

## **Election Marketing and Neuromarketing from a Politician's Perspective: A Thematic Analysis of the Content of Interviews Conducted in the Pre-Campaign During the SARS-Cov-2 Pandemic in Romania**

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### **Abstract**

The pandemic period has generated major changes in all sectors, across the globe, and these changes are also felt in election marketing practices that ramify on political consumer behaviour. The current environment may lead to permanent changes in election marketing practices, and neuromarketing could be a valuable tool to target the needs and desires of eligible voters. In this direction, we conducted a fundamental research, from the perspective of politicians, during the pre-campaign period of the pandemic in Romania. Thematic content analysis was used to identify themes in the textual dataset based on word content. The themes identified in the data analysis were the following: (a) Perceptions of election marketing; (b) Perceived changes in election marketing practices over time in Romania; (c) Perceptions of the politician in terms of marketing; (d) Attributes required of a Romanian politician; (e) Perceptions of lobbying practices in Romania; (f) Romanian politicians' perceptions/understanding of neuromarketing techniques; (g) Election marketing strategies during the pandemic period. Politicians want their messages to reach all segments, or the context generated by SARS-Cov-2 directs the implementation of new electoral marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Election marketing, neuromarketing, political marketing, SARS-Cov-2, marketing.

**JEL classification:** M31.

### **Introduction**

Evidence from the literature (Gbadeyan, 2011), argues that marketing has been extended from the field of exchanging services and goods to the distribution of ideas. As for the concept of political marketing, it is seen as an alliance between political science and marketing. The direction towards democratic politics is shaped by the application of the marketing concept in politics. Thus, the election of leaders by voting is a foundation of democratic societies. By voting, the candidate formally expresses support for a preferred candidate, idea or party. As countries have undergone social and cultural changes throughout history, the voting system itself has undergone many changes. It is believed (Johnson, Pollock and Rauhaus, 2020), that although throughout history several tragic events have led to political changes, in the current

conjuncture, created by the new coronavirus, the task of nations is to keep people alive, and this is likely to lead to the reorganization of politics. The perception of leadership, and many other factors, play a part in specific electoral outcomes. Reid (1988), suggests that most of the time the election issue is a marketing one, although politicians rarely acknowledge this fact. In particular, politicians lack knowledge of consumer behaviour and there is little research that addresses these issues. In this sense, political neuromarketing, which applies neuroscience technology to politics, could lead to an understanding of public opinion, which is the core of the democratic system, rather than manipulating the electorate (Lee, Brandes, Chamberlain and Senior, 2017). At the same time, the field of neuromarketing could provide an objective understanding as it, "applies neuroscientific methods to analyse and understand human behaviour in relation to markets and marketing exchanges" (Feenstra and Pallarés-Domínguez, 2017). It is believed (Lock and Harris, 1996), major parties want to attract the electorate to win elections with the goal of holding power. In achieving this goal, parties need to obtain funding from companies, trade unions, organisations or individuals, in addition to attracting and retaining members. These types of funding are not legal in Romania, as the law on lobbying is not regulated, although (Brinig, Holcombe and Schwartzstein, 1993), it is likely to benefit the general welfare of legislators rather than private interests.

## **1. Political marketing and election marketing**

Hughes and Dann (2009), believes that political marketing aims to make value-for-vote offers for the benefit of stakeholders. Whereas, the products offered by political parties are designed to a target market, the products offered by the political process and the act of government are made to meet the broader needs of society. Thus, Matei-Sarandi (2020), states that, "election marketing is a sum of sales strategies combined with effective communication and mass influence techniques". O'cass (1996), suggests that if the concept of marketing is to be applied by a party or politician, they must be able to adapt and meet the needs of the people entitled to vote. Information is distributed by politicians in order to produce behavioural change and to maintain voter support. To facilitate this process, the candidate must have a sufficient understanding of the values of the eligible voters. The interpretation of the marketing concept provides the link between the marketing exchange process and the concept of marketing as a way to facilitate and create effective exchanges.

### **1.1. Lobbying as a form of election marketing**

The literature, sees political marketing and lobbying as being based on marketing methods (Harris and McGrath, 2012). Lobbying is based on the principle that voters are rational in the sense that they vote for the politician (and party) that serves their interest, given the information available. In politics, lobbying, persuasion or interest representation, is the act of legally attempting to influence the actions, policies or decisions of government officials, most often legislators or members of regulatory agencies (Sorensen, 1995). Of interest to the field of neuromarketing and lobbying is Falk's study, which suggests that the temporoparietal junction (TPJ) is the only brain region, which differentiated more successful and less successful social influencers (Falk et al., 2013).

### **1.2. Personal attributes of the politician**

Alsamydai et al. (2013), sees the product (the politician) as a formation comprising personal and non-personal qualities. Thus, the political product, is seen as "the mixture of personal and non-personal aspects that should be integrated into the political product in order to be accepted by the public and to achieve the goals promised by the organization to which the political candidate belongs". These characteristics distinguish the political product from

competitors both within the political organisation and within competing political organisations. Caprara and Vecchione (2013), believes that in the field of politics, due to the influence of the media and their focus on the personality of politicians, there has been a preoccupation on the part of candidates, under pressure to convey a favourable personal image, to construct enticing narratives to attract potential voters. On the other hand, voters' personalities play an equally important role, and their political preferences depend on their liking or disliking of political candidates.

### **1.3. The evolution of electoral marketing**

Rojas Carrillo (2014), points out that, with the passage of time, there has been an evolution in electoral marketing, whereby people have acquired the right to vote, through a participatory democratic election, and by adding up the majority of votes, the representative is elected. (Y Patiño and Goldaráz (2014), suggests that the paradigm shift in the political context and the way political communication is evaluated, i.e. the convergence of public opinion, changed after the attack in the United States of America on September 11, 2001, with the emotional component, otherwise unconscious, visible in the evaluations of international political communication. Communication strategies have the same essence, but political communication has moved to another level, thanks to the use of market research techniques. These techniques also refer to the field of neuromarketing, which was partly influenced by the circumstances created by September 11, 2001.

### **1.4. Political Neuromarketing**

Pop et al. (2014), reports that neuroimaging research is not only demarcated to the conventional marketing field, as similar studies are conducted in politicians' election campaigns. This, denotes that as technology progresses, performance is amplified and information is becoming more accessible. Y Patiño and Goldaráz (2014), believes that neuromarketing has gained its place in the political arena due to the political and electoral communication perspective, especially in the international environment. Political neuromarketing is seen as a new subfield that helps political marketers gain more detailed insights into the brain mechanisms of the political consumer's mind and their response to political marketing stimuli, without requiring cognitive or conscious participation, this is made possible through exposure to MRI and similar neuroimaging technologies, with the aim of engaging and improving the political marketing mix that blends with the culture of the political consumer. Tingley (2006), argues us that, one of the great challenges of neuromarketing, has been given by the lack of familiarity, with medical neuroimaging techniques, of most political scientists around the world. The second challenge was that most traditional neuromarketing studies and applications are mainly based on laboratory experiments requiring a group of volunteers. Arguably, the increasing use of neuromarketing in today's political market has reduced most of the traditional neuromarketing challenges.

### **1.5. Election marketing in pandemic**

The political scene and beyond has been affected by the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic in several countries around the world. The political landscape is most likely to undergo changes in terms of election marketing. In America, it is believed that the 2020 presidential election will suffer, and the severity of the pandemic situation may have a huge impact on the presidential election (Johnson, Pollock and Rauhaus, 2020). Johnson et al. (2020), believes that there has almost never been an event in American history that has reshaped the political landscape in just a few months. And this could lead to policy changes on education, immigration, the environment, health care, gun control and other issues.

In this sense, the clarifying context is not fully known, which could create an opportunity to do things not thought possible before this crisis. It has also introduced pressing challenges for societies and democratic systems around the world, transforming some fundamental aspects of the social life of individuals, or it may impact on the fulfilment of individual and collective civic responsibility and political rights. In other words, it is a year that has brought unpredictability and uncertainty across all social spectrums.

## **1.6. Research objectives**

### **1.6.1. General objectives**

This paper will address the field of election marketing, as politics influences and can exert power over all areas of organizations, institutions, the economic system, health care, research, etc. Politicians' perceptions could provide valuable information that ultimately impacts the well-being of society at large.

The aim of the present research is to identify politicians' perceptions of the field of neuromarketing with applicability in the political context, of electoral marketing and of some of its criteria, approached through the marketing lens.

### **1.6.2. Specific objectives**

The objectives of the present study are: (1) To identify the perception of politicians on the concept of electoral marketing; (2) To identify the perceived changes, over time, in electoral marketing practices in Romania; (3) To identify the perception of the politician in terms of marketing; (4) To identify the personal attributes necessary for the Romanian politician; (5) The perception of lobbying practices in Romania; (6) To identify the perceptions/ understanding of Romanian politicians regarding the use of neuromarketing techniques; (7) To identify electoral marketing strategies in times of pandemic.

## **2. Research method**

### **2.1. Participants**

The subjects of this study are people who have held political positions and have been or are involved in an electoral campaign, in several cities and counties of Romania: 3 deputy mayors (Predeal, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca), 1 sub-prefect (Cluj Napoca), 1 councillor in the Ministry of Labour and Interior (Cluj Napoca), 1 deputy (Cluj Napoca), 1 senator (Cluj Napoca), 2 mayors (Cluj county), 1 political analyst (Bucharest), 1 vice-president of a county council (Baia Mare). These participants also held/hold related political positions, such as local councillor, foreign politician, municipal councillor, press manager in the Romanian Senate, etc. The sample consists of 11 male participants, aged between 37 and 61.

### **2.2. Assessment tools**

Participants in the study were asked seven main questions in a semi-structured interview, and an interview guide was formed to achieve this. The questions asked of the politicians were related to the politicians' experiences, knowledge, behaviours and opinions.

Data were collected between 01.07.2020-30.07.2020 (pre-campaign), by telephone, the nature of the information is primary, specifically developed to meet the objectives of this study.

### **2.3. Design and model specification**

The present research is a qualitative study and the data obtained was examined through thematic content analysis to make inferences by identifying specified characteristics of the message. It began by identifying the main dimensions/characteristics of the interviews and a coding system was developed for each characteristic. An open coding method was used, so

after going through the material, codes were attached to each unit of text as it emerged from the text.

## 2.4. Research procedure

Participants in the study were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the present research, through a telephone interview, on political and electoral marketing.

The important political sampling method was used. The telephone data collection method was used for epidemiological reasons, as a state of alert has been declared in Romania. Politicians chose whether to respond immediately or to schedule the interview at a later date, after a brief presentation of the purpose of this study and the time (approximate) needed to obtain the interview.

## 3. Research results

### 3.1. Data analysis

*Dedoose*:8.3.35 software was used to first code the questions and then the answers were coded in an open code format. The coded responses were then developed into themes based on the interview questions and word frequency was measured based on the number of code occurrences, relative to the question code in the code co-occurrence list. Similar codes were grouped together to form initial themes. An iterative process was used to reduce the data by combining overlapping themes and eliminating redundant themes. Variations within categories were labeled as subcategories to identify relationships and possible new emerging themes. In the following, the data will be exposed through a process of abstraction appropriate to each theme, and the tables are adapted as suggested by the literature (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008).

The themes that emerged from the data analysis were the following: (a) Perceptions of election marketing; (b) Perceived changes in election marketing practices over time in Romania; (c) Perceptions of the politician in terms of marketing; (d) Attributes required of a Romanian politician; (e) Perceptions of lobbying practices in Romania; (f) Romanian politicians' perception/understanding of neuromarketing techniques; (g) Election marketing strategies during the pandemic period.

*Table 1. Politicians' perception of election marketing.*

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Election marketing	Implementation	Different in counties
		Used only during the campaign period
	Purpose	Bridge
		Information
		The use of own product (the law) to pass the vote
	Promotion	Tool to promote the politician
		Strategy for creating programs
		Image creation strategy
		Promoting interest-based values
		Powerful instrument
	Extremely important	

In achieving the objective of identifying the perception of the concept of election marketing, some promotion strategies, the purpose of election marketing and the way of implementing election marketing in Romania have resulted (*table 1*). Thus, some of the respondents described electoral marketing as a strategy to create a favourable image of the politician or a strategy to create programmes for the benefit of the electorate. Other respondents stated that election marketing is only used during election periods to promote the interest of



politicians based on their values, or this is wrong. The majority of respondents believe that election marketing is extremely important as a good mechanism to build a bridge with the electorate. One of the respondents states that: *"Election marketing, has its applicability in promoting the politician, as plans but also as profile"*. At the same time, this powerful tool is used differently, depending on the region, to convey specific information to the electorate and to optimise the politician's image both inside and outside the party. Inside the party, the politician uses marketing to promote his own product (the law). Unfortunately, election marketing is also used to promote interest-based values.

**Table 2. Perceived changes in electoral marketing practices over time in Romania.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Changing election marketing practices over time	Change	Positive
		Expenditure limit
		Transparency
	Methods	Opinion polls
		Technology
		Online environment

In terms of perceptions of changes in election marketing practices over time in Romania (table 2), all survey participants expressed satisfaction with how election marketing strategies have undergone positive changes. Thus, the implementation of spending limits requires transparency and technology offers the possibility for opinion polls to be conducted online. At the same time, respondents described how election marketing campaigns now involve extensive use of technology to target specific sub-populations, such as young voters. One respondent noted that, *"The digital generation has more access to information, which increases competitiveness among politicians and this is very good."* Moreover, some participants felt that the increased use of technology in the election campaign has facilitated direct contact between politicians and the electorate.

**Table 3. Perception of the politician in marketing terms.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
The politician in marketing terms	Politician (product)	Product presented to the electorate
		Packaged product
		Party product
		Product founding
	Product content	Flexibility
		Good manager

Participants in the study described the politician as the equivalent of a *"packaged product"* in marketing terms, with some descriptions including *"party product"* as well as *"product presented to the electorate"*. In building the political product, teams of specialists are used to optimise their public performance. One respondent said: *"Seen from a marketing point of view, the politician is a product "dressed" in the clothes the electorate wants. The most important thing for the electorate is that the politician looks like them. The messages are different and created according to the segment, being adjusted to the level of the citizen."* It is stressed that in order to have a quality content, this political product (the politician) has to be flexible, in order to respond to the electorate's demands and succeed in being a good manager.

**Table 4. Attributes necessary for the Romanian politician.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Attributes needed by politicians	Personal attributes	Ability to handle
		Charisma
		Communication and listening
		Empathy
		Humble
		Integrity
		Orderly in thought
		Patience
		Pragmatism
		Sociability
		Sense of responsibility
		Flexibility
		Professionalism
		Non-personal attributes
	Experience	
	Education	

The majority of respondents considered that the most important attribute a Romanian politician needs is charisma. Other attributes mentioned included communication and listening, empathy, experience, professionalism, sociability and flexibility. These attributes lead the politician towards a positive image. From one politician's account, *"Charisma is indispensable, although in the digital age the politician can easily be transformed and packaged into what one wants. If charisma is missing, winning elections will depend on the opponent."* Some participants also mentioned attributes such as integrity, education, access to information and the ability to manipulate as being of importance. Although the image is a non-personal characteristic, the image is constructed on the basis of personal characteristics.

**Table 5. Perception of lobbying practices in Romania.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Lobbying practices in Romania	Advantages	Lobbying would be good for Romania
	Disadvantages	Lobbying is not ethical
		Lobbying could be ethical or unethical
	Legislating	Lobbying is regulated in other countries
		Lobbying should not be regulated in Romania
		Lobbying should be regulated in Romania
		Lobbying is not regulated in Romania

Regarding lobbying, most respondents acknowledged that, although lobbying is not legislated, it still takes place behind closed doors in Romania today. The majority of respondents believe that regulating lobbying as it currently operates in other democracies would be beneficial as it would eliminate corrupt practices and make the lobbying process transparent and within the law. Some respondents believe that lobbying would help communities, and that this would allow companies and politicians to implement citizen-friendly programs. One respondent said, *"Lobbying is imperative, it is hard to get anything done without being introduced. If you look at American lobbying, many companies can bring multiple benefits to citizens, by creating jobs, helping with infrastructure, rolling money into the city, etc."* Although most interviewees were of the opinion that regulating lobbying would benefit the country, some were more sceptical, believing that it was too early to implement this law due to the high level of corruption in Romania. Some politicians believe that implementing

lobbying practices for self-interest is unethical. Thus, depending on the politician and the goal he or she is aiming for, the regulation and application of the lobbying law could be ethical or less ethical.

**Table 6. Romanian politicians' perception/understanding of neuromarketing techniques.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Political neuromarketing	Domain	Extremely important
		Premature for Romania
		Scientific
		Unknown by politician
	Character	Unethical
		Ethical
	Instrument	Gives the politician too much influence
		Beneficial
		Costly
		Manipulating the electorate
	Powerful	

The analysis of the participants' responses regarding their perception of the use of neuromarketing in politics revealed that it is a truly beneficial and necessary technique for optimizing the effectiveness of election marketing. Indeed, some of the participants are of the opinion that, it is a scientific tool that is very powerful and would enhance electoral manipulation tactics. The following excerpt describes some of the politicians' perception of the field of neuromarketing with use in a political context: *"Applying neuromarketing to political practice would be beneficial because every politician hires firms to optimize his or her public performance, and in achieving this goal it is important to identify the emotion that leads to winning power"*. Most politicians also consider the use of neuromarketing in election marketing to be an ethical practice: *"The techniques used in neuromarketing being ethical and fair would be of great help to the politician, who has an interest in doing things for the citizenry, and those things should be what the voter wants. Neuromarketing has nothing to do with the politician's good or bad plan, and the target audience often chooses emotionally and not rationally"*. However, some respondents believe that neuromarketing is an expensive technique and too powerful a "weapon" for politicians to use, as it could be used for personal gain. Even though participants acknowledged that political neuromarketing is the future of election marketing, it is believed that it is premature to use these techniques in Romania.

**Table 7. Election marketing strategies during the pandemic period.**

Main categories	Generic categories	Subcategories
Election marketing in pandemics	Message delivery	Online environment
		Print media, flyers, TV
		Communication channels will be adapted
	Practices	Extension of the campaign period
		Remote campaign
		Segmented strategy
	Methods	Technology
		Transparency

Participants interviewed acknowledged that the current pandemic is having a negative impact on traditional election marketing strategies and stressed the need to design a new election marketing campaign adapted to the health context. The strategies suggested by the politicians involve remote campaigning techniques through TV commercials, online campaigns, online newspapers and social media platforms. One respondent said: *"In the current*



*epidemiological context, election marketing needs to move from the physical to the online environment. [ .....] Subversive methods will be interesting, now the creativity starts".* On the other hand, concern was expressed about the limitations of adapting election marketing strategies in such a short time, in the online environment, as a result of the pandemic. It is believed that remote and online campaigning can only cover the youth segment and these constraints make it easier for some of the dishonest politicians with huge financial backing to buy media appearances and manipulate young people (because they are the most present in the online environment). As a solution, it is proposed that the political campaign be extended over a longer period of time so that it can be implemented remotely, segmented, by technological methods to ensure transparency.

#### **4. Limits and future research directions**

The social distancing limitations imposed by the pandemic did not allow us to interview politicians face-to-face, and future research would be preferable to take these aspects into account, so as not to lose sight of non-verbal language issues. Delaying the interviews until the health context allowed would have led to the completion of the pre-campaign, and politicians could have been influenced by the strategy of the opponents. At the same time, the pre-campaign period is a busy time for politicians and time resources are limited. The political status of the participants in the study, imposes access difficulties for the researchers. Also, a lack of standardisation in question wording, which is specific to semi-structured interviews, limits the comparability of information. At the same time, possible inconveniences related to the study participants' state of tiredness or their psychological or other moods were tried to be controlled by scheduling the interview on another day or at another time, preferred by the interviewee. The method of data collection is reactive, so politicians who participated in the interview may have changed their attitudes and behaviours. Inevitably, with some participants in the study, there was some discussion about the discrepancy between the political agenda and what actually happens after winning the election. This topic is not directly relevant to the objectives of the study, but is of great interest as it weakens trust between political consumers and the political product. It would be worth investigating in the future, using neuromarketing methods, to identify to what extent the political agenda formulated in the election campaign as an election marketing strategy is consistent with what the politician really wants. Future research could also identify the extent to which new election marketing strategies adapted to the pandemic period have led to the desired results and whether the adoption of these practices is desired in the future.

#### **5. Discussion and Conclusions**

This paper has managed to identify some common threads that run through a set of interviews, obtaining data about certain actions and contexts in which some political activities were undertaken, i.e. the real attitudes and motives of some politicians, which cannot be explained by the application of questionnaires. As this is qualitative research, which does not aim to extend data to the whole population. Thus, the sample size is not important and the focus is on the information received from the interviewees (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). The present study, refers to the validity of interpretation through the meaning of actions or behaviours from the participants' perspective. Fidelity does not refer to the quality or consistency of the measurements, as we may not get the same result every time, the question may differ from time to time, or there may be large differences between researchers studying the same phenomenon. Through open coding, the data were disassembled, conceptualised and reassembled resulting in new data. The presentation of the data was done in a quantitative style, for each theme the resulting codes and their frequency were treated as response variants. At the

same time, the data are presented in a narrative style, by presenting the responses received in the form of a story, illustrated with quotes from the text, providing a better perspective on the primary information and a check on the correctness of the interpretations.

The sample was made up exclusively of men, but the situation that can be observed in Romanian politics is that those political positions that are inaccessible to women are those that offer real executive power and legitimacy. For example, in 2020, in Romania, female candidates for local elections accounted for 22.9%, of which less than 10% for mayor, according to a report published by Expert Forum, with the support of the Canadian Embassy in Romania (Pârvu, Ioniță and Popescu, 2020). The situation does not seem to have improved in terms of women's executive power in the Ministry either, with Romania having only one female minister after the 2020 elections. Thus, there is a significant gender gap in the filling of non-eligible seats, with women mostly being figureheads in political positions. It is possible that the trend generated by this gender disproportionality in terms of filling positions with executive power starts at the base of the political organisations on which Romanian democracy is based. A correct diagnostic method could lead to the identification of solutions in this direction.

In line with the objectives, seven themes were identified through thematic content analysis, which was used to identify themes in the textual dataset based on word content.

Political marketing and election marketing, has come to our attention, given that politics has a pervasive character in all interactions of human groups, with consequences for the entire economy and our well-being in general. Identifying the perception of politicians on the issues that have been dealt with in this study gives us an insight into their thinking and the separation of their common needs from their individual needs.

Depending on the election marketing strategy the politician adopts, political consumers can be swayed in one direction or another. Most studies, identify voter perception of election marketing strategies, but this study aimed to provide an insight into the perception of politicians that can be used to the benefit of citizens and not the other way around. Obtaining data on politicians' perceptions of election marketing could lead to knowledge of a judgement that comes from within the political system.

As regards the use of neuromarketing techniques by politicians, it should be pointed out that this powerful tool must aim to meet the needs of citizens. The present study has succeeded in identifying the extent to which neuromarketing methods are seen as ethical and practicable in Romania in the political context. Like any new field, neuromarketing has both supporters and opponents, and controversies have not been slow to emerge, but with the emergence of more studies, confidence in the field has increased (Fisher, Chin and Klitzman, 2010; Cherubino et al., 2019). At the same time, some politicians do not seem to resort to very ethical methods in gaining and maintaining power, daring to say that politicians do not always apply scientific methods nor do they ask permission from the electorate in creating their election marketing strategy (Thompson, 2013; Cadwalladr and Graham-Harrison, 2018).

By implementing new election marketing strategies, which are required by the pandemic context, it is hoped that the politician's message will reach all age groups. Moreover, the current health context may differentiate between capable and less capable politicians, or this could steer our voting decision towards the politician who will influence at least part of our future. At the same time, it is possible that new election marketing practices will be adopted in the future, in the absence of pandemics, perhaps even the abandonment of some old practices, or a mix of the most effective election marketing practices, could structure future campaigns.

The attributes required of a politician, can have implications in the management of day-to-day problems or in crisis situations, such as pandemics, which require a well-functioning medical, economic and education system. Furthermore, by identifying the attributes of the

politician, we could outline a small profile of the politician, which would support the basic yardstick of our voting decision. It is possible that the attributes that the politician thinks are necessary are not similar to those of the electorate, so politicians' attempts to attract votes may fail.

Translating the politician into marketing terms emphasises that the politician is a product that satisfies the demands of citizens. The literature suggests that analogies in election campaigns that associate politicians with '*selling candidates like soap*' are common (Marland, 2003). This expression is used to highlight the fact that the promotion of political candidates is done in the same way as the promotion of soap, exposing the side effects of political marketing. The present study, identified the perception in marketing terms of the politician, from the point of view of the politician and not the media or a marketing practitioner. The general view of the electorate is directed towards ideas taken from the media, but the present study provides views from the '*source*'.

Most likely, our reflection is mirrored in the leadership of the state/region we live in. In this direction, electoral marketing practices have changed over time precisely because the electorate has changed its voting practices. In Romania, in order to attract votes, in the past, various goods were offered, nowadays this is no longer possible due to several influencing forces such as: access to information, age group interested in the political environment, changing needs and requirements and the evolution of technology. Moreover, the introduction of the new law, offering money from the Romanian state for election campaigning and imposing spending limits, is perceived by politicians as positive.

The Lobbying Act, as it works in other countries, brings clarity and transparency to citizens, as the electorate is made aware of the funding the politician receives from various companies and the cause the politician is fighting for. After analysing the data, the majority of participants in the study tend to believe that the Lobbying Law could be regulated in Romania. Probably, there would be a direct surplus for companies, which would lead to economic growth and indirect benefits for society in general, through the implementation of new jobs, infrastructure development, implementation of new projects for the benefit of the whole community and the relevance of the politician's interest.

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