Introduction

As the chapters in this book were written, countries around the world found themselves at a very uncertain juncture, with new challenges and a divided electorate making the very fabric of democracy vulnerable to the actions of various ideologically extreme groups in society. Domestic terrorism, the role of foreign governments suspected of playing a role in the election process, and the election victories of unorthodox politicians around the globe creates a new set of pressures and circumstances that will certainly impact the role of political marketing in the years to come. Growing concerns with, and the proliferation of, misinformation and disinformation continues to impact how citizens and government officials form opinions, creating a fragmented and dangerous ecosystem for the news and information that we all receive (Krause et al., 2019; Freelon & Wells, 2020). Finally, the imprecision of public opinion polling, such as the 2016 and 2020 presidential election in the United States and the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, highlight the disturbing pattern of public opinion surveys that proved to be inaccurate, questioning the accuracy of public opinion measurement (Sturgis et al., 2018; Toff, 2018).

Along with these challenges to democracies around the world, the strategy and tactics of established political parties have also evolved. New sophisticated analytical tools based on big data, micro-targeting and social media are now part of the political marketer’s machinery to impact public opinion – the currency in the political marketplace. Just as companies break down markets and target specific appeals, products and services to individual consumers with the aid of more advanced methodological and quantitative tools, so do politicians and
political parties as they rely on market segmentation and positioning strategies to fine-tune their efforts to influence the thinking of citizens.

Furthermore, political parties and politicians recognize the strategic importance of relying on techniques from branding concepts, theories and frameworks to provide differentiation from political competitors and to better identify with audiences (Newman & Newman, 2018). Likewise, the voters, who they are, what they stand for, and how they communicate with one another has become more important as disruptions in political systems are putting democracies into a state of crisis management. Hence, it is critically important we establish the future direction in a field that has changed more in the past five years than it has in 50 years. This book will establish the essence of this change, and how it will move the field forward in the future.

As part of the Elgar Research Agenda series, this book documents and establishes the critical thinking of leading scholars in the field of political marketing and related fields, as well as new directions that are the result of technological advances in several different social science disciplines that intersect at the crossroads of political marketing. Scholars from different countries were asked to contribute to this volume in an effort to bring in a wide-ranging set of vantage points that has established the field of political marketing over the past several decades. The field of Political Marketing has grown significantly from the last major edited book to address the future issues in the field – The Handbook of Political Marketing (Newman, 1999).

The scholars asked to contribute to this volume were requested to provide their assessment of the “state of the art” of the field with respect to their particular area of expertise within the field, and where they thought the field was headed over the next several years. The authors were chosen with an understanding that although the United States represents the center of advances in the field, there are subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, differences that exist from one country to another when it comes to the theory and practice of political marketing within the political systems around the world. The United Kingdom certainly represents one of the countries from which the field has developed, and as such, the book includes contributions from that country in multiple chapters. In addition to the United Kingdom, there are chapters from scholars in Poland, Sweden and Spain, each of which represents a different use of these methods depending on their history and unique election laws which spell out differences addressed in the chapters provided. The remaining chapters are all from U.S. scholars, each of whom has addressed different areas of the field, and in some cases, similar areas, but from very important vantage points that link together sub-areas of Political Marketing.
One of the more recent trends in the field has been the increased focus among both politicians and citizens on epistemic issues – such as facts, knowledge and truth – and, in particular, how this increasing focus creates new challenges and opportunities for political parties and politicians around the globe when communicating about complex issues, such as science and technology (Newman, 2020). This is definitely not the first time that these issues have emerged as a driving force in political campaigns, but with the current state of affairs we expect it will emerge as one of the most important research areas in the field in the future. In addressing this trend, several of the chapters address the complexity of how politicians and political parties leverage trust, credibility and expertise across their policy positions, and how citizens formulate attitudes and opinions on issues give the heightened attention to these matters. Overall, these chapters lay out an agenda for political marketing researchers and practitioners to recognize how marketing tactics may be used in to shape, guide and manage public opinion and policy discourse on these issues.

The chapters are arranged to introduce the reader to the development of the field of political marketing, and follows a logical progression of topics that cover key sub-categories. By definition, political marketing, having emerged from the field of marketing, is strategic in nature. It has developed over the past 60 years in earnest, since the presidential election of John F. Kennedy, as a discipline that covers a theoretical, strategic and historical path that has diverged from the field of electoral politics and campaigning. It is now an established discipline that is centered on the use of advanced methodological tools and methods that form the basis of the marketing machinery in the arsenal of all politicians at all levels of office. Certainly, of great importance is the historical background of the ideology and normative aims of political marketing, as well as the emergence of the field in countries around the world. Additionally, some of the more traditional sub-divisions within the field are addressed in individual chapters, which include the subjects of political communication, science communication, public relations, mass media, branding, management of political campaigns, and the role of digital and social media in campaigns. The book ends with a discussion of the role of scandal in political campaigns, and the misuse and potentially dangerous implications of what could happen to a country if the wrong political party or leader relies on these methods to move a country in an undemocratic direction.

This historical movement has been more poignant in recent decades, introducing the tools of political marketing to not only political consultants, but also to lobbyists and organizations who all seek to influence not only voters, but other organizations and politicians as well. Along with movement in a change of language and attention to marketing has come the focus of the media who...
report on and effectively serve as judges in the conduct of the field. Words like brands, polls, social media, micro-targeting, marketing research and many others are now part of the language of all journalists and scholars who analyze and report on elections around the globe. The field of political marketing has turned into a multi-billion dollar industry ripe with a variety of organizations that have carved out a unique niche in capitalizing on the different roles that are played out in political marketing. Documenting all of these changes has been the *Journal of Political Marketing*, which is the key journal focused on this field over the past 20 years. Additionally, signifying the maturity of the field, there are many other journals in related sub-fields that are now publishing articles on the topic.

The current state of affairs in the field of political marketing

Historically, mass media has played a prominent role in elections, with television being the primary source for election information. However, digital communication platforms – such as blogs and social media – have gained popularity, and new technologies have prompted changes in election campaign strategies by reshaping media coverage and influencing voter engagement. Candidate websites have evolved from brochure-ware to individualized experiences via major social media platforms to help campaign activities reach specific constituencies (Owen, 2018).

At the same time, the political system in the United States has been overwhelmed by big money, giving the wealthy more power. The 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* prohibited Congress and the States from putting limits on raising and spending money in elections. That resulted in a flood of corporate dollars into the elections, allowing the wealthy to fuel their interests at the expense of ordinary Americans, further dismantling campaign finance laws. In 2018, over $436 million was funneled by large individual donors to Super PACs (political action committees) during the midterm elections, which allowed the super-rich to secretly influence public policy and Americans to lose faith in the system. This unlimited spending concentrated into the hands of a few has distorted the voices of ordinary people jeopardizing the foundations of democracy (Udall, 2019).

With the *Citizens United* decision, Americans’ view on the role of money in politics has shifted. Many Americans believe that political contributions have a corrupt influence on Congress (Bowler & Donovan, 2015). Findings show
bipartisan support for new measures to curb the influence of wealthy donors, restricting the amount of money that Super PACs can spend and ensure more public disclosure. Some experts have argued that campaign finance reform eliminating donation caps to candidates and reporting of all donations to campaigns and PACs needs to be implemented. The argument is that this will ensure respect of freedom of speech, minimize irresponsible negative advertising, and encourage voters to choose if they want to vote for a politician who accepts money from sources the public dislike or distrust (Pierce, 2019). Yet, the U.S. Supreme Court’s conservative majority continues to slowly chip away limits on political donations, dismissing the ideas that the presence of large contributors warrants campaign finance restrictions and unregulated campaign spending favors the rich (Confessore & Thee-Brenan, 2015).

Even though money serves as an equalizer in electoral campaigns, its strategic use is the key factor determining a candidate’s success. Mass communication during campaigns, however expensive, is essential to increase voters’ knowledge of the candidate. But the 2016 presidential campaign demonstrated otherwise. Donald Trump during his 2016 campaign received “free” media because of his colorful and controversial personality and savvy use of social media, while his opponents relied on paid media to reach the masses. President Trump’s re-election campaign plan in 2020 took a more conventional route compared to his 2016 campaign. The emphasis was still on digital media but revolved more around business strategies like branding and merchandising. It focused on direct-marketing by gathering supporters’ phone numbers and involving a data-mining operation on a yet-to-be-released mobile app. The challenge was to take a more professional stance without dampening his followers’ enthusiasm or interfering with his previous successful campaigns. The key to his re-election was to motivate supporters to vote, rather than raising his approval rate or persuading critics (Bender et al., 2019).

During every political season in the United States, billions of dollars are spent on TV ads, cold calling and mailings, as well as advanced technology that uses big data for targeted advertisement, sparking concerns of public exploitation. Campaigns that have adopted cutting-edge mobile strategies to connect and draw out supporters tend to be in the strongest shape to win on election day. Typical voters devote three times as much time every day engaging with content outside of broadcast television, with most of the time spent on mobile devices. Likewise, 58 percent spend at least three hours a day on their mobile devices, and nearly one-fifth spend a minimum of six hours every day on their devices. This was one of the reasons why digital campaign ad spending was expected to reach almost $2 billion, a seven-fold rise from the digital spending seen during the 2014 midterms (Lawrence, 2018).
Through more fine-grained audience insight generated from social and digital media, campaign managers are using micro-targeting to identify a subset of the voters by collecting customized data on their political convictions, personal beliefs and perceptions of a candidate’s credibility. This data aids in the estimate of “psychometric traits” such as biases, dispositions and personality traits, which campaign managers believe are essential for the electorate (Madsen, 2019). In the 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump used his well-established brand to boost his campaign message over Hillary Clinton’s. He used Twitter to establish relationships with voters, which helped build loyalty. Trump also used the campaign slogan “Make America Great Again” to appeal to his target demographic and presented the “problem” as the nation and placed himself as the change agent (Rivero, 2016).

Other serious issues revolve around digital marketing used in political campaigns in the United States and abroad. The “fake news crisis” that former President Donald Trump articulated after losing the 2020 presidential campaign has had serious implications for the welfare of the democracy in the U.S.A. Voters process information no differently than consumers do, and they tend to share and respond to information based on content with strong emotional appeal. This created a new and powerful role for the use of machine learning by political parties and politicians, where large amounts of unstructured data can be used to differentiate the strength of specific emotions in fake and real news content (Paschen, 2019).

Along with the increasing importance of technology in this area, digital populism provides online support for populist movements and offers insights into how politics and democratic participation function. Populist parties use data analytics companies to intensify their agenda and broaden their voter base. Companies like Cambridge Analytica and Aggregate IQ have been perfecting methods to measure voter activity to influence their votes, which has led to a rise in right-wing extremism. Although digital populism is distinct from conventional right- and left-wing populism, it presents a much bigger threat. It uses new tools to encourage politicians to engage with voters and focuses its political agenda on the influence of social media and its exploitation (Zabala, 2020).

The rise of technology and the tracking of phone data has ramifications on democracy, as well. Voters are targeted based on their interests using location data and to track down protesters who have their phones during riots. Demonstrator anonymity has been a point of contention for a long time. Masked or unmasked, through smartphone tracking, a person’s participation at a rally is registered into commercial data sets, and then used by political
parties who then collect and purchase phone location data for the sake of voter persuasion (Warzel & Thompson, 2020). Computational propaganda, however, challenges these online campaigns and democracy since it can be used to fake political support and “likes” on social media. That raises the likelihood of public sentiment manipulation and dissemination of political misinformation (Apuke, 2018).

With the rapid rise in support for extreme right-wing populism in recent years, understanding the meaning and importance of emotions in political mobilization has taken on new urgency. During the 2016 presidential campaign, various experts in the media postulated that Trump was more emotionally connected to voters in a way that was not seen in recent elections in the U.S.A. According to some experts, the thought was that Trump was activating “emotional triggers,” which the brain uses to avoid cognitive energy, tapping into the functions of the emotional brain where decisions are made with speed and intensity. This tactic is no different in manner than when marketers of products use emotion built by reaction to reality and the belief structure it creates (disgust, terror, admirable, sublime) to mobilize support (Betz, 2020).

The role of new media in reshaping political parties and election campaigns is driven by a conflict that exists between power and interactivity. Digital media encourages systemic creativity, and election campaigns are seen as an opportunity for customized and potentially divisive political expression while at the same time accommodating populist appeal (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016). Advances in technology have changed the way news is distributed and absorbed: Users are not only consumers of news but also creators of web content. As a result, a collaborative news awareness network has emerged, encouraging digital activism through voluntary content in online communities. Findings show that digital activism bursts occur during times of prolonged public interest shortfall or surplus (Mahabir et al., 2018).

While political advertising is banned on television and radio in some countries, laws governing online videos are more flexible. In the U.S.A., the source of political television commercials must be disclosed, but this is not the case with online political advertisements. Media control in democratic countries is still a contentious issue, and tech giants with a business motive are pressured to self-regulate. Although new media creates new opportunities, it still poses certain risks. Leading social media networks like Facebook and Twitter have faced constant scrutiny for political advertising. These tech companies will have to follow a wide range of local laws if governments decide to tighten rules on online advertising (D.D., 2016).
Democracy faces many challenges today, and with the rise of populism, events like Britain’s exit from the European Union and President Trump’s election have hindered people’s confidence. While widespread participation makes democracy stronger, political participation among citizens has declined. Several theorists have proposed that citizens have a responsibility to engage in democratic life, and if they fail to do so, they may be legally compelled into participating. This raises concerns about governance and the growing cynicism of citizens around the globe (Parvin & Saunders, 2018).

Overview of book chapters

The main argument that has been put forward by scholars in political marketing has been the importance of focusing on theories and frameworks from the field of marketing, and how it is applied to the field of politics. In marketing, the success of all companies always begins with a focus on the needs and wants of their customers, and the importance of monitoring how those needs and wants change. Certainly the role of innovation is critical to the success of all companies, and must be used to respond to changes in the business, political, social and economic environments of all countries as technology forces those changes. The same is true in politics, and if the needs and wants of citizens and voters are met, then democracy is strengthened. At the same time, those needs and wants must be closely monitored, not just during an election campaign, but afterwards as well, as the role of political marketing takes on a new role, sometimes referred to as the “permanent campaign.” Hence, the ultimate aim of the work carried out in the field is to strengthen democracy, and even where the government that exists is not necessarily democratic, any leader, be it a despot or dictator must always keep a close eye on public opinion, and how that is interpreted and played out in the form of policies that dictate the role of government and impact the lives of all citizens. In light of this orientation, we have spelled out the chapters that follow this thinking.

In Chapter 1, Michael Cornfield uses the 2020 U.S. presidential election as the basis for an analysis of the impact that political marketing is having on democracy. He highlights the critical findings and theories that document the political power of social media, and the extent to which and in what ways the connection between Big Tech companies, government and citizens has shaped the current situation in which the U.S.A. finds its democracy. As part of his analysis, he reports on the research that supports key findings and arguments both for and against the role of social media and its impact on democracy. In the process of carrying out this analysis, he highlights three issue areas: The
unequal role of Big Tech in selected election and advocacy campaigns; how Big Tech content priorities has impacted the debate in this area; and argues that the lack of Big Tech methodological checks and balances has abetted the spread of disinformation. He concludes with an assessment of the response to these realities from Democrat and Republican institutions and his own innovative solution to deal with this democratic challenge.

In Chapter 2, Wojcieh Cwalina and Andrzej Falkowski use elections from around the globe to explore the role of the power of politicians and their political parties to convince an electorate that they represent the best alternative for them. They compare and contrast the use of rationality versus emotion to establish the goal of a political party and its leader, and give examples of how this plays out in various issue campaigns. Regardless of the type of campaign that is at the heart of the ideological basis behind it, they show how and where different goal-setting strategies have impacted the thinking and actions of an electorate, and why this will become even more important in future campaigns as the whim of an electorate or an extreme event will continue to shape election outcomes. They argue that ideology is a characteristic of both citizens as well as politicians, with the implication that movements may be started by either one, and be the basis for the reasoning behind it. Their focus is on those election campaigns where the actors are convinced that they truly understand what a country needs, and without their ideological orientation a government cannot guarantee the welfare of its’ citizens. The chapter provides multiple explanations and connections between ideology and the strategic and tactical uses of political marketing, with their concluding comments that it strengthens democracy.

In Chapter 3, Dominic Wring provides a comprehensive overview of the use of political marketing in modern day elections in the U.S.A. and the U.K. He gives a brief overview of how professionals in both countries have played significant roles in recent presidential-level campaigns, paying close attention to the activities of Cambridge Analytica in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, and the scandal surrounding their role in the Trump campaign and the ethics of their use of targeting tools to identify those voters who were most likely to change their voting preferences. His analysis of how political campaigns have been transformed in both countries are captured by the different terms some have used to explain this, including: Americanization, modernization, media-tization, marketization and professionalization. All of these terms highlight the fact that political marketing is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but one that is part of the process of democracy that must respond to mass electorates. He concludes by making the argument that political marketing is not exclusively U.S. originated, but has been widely influenced there due to the sophistication
of the commercial marketing industry, and parallels with the political marketplace and common use of emotive, expensive and potentially manipulative campaigns to win over voters. Along with the British parallels, and use of these techniques, he encourages democratic country experts to carefully examine how their countries are relying on these same strategies and tactics, as well as those countries that previously relied on elections but have succumbed to dictatorial control of their countries.

In Chapter 4, Matt VanDyke and Nicole Lee provide an overview of issues management and its use as a conceptual tool for analyzing how political actors manage science and technology issues in the public sphere. Using the cases of climate change, stem cell research and genetic genology, the authors show how these issues cut across matters of fact, value and policy, respectively, and ways in which an issues management framework helps to unpack how citizens form opinions on these issues and political actors seeks to manage and influence that opinion. The authors conclude by outlining how an issues management framework may compliment current political marketing theory and practice focused on the management of contested and complex issues.

In Chapter 5, Jody Baumgartner carries out an extensive review of the guidelines that are used in most political campaigns in the U.S.A. His chapter provides an overview of how political marketing has been integrated into modern-day campaigns. Focusing on presidential campaigns, he looks at the role of personnel in campaign management; the resources that are used to finance campaigns, including the role of fund-raising, budgeting and spending; and finally looks at what exactly takes place in a campaign, including the use of planning, communication and strategy, all from a management perspective. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the importance of successfully integrating a number of different parts in a timely fashion based on well-thought out strategies, and the caveat that even by following these guidelines, there is not a guarantee for success. This then sets the stage for the following chapters that pick up on sub-categories of political campaigns.

In Chapter 6, Christine B. Williams synthesizes the work carried out in social media over the past two decades, with a detailed analysis of the research of the most influential scholars from countries around the world. She makes the case that there has been an upsurge in interest in this area by scholars in related fields to political marketing over the past ten years, with a new emphasis on areas that represent advanced technologies beyond the previous focus that tended to center on websites. Her chapter includes an analysis of research carried out in social media between the years 2002 and 2020, with a focus on the articles published in the *Journal of Political Marketing*, which she credits
with the most exhaustive review of the literature in this area. Her analysis of scholarly research focuses on a few key characteristics of the work carried out, including: usage of the technique, the actors involved, the specific activities carried out, the approach and methodology used, and the geographic locus or country where it was carried out. This analysis leaves us with a very clear trajectory of where the scholarly work in this area first developed, where it is headed in the future, and where the most promise lies based on the research conducted to date.

In Chapter 7, Christopher Pich establishes the importance of branding as part of the political process, and makes the point that whereas this construct has been borrowed from commercial uses and theories concerning it, the political application of it highlights the complexity of its use and understanding. Along this line of thinking, he puts forward a typology of political brands in the same fashion one would find with commercial brands. He argues that the role of branding in politics can only be successful if it is constantly analyzed from the voter’s vantage point. The chapter is organized around a discussion of different typologies of political brands, their segmentation strategies and tactics, and the development of an organization’s positioning strategy. The sub-categories discussed are then integrated into a model that covers the strategic process of managing political brands, using a political branding campaign in the U.K. as a case study.

In Chapter 8, Daniel Bergan covers several critical elections in the United States, with an eye on how the mass media played a role in each. He defines exactly what mass media is, the role of the mass media in political campaigns, and argues that it still plays a significant role in elections in light of the emphasis that has been placed on digital and social media in more recent elections. He comes to three key conclusions concerning mass media: There is evidence to indicate that mass media in fact has an influence on voter choice; the fact that the context of a campaign influences the content of the ads used; and finally, that the sophistication of communication technology makes it possible to deliver messages to specific individuals. This analysis is carried out with a thorough review of various U.S. campaigns.

In Chapter 9, Roberto de Miguel Pascual and Rosa Berganza cover an area of particular relevance to the political climate that exists today in democracies around the world – political disaffection. They focus on the measurement of attitudes in an era of scandal and the challenges of carrying out this important task for any person in a campaign that seeks to understand how best to respond to an electorate that may be reluctant to support any politician and political party for that matter. Their chapter covers both the theoretical underpinnings
of this construct as well as the findings from a recent study on Spanish voters that lends insight into how this played out in a recent Spanish election. They argue that it is of critical importance that democracies work to eliminate the possibility of a nation becoming tolerant of corruption, as this will only lead to a tolerance of corrupt politicians. Throughout their chapter, they attempt to offer empirical answers to a problem for which the social sciences have not provided a unitary answer. They argue that there is a lack of theoretical cohesion in this area because of the breadth of the area, and the many explanations that exist across different social science disciplines. They conclude with some recommendations on future research.

In Chapter 10, Greg Simons brings to light the theoretical and practical differences between political marketing and propaganda. He argues that whereas there are differences between the two, they are used in both the popular media and in academic research interchangeably. Relying on examples from recent elections in different countries, and looking at some of the classic literature in the field, he highlights the debate that continues on in the field, and looks at the critical role that communication and persuasion play in impacting the mindset of voters during an election campaign. Definitions of propaganda based on historical references from different countries are made, as well as a critical assessment of the impact it had on democracy. The role of political marketing is compared and contrasted with propaganda, and the future role of each is established and defined for Western democracies. He makes the case that this is an underdeveloped area in the field and must be understood by looking at new ways to add an insight into the area, which he does in this chapter.

The recent developments in the field of political marketing over the past few presidential cycles in the U.S.A. has set the stage for how other democracies around the world have implemented the latest technological advances into their unique political situations. The same electoral strategies used to elect a politician and political party members are being used to run government, what many have referred to as the permanent campaign (Newman and Newman, 2018). The future of political marketing and the relative impact it will have on democracies for decades to come will rest on the shoulders of scholars who are able to disseminate their understanding of its use and mis-use, and the ability of those who use it to implement these strategies to continue to win elections, and strengthen democracies around the globe.
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