ABSTRACT. During the last decade a number of scholars have argued that political campaigning has become professionalized, and that political marketing has become the new dominant campaign paradigm. However, the conceptual relationship between political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning is unclear. Furthermore, the distinction between political marketing, market orientation, and marketing techniques is often blurred. At the same time, most of the literature is dominated by either an American or British perspective. This makes it unclear as to whether these concepts should be viewed as general concepts, or as concepts relevant primarily for countries that share some specific set of political institutions.

In this backdrop, the purpose of this article is to analyze (1) the conceptual relationship between political marketing, market orientation, marketing techniques, and professionalization of political campaigning, and (2) whether contemporary concepts of political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning are equally applicable to all modern democracies regardless of, for example, political system and
other country-specific factors. It also outlines a theory of strategic party goals for multiple arenas. doi:10.1300/J199v06n02_04 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Political marketing, professionalization, political campaigning, political strategy, party goals

The literature about the professionalization of political campaigning and political marketing has grown considerably during the last decade. The obvious reason is that political campaigning has changed in character as well as in importance.

Some of the factors contributing to the increased importance of political campaigning include the weakening of political parties, the decline of party identification, and the increasing electoral volatility (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). Indicators of the changed character of political campaigning are, for example, the growing importance of political consultants (Plasser and Plasser, 2002), of media in general as well as television and TV ads in particular (Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Kaid, 2004), an increasing personalization of politics in general and political campaigns in particular (Mughan, 2000), and the emergence of “permanent campaigning” (Ornstein and Mann, 2000).

Thus, much has changed since Lazarsfeld et al. (1944/1965, p. 94) wrote that “the first thing to say is that some people were converted by campaign propaganda but that they were few indeed.” However, while the increased interest in political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning is most welcome, there are theoretical difficulties tied to both concepts.

To start with, the conceptual relationship between political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning is unclear. Often these concepts are treated as if they were two sides of the same coin, when perhaps they should be understood as two separate concepts. The distinction between political marketing, market-orientation, and marketing techniques is also often blurred, resulting in a conceptual lack of clarity. Finally, most of the literature is dominated by either an American or British perspective. This makes it unclear as to whether these concepts should be viewed as general concepts or as concepts relevant primarily for countries that share some specific set of political institutions that are
candidate based, television centered and have few parties with large campaign budgets and weak internal arenas.

In this backdrop, the purpose of this article is to analyze (1) the conceptual relationship between political marketing, market orientation, marketing techniques and professionalization of political campaigning and (2) whether contemporary concepts of political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning are equally applicable to all modern democracies regardless of, for example, political system and other country-specific factors.

**THREE PHASES OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION**


Despite the fact that the authors use different labels, the changes and trends they identify are similar. Figure 1, adapted from Plasser and Plasser (2002, p. 6), represents the phases and trends identified by all these authors very well.

While categorizing in this manner might be useful in providing an overview, it is important that they are used as a starting point for further analysis and research—not as an end point. The features of models such as these will always vary from one context to another, depending on both the media system and the political system as well as other country-specific factors (Norris, 2000, p. 140; Farrell and Webb, 2000).

For example, a campaign in a country that does not allow TV ads can obviously not do any “targeted television advertisements”; the campaign expenditures in such a country will probably not be “spiraling up”
as much as in countries that do allow TV ads; and the possibilities of sending narrow-casted micro-messages will be more limited than in a country with a multiplicity of commercial channels. This does not, however, mean that campaigns in such countries, by definition, are less professionalized. Thus, it would be misleading to write about these “stages” as “stages in the professionalization of campaigning,” even if also noting that it is at the “risk of oversimplification” (Farrell and Webb, 2000, p. 103).

In other words, the development of political campaigning during the last 50 years is one thing, whether this can be described as a continuing

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**FIGURE 1. Modeling Changing Campaign Practices**

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<th>Mode of Political Communication systems</th>
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professionalization is another. In the next section, the concept of professionalized political campaigning will therefore be analyzed.

**WHAT DOES THE “PROFESSIONALIZATION” OF CAMPAIGNING STAND FOR?**

That political campaigning has changed during the previous decades is an indisputable fact, but this does not in itself mean that the campaigns have become professionalized. Whether they have become more professionalized depends, as always, on how we define the term. Thus, it is unfortunate that the term “professionalized” has become a “catchall term” (Lilleker and Negrine, 2002, p. 99), as it makes it less useful for analysis.

Therefore, it is easy to agree with Lilleker and Negrine (2002, p. 102) that “the term professionalization needs to be more carefully defined.” This is particularly important since the word and its derivatives have positive connotations. The term “professionalism” used in this context should also be in accordance with general theories of professionalism and professionalization.

At a general level, professionalism is usually taken to mean (1) the existence of specialized education or body of knowledge, (2) professional codes of ethics or standards of performance, (3) some kind of certification or societal acknowledgement of the profession, (4) some level of autonomy given to and responsibility placed on the practitioners, and (5) limited access to the field (Cutlip et al., 2000, pp. 50-52). Some of these criteria (2, 3, 5) involve or presuppose institutionalization of the field, and these might be of less relevance when applied to political campaigning. The other criteria (1, 4) deal with the existence or level of expertise within a field of human activity, and it is in this sense the term professionalization can be applied to political campaigning. In other words, and with regard to political campaigning, professionalization is ultimately about expertise and the use of specialized expertise in campaign-related activities.

Therefore, a definition of professionalized political campaigning should focus on the planning for and the conduct of campaigns, and not on system-specific factors that the campaigns themselves cannot control. Finally, the definition should be operationalizable in order to make comparative studies possible.
Building on these considerations, I propose the following definition of professionalized political campaigning:

Professionalized political campaigning is characterized by being permanent, although with varying intensity; by the central campaign headquarters being able to coordinate the messages and the management of the campaign; and by using expertise in analyzing and reaching out to members, target groups and stakeholders, in analyzing its own and the competitors’ weaknesses and strengths and making use of that knowledge, and in news management.

Following Gibson and Römmele (2001), this definition might be operationalized in an additive “Professional Campaign Index,” (Figure 2) where one point would be assigned to each of the following (based on, but modified, from Gibson and Römmele, 2001. See also Powell and Cowart, 2003; Farrell and Webb, 2000; Kavanagh, 1995; Newman, 1999; Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Faucheux, 2003).

FIGURE 2. A Professionalized Campaign Index

- use of campaign controlled opinion polling,
- use of campaign controlled focus groups,
- use of computerized databases,
- use of in-house expertise and/or outside consultants in news management/public relations,
- use of in-house expertise and/or outside consultants in analyzing public opinion,
- use of in-house expertise and/or outside consultants in advertisements,
- use of in-house expertise and/or outside consultants in voter segmentation,
- use of direct mail to target groups,
- use of direct mail to own members or campaign volunteers,
- use of telemarketing for contacting target groups,
- use of telemarketing for contacting own members or campaign volunteers,
- conducting semi-independent research of strengths and weaknesses of their own campaign,
- conducting opposition research,
- use of rapid rebuttal-unit,
- presence and use of an internal Internet communication system,
- presence and use of an external Internet communication system,
- e-mail sign-up or subscription lists for regular news updates/news letters,
- the campaign being continuous,
- a centralized campaign headquarters able to coordinate the management of the campaign.
Most of the items in the proposed index concern the use of expertise in applying the marketing techniques that should be available to campaigns in most present-day democracies. They are also sensitive to the fact that the campaigns can be more or less candidate based and party based. Obviously, a pure candidate-based campaign does not have any “members,” but by including campaign volunteers the index does not discriminate against those campaigns. Similarly, by including both in-house expertise and outside consultants with different fields of expertise, the index does not give premium to campaigns in countries with either a tradition of strong party organizations (and in-house expertise) or weak party organizations (and outside consultants), thus making the theory more applicable in different countries. Since the index is additive, the more points a particular campaign scores, the more professionalized it should be considered to be.

One important implication of this is that the use of expertise in applying marketing techniques is not viewed as the same as being politically market oriented. But what, then, do the concepts of political marketing and being market oriented stand for?

**WHAT DOES POLITICAL MARKETING STAND FOR?**

Several of the authors analyzing the evolution or development of political campaigning include “political marketing” in one way or another, as a part of the “third” or “postmodern” stage. According to Plasser and Plasser (2002), the “marketing logic” is the “Dominant Campaign Paradigm” in the postmodern phase. Similarly, Farrell and Webb (2000) write about the “Marketing Concept” as part of the third stage. The conclusion following this line of reasoning is that a professionalized, postmodern political campaign is one following the marketing concept, and, by definition, a campaign not following the marketing concept is thus not a professionalized campaign.

This, however, not only ignores conventional ways of understanding professionalism, it also treats political marketing as a derivative of professionalism. It is therefore both oversimplified and misleading.

What, then, does political marketing stand for? The concept builds on a merger between marketing and politics. According to Newman (1994), “marketing is a needs assessment approach to product innovation that relies on information from the marketplace to help guide research and development.” Similarly, Slater and Narver (1998, p. 1001)
write that “the marketing concept says that an organization’s purpose is to discover needs and wants in its target markets and to satisfy those needs more effectively and efficiently than competitors” (see also Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Lafferty and Hult, 2001). The essence of marketing is that no producer should develop his/her products without first having researched the perceived needs of the targeted consumers. In terms of politics, the product consists of three core components (Wring, 2005, p. 4)—party image, leadership image, and policy commitments—and a “mindset” of voter-centredness (O’Cass, 1996, p. 40). As in commercial markets, political campaigns building on the marketing concept should perform research about and adjust to the perceived needs of their targeted consumers—the voters (Kotler and Kotler, 1999). As defined by Newman (1999, p. xiii):

Political marketing is the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations. The procedures involved include the analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in society.

What is crucial in this definition is first, that political marketing is the application of marketing principles and procedures—not just marketing techniques and activities—and second, that the processes should be “in response to the needs and wants” of people or groups targeted by the producers—the organizations or campaigns. The campaign should not try to sell an already defined product, or believe that the product in itself is superior to that of its competitors. Instead, the campaign should concentrate on giving the targeted consumers in the selected markets what they want or need. If that requires changes to the product, then it should be changed accordingly. However, it should also be noted that consumers have both expressed and latent needs, and that, at times, a more successful strategy might be to focus on the latent rather than the expressed needs and wants (Slater and Narver, 1998).

Often, the concept of political marketing is discussed in the context of electoral campaigns, and treated primarily as a matter of communication. In so doing, the theory tends to ignore the fact that marketing is not only about the product but also concerns the market itself and the selling of the product, and, additionally, that politics concerns governing as
well as campaigning for power. Furthermore, it also tends to ignore the
fact that marketing is about organizational and political-philosophical
principles, as well as about communication (Wring, 2005; Slater and
Narver, 1998; Lafferty and Hult, 2001; Ormrod, 2004). Thus, it tends to
ignore the fact that a campaign cannot be truly market-oriented if the
producer of the campaign is not market oriented, and that if an organiza-
tion wants to be truly market oriented, it cannot start when a specific
campaign approaches.

This is particularly important in party-centered systems, where the
parties as organizations have a decisive role in designing the “product,”
including not only the campaigns but also the policies, the party image
and the leadership image. Thus, political marketing is about market in-
telligence, needs management, the design of the political product, and
how political organizations and actors behave in relation to their mar-
kets, not just about campaigning (Henneberg, 2002; O’Cass, 1996;
Butler and Collins, 2002; Lees-Marshment, 2004).

From that perspective, a political party can choose to be market ori-
ented, but it can also choose to be sales or product oriented (Henneberg,
2002; Lees-Marshment, 2001; Henneberg and Eghbalian, 2002; Nord
and Strömback, 2003; Wring, 2005). The defining characteristics of
product-, sales-, and market-oriented parties are outlined in Figure 3
(adapted from Lees-Marshment, 2001).

The reasoning about differences among product orientation, sales
orientation, and market orientation could be applied to campaigns as
well as to political organizations other than political parties. This forms
one of the reasons why the concept of professionalized political cam-
paigning and the concept of political marketing should not be treated as
two sides of the same coin. A second reason is that the choices and con-
straints facing political parties regarding what orientation to follow and
whether to become as professionalized in their campaigning as possible,
are fundamentally different.

To start with, a party or a campaign must decide what orientation to
follow. If the party decides that it wants to be product oriented, then the
question of conducting as professionalized campaigns as possible is
mostly a non-issue. Product-oriented organizations focus on the prod-
uct as such, not on the communication about it, or its selling or market-
ing. Only sales- and market-oriented parties have a subjective and
objective need to be as professionalized as possible in their campaign-
ing, as they realize that the policies and ideas need to be effectively
“sold” or marketed in order to reach and convince the target groups.
If a party decides that it wants to be either sales or market oriented, it must analyze the advantages and disadvantages that might follow from either choice, and decide whether the choice makes it easier or more difficult to become professionalized in its campaigning. Thus, under certain circumstances, being market oriented might facilitate the efforts of running more professionalized campaigns, whereas under other circumstances, being market oriented might actually be at variance with professionalized campaigning. To understand why this is the case, we must understand the differences between political cultures and parties in different countries as well as between different parties in different countries. We must also appreciate the strategic dilemmas that follow from the fact that political parties are active not in just one arena—the electoral arena—but in four different arenas. The next section will therefore outline a theory of strategic party goals with reference to multiple arenas, and then relate this

FIGURE 3. Defining Characteristics of Product-, Sales- and Market-Oriented Parties

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<tr>
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<th>Sales-oriented party</th>
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<td><strong>Defining characteristic</strong></td>
<td>Argues for its own ideas and policies; assumes that voters will realize that its ideas are the best one and therefore vote for it.</td>
<td>Believes in its own ideas and policies, but realizes that they must be “sold” to the public; does not change its behavior or policies to give people what they want, but tries to make people want what the party offers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If the party does not succeed in elections</strong></td>
<td>Believes that the voters just do not realize that the party’s policies are the best ones; refuses to change policies.</td>
<td>Tries to make better use of market intelligence and persuasion techniques, i.e., become more professionalized in its campaigning.</td>
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to questions regarding when and why being market oriented might not be the best choice, while at the same time running professionalized campaigns might be a better option.

**STRATEGIC DILEMMAS FACING POLITICAL PARTIES**

In the literature concerning campaigning, political parties are often implicitly assumed to have only one strategic goal—electoral victory—and being active in only one arena—the electoral arena. Whereas that might be the case in electoral systems which are very candidate based and have weak political parties, it is certainly not a universal truth. After all, differing versions of proportional representation are the rule rather than the exception, and countries with proportional representation also tend to have moderate or extreme multi-party systems (Plasser and Plasser, 2002, pp. 107-137).

Looking at political parties in moderate or extreme multi-party systems, theoretically, they are active in at least four different arenas. If we assume that the general goal for the aims of a party is that the party itself and its representatives shall make the authoritative decisions in accordance with its ideology or “evaluation system” (Sjöblom, 1968, p. 73), then the party must develop strategies guiding their behavior within each of these arenas.

The four arenas are the parliamentary arena, the electoral arena, the internal arena and the media arena (Sjöblom, 1968; Strömbäck, 2002; Nord and Strömbäck, 2003), and each arena contains its primary actors and its different decision types.

For the parliamentary arena, the strategic goal is to maximize parliamentary influence. The primary actors are the members of parliament from different parties, and the most important decisions are related to conflict or cooperation with each other. For the electoral arena, the strategic goal is to maximize electoral and voter support. The primary actors are those who have the right to vote, and the most important decisions concern which party or candidate to vote for. For the internal arena, the strategic party goal is to maximize internal cohesion, and the primary actors are members of and activists within the party. Thus, the most important decisions concern whether or not to support the official policies of the party and the party leadership. Finally, for the media arena, the strategic goal is to maximize positive publicity. The primary
actors are those with influence and power over the content of the media: journalists, editors and gatekeepers within the media. Accordingly, the most important decisions concern whether or not to give publicity to the party and whether the publicity should be critical or positive.

Even though parties have different strategic goals in multiple arenas, their relative importance might vary between different parties both within and between different countries, depending on such conditioning factors as the electoral systems, political cultures, the size of the parties, and whether or not they are in power. An example of this is that some parties in some countries are based more on mass membership than in others. The more a particular party is based on mass membership, the more important the internal arena can be expected to be. A second example is that the parliamentary arena can be expected to be of more importance to a party which forms part of a parliamentary majority than for a small party in opposition. A third example is that the media arena can be expected to be of more importance in party systems with high electoral volatility and for parties whose targeted voters show low party identification.

In the best of all worlds, the party goals for the four arenas would be in harmony and it would be possible for a party to be successful in all arenas simultaneously. In reality, minor or major conflicts between the goals and the primary actors within the four arenas will generally be the norm. It is important to note, however, that this has clear implications regarding whether a party should adopt a product orientation, a sales orientation, or a market orientation—but (with the exception of parties that choose a product orientation) not regarding the degree of professionalism in political campaigning. This underlines the importance of separating the concepts of market orientation and professionalized campaigning. Let me take a few examples.

1. A party with a strong internal arena and an ideologically committed membership is highly unlikely to adopt anything other than a product or a sales orientation. The members and activists of the party would probably not accept a market orientation, partly because of their own ideological beliefs, and partly because such an orientation would lead to diminishing power and relevance of the members. However, there is no reason why the members should be concerned if the party campaigns were to be conducted more professionally.

2. Parties in countries with moderate or extreme multi-party systems are less likely to be (or become) market oriented. If we assume
that the majority of the electorate is grouped in the middle of the political spectrum, market-oriented parties will find that their target voters will lie towards the center. However, if too many parties target these voters, there will not be enough “product differentiation” (Maarek, 1995), thus resulting in a lack of choice at election time. It would also be difficult to mobilize the electorate and build strong internal arenas. Therefore, in order to meet the need for product differentiation, the parties would probably find that a sales orientation, together with professionally conducted campaigns, is a better option rather than being market oriented.

However, if one of the parties in such a political system is significantly larger than the others, it might be more likely to adopt a market orientation. Since the market intelligence that a market-oriented organization needs is costly, and a larger party has more resources than smaller parties, these smaller parties would find it difficult to compete with a bigger party by becoming more market oriented. This would likely force the other parties to adopt a sales orientation or to cater to the issue-based or ideological interests of special groups within the electorate. It would also compel them to increase their efforts to professionalize their campaigning, even if a lack of resources would inhibit such efforts.

3. Parties with weak internal arenas, or candidate-based rather than party-based campaigns, can be expected to be more dependent on success within the media arena in order to be successful in the electoral arena. As noted by Plasser and Plasser (2002, p. 117): “If parties are disconnected from their potential voters, and large parts of the electorate are lacking any affiliation or commitment to a particular party, campaigns might rely solely on mobilization appeals induced by media and advertising.” In such a case, running professional campaigns is of the utmost importance, but it does not mean that the party necessarily should adopt a market orientation. It could also adopt a sales orientation, and still run professional campaigns.

4. In a country with a history of mass membership and a culture valuing participatory rather than elite democracy, the internal and external reactions to a party openly trying to become market oriented can be expected to be generally negative. Being market oriented in such a country might be viewed as populism and thus trigger negative publicity. The ultimate paradox would be if market intelligence revealed that voters do not want or need market-oriented parties. In such a situation, in order to be market oriented, the
party would need to be less market oriented, at least with regard to the expressed rather than the latent wants and needs of the target groups (Slater and Narver, 1998).

5. In countries with partisan media that are important and influential, the parties can count on “their” media to give them publicity and on not being particularly critical. On the other hand, in countries with predominantly commercial media, a strong journalistic professionalization, and/or an adversarial relationship between the parties and the media, the parties must place greater emphasis upon gaining publicity. In such a country, the media arena calls for more attention and becomes relatively more important. Thus, media systems matter (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). To this, one should add the importance of whether political advertising on television is allowed or not—in countries that allow political TV ads and where it is important during election campaigns, financial resources become crucial for the execution of successful and professionalized campaigns (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2006; Plasser and Plasser, 2002). At the same time it reduces the importance of the internal arena.

These are just some of the implications that follow from the theory of strategic party goals on multiple arenas, which multiply could without any difficulty. What is more important, however, is the general conclusion from this analysis.

The degree of professionalized political campaigning, and the extent to which political parties and campaigns are becoming market oriented instead of product and sales oriented, are two separate dimensions, even though neither can be dealt with as being independent from factors such as the media system, the electoral system, the political culture, the degree of polarization between and the number of political parties, and the relative importance of the parliamentary arena, the media arena, the internal arena, and the electoral arena.

**CONCLUSIONS**

To summarize this analysis, three conclusions can be drawn. First, the concepts of political marketing and political market orientation should be understood as dealing with organizational and political-philosophical principles, whereas the concept of professionalized campaigning should
be understood as dealing with the expertise in the use of marketing techniques before and during political campaigns. That is, political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning should be viewed as two separate concepts, where both have implications for the planning and conduct of political campaigning, but where the concept of political marketing has much broader implications. Furthermore, using marketing techniques is not the same thing as being market oriented.

Thus, the first choice a party or a campaign has to make is what orientation it should follow. If a party or campaign decides that it wants to be sales or market oriented, then its campaigns and its application of marketing techniques can be more or less professionalized. However, the choice of being sales rather than market oriented should not be viewed as a choice of being less professional in political campaigning, and parties or campaigns that choose to be market oriented rather than sales oriented must not by definition be more professionalized in their campaigning.

Second, contemporary concepts of political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning are not equally applicable to all countries regardless of, for example, the electoral system, the media system, and other political institutions. Instead, both concepts tend to presuppose a two- or few-party system, a candidate-based electoral system, political parties with rather weak internal arenas and centralized control, a television-centered society where political television advertisements are allowed, and a relatively non-ideological political climate. That is, both concepts bear the stamp of being predominantly American and, to a lesser extent, British in their origins. While there is nothing wrong in theoretical concepts being affected by the context in which they are formulated, it is also important not to assume a generalizability that does not exist. At the same time, system-specific conditions that the parties or campaigns cannot themselves control, should neither be presupposed nor be part of the definitions or theoretical concepts. For example, it would be wrong to view campaigns in countries where the political parties are strong, and where the expertise in polling, news management, and voter segmentation, therefore, is in-house, as inherently less professionalized than in countries where the parties are weaker and where they make more use of outside consultants.

Third, if we want to understand why different parties in different countries make the choices they do regarding what orientation to adopt, and the extent to which they try to professionalize their campaigning, we need to consider the party system, the electoral system, the media system, and the political culture. We must also consider the parties’ positions on and priorities between the parliamentary arena, the electoral
arena, the media arena, and the internal arena. The strength of the internal arena and party organization, in particular, can be expected to be of decisive importance in understanding the degree of freedom the party leadership enjoys in choosing what orientation to follow and what kind of campaigns to run. Finally, we also need to consider how the electorate in different countries, and the voters of different parties, view the role of political parties and political leaders. The line between responsiveness and populism might not only be thin, it might also vary between different countries and among the voters of different parties or campaigns.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

While this analysis suggests that contemporary concepts of the professionalization of political campaigning and political marketing suffer from being biased in favor of countries that share certain characteristics, it also shows the need for more comparative research about political marketing and political campaigning.

The implication is that we need theories and definitions that are as universal as possible. Thus, the proposed definition of professionalized political campaigning and the “Professionalized Campaign Index” are intended to serve as starting points for comparative research about the extent to which campaigns in different countries have become more professionalized. There is also an urgent need for operationalized measures of political marketing. These measures should also be as unbiased in relation to system-specific factors as possible.

In addition, there is also a need for more country-specific and in-depth studies of political campaigning as well as political marketing. Some edited books already exist (Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Newman and Vercic, 2002; Mair et al., 2004; Lilleker and Lees-Marshment, 2005), but more such studies covering a broader range of countries are required.

Moreover, there is a need for an analytical framework that theoretically has the ability to outline an answer and testable hypotheses to the question: What are the factors, related to what arenas, which affect the parties’ choice of electoral strategies and whether to be product, sales, or market oriented in different countries? At present, we know, for example, that electoral volatility has increased in most countries, that party identification has decreased, and that the media have become
more important for the political actors. What we do not know, is how these and a number of other factors interact, in terms of what implications they have in relation to the relative importance of the four arenas, what trade-offs different parties make between the arenas, and how they affect the parties’ choice of electoral strategies and whether to be product, sales, or market oriented.

At present, although a great deal is known about political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning, in some cases it is still difficult to work out what the particulars really are. This is caused by generalizations being made which are over and above that demonstrated by empirical observations. In other cases there is a need for both additional theoretical and empirical studies. To develop both empirical research and theory, further research would truly benefit from more cooperation among scholars from different academic fields and different countries.

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