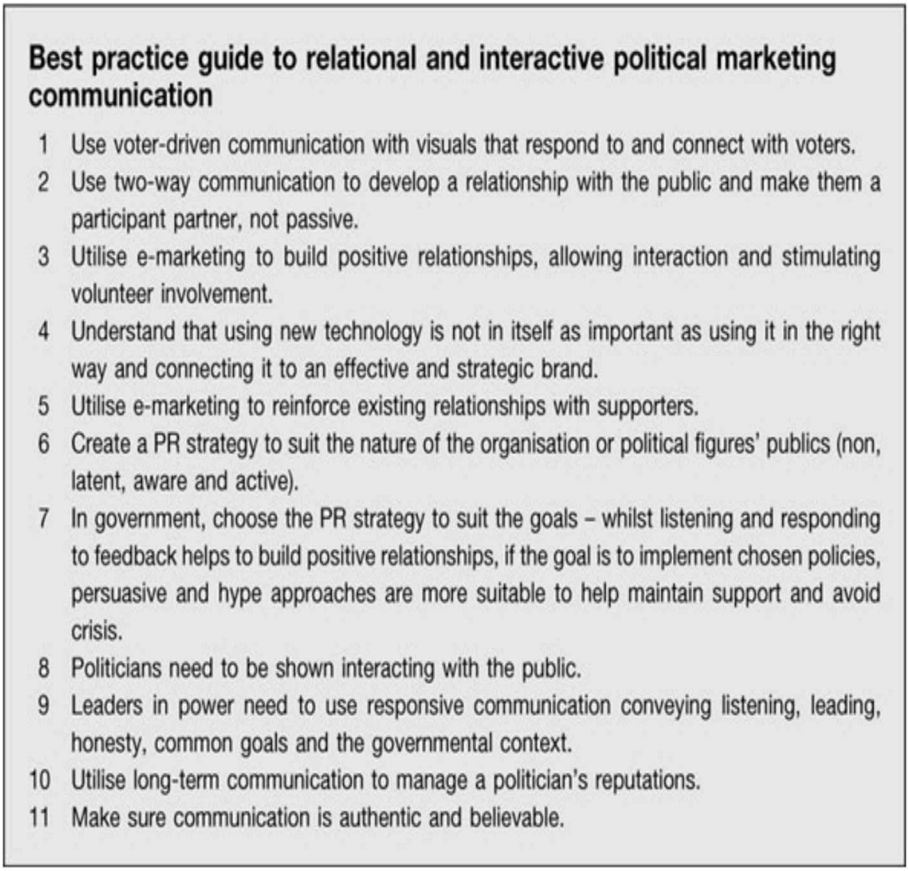
Reputation is the overall assessment the public might make of all the information they receive about a political organisation – a wide range of sources including imagery, party origins, its policies, speeches, advertising, media commentary, personal discussions (see Davies and Mian 2010, 345). Government itself needs to use marketing communication to manage its reputation over the long term. Whereas crisis communication discussed in the previous chapter is very focused and short term, reputation management is, like PR, about efforts to support the brand’s image over the long term. Once a politician is in power, they are held more responsible for what happens and what goes wrong. Managing problems is, therefore, even more important as they can damage the overall image of credibility of a government, which relates to delivery and trust.

In government, consultants work to maintain a leader’s image, even where scandals and failures of policy occur. The same management of a politician’s personal characteristics in a campaign for office can occur in power. Newman (1999, 88) observes how Bill Clinton’s advisors dealt with a number of scandals during his presidency ‘by carefully crafting an image of himself as leader in charge and almost above the rumour mongering of the media about his sex life’. He focused on what was important and, amazingly, he did not lose public support, despite continual criticism from the opposition. Davies and Mian (2010, 345) discuss the reputation of UK parties in 2001 and 2005, and note how the Liberal Democrat Party’s reputation was of being moderate and informal; the Conservative’s chic, more ruthless, quite macho and less agreeable relative to their other scores. Labour was seen as more competent and enterprising in 2001. In party systems such as the UK, the reputation of the party is affected by that of the leader, and vice versa; they are separate but linked.

As discussed in previous chapters, communication was used to try to restore Tony Blair’s relationship with voters in 2004–2005 because it had been damaged as he became increasingly dismissive of public input and argued he was the leader and knew best what was right for the country. Communication enacted for the reconnection strategy sought to change the way Blair spoke and appeared to listen to voters; so he was pictured receiving strong public criticism, and when he spoke he acknowledged public concern with his decisions and showed respect for those who opposed him, and he used phrases such as ‘working in partnership with the public’. This reconnection strategy helped to rehabilitate Blair’s overall image. Scammell’s (2008) research identified that Labour improved its opinion poll rating over the campaign, increasing its lead over the Conservatives as the best party to deal with the issues of the economy, health and education; and Blair improved his advantage over the opposition leader Michael Howard. It increased the female vote by 8 per cent. After winning the 2005 election, Mr Blair said outside Number 10: ‘I have listened and I have learned. And I have a very clear idea of what the British people now expect from this government for a third term’.

Summary

This chapter has explored more relational forms of political marketing communication including public relations, e-marketing and reputation management by political leaders, political parties and governments. This type of communication is long term, and seeks to build and maintain positive relationships between politicians and the public. It is also more interactive as it enables the public to communicate with the politician and can be used to stimulate face-to-face communication and volunteer participation. A best practice guide to relational forms of political marketing communication is given in Figure 7.4 and is followed by a practitioner profile of Joe Trippi who revolutionised how to use the internet to recruit volunteers. Communicating delivery is also an important factor of using political marketing in government, and the next chapter focuses on this.



Best practice guide to relational and interactive political marketing communication

1. Use voter-driven communication with visuals that respond to and connect with voters.
2. Use two-way communication to develop a relationship with the public and make them a participant partner, not passive.
3. Utilise e-marketing to build positive relationships, allowing interaction and stimulating volunteer involvement.
4. Understand that using new technology is not in itself as important as using it in the right way and connecting it to an effective and strategic brand.
5. Utilise e-marketing to reinforce existing relationships with supporters.
6. Create a PR strategy to suit the nature of the organisation or political figures' publics (non, latent, aware and active).
7. In government, choose the PR strategy to suit the goals – whilst listening and responding to feedback helps to build positive relationships, if the goal is to implement chosen policies, persuasive and hype approaches are more suitable to help maintain support and avoid crisis.
8. Politicians need to be shown interacting with the public.
9. Leaders in power need to use responsive communication conveying listening, leading, honesty, common goals and the governmental context.
10. Utilise long-term communication to manage a politician's reputations.
11. Make sure communication is authentic and believable.

Figure 7.4

Practitioner profile 7.1

Name: Joe Trippi
Date of birth: 10 June, 1956
Most notable job: Campaign worker/Consultant

Description: Joe Trippi is an American Democratic campaign worker and consultant who has worked on a number of presidential campaigns over the last 35 years. Having worked on several local election campaigns in California, Trippi joined the national campaign staff of Senator Edward Kennedy's presidential bid in the late 1970s. Since then Trippi has worked on the presidential campaigns of Walter Mondale, Gary Hart, Dick Gephardt, Jerry Brown and John Edwards. However, from a political marketing standpoint, his most notable work was as the campaign manager for former Vermont governor Howard Dean's bid to become the Democratic nominee for the president of the United States in 2004. It was as the manager for this campaign that Trippi gained recognition for his use of innovative internet strategies. Notably, Trippi was largely responsible for the creation of an official campaign blog and the use of Meetup and other social networking technologies to raise more money, mainly through small-dollar donations, than any other Democratic nominee. He has also used such internet channels to organise thousands of volunteers to do door-to-door campaigning, write letters to possible voters, distribute flyers and organise local meetings. While Dean replaced Trippi as campaign manager on January 2004, Trippi's internet strategy laid the groundwork for many campaigns in the years to come, including that of Barack Obama in 2008. Trippi subsequently started his own consultancy, Trippi & Associates. See his book *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything* (2004), published by Harper Collins.

Discussion points

1 Identify the marketing elements in the use of the internet by Obama's 2008 campaign.
2 What is political PR and how can it help create positive relationships between the government and the people?
3 Identify the non-publics, latent publics, aware publics and active publics for a party or politician.
4 Discuss the potential and limitations for political PR to help create and maintain a positive reputation for politicians and governments.
5 What is interactive political communication? Think of some examples from recent elections.
6 Discuss whether voter responsibility communication will expand in the coming years.

Assessment questions

Essays/exam

1. What are the principles of effective e-marketing and to what extent do parties and candidates follow these in their online communication?
2. Define the nature of political PR and explore how politicians and governments have sought to use it to achieve more positive relationships with their publics.
3. Explain why political PR is not about promoting a product but building positive relationships, using theory and empirical examples to support your answer.
4. Explain and illustrate Jackson’s different political PR approaches.
5. Discuss the potential and limitations for political leaders to use interactive communication.
6. Discuss and critique the ways in which reputation management has been used to promote or restore a leader’s image in office.

Applied

1. Apply Jackson’s relationship marketing email criteria to the use of email by elected representatives, and discuss how effectively they are using email, making recommendations for improvement and further development.
2. Assess a party’s or a politician’s Facebook page against the relationship marketing criteria by Small (2012), and make recommendations for future development.
3. Identify the publics that a political leader or government needs to build a positive relationship with using Lieber and Golan’s (2011) explanation, and critique how they have used political PR to reach each one, making suggestions for improvement.
4. Assess which of Jackson’s political PR approaches a government uses, with what impact and, therefore, which seems to be the most effective.
5. Critique the range of political PR activities used by a recent or current government and make suggestions for how they might improve their strategy in future.
6. Devise a PR plan for a local politician, using guidelines and ideas from the cases presented in this textbook.

Case Study

Case study 7.1 Communicating contemporary market-oriented leadership in

government: Barack Obama

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Background

Assuming office introduces political leaders to a whole new set of social, political and logistical constraints not present in opposition (see Ormrod 2006, 112–15), such constraints can hurt a governing leader's ability to maintain the image of being in touch with their public (Lees-Marshment 2009). However, more recent research suggests that governing leaders don't have to blindly follow public opinion to be perceived as being in touch as long as their communication suggests they are talking *with* the public rather than *at* them. Such practices also allow governing leaders to show strong, decisive and honest leadership (Robinson 2006; Scammell 2007, 185–6). This case study highlights some important findings from analysis of US President Barack Obama's verbal communication around the issue of reforming US health care through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (also known as 'Obama care') during his first term in office. It does so through the framework for market-oriented governing leaders' communication, which is briefly outlined in the following table.

Framework for market-oriented governing leaders' communication

Quality shown through rhetoric	Communicate through rhetoric by …
Listening/in touch	• Respectfully acknowledging concerns and criticisms. • Talking about positive working relationships with political elites from other major parties. • Communicating an understanding of target audience.

Leading	• Communicating delivery. • Communicating ideological positioning. • Using words and phrases associated with strength.
Honesty/authenticity/trustworthiness	• Talking about non-political personality. • Showing an openness to questioning. • Using inclusive pronouns.
Common goals and benefits of decisions	• Focusing communication on how the decision will benefit the target audience rather than focusing on the problem(s) being resolved. • Highlighting an overall goal trying to be achieved that resonates with the target audience.
Social and governmental variables	• Talking about other potential options not chosen, and why this was. • Communicating reasoning behind

the decisions made.

- Outlining the decision-making process, including the variables involved.

Obama communicating Obama care

Listening/in touch

Obama effectively used verbal communication around Obama care to suggest he was in touch with the American public. This could best be seen in his communication suggesting a respectful acknowledgement of public opinion; especially in his response to criticism questioning whether Obama care was a government takeover of American health care. Typically, in response to such criticism, Obama would acknowledge the concern as 'legitimate' before asking the critical question again; communicating his willingness to put himself in the position of a person who would ask the question. Furthermore, Obama would take the time to explain why he disagreed with the argument. Such communication may be decoded as Obama showing some level of respect for the opposing argument, without agreeing with it.

Leadership

Obama successfully used verbal communication to imply his strong leadership characteristics. Notably, Obama's communication suggesting 'delivery' was substantial. A major theme in Obama's communication was the message that 'we must and will get this done'. This is not surprising considering much of Obama's communication on the issue came prior to the passing of Obama care. Such communication was often used in Obama's final remarks during speeches and press conferences prior to the bill being passed. In such communication Obama would specifically note his desire to 'deliver on health care'. Obama would verbally communicate this message with a stern tone, further implying the determination he felt. Such communication may have helped Obama show leadership characteristics in two specific ways: by implying personal conviction and strength through his determination, and by presenting Obama as a leader who will attempt to deliver on the promises he made prior to being elected.

Honesty/authenticity/trustworthy

Obama's ability to communicate honesty, trustworthiness and authenticity can best be described as mixed. However, Obama was very effective in using the Obama care issue to communicate his non-political personality. This was often achieved by linking the issue to the struggles his mother faced with the US health-care system when she was battling cancer. By communicating a story that affects him directly, the viewer may have felt as though they were gaining a better understanding of Obama as a real person, rather than simply a political figure. Such a connection is often linked to feelings about whether that person is trustworthy (Lilleker 2006, 79). Thus, by communicating a real-life example of how the issue under discussion affects him personally, Obama may have been lending validity to the idea that he can be trusted. In doing so, the American public may be more willing to accept a polarising idea such as Obama care.

Common goals and benefits of decisions

Obama successfully communicated the benefits of decisions as well as goals that would resonate with the American public on the Obama care issue. However, Obama may have communicated the benefits of these decisions too much. In the analysis, rhetoric was coded under the heading of 'communicating benefits of decisions' more than any other single heading by a large margin. This overwhelming dedication to such communication seemed to taint many media texts that otherwise strongly suggested Obama possessed market-oriented qualities. In other words, the lasting impression left on the audience by the media text may have been that it was 'Obama selling his decisions' rather than 'Obama talking about the issues with the American public'. In essence, such communication implied that Obama was trying to simulate market-oriented behaviour rather than actually being market-oriented.

Social and governmental variables

Obama was somewhat successful at using verbal communication to outline the social and governmental variables around Obama care. In particular, the President's communication on the decision-making process was often very detailed. Obama's communication often outlined the remaining process needed to achieve health-care reform. In doing so, Obama highlighted the complexity of the process, why health care reform was difficult to achieve and why it would take time. In essence, by communicating these variables in front of the bill being passed, Obama attempted to manage public expectations.

Lessons for political marketing

In sum, US President Barack Obama's verbal communication around the issue of Obama care partially followed the framework for market-oriented governing leaders' communication. However, as suggested above, Obama was normally successful in following the advice of the framework on the most important and effective ways to communicate the qualities associated with market-oriented behaviour. This suggests that Obama learnt some lessons from the failings of the governing leaders that came before him; in particular, the failings of their communication strategies. However, further investigation around other case studies is needed to understand if these findings are isolated to Obama and the issue of Obama care, or a global trend for market-oriented governing leaders.

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