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From the History of the 2005 British General Elections: The Application of Political Marketing in New Labour's PR Campaign During the 2005 General Elections in the UK

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This article mainly concentrated on the evaluation of the use of political marketing tools in New Labour's PR campaign, their efficiency and historical development of the party under T.Blair in 1997-2005. It could be of interest for Russian academics, historians, PR and political marketing specialists, and some of the tools and strategies might be considered and applied in Russian political campaigning.

Keywords: Great Britain, 2005 General Election, historic development of Labour Party under T.Blair, G.Brown, political marketing.

Introduction

The popularity of British Prime-minister G.Brown was one of the lowest in the history of the Labour Party. In May 2010 the Conservative Party leader D.Cameron became the head of the UK. In the light of the British General Elections held in May 2010, it was interesting to examine how the previous elections were won by the Labour and if there was any possibility for the party to win the next elections. The article will focus on the political marketing tools used in New Labour's PR campaign during the 2005 General Elections in the UK.

Nowadays political marketing has been widely applied in different aspects of political life. Voters face a great number of political products on the political market. To be able to attract voters and to win elections, parties may apply various political marketing tools. The application of a marketing mix is essential in the successful performance of a party in the political environment in general and particularly during an electoral campaign. The ability of a party to apply the marketing concept and to adapt to and satisfy voters' needs is also important in electoral success (O'Cass, 1996).

The term 'Political marketing' implies the application of marketing tools to political processes (Maarek, 1995). It helps to improve the efficiency and quality of communication between voters and the parties (Harrop, 1990). Market research allows politicians to base their campaign strategy on the sound information

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of the electorate's needs and desires. An integrated marketing communication strategy, which implies advertisements, PR and the like, focuses the attention of the electorate on the most essential information and, thus, helps comprehension (Ibid.).

Harrop (1990) suggests for the evaluation of party performances dividing marketing into two dimensions: strategy, 'which involves providing things people want' and promotion, 'which is selling the things you have decided to provide' (1990: 277). Strategy is fundamental for a party's successful performance. Harrop (1990) maintains that 'the purpose of strategy is to take the party into a campaign with a level of support which can then be defended [...] through effective promotion during the campaign itself' (1990: 288). New Labour's strategy during the 2005 General Election was to refresh its brand in order to be re-elected. Promotion is a 'more specific and technical task' which counters the strategy and covers 'whether, where and how a party positions itself in the electoral market (Harrop, 1990: 277). Dean and Croft (2001) maintain that Blair's electoral successes can be explained as 'the apotheosis of a PR-led party' (2001: 1206). McNair defines political communication as 'purposeful communication about politics' (McNair, 1995: 4).

Methodology and approach

The analysis of the use of political marketing techniques in New Labour's public relations campaign during the 2005 General Elections is not yet widely covered by academics. The sources reviewed in this essay can be divided into three categories: political marketing, political public relations and New Labour's 2005 General Election campaign.

Various authors have pointed to the use of marketing tools for political purposes or their relevance to governmental communications.

Maarek (1995) deals with the general functional framework of political marketing and its tools, such as the classic instruments as well as audio-visual methods of communication and direct marketing tools. He also details the particular aspects of political marketing in election campaigns. Harrop (1990) explains how marketing perspectives can help to improve party performance, which marketing tools ought to be taken into consideration in politics and the differences in marketing strategies of various political organisations during the pre-election period, during an election campaign and in day-to-day political life. Reid examines the different stages of a political marketing strategy. He stipulates that a successful strategy should be determined by knowledge of consumer behaviour. O'Cass (1996) discusses the importance of the application of the marketing concept to political processes. Harris and Lock (1996) analyse the application of political marketing in British politics. They believe that political brand image is essential for party's competitiveness and performance. The authors maintain that the vast majority of voters make their choice on the basis of an 'overall political package' (Harris and Lock, 1996: 24). They, therefore, suggest that a considerable amount of effort should be focused on the work of the brand. Dean and Croft (2001) propose a model of political marketing based on the 'Six Markets Model' of relationship marketing and the adaptation of the latter to the British political system. They examine different strategies applied in each market. Especially they stress the importance of internal markets for the whole PR-strategy of a campaign. 'Careful management of internal markets prioritises the links between departments and ensures the organisation has one coherent set of strategic objectives to address'(Dean and Croft, 2001: 1205). Lewis-Beck (2006) suggests the direct

influence of economic perceptions on voter's partisanship.

The second category is that of public relations literature. This group includes books on public relations and techniques. A scan of the literature suggests that the most relevant book in this category was McNair's 'An Introduction to Political Communication'. McNair (1995) explains the importance of different types of political communication. This essay concentrates mainly on the chapter about political PR. The author examines four types of activities within political public relations, the importance of each of them and their influence on parties' performances during election campaigns. Further books have not been very valuable in this essay but they may be indispensable as books of reference and may be used in further research. Somerville (2004) explores the intersection of politics, public relations and the media. Wood (2004) stresses the importance of corporate communication and identity in the construction of the party's PR campaign during an election.

The third category comprises literature related to the General Election of 2005. Kavanagh and Butler's (2005) 'The British General Election of 2005' is an invaluable book of reference. It is the seventeenth book in the highly respected series of British general election studies. Kavanagh and Butler (2005) analyse new strategies and methods of communication which made the 2005 Election different from its predecessors. The methods with the help of which New Labour secured a third term, their campaign, its handling in the media are examined as well as the new focus on a more intense struggle in the target seats. Dean (2005) focuses upon the usage of fear in the 2005 General Election Campaign. This work helped to highlight one of the aspects of New Labour's PR strategy and the political marketing tools used in it. Sanders, Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley (2007) point to the use of in-person and Internet data by Labour Party campaign planners for the estimation of voters' turnout and party choice. However, they assume that "few statistically significant differences" can be found "between coefficients generated using the in-person and Internet data" (Sanders, Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley, 2007: 257). Green and Hobolt (2008) stress out how spatial model combined with "issue ownership" approach was applied in the 2005 British General Elections. They suggest that these elections fully revealed that competence considerations had started to outweigh ideological positions of a party.

The main methods applied in the article were content and event analysis. New Labour's election manifestos, speeches of the management of the party and the principle events held and organized as parts of the electoral campaign were examined. For the allocation of each aspect of New Labour's electoral campaign, their examination and evaluation deductive reasoning approach was applied.

Historic background of New Labour's chances for victory in 2005 General Elections

The 2005 election campaign for New Labour differed from the previous two. In 1997 New Labour had been a new fresh brand on the British political market not biased with Old Labour's negative past. Their product – political programme – had been very attractive. They had linked traditional Labour's ideas of a social welfare state with the New Right's ideas of free market, private iniative and neo-liberal economy (Seldon and Kavanagh, 2005). A member of Tony Blair's team commented that in 1997 Labour had won a mandate for two terms (Ibid.). According to Kavanagh and Butler (2005), in 2001 New Labour was in a 'historically unique position' as they had won second consecutive full term and 'had every prospect of a third' (2005: 17).

Nevertheless, the policies of the 1997 and, especially, the 2001 Government changed people's attitude towards New Labour. Blair who "felt instinctively European" and the beginning of whose premiership aimed at "embedding Britain in the European Union" seemed to have changed priorities (Naughtie, 2004: xiii). In his speech in December 15, 1998 Blair changed his tone and argued that Britain did not have to choose between its commitment to Europe or the US. He claimed that "Britain did not have to choose between maintaining strong ties with the US, or strong ties with Europe". He believed that "we are stronger with the US because of our strength in Europe" and "we are stronger in Europe because of our strength with the US" (Blair, 1998). Simon Bulmer in his work about the Blair Government's European policy argues that Britain could not sustain its role as a bridge between Europe and America: "It had to take sides and chose that of President Bush" (Bulmer, 2005). British foreign policy attached to the US direction even stronger with the 9/11 attacks. Bush announced a new Doctrine of pre-emptive strikes and proclaimed "the War on Terror", to which Blair expressed his support: "Now we have to act on the basis of precaution. What is more such action will often require intervention far beyond our own boundaries" (Blair, 2006). Standing 'shoulder-to-shoulder' with the US administration in Afghanistan in 2001 cost Blair the loss of many lives and support of British people. Despite the unpopularity of his actions at home, Blair gave Bush his support on Iraq in 2003.

The protests in London in March 2003 showed the strength of people's discontent. The war in Iraq led to the division of the parliamentary faction of Labour and the resignation of the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. Before the 2005 General Election, Blair, referred to as "Bush's poodle", risked not being re-elected because "the majority of Britons didn't want him to be re-elected" (Carlile, 2004). It is generally accepted that Blair's original modernisation project aimed at the reconciliation of domestic choices with foreign policy. However, the 7th of July London bombings in 2005 indicated that this policy had not worked. Blair's foreign policy choices were damaging not only for the international reputation of the UK, but also for British society as a whole. Moreover, following his American 'brother' hindered Blair's efforts on the restoration of Britain's role in Europe.

9/11 and consecutive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the loss of many British people's lives, Blair's declining popularity, enormous spending on the maintenance of the British contingent in these countries and the large numbers of soldiers' deaths each year, contradictions between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and, as Kavanagh and Butler (2005) put it, '24-hour media' and 'boredom factor' – all these may have led to the diminution of Blair's political capital, the Government's support and the decline in popularity of New Labour and, therefore, to the loss of votes. Before the Iraq war Labour had had a lead in the opinion polls whereas after the war research shows that its support fell by some 3-4 per cent (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005). A member of Number 10's staff claimed that the two terms' mandate that New Labour had won in 1997 had then run out and they were trying to renew it (Ibid.).

New Labour's marketing research and campaign strategy

The idea of a near-term campaign borrowed from the USA was used in 2005 as well as in previous campaigns since 1992 (Ibid.). According to this strategy, before a campaign starts, a party launches new policies and mounts advertising and PR initiatives, hoping to set the news agenda. During the first three month of 2005 Labour announced plans to help first-time house

buyers and to increase paid maternity leave to nine months (Ibid.). It also launched strong PR campaigns to back up its policies and to attract more voters.

In 2005, New Labour strongly needed to change its campaign strategy. Party's campaign strategists argued that the top-down permanent campaigns, used in 1997 and 2001, would not work in 2005 campaign (Ibid.). Before starting the campaign New Labour needed to make a party analysis and find out their strong and weak points to be able to use this information beneficially in the campaign. The attitude towards the political party and its candidates should have been identified. Opinion polls showed that even though voters were 'often satisfied consumers, but when it came to politics they felt impotent and ignored' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 18). The negative impact of salient issues to voters, such as Iraq, was rather strong. The results of the marketing research led to the understanding of the necessity of change in the approach to the public. Therefore, political parties had to move from interruption to permission marketing (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005).

Moreover, owing to Labour's reputation for spin and revelations about the 'faulty intelligence' on Iraq's WMD the New Labour brand 'had become "contaminated" and voters thought Blair all show and no substance' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 18). There was a necessity in the change of PR strategy. In 2003 Blair announced a fresh 'openness'(Kavanagh and Butler, 2005). As a part of it he held regular 'on the record' press conferences and took questions from the Liason Committee of the House of Commons (Ibid.).

Having identified the public's attitudes and the necessity of transformation of their approach to voters, New Labour switched to the analysis of their competitors. According to Kavanagh and Butler, the opposition remained 'unimpressive'

and surveys showed that about the third of those dissatisfied with the Labour Government would still vote for Labour (Ibid.). However, public and private polls reported that the Conservatives' supporters were more likely than Labour's to turn out (Ibid.).

When it came to constituencies, PR professionals advised the party on targeting key seats the party had to hold if it was to win a considerable majority in the General Election (Ibid.). In order to fulfil this aim, new methods of local campaigning were introduced. More use of direct mail and email were employed. MPs were promoted as 'champions of the constituency' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 19). New professionals were employed to conduct the national campaign and to help at the local level. Allocation of resources to key seats and targeting messages in their key constituencies were new methods in Labour's campaigning (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005). During the campaign itself most of the Blair's time was taken up by local press and broadcast interviews and staged photo opportunities (Ibid.). E-campaign was aimed at boosting electoral support on the local as well as the national levels.

Market segmentation, such as targeting a particular group of voters in certain constituencies, was an effective political marketing tool. Another example of market segmentation may be the targeting of party members. New Labour needed to target not only their loyal voters, disillussioned supporters and disengaged voters but also to motivate party people. In November 2003 the party launched the 'Big Conversation' aimed at promoting informal discussions between ministers and party members.

Marketing research comprised surveys in marginal seats and national polls. Half of opinion polls were conducted through cheaper internet-based surveys which led to the increase in the scale of polling compared to 2001 (Ibid.).

The renewal of 'New Labour' brand and party image

A key element in Labour's campaign layed in the prominence given to the renewal of their brand and to the relationship between Brown and Blair. Harris and Lock (1996) stress the importance of political brand image. It is very important to close the gap between the presented and perceived brand. Negative campaigning of competitors can use this difference and play very well on it. The perception of New Labour's brand was different from what they tried to portray. They needed to present New Labour united but the contradictions between Brown and Blair were very serious and could hinder the party's performance in the elections. Nevertheless, Number 10 and 11 reached an agreement to present together in the campaign. That was a part of the party's PR strategy to portray Labour as a team, to make its brand stronger and attractive to voters. That was a good strategic step that helped Labour to stand out from their competitors, especially the Conservatives who were seen as 'divided and old-fashioned' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 57). The image of Blair as a family man was promoted as a part of the brand strengthening strategy.

Corporate identity is essential for the party's performance in general and during an election campaign in particular. This term refers to 'the combination of ways in which an organisation's personality is expressed' (Wood (b), 2004). Labour's logos were considered to be well conveyed and rather effective (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005). In February 2005 Labour unveiled its election slogan: 'Britain Forward Not Back', meaning that despite some failures in its policies, New Labour still considerably improved different aspects of people's lives and voting the Conservatives would mean a huge step backwards and especially in the social State. Mid-campaign the slogan was changed to 'If You Value It, Vote For It' which aimed at bolstering Labour's achievements in health and education (Ibid.). The poster 'Vote Labour On Thursday Or Wake Up With Michael Howard' also stressed that it may be advantageous for voters to stay with Labour. A considerable PR campaign in the press around this poster was launched stressing the dangers of the Conservatives' return in case of abstention. The turnout of 61 %, which was slightly up than on 2001, showed that this campaign may have been successful and attracted the attention of some apathetic voters (Ibid.).

Harrop (1990) believes that 'A "state of the art" campaign still requires a rare combination of circumstances: a sympathetic leader, able lieutenants, a united team and a good dose of fear (1990: 286-287). PR and marketing professionals worked hard to improve the leader's image, to portray a party as a united team. Now they needed 'a good dose of fear'. Labour speakers warned that 'if one in ten don't vote' the Conservatives could come back. They suggested that the Conservatives would be a threat to voters' essential desires and needs. This phrase was also employed in an attempt to encourage more people to vote. Dean (2005) maintains that New Labour's PR strategy focused on positioning Blair as a strong leader, being able to 'provide protection' against such threats as immigration and terror. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that compared to other major parties, the use of negative campaigning by New Labour may have been less.

The promotion of New Labour's political program

In the party's marketing program product positioning plays an essential role. The party platform, its past record, policies, personal characteristics and the image of the party should be taken into consideration (Niffenegger, 1989). According to Harrop (1990), parties seek to convince audiences not only of 'their ability to deliver a quality service but also of their capacity

to maintain that quality over time' (1990: 279). On the 13 of April 2005 Labour launched its new product – the new manifesto. New Labour tried to set an agenda especially around sound steps in improving the education and healthcare systems (Manifesto, 2005). Alan Milburn made a series of speeches promoting a third-term 'for increasing choice for consumers and diversity of providers, all to promote social mobility' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 55). The launch of the new product was accompanied by a number of marketing activities. First of all, the place for the promotion was chosen very carefully.The event took place in the spectacular Mermaid Theatre. The promotion was thoroughly prepared and advertised. The whole Cabinet was assembled at the back of the stage behind Blair and his, at that time presumed, successor, Brown. A number of soundbites were used to emphasise the quality of the proposed product. The manifesto promised to 'personalise public services', to help 'hard-working families', to maintain economic stability and to 'entrench' the similar to 1945 consensus (Manifesto, 2005).

A central element of the campaign for re-election was the economy (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005). Research showed that this topic was a key dividing line between the parties and a major advantage for Labour over the Conservatives (Green and Hobolt, 2008) and, as Kavanagh and Butler (2005) put it, particularly attractive to the party's target voters. Labour's message was focused on its record of economic success and stability and the Conservative threats of economic instability and public service investment cuts (Ibid.). Given the fact that since 1997 New Labour's economic policy had correlated with traditionally Conservative approach, the only way to differentiate and win was to show greater competence in the area. As far as New Labour proved to be highly competent in the most salient issue for British voters, in spite of their traditional policy focuses, such as education

and health, this was one of the most significant contributions to their victory. According to Green and Hobolt (2008), this fact also shows that not only competence considerations are more important than ideological position, but also "increasing the salience" of certain issues "brings a commensurate vote gain" (Green and Hobolt, 2008: 473).

Baring in mind the electorate's complaints that the war in Iraq led to Blair losing interest in lay people's concerns, especially on the NHS, education and the standard of living, he decided to apologise for the the faulty intelligence about WMD. This was a good PR step. However, his apology sounded less contrite than the media expected (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005).

Approach towards target audience and media management

Wood (2004a) argues that New Labour advocated the Stakeholder approach. Stakeholders typically include customers such as voters, members of the local community, employees – members of the party, suppliers – various sponsors of the party. The Stakeholder approach implies research into identifying the main stakeholder groups of the party, their needs and values and the strategy of satisfying them (Wood, 2004a). New Labour also used the 'Six Markets Model' in identifying their key target groups and their essential needs and wants (Dean and Croft, 2001). In 2005 New Labour needed to target not only their loyal, but also swing, disengaged and disillusioned voters using the combination of cognitive and affective approaches. However, it is worth noticing that Labour's campaign strategist targeted the emotional consumer/voter, as in aforementioned logos and posters, than rational. Direct marketing techniques were widely used to appeal to the voter market. New Labour worked closely with local communities. An important part of every PR campaign implies internal

communications. A separate programme was aimed at working directly with party members trying 'to give more party people a sense of ownership of what we are doing' (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005: 19). The four 'uncontrollable' markets were also adressed. Labour PR team tried to maintain dialogue with business and trade unions, pressure groups, peer groups and civil servants directly and using Media channels to send messages to them.

Media management and information management, however, had a number of deficiencies. There was a lack of coordination between the national and local levels of their campaign. There was also an absence of a stable opinion on the important issues of their agenda. Contradictions between Blair and Brown in the begining of the campaign almost led to the creation of two separate campaigns and the absence of one strong strategy. The political marketing tools were not sufficiently employed in these two areas, which may have led to their unseccessful execution.

A survey from the party's supporters showed that lapsed Labour voters were predominantly middle aged and working class and were twice as likely to read the Daily Mail as party voters. Therefore, New Labour's media choices needed to address this group of voters through the Daily Mail as well as the Sun and the Mirror. Blair achieved the support of The Sun and the Mirror. However, the Daily Mail was more sceptic and criticised Blair (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005).

The result of the Election showed that the use of political marketing tools in New Labour's PR campaign may have borne its fruits. Labour had won a comfortable majority of 66 seats whilst only 35.2 % of the vote, the lowest support they had had since 1997. It may have been the evidence of not only the deficiencies in policies but also in PR strategy and insufficient use of political marketing tools which if used responsibly and correctly may

lead to more awareness and involvement in the democratic political process.

Practical implications and conclusion

New Labour employed quite a few political marketing tools during the 2005 Election campaign. Party analysis and research on its positioning on the political market played an important role in New Labour's PR campaign elaboration. Marketing research was widely used to identify voters' attitudes towards certain issues and to check the potential effects of new policy directions. Quantitave research, such as polls, surveys and attitudinal studies were used to monitor potential voter's attitudes and the change in attitudes towards party's policies and their potential choice. Qualitative method, such as focus group discussions, were aimed at raising participation, engagement and awareness of party members themselves.

Market research helped to elaborate effective PR-strategy. New Labour identified the important segments of the political market and tried to target them using appropriate techniques. The application of the marketing concept, stakeholder approach and 'Six Markets Model' was useful in identifying the key target groups, their desires and wants and elaborating strategies for each of them. Direct marketing techniques were employed to appeal to the voter market. Different conferences and 'Big Conversation' programme tried to address internal markets, especially party members, increase their awareness of the importance of party policies and activities engaging them in these activities.

Traditional PR methods such as press conferences, speeches, interviews, exclusives with newspapers, especially the Daily Mirror, the Sun and the Mirror (for as marketing research found considerable part of New Labour's target voters red those newspapers) were widely employed.

They were followed by poster launches. Labour's posters used in the 2005 Campaign may be evaluated as rather powerful and effective.

A central role was given to the improvement of the party's brand image. New methods of local campaigning were introduced and a large E-campaign was held. A fear factor was present in the campaign. Political marketing was employed in different aspects of campaign management, in agenda setting, in issues and news management.

Overall, the use of political marketing tools in New Labour's PR-campaign was successful. Nevertheless, the use of political marketing tools in such aspects as media and information management could have been better worked on. Despite voters' dissatisfaction with the Government and Blair, in the situation of consumer choice of which political party should be in government, Labour has won decisively in 2005.

Some of the above mentioned techniques may be wider used in Russian campaign planning and its development, especially quantitative and qualitative research methods, 'Six Markets Model' in order to attract more target groups and elaborate subtle and effective campaign for each cluster.

Given all the failures, given all the failures in British policies under Gordon Brown in 2007-2010 and the drastic drop in popularity of the leader as well as the whole party, even the best and most sophisticated political marketing tools could not have been sufficient for Labour to be able to win the 2010 General Elections. According to pre-election polls, Conservative party was more likely to come to power in May 2010. Therefore, Labour would have won only if it had undertaken breaking through policy initiatives necessary for and popular among the population, especially on taxes and public policy, promoted them on a very high quality level and convinced British people that Labour should have had opportunity to prove that they were efficient and could be trusted again.

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Из истории Всеобщих парламентских выборов в Великобритании в 2005 г.: Применение инструментов политического маркетинга в PR-кампании Лейбористской партии на Всеобщих выборах 2005 г.

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В статье анализировалось применение инструментов политического маркетинга в PR-кампании Лейбористкой партии на Всеобщих выборах 2005 г. и их эффективность, а также историческое развитие самой партии при Т.Блэре в 1997-2005 гг. Статья может быть интересна ученым, историкам, специалистам в области PR и политического маркетинга. Результаты исследования, инструменты и стратегии, применявшиеся в кампании лейбористов, могут быть рассмотрены и применены в российских политических кампаниях.

Ключевые слова: Великобритания, Всеобщие выборы 2005, историческое развитие Лейбористской партии при Т.Блэре, Г.Браун, политический маркетинг.