

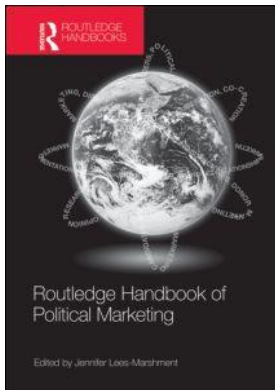
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Government public opinion research and consultation

Experiences in deliberative marketing

Mathias König and Wolfgang König

The topic: the deliberative marketing approach

Political marketing can help governments and political parties to respond to the specific needs of the citizens and avoid superficial or undifferentiated protest, but rather than just conducting market research, another form of consultation or dialogue is through a deliberative political marketing process. The intelligent involvement of citizens in political decision-making processes can also increase the effectiveness of governance. The multifaceted knowledge of citizens is an additional resource that should be utilized. This idea is based on the concept of communicative action (Habermas 1984) respondent deliberative democracy (Habermas 1996: 287–328) and rests upon the argument that through the participation of the public and the citizens in political processes, it becomes possible to make better decisions and thus also to communicate them more easily. Not only from a philosophical standpoint, but also directly from practice-oriented administrative science there have been efforts to increase citizen participation in administrative politics and decision-making at least since the discussions of New Public Management and Good Governance (Scott 2003: 55–69). After all, what is striven for is an increasingly efficient constitutional and citizen-friendly administrative practice and that is dependent upon democratic quality and legitimacy (Dahl 1994). From the viewpoint of political marketing, deliberative communicative processes represent new forms of dialogue and marketing. Furthermore, deliberative political marketing can develop beyond a technique to a form of governance.

Previous research on deliberative political marketing

In political marketing literature, few studies have linked deliberation to marketing, other than Lees-Marshment and Winter (2009), Henneberg *et al.* (2009), and Lees-Marshment (2011). Lees-Marshment and Winter pointed out that political marketing is associated with deliberative democracy and so deliberative politics may therefore offer greater insight into how governments can consult the public and make that consultation more worthwhile (Lees-Marshment 2009: 282).

Henneberg *et al.* (2009) point to terminological inexactitudes and difficulties when it comes to the delineation of ‘political marketing’, ‘political management’ and ‘political communication’. From a democratic-theoretical perspective, the concept of political marketing runs the risk of appearing like a discursive instrument of power to be used for the achievement of short-term political goals, e.g., during elections. However, from the very same point of view a more positive conception may be adopted, i.e., political marketing as an opportunity to establish and maintain a trustful relationship between voters on the one hand and political parties and administration on the other. To practitioners, and hence realists, the truth lies somewhere in between. Thus, Henneberg *et al.* (2009: 165–88) subdivide ‘political marketing’ into three practical concepts:

- selling-oriented political marketing management (PMM);
- instrumentally oriented PMM; and
- relational PMM.

A selling-oriented approach ‘puts an ideology or conviction first’, whereas ‘instrumentally-oriented PMM is focused on a deep understanding of primary stakeholders’. However, a relational approach ‘also incorporates the interests of stakeholders who are not direct exchange partners and assesses the trade-offs between short-term and long-term effects’ (Henneberg *et al.* 2009: 171–72).

From a democratic-theoretical perspective, the strategic use of political marketing instruments seems closely linked to the logic of Joseph Schumpeter’s ‘competitive elitism’. According to Schumpeter, democracy is a procedure for the selection of elites by means of regular elections. Thus, his theory is based on the assumption that it is not the citizens who rule, but the elites. However, the term ‘elite’ has positive connotations in Schumpeter’s approach, and from his point of view political marketing can be understood as management by and through elites. Hence, political marketing is predominantly perceived as an instrument. At the same time, arguments from the theory of deliberative democracy are gaining more and more significance within the context of political marketing. Whoever wants to win elections nowadays must win the ‘political marketing game’. That means that politicians:

need to offer responsive leadership that responds to but does not just follow public opinion; authentic reflectiveness that shows genuine considerations of different demands but does not change positions without justification. Furthermore, they need to move towards a partnership relationship with the public where both citizens and government work together to find solutions.

(Lees-Marshment 2011: 209)

Lees-Marshment’s (2011) new theory of a partnership democracy argues that market analysis needs to become more deliberative and even form an institution in its own right.

The political decision-makers and leaders who must decide upon a strategy are still a central factor. ‘They need to balance leading and following the public ...’ (Lees-Marshment 2011: 213). If one understands politicians as a brand (Lees-Marshment 2011: 213), the decision on the kind and manner of the chosen political marketing then is a key element of the brand. Accordingly, the level of deliberation of the chosen political marketing is a key element of the brand. Thus, deliberative market analysis is ‘the new system of voter input in politics’ (Lees-Marshment 2011: 220).

However, the idea to link political marketing and deliberation needs further development and application. First, it is important to make the link between political marketing and deliberative politics. Habermas explained a key factor of deliberative politics and communication: ‘The communication circulation in the public sphere is especially vulnerable to the selective pressure of social inertia; the influence thus generated, however, can be converted into political procedure and penetrates the constitutionally organized political system in general’ (Habermas 1996: 327). Second, although much of the literature has discussed the need for politicians to become market-oriented, even if a politician wanted to meet the wishes of the voters, it is always possible that he or she will fail. Therefore, a market orientation cannot ensure a long-term relationship, because the voters are addressed as customers and not as citizens. Customers expect a good product, and will switch producers if the product is deficient. Empowered citizens, however, can understand why and how political decisions were made, and so failures do not destroy a long-term relationship. ‘Parties should not treat voters solely as consumers, but as both consumers and citizens’ (Lees-Marshment 2008: 12). In order to emphasize the citizen perspective, a new form of marketing is necessary, namely deliberative marketing, which would enable the circulation of communication in the public sphere.

New research on deliberative political marketing

Elite discussion of deliberative marketing: President Obama and the EU Commission

The focus shift in political marketing became evident in the Obama campaign. The chief campaign manager for Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign in the US, David Plouffe, pointed out that the so-called grassroots focus is the key to success. ‘There is no more effective courier for a message than people who believe in it and have authentically embraced it’ (Plouffe 2009: 379). The grassroots approach makes campaigners less like foot soldiers and more like the passionate minutemen of the American Revolution because the campaign creates a user-generated brand culture (Bryant 2008). This made it possible to connect with voters on a different level. The internet has proven to be of great value here. The further development of political marketing is reflected in the Open Government initiative:

On his first day in Office, President Obama signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, ushering in a new era of open and accountable government meant to bridge the gap between the American people and their government:

The Administration is reducing the influence of special interests by writing new ethics rules that prevent lobbyists from coming to work in government or sitting on its advisory boards.

The Administration is tracking how government uses the money with which the people have entrusted it with easy-to-understand websites like recovery.gov, USASpending.gov, and IT.usaspending.gov.

The Administration is empowering the public – through greater openness and new technologies – to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

(White House Open Government Initiative no date)

This initiative is predominantly implemented through the internet. One example is the website Data.gov. Data.gov enables the public to participate in government and deliberate on political issues by providing downloadable federal datasets to build applications, conduct analyses and perform research. The site also allows the communication between citizens and administration. ‘The site will continue to improve based on feedback, comments, and recommendations from the public and therefore we encourage individuals to suggest datasets they’d like to see, rate and comment on current datasets, and suggest ways to improve the site’ (Data.gov no date). The internet allows citizens to become active participants and opens the opportunity for a more robust, sustainable level of involvement of citizens in the governance of their society (Benkler 2008: 53). The cost structure of the internet enables the creation of a deliberative arena through political marketing. These arenas will be increasingly important because people always want more things to decide. ‘For it’s clear we’re living in a new age, where millions of people can participate directly in governance and policy making, not just in ratifying the results on Election Day’ (Fine *et al.* 2008: 1).

One reason for Obama’s latest crisis can be seen in the fact that his government did not succeed in the institutionalization of deliberative political marketing, which has led to the loss of the communicative impetus that had accompanied his election campaign. What Obama’s case shows is the necessity to employ deliberative marketing not only as a way to short-term success, but as a philosophy in itself. The constituents know if they are dealing only with a simple technique or with an authentic and credible philosophy. When used solely as a technique, deliberative political marketing may evoke exaggerated expectations on the part of the constituents and thus lead to a spiral of disappointment with the government.

In Europe there is a dawning realization that deliberative political marketing needs to become an inherent part of European governance. In its White Paper on European Governance, the European Union (EU) Commission aims to help reinforce the culture of consultation and dialogue in the EU. The democratic institutions and the representatives of the people, at both national and European levels, must try to connect Europe with its citizens (Commission of the European Communities 2001: 3).

The Commission believes that the processes of administration and policy-making must be visible to the outside world if they are to be understood and have credibility. This is particularly true of the consultation process, which acts as the primary interface with interests in society.

(Commission of the European Communities 2002: 17)

Extensive consultation should take place in all political arenas. In this context, good consultation serves a dual purpose by helping to improve the quality of the policy outcome, while at the same time increasing the involvement of interested parties and the public at large. A further advantage is that transparent and coherent consultation processes run by the Commission do not only allow the general public to be more involved, they also give the legislature greater power to scrutinize the Commission’s activities (Commission of the European Communities 2002). The intention of the so-called ‘European Citizens’ Initiative’ (ECI), enacted in December 2010, is to push citizen involvement. A central element of the ECI is the political and legal institutionalization of a new instrument of deliberative marketing, the opportunities and benefits of which are known. That is, the public is mobilized while being well aware of the fact that although the results are not binding, they will definitely help produce political pressure:

The ECI will introduce a whole new form of participatory democracy to the EU. It is a major step forward in the democratic life of the Union. It’s a concrete example of bringing

Europe closer to its citizens. And it will foster a cross border debate about what we are doing in Brussels and thus contribute, we hope, to the development of a real European public space ...

(*Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration*)

Implementation of deliberation: examples of citizens' juries

The precursor to the European Citizens' Initiative was the European Citizens' Consultations, which represent the only EU-wide deliberation until the introduction of the ECI in 2012. The first transnational, EU-wide citizens' juries, namely the European Citizens' Consultations, serve as the first case study. These were established in order to increase the involvement of citizens after the failed referenda on the EU Constitution, and at the same time to boost the support of the general public for the EU project. The European Citizens' Consultations have been awarded several PR prizes.

In the second case, a citizens' jury (*Planungszelle* in German) is utilized in the framework of a controversial communal and general administrative reform in Germany, in addition to two other forms of deliberative communication. This had great impact on citizens. Figure 5.1 illustrates the 'change dynamics' of the attitudes (beliefs) of the participants as assessed in the examined procedure in Rhineland-Palatinate.

Figure 5.1 summarizes the results from six *Planungszellen*. It becomes clear that citizens' beliefs change through the procedure. They demand in particular the support of voluntary work by citizens and gain trust in the political process of the reform. Transparency and knowledge

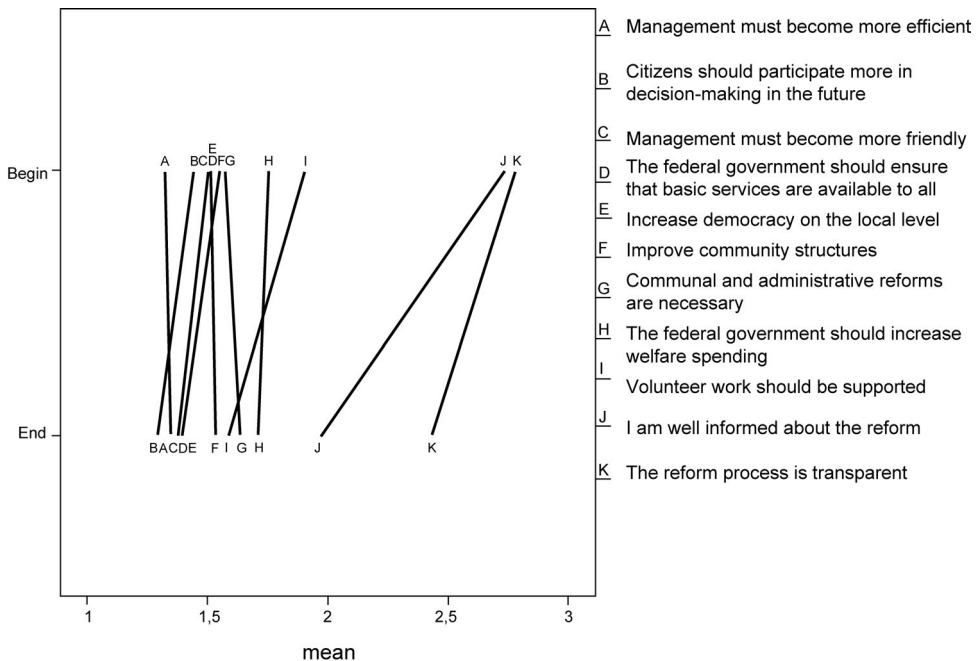


Figure 5.1 Changes in ratings of statements concerning reforms in the course of the planning procedure (*Planungszelle*) (N=140)

improve the most; from the viewpoint of political marketing this result should be interesting for further research. Changes and possible mergers of cities and communities in the state (*Land*) of Rhineland-Palatinate are the issue here. Such reforms have previously failed in other German states because of poor political marketing, among other things. For the example of Rhineland-Palatinate, its own extensive qualitative and quantitative data is available on the basis of which it is possible to formulate conclusions concerning the success of deliberative political marketing beyond the citizens' jury. The main result is that in general as participation increases, so does the satisfaction of the citizens. In any case, it is clear that in principle there is a need for reform. Citizens who are in further participation in the Reform process show interest (Sarcinelli *et al.* 2009: 2).

A look at Japan shows that a citizens' jury can also proceed bottom-up. In Japan, citizens discuss with experts and representatives from the administration and policy, enforced by non-governmental organizations. This *shimintōgikai*¹ promotes interest in the political process and contributes to changes in Japanese public culture previously characterized by the rejection of politics in Japan (Shinoto 2009: 18).

Due to their global utilization in the meantime, citizens' juries are well suited to serve as an empirical case (see Table 5.1). This empirical finding makes clear that the deliberative marketing phenomenon should be explored from the perspective of governance theory.

Deliberative marketing and governance

Governance theory addresses the further development of political institutions, national-global linkages and transnational public-private cooperation (Kooiman 2003: 5), and thus can be linked to deliberative political marketing. Stoker notes how 'theoretical work on governance reflects the interest of the social science community in a shifting pattern in styles of governing' (Stoker 1998: 17). It is all about 'new patterns of interaction', that is, new 'interactive' forms of governance between actors from government, society and economy to observe and explain. 'These new patterns are apparently aimed at discovering other ways of coping with new problems or of creating new possibilities for governing' (Kooiman 1994: 1). Governance is a theory about the changing ways of governing, and governance is understood as an interaction of or with society. However, the impact of change in the relationship of rulers to the ruled has not been adequately explored

Table 5.1 Deliberative political marketing and the citizens' jury

	<i>USA</i>	<i>EU</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)</i>
Name	Citizens' jury	'European Citizens Consultation'	Shimintōgikai	Planungszelle
Organized by administration	+	-	+	+++
Media campaign	+	+++	-	+++
Organized by non-governmental organizations	+++	+++	+++	+++
Administrative input	++	+	+++	+++
Problem formulation/ Solution proposals	National, state and local	Transnational	Local	State and local



Figure 5.2 Governance focused market-orientated party (MOP+G)

(Kooiman 1994: 249). Governance can explore how elites develop their own ideas and use different instruments and measures to achieve their goals (Kooiman 2003: 10), and how new methods and modes can create socio-political interaction including problem solving (Kooiman 2003: 133).

Governance can also be concerned with the citizen-state relationship and include both more participation and ‘extra-formal democracy’ (Heinrich *et al.* 2010: 9). Communitarianism and deliberative democracy are two accepted forms of democracy which try to create the smallest possible decision arenas, as these have a low threshold to get citizens involved in decision-making (Pierre and Peters 2000: 148). Citizens are no longer just taxpayers and consumers of public services but participate in the production of public services and contribute to the welfare of society (Bouckaert 1994: 157). It is about the joint development of solutions. Dialogue involves communication, argumentation, deliberation, persuasion and choice (Pekonen 1994: 217).

Thus, given the increased use of deliberative marketing, we can put forward a new theory of ‘governance-oriented deliberative political marketing’. ‘Market-oriented party’ (MOP) can adopt a governance perspective (MOP+G), with deliberative marketing playing a central role. ‘Deliberative governance arenas’ allow institutional space for the deliberation process (see Figure 5.2).

These deliberative governance arenas also allow the inclusion of different components of knowledge. According to van Buuren, this increases the success of collaborative governance. Fact-finding and framing are the essential ingredients (van Buuren 2009: 230–32).

However, each level of government will be different, of course. The following matrix (see Table 5.2) illustrates the interrelated elements of different kinds of deliberative governance arenas and deliberative political marketing in the decision-making process. In an ideal world, elites would choose the activities that that are most appropriate for the respective partnership.

Advice for practitioners: success factors for deliberative political marketing

The following steps represent the key factors in realizing deliberative political marketing:

The ability of deliberative governance

The first step is to check if there is something to decide and to deliberate. If not, then deliberative political marketing is not helpful.

Designate the responsible leader: The second step is to identify and to name the leader or leaders who are responsible for the deliberative marketing process. At this point it is necessary to clarify the strategic significance of deliberative political marketing for the party.

Table 5.2 Overview of different deliberative governance arenas in the context of the process of political decision-making

<i>Deliberative political marketing focus</i>		<i>Variations of deliberative governance arenas in the context of the steps in the political decision making process</i>				
	<i>Agenda setting</i>	<i>Drafting</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Monitoring</i>	<i>Reformulation</i>
Partnership	Work group or committee	Co-drafting	Joint decision-making Co-decision making	Strategic partnerships	Work groups or committee	Work groups or committee
Dialogue	Hearings and public forums Citizens' forums and future councils Key government contact	Hearings and Q&A panels Expert seminars Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies	Open plenary or committee sessions	Capacity building seminars Training seminars	Work groups or committee	Seminars and deliberative forums
Consultation	Petitioning Consultation online or other techniques	Hearings and Q&A panels Expert seminars Multi-stakeholder committees and advisory bodies	Open plenary or committee sessions	Events, conferences, forums, seminars	Feedback mechanisms	Conferences or meetings Online consultation
Information	Easy and open information access Research campaigning and lobbying Website for key documents	Open and free access to policy documents Website for key documents Campaigns and lobbying Web casts Research input	Campaigning and lobbying	Open access to information Website for information access E-mail alerts FAQ Public tendering procedures	Open access to information Evidence gathering Evaluations Research studies	Open access to information

Choose the right deliberative governance arena wisely: The third step is to identify the most useful deliberative governance arena in the context of the decision-making process and the strategic goals. The 'Matrix of Civil Participation' in Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe (2009: 17) is useful for this step.

Check the deliberative political marketing focus: The fourth step is to ensure that the chosen deliberative governance arena is in line with the strategy of the party.

What happens with the results? The fifth step focuses on the output. In planning the deliberative marketing strategy, it is essential to know which steps will be taken after the results of the deliberation have been obtained. This is also important for the people who deliberate because they want to know if the time they are investing in a deliberative governance arena is worthwhile.

Design the deliberative marketing communication: The sixth step is to design and choose marketing instruments that are useful for implementing the specific form of deliberative governance by considering the outcomes and impacts.

Use the deliberative governance arena as a marketing event: The seventh step is to use the communicative power of the deliberative governance arena. Voters and party members can be mobilized to deliberate and find collaborative solutions which give new perspectives for political solutions. This fact is particularly interesting for the media because new perspectives may collide with established ways of thinking

Conflicting results

Challenge for leadership: Dealing with conflicting results is the greatest challenge for leadership in deliberative political marketing. At this step the importance of step 2 becomes clear, because that is where personal accountability and responsibility for ensuring and monitoring outcomes are determined.

Communicate your decision

The final step is to communicate the decision wisely. This is one of the most challenging tasks in deliberative political marketing. The decision (especially when there are conflicting results) must be transparent and comprehensible, so the stakeholders can understand why the leader prefers a different solution.

A lifecycle approach: Steps one to nine can be considered a lifecycle model when deliberative political marketing is used continuously over time.

Deliberative political marketing: a governance philosophy

Under a holistic perspective, deliberative political marketing must be seen as a governance philosophy for market-oriented parties, so that they will be able to handle the problem of complexity.

Impact on politics: deliberative political marketing and leadership

The market-orientation model is a valuable heuristic guideline, but no party can be 'truly' market-oriented (Temple 2010: 274–75). The concept of market orientation is not just about following the market demands, but using market intelligence (Lees-Marshment *et al.* 2010: 295). Deliberative marketing, however, may make it work more effectively if it is integrated into a new

leadership style whereby policy-makers or parties must align marketing intelligence with governance. The consequence for political leaders or marketing managers is that they find themselves in the middle of a new kind of strategic collaboration for which they need respective skills. Collaboration-related competencies include the ability to work productively both within and outside of hierarchy and to act deliberatively and strategically (Norris-Tirrell and Clay 2010a: 2–10). They also should attend carefully to the development of the collaboration's structure, focusing on the rules of deliberative governance and the political decision-making process (Norris-Tirrell and Clay 2010b: 36). The existence of a champion or highly visible and well-known leader or leadership group helps citizens to join or to engage in deliberative governance arenas (Clay and Norris-Tirrell 2010: 64). Voters must trust governments to deal with the unexpected as well as the expected, and a party or government will be more highly regarded when it is seen as being responsive to public opinion. However, in the long term it is necessary to develop leadership systems because leaders will someday leave the organization. Thus, operational guidelines should encompass leadership development programs so that future leaders can acquire experience in key roles before stepping up to higher positions (Norris-Tirrell and Clay 2010c: 81). Consequently, deliberative political marketing needs to undergo a transformation from a mere idea to an entire philosophy. If deliberative political marketing is accepted and applied within the federal institutional system, then it will become part of the logic of the political culture. This will lead to a new form of trust in the citizen–leader relationship.

The way forward

There is a growing awareness of the need for participation to be valued in democratic systems. This has implications for policy-making and decision-making, in that participation and multi-perspectives are the ingredients for a more informed debate over policy issues and the basis for the analysis of policy options (White 2002: 158–59). Through deliberative governance arenas, policy-makers get the whole system into one room which could result in creative solutions for a particular issue that are quantitatively different from solutions found by a small group. The use of such processes could activate citizens and strengthen their faith in democratic processes. The following practical criteria must be considered on a permanent basis:

- Reasonable time frame: This is necessary in order to increase the willingness of the individual to invest time in common interests.
- Partnership: Cooperation with the participants on a level playing field.
- Intrinsic motivation: Ensuring that participants motivate themselves.
- Personal interest/self-interest: The topic must interest the citizen and appear meaningful.
- Plausibility: Easy comprehensibility of the processes from the beginning until the end.
- Integrative aspects: Integration of diversity to make use of its potentials.

Exactly to attain these quality criteria, deliberative marketing analyses are necessary. The next steps in research are to learn about how to work with large groups in deliberative governance arenas and apply the results in order to optimize deliberative marketing, because constant combining and adapting will be necessary to produce the most powerful dynamic of methods of deliberative governance arenas (Carson and Hartz-Karp 2005: 135) and deliberative political marketing. The challenge is to build decision-making processes in which participatory action is possible with a fully engaged leadership or leadership group that accurately reflects the diverse views and values and can still make effective decisions (Murell 2000: 811–12).

Note

- 1 The concept consists of *shimin* (citizen), *tōgi* (discourse) and *kai* (discussion).

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