

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW POLITICIAN. FACT AND FICTION.

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Electoral marketing is undoubtedly among the most challenging fields for a modern day marketer and also one of the most unforgiving markets. The large amount of resources concentrated over a relatively short period of time and the remarkable speed of reaction involved are the key elements that require scrupulously plan. One of the most recently approached product strategy in electoral marketing involves the facial characteristics of the candidate and how they can influence the communication with the electorate. In order to see what faces does the Romanian electorate like for its politicians 10 groups of 12 people developed their own ideal face for a brand new politician. Those portraits were then analyzed using scientific patterns and so a number of rather interesting characteristics was obtained and compared with the results of conventional researches.

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Electoral marketing in Romania

The electoral marketing is one of the newest and most challenging types of marketing and in the same time one of the toughest on the business. This is a result of the “all or nothing” character of a competition that it doesn’t take any prisoners, at the end of the day when the votes are being numbered there are only two types of candidates: the winner and everyone else.

Another particularity of the electoral marketing is the relatively short time available for the marketing campaign (30 days before the Election Day) and the numerous rules that apply to this activity, rules that are carefully monitored by a large number of observers and organizations.

Also, during this period, the fight can and most certainly will be merciful, any mistake can be the last for a certain candidate and the competition is always on the lookout in order to exploit even the slightest mistake to their advantage.

The clients, the electorate, are becoming less and less forgiving when it comes to bad choices in the campaign because the large number of political factions, because their aggressive promoting and because of the degrading social and economic condition that seem to be on a ever increasing trend.

Among the Romanian political parties marketing is a relatively new subject. Until recent events many factions, especially the large ones, centered their campaign mainly on the name of their dominant politicians and their power to generate a positive response from the electors. Most of the marketing related activities were specific to advertising and most decisions would be taken based on the previous experience.

The new uninominal poll system surprised the Romanian politicians with result that few were anticipating. The “political locomotive“ system so loved by every faction failed for the first time, many famous politicians being forced to apply for a position in the countryside in order to assure their place in the parliament or senate.

Because of the very essence of the uninominal poll system, every parliament or senate candidate must compete, the accent goes from promoting the faction as an umbrella for the candidates to promoting the individual candidates that act as a representative for the faction.

This way the subject of the electoral marketing campaign is being changed from the political faction to its individual members, from an organization to an individual. Marketing a person is something relatively new, the franchise type campaign failed at the December 2008 polls drastically decreasing the number of factions present in the parliament.

The uninominal disaster, as the campaign was named afterwards, happens because the political parties forgot about or neglected the fact that most of their candidates are unknown to the electorate and thought the simple logo of the part should be enough in order to obtain the score of the party.

This situation is the perfect example for the usefulness of personal marketing, especially for the political highlife. But what does this personal marketing involves? In base lines it is about adapting the marketing mix and its components to the particularities of an individual and establishing proper marketing strategies for that person.

This particular article focuses on the product component of the marketing mix and specifically to building the image of a politician. Romania as a nation in general and its citizens eligible to vote in particular had learned a

valuable painful lesson over the past 20 years of “transition” and became immune to electoral promises launched by various politicians near the election day.

This vote of disbelief presented by electors thru the alarming low presence at the polls proved to be rather dangerous due to the fact that the ones that actually went to the polls didn't act accordingly to the opinion of the majority (majority that stayed comfortable at home). Problems like the doubting the results of the polls and the methodology itself and the general discontent of the populations are inevitable in this situation but in December 2008 a serious unprecedented problem accrued: few parties remained in the parliament the major factions joined forces and the opposition became purely formal.

The dangers this situation presents for the democratic system together with the desperate need for a position in the defeated factions calls for a new strategy, a new revolutionary way of doing things, calls for a brand new method to create and promote candidates.

Until recently the accent was on the image of the faction in general and how the entity communicates with the electorate and with relatively small exceptions (the primary political figures) their members remained unknown to the large public.

The amount of financial, human and time resources needed to promote all the members of a certain faction are enough to show us that the classic promotion is not and can not be the solution.

If one carefully analyzes what's happening in the mature democracies all over the world he can effortlessly observe that much too often political factions display new out of the box candidates specially created for a certain election. They are close to perfection in any way imaginable regardless how carefully they are being analyzed.

And they should be. Those candidates are specially designed for a certain position and a specific electorate. Among other things the process of designing a politician from scratch includes the Curriculum Vitae, family, system of values, friends, habits, clothing and surprisingly the face.

The social implications of facial characteristics

The face, this essential mean of communication with the electorate has just entered the list of items that can and should be correlated with the public's expectations and preferences.

Plastic surgery is currently regarded as detached as a simple haircut and as a rather “must” for the future perfect candidate. If speeches can be written by a consultant, clothes can be chosen by another, action dictated by the party the face remains the number one factor that can show some undesired facts about the past and present of a person and part of his true emotions.

The more attractive faces viewed by the electors seem to show a candidate that is more successful, content, friendly, intelligent, sociable, accessible, exciting, creative and busy than his competitors.

As Dr. Todd K. Shackelford and Dr. Randy J. Larsen from the University of Michigan show in one of their articles, the spirit, the body and the mind are all in connection and synch with each other. The wrinkles we carry on our faces are our best storyteller of our lives. Every painful and joyous emotion we have ever felt throughout our lives shows up in the wrinkles we carry with us in our older years.

The knowledge and style of living are revealed to physiognomy in the forehead region, health shows up in the region of the eyebrows, the nose reflects intimacy and affection, communication and love are all reflected within the chin, money relationships and courage are reflected in the lips, our happiness shows within our cheeks, ethical standards reflects in the chin, leadership qualities and abilities are reflected within the ears. Even the hairs texture, the hair line, double chins, floppy jowls and the placement of moles all different meanings to physiognomy.

The electorate unconsciously reads the face of a candidate and forms an opinion that will affect their judgment and their reaction to his campaign.

Facial expressions are the earliest form of communication. Experiments conducted on all ages and cultures around the globe have revealed that there is universal agreement to some basic emotional facial gestures. (happy, disgust, concerned, surprised, suspicious, sad, horrified, angry).

The most attractive faces designed as a result of special test and experiments do not exist in reality, they are created compound images you would never find in everyday live, they are unreachable for average human beings but still one can come as close as possible to them while keeping the human aspect. (Devendra Singh, researcher specializing in attractiveness at the University of Regensburg)

Over the years researchers analyzed the impact of the face over the image of an individual in the eyes of others and established there hypotheses on human facial attractiveness:

-the “attractiveness is averageness” hypothesis (Langlois & Roggmann, 1990)

-the 'symmetry hypothesis' (Grammer & Thornhill, 1994; Thornhill & Gangestad 1999)

-the theory of 'multidimensional beauty perception'(the baby face effect) (Cunningham, 1986)

A different study from the University of Utah established a series of characteristics that make a face more attractive than another categorized by sexes:

-females: Suntanned skin, narrower facial shape, less fat, fuller lips, slightly bigger distance of eyes, darker, narrower eye brows, more, longer and darker lashes, higher cheek bones, narrower nose, no eye rings, thinner lids, large, round eyes, a large domed forehead and small, short nose and chin

-Browner skin, narrower facial shape, less fat, fuller and more symmetrical lips, darker eye brows, more and darker lashes, upper half of the face broader in relation to the lower, higher cheek bones, prominent lower jaw, more prominent chin, no receding brows, thinner lids, no wrinkles between nose and corner of the mouth
Men, whose photographs were judged to be facial asymmetric (i.e. not bilateral and equal), were found to be more likely to have psychological problems such as depression, stomach problems, anxiety, headaches, sleep disturbances, difficulties with concentration and lower intelligence.
Women, whose photographs exhibited facial asymmetry, were also found to have poorer health, were less physically active, more prone to emotional instability, less happy and less intelligent
Very asymmetrical faces are rated unattractive, but unattractive faces don't need to be asymmetrical, therefore, by checking the characteristic above one will not be rated attractive.

CDI technique and the development of a new politician

As a fundament for the present article a research was conducted using the CDI technique on 10 groups of 12 individuals in order to sketch out the basic characteristics of a brand new politician assuming that all the politicians in the country simply disappeared.

In order to assure the complete analysis the participants were instructed to discuss and propose characteristics regarding several face elements like: face shape, hair, forehead, eyes, eyebrows, nose, and groove on the upper lip, mouth, chin, ears and cheeks.

As showed in the previous parts of this article the elements of the face can characterize a person and on a daily basis every one judges the persons he or she comes in contact with mainly by their face and clothing.

The respondents received a standard list of facial and physical elements extracted from various secondary data analysis and the instrumental research. These components will be the puzzle pieces that the researchers will use and combine in order to develop the virtual face of the much desired modern politician, the visual answer to their problems.

It is this particular difference between what the electorates say they desire from a politician and what they really want that interests the authors. When asked about the main characteristics of an politician the responses go towards an ethical person, helpful and closed to the people (the all milk and honey strategy) but when they were asked to describe the candidates face some ideas were quite interesting.

The face shape was a true controversy, in 4 out of 10 groups the participants argued about it without being able to sustain one form or another. Overall two distinct face shapes emerged as the chosen ones: oblong and square. The motives used here by the participants were: strong, manly, handsome, business oriented, imposing and diplomat. Face reading studies showed that the oblong faced man is usually methodical and deliberate, hard worker, limit pusher, successful and severe with himself and others working with him.

Even if a great confusion was observed between the oblong faced man and that square faced one the groups that went for the square face shape presented their candidate as being a good specialist, hard worker, imposing but also a family person, good with the ones around him, not so severe and trust worthy. The face reading specialists say about the square faced man that he most probably is ambitious, dominating, aggressive and irritable, intimidating, sharp minded, analytical and most likely to have an exceptional dexterity.

The hair represents a truly Achilles' heel for man especially after a certain age. Our groups all chosen for their perfect candidate a short haircut and grayed hair preferable without hairless regions on the scalp and motivated their choices mainly on the aesthetics. Sociologists say that the scalp is an indicator of power and strength and as the dominant lions are the ones with biggest and darkest collars humans see their fellow men with a thick wiry hair as powerful, resilient in life, with great recuperative powers and most likely to embrace challenges.

The forehead was by far the biggest attraction of the entire session but, surprisingly almost the only part where most of the participants agreed in general. All the 10 groups went for a wide flat forehead with horizontal wrinkles. Studies reveal like in most cases people with wide foreheads are intelligent, capable of executing duties diligently, with high idealism and wealth of ideas. A flat forehead also indicates a more pragmatic nature and the horizontal wrinkles show a sustained thinking process over the years.

The eyes, this so called mirror of a person's soul, were among the most disputed elements in all 10 groups. The participants chose for their candidate prominent eyes, symmetrically disposed, with a steady look, brownish color, and with a white background (no preeminent blood vessels, no yellowish tone due to disease or smoking). For a psychologists the eyes are the most important feature in close encounters and it is important for the eyes to sit firmly whilst gazing steadily (solid and persevering nature, stability and forthright disposition). Brown eyes are characteristic to the Mediterranean and East European races and indicate a man that loves social life and meeting different people, loyalty, demonstrative nature, a good family life, hard worker and considerable generosity.

The eyebrows were a subject that all the groups agreed upon in record time without the need for negotiation as they should be thick and well contoured. Sociologically speaking the eyebrow speaks of reputation, fame and temperament, a developed brow line also shows a high degree of dexterity whilst a higher brow indicates a cautious attitude to decision making.

The nose did not represent a high priority for the participants; most of them mentioned quickly a roman type nose (long straight nose with large nose trolls) and some mentioned a light bend outwards. The intensity of physical action is related to oxygen intake, and the external instruments of the body responsible for that function is the nose. A good sized nose is certainly an indication of wealth too and the capacity to earn money, attitude, cordiality, disciplined nature (methodical) and warmth of personality prudent but anxious.

The mouth was by the most disputed part of the face between participants to different sexes, ages, residences and even domains of activity and they settled down for two types: thin lips and thick lips, both symmetrical, straight and not too wide. The mouth is mainly related to communication and speech, lips which are full, round and even convey to you that the person is caring and sensitive and the equal distribution reveal a well meaning and communicative personality. The straight lip line expresses a self-controlled person. If the lips are large it means an expensive and somewhat luxurious taste - but an expressive and generous temperament nonetheless. Small lips which are also tightly pursed warn of a self centered and mean character.

The chin was neglected by almost all the ten groups mainly because of its implication in the face type attribute. In most cases the participants choose a moderate round or square chin without any other distinctive signs. The chin together with the jaw line relates to the stamina of the individual and the stronger the jaw line the greater the degree of stamina and endurance and also to the stubbornness of the individual. The rounded or squared chin without any protruding reveals a strongly independent and determined individual.

The ears also suffered from a slight neglect and most of the participants choose normal years referring most probable to the basic Romanian ear types and to exclude certain particular features. The ears fall in the mid section of the head but represent the early, formative years of life between birth and 15 and they reflect the foundation of life and the potential for achievements at maturity. Thin and poorly shaped outer helixes may reveal diminishing health. Large ears show an intellectual person, large ear lobes indicate an independent, strong minded person and the position of the ears close to the head indicate a person that plans ahead and is thrifty, a person that doesn't like to leave too much to chance.

The cheeks were surprisingly heavily disputed by the participants and after long discussion they concluded that their politician should have less fat in their cheeks, less protruding, their color should be the same as the rest of the face and should not present any particular mark. Sociologists say that if status and position means anything the viewer should pay a lot more attention to this part of one's face as cheeks tell the story of industriousness, power and authority in a person's life. The attributes of the cheeks must be balanced against the position and strength of the nose, both features should harmonize with each other. When observing cheeks every kind of excess is to be considered a sign of illness (overly red, shiny and red, red and rashly, blue or greenish tinge, dark or grey tinge, nodes or marks). Strong cheeks show authoritative persons in positions of control, executive power and leadership.

The developed leader vs. the desired leader

In this final part of the article all the characteristics extracted from the portraits generated by the 10 groups will be joined to establish the main attributes of the newly developed Romanian politician. First of all, as a person, the participants desire a strong powerful figure, resilient in life, with great recuperative powers, strongly independent, determined, disciplined (methodical) and severe with himself and others working with him.

In the professional life the future politician must be hard worker, limit pusher, intelligent, capable of executing duties diligently, with high idealism and wealth of ideas, successful and most likely to embrace challenges. Also this dream politician must have a cautious attitude to decision making, must be prudent but anxious, self-controlled and must be a person that plans ahead and doesn't like to leave too much to chance.

This future candidate should also have a personal life in which he must love social life and meeting different people and be a well meaning and communicative personality, caring and sensitive, loyal with a good family life, and considerable generous.

It is obvious that such a person does not exist in the real life and trying to impose such a candidate to the electorate will be a true marketing suicide. Even if one can never be perfect he can always try to be as close as possible to that image and is the campaign staff's duty to promote the good point and elegantly cover the attributes missing from the picture.

All the attributes above were extracted from the subconscious thinking of the participants but what is their opinion when asked directly about their perfect candidate? In an earlier research conducted on 783 respondents in the same geographical perimeter the participants said about the perfect candidate that he must be honest (73%), caring for the needs of the citizens (52%), a man of his word (48%), generous (various event, free meals, donations...), popular in mass-media, experienced, ambitious, intelligent, a strong leader and trust worthy.

While comparing the information gathered using the two different methods (CID technique and quantitative research) the authors came to the conclusion that the obvious difference between them is due to the experience gathered by the respondent.

The CID technique allows respondent to create their own dream politician regardless of any consequences and knowing that the entire Romanian political class disappeared while the quantitative research remembers them of the implications that electing one candidate or another will have on their future life.

This way, in the quantitative research respondents focused on avoiding the major negative characteristics observed in the present day politicians like: untruthfulness, lack of interest for society's problems, indiscipline, electoral unfounded promises, limited competence and various bad habits.

By comparing the two approaches mentioned above with the data found in the report from a press monitoring agency the researchers found that citizens desire a certain politician subconscious, have a different conscious opinion and appreciate a different set of attributes that appear in the mass-media.

In conclusion, from a marketer's point of view, which of the 3 approaches described in this article should be the one to follow while elaborating the campaign strategy? For sure each of the three options have their fans and critics but from the author's point of view the subconscious criteria seem to be the most logical solution.

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