Party Positioning in Political Market

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要　旨

現代社会の大きな変化に沿って政党政治の姿が変わってきた。政党の役割と行動様式もそれに従って、変化しつつある。現在政党はビジネス組織のように行動し、また有権者は消費者のような立場から選択をする。選挙に勝つために、政党には新しく特別な戦略が必要とされている。こうした事実を分析するためには、これまでとは異なる、新しく、特別なフレームワークが必要とされている。

政治アリーナにおける政党の地位は、マーケティングの観点から分類することができる。マーケティングの手法によって、政党はそれ自体の競争戦略を作成することができる。また、それによって政党は競合する他の政党の戦略を理解することができる。これからは、政党はマーケティングを通して人気のあるプロダクト、すなわち政策を提供するようになるであろう。

Keywords: Political marketing, political party, election, election campaign

Contents

I. Introduction

The study of political parties is a major area in political science. In turn, there are many points of view, from which party politics could be observed and considered. One is the market-oriented perspective. This kind of analysis requires that the political parties in a democratic system be regarded as analogous to commercial organizations in industrial markets.

The process of adapting business-marketing concepts and techniques by political organizations can be defined normally as political marketing. Contemporarily, political organizations increasingly conduct market intelligence to identify citizens concerns, change their behaviour to respond those demands and communicate their "political product" effectively.

Societal changes also undermine the influence of class on voting behaviour[1]. Indeed, voters are more likely to choose on a rational basis and follow the issue voting-behaviour model. As Member of British Parliament Andrew Lansley indicated at the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties Conference in 1997, "…politics has moved into a new and transactional era of politics where parties have to engage voters in a discussion on why they should vote for them" (cited in Lees-Marshment, 2001, p.22).

Rather than analysing the parties in terms of their ideology, historical origin or policy platforms, they are considered in terms of their relative market standing or competitive position.

The analysis of market positioning can be addressed from many perspectives. The firm of Arthur D. Little suggested one of these[2] that a commercial firm in a market occupies one of six competitive positions, which are: dominant, strong, favourable, tenable, weak, or non-viable. Kotler, in turn, offers framework that includes four main positions, which are leader, challenger, follower, and nicher, as more appropriate to politics. "It is more applicable in an arena where fewer players will operate" (Collins and Butler, 2002, p.6).

II. Transformations of Party Model

As a rule, parties can take different approaches to how they determine their behavior. This in turn affects their ability to achieve the goals and execute the role in the political system.

Political science already has a number of models that attempt to outline the way parties behave: the mass-party model developed by Duverger in 1954, the catch-all party model offered by Kirchheimer in 1966, the electoral professional party model suggested by Panebianco in 1988, and the cartel party model elaborated

by Katz and Mair in 1995.

1. The most long-standing model is the Mass Party. This argued that parties emerged from and to represent a group (or class) of people in society. Parties had strong roots in that section of society: providing channels by which people could be involved in politics, not just politically but also socially. Parties also pursued a distinct and particular ideology according to the "stratification of society" (Duverger, 1954, p.419). Duverger was the first who presented in detail the analysis of party politics from sociological standpoint. His analysis widely utilized the examples of emergences of Socialist parties, and founded his concept of mass party generally on the cases of Europe Socialist parties. He highlights that the "…mass parties are generally parties of the Left" (p.359). Duverger argues that for the mass political party "…recruiting of members is a fundamental activity…" (p.63). He continues, "…without members, the party would be like a teacher without pupil" (p.63).

The essence of mass party is in the ideological cleavage in society. It is completely class-oriented party relying on party affiliation and identification within masses and focusing on certain ideology or doctrine. There was strong linkage between parties and its supporters. Voters normally identified themselves with certain party as a socialist, republican, bourgeois and so on. But society began to change structurally and ideologically. Therefore the role and functions of mass party no longer respond such changing. Ideology basis, class identification, linkage between voters and parties has weakened. On the other hand voters' electoral volatility has been increased. Consequently, parties faced new electoral conditions and needed to apply new electoral strategy.

2. Kirchheimer realized such transformation in 1966 and published his seminal article "The Transformation of the Western European party system". In his analysis Kirchheimer used the rational choice concept[3] developed by Downs in 1957, but provided more detail about how parties would behave. In fact, Kirchheimer was somewhat impressed by Downs's study. He argued that Western liberal democracies had seen the rise of the Catch-all Party, which tries to attract the support of a broad majority in society. Although Kirchheimer's "The Transformation of the Western European party system" was published firstly in 1966, it contains terms and theoretical framework that seem very modern. In general, Kirchheimer was concerned with the organization of the integrating links between government and the electorate and the changes of party structures, strategies and systems in time.

The Kirchheimer's analysis starts with conclusion:

Yet after the Second World War the acceptance of the law of the political market became inevitable in the major Western European countries. This change in turn found its echo in the changing structure of political parties. (Kirchheimer, 1969, p.184).

Kirchheimer's work is one of the most influential and widely cited articles in political science on the question of party and party-system development. Wolinetz (1979) stresses, for example, the fact that the concept of catch-all strategies should be adopted by all successful parties because of its competitive advantage. Parties that fail to adopt should become insignificant; hence, the party systems should become less fragmented (p.17). Wolinetz concluded that the adaptation of catch-all strategies is only successful in party systems in which the voter's attachment is weak (p.22).

In fact, the terms "political market" or "political competition" are virtually ubiquitous in article (Kirchheimer, 1966, pp.183, 184, 186, 188, 192). This is an indication of Kirchheimer's thinking in an economic framework. In addition to the market and competitive analogy, he also used generic conceptual terms of marketing in his analysis. One obvious example is the equation of parties with major brands (p.192).

Kirchheimer's catch-all party seemed to be the most sensible to electoral conditions. However, as far as society has become structurally and culturally more heterogeneous, so-called "middle class" and voters' electoral volatility has been increased, parties faced the necessity of more effective approach to campaign. There was a premise to emergence of new Electoral-professional type of party. Similarly, popular politics had been substituted by merchandized and educational politics in America in the early twentieth century[4]. Such new type of party has been realised and described firstly by Panebianco in 1988.

3. Panebianco's (1988) Electoral-professional party followed the same line as Kirchheimer. This founded on the same basis as the catch-all party that parties are changing who they appeal to. The electoral-professional party gives a central role to professionals within the organization. In the mass party described by Duverger the apparatus, the party bureaucracy, plays a crucial role. In turn, Panebianco (1988) explains that,

…in the new type of party a much more important role is played by professionals (the so-called experts, technicians with special knowledge) they being more useful to the organization then the traditional party bureaucrats, as the party's gravitational centre shifts from the members to the electorate. (p.264).

Panebianco in his book “Political parties: organization and power” suggests a new type of political party, isolates it from mass party, and draws the differences between mass-bureaucratic party and electoral-professional party (Table 1).

Table 1. Differences between mass-bureaucratic and electoral-professional parties.

Mass-bureaucratic party	Electoral-professional party
Central role of the bureaucracy (political-administrative tasks)	Central role of the professionals (specialized tasks)
Membership party, strong vertical organizational ties, appeal to the “electorate of belonging”	Electoral party, weak vertical ties, appeal to the “opinion electorate”
Pre-eminence of internal leaders, collegial leadership	Pre-eminence of the public representatives, personalized leadership
Financing through membership and collateral activities (party cooperatives, trade unions etc.)	Financing through interest groups and public funds
Stress on ideology, central role of the believers within the organization	Stress on issues and leadership, central role of the careerists and representatives of interest groups within the organization

Adopted from Panebianco (1988, p.264).

Panebianco stresses that the historical epoch of strong parties/strong institutions (the mass-party analyzed by Duverger) seems to be drawing to demise, and the era of new electoral-professional type of party and catch-all party seems to be coming up. As a general premises for the appearance of that new models Panebianco suggests the changes in the party environment, decline of “electorate of belonging” and party identification, and unstableness of electoral arena.

4. The most recent addition to the models of party behaviour is the Cartel model, by Katz and Mair (1995). This suggested that parties increasingly collude and act together, using the resources of the state to ensure their survival and resist challenge from new parties or movements.

Katz and Mair (1995) characterized their new type of party, the cartel party, “by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by a pattern of inter-party collusion” (p.17). The cartel party can be identified through several key characteristics. Katz and Mair describe the characteristics of cartel party through the goals of politics, the patterns of electoral competition, and the party membership, and the relations between the party members and the party leadership. The emergence of the cartel party, cased the advent a period in which the goals of politics

“…become more self-referential, with politics becoming a profession in itself – a skilled profession, […]

and one in which the limited inter-party that does ensue takes place on the basis of competing claims to efficient and effective management. (p.19).

The new style of electoral competition that has been formed in mid-1970s has certain implications for changes in the resource base of the parties and in the type of party work and campaigning. The campaigns of the cartel parties are now “almost exclusively capital-intensive, professional and centralized” (p.20). It, like a Panebianco’s electoral-professional party, devotes more and more resources to the employment of professional publicists and media experts.

As all preceded party models had an associated model of democracy, the cartel-party also associated with a revision of the normative model of democracy. In this revised model the essence of democracy lies in the ability of voters to choose from a fixed menu of political parties. In this respect, Katz and Mair characterize the party as a “group of leaders who compete for the opportunity to occupy government offices and to take responsibility at the next election for government performance” (p.21).

Katz and Mair consider the development of party politics as a continuing process in which each of party models are seen merely as a certain stage in such process. From this perspective the cartel party is not a final model in development, but simply one stage in an evolution process. Like previous party types, the cartel party suggests a particular conception of democracy; “moreover […] it stimulates further reactions and sows the seeds for yet further evolution” (p.6), perhaps towards a market-oriented party that, in turn, would imply its specific democracy conception.

III. Toward Market-oriented behavioural model

A number of changes in electoral environment affect the way parties behave. Party identification, attachment and membership have fallen in terms of overall level. Electoral volatility has increased, and party support has declined. The so-called “anti-party” voters have appeared[5]. Since the advent of mass technology, television and radio has become the main source of information about politics. People no longer need to relay on partisan sources of information. Increasing the availability of education makes voters more critical and less attached to parties. Voter’s pattern of electing candidates has become similar to process of buying goods and services by usual consumer. Politics itself has become more flexible and consumption-oriented.

As a result of such transformations a “value vacuum” has been created in societies. Indeed,

O'Shaughnessy (1990) argues that political marketing [market-oriented party] arises when, amongst other things, "geographically and socially mobile societies create a "value vacuum" and political territory is open with low pre-existing loyalties" (p.24). The behavioral model of market-oriented party has been suggested by Lees-Marshment in 2001. It based upon the classification of business organizations according to its orientation toward product-, sales-, or consumer-focusing. Certainly, parties implement its strategy according the positions they take. As far as we recognize that recent parties act like business organizations, it is obvious that parties' positioning need to be analyzed in marketing perspective. The concept of political marketing offers the framework for analyzing parties' various strategy in terms of marketing.

Similarly to modern-day principle of economy that consumer is at the absolute center of the business world the parallel can be drawn in electoral politics. The voter is at the center of political competition, and parties and candidates revolve around him/her, like companies revolve around the customer. In 1960 when Robert Keith published his "The marketing revolution", perhaps he did not even guess that in the new millennium the political marketing revolution would be occurred.

The application of marketing to politics has been somewhat neglected in both the marketing and politics literature. While the study of elections is central to their subject, political scientists tend to focus on institutional relationships or scientific explanation of political and electoral phenomena rather than campaign strategies and management. However, the last few years have seen the emergence of a coherent subset of the broad field.

Marketing is called to offer political campaigners a variety of benefits. Firstly, marketing offers a framework for thinking about political campaigning. Secondly, marketing offers a professional approach to analyzing and managing political campaigns. The political campaign is analogous to the product development and launch process in the world of enterprise, and can be described and managed in the same way. As Reid (1988) claims, "the problem of getting elected is essentially a marketing one" (p.34). "Almost all politicians use marketing techniques and ideas, but very few wish to admit it openly" (Mauser, 1983, p.3).

The changes occurring in electoral politics are evident. Political actors face the emergence of new type of politics, that is, "consumption politics". Political parties no longer pursue grand ideologies, and the majority of the people no longer simply vote for the party their parents supported. They are more critical of parties and candidates, expecting them to deliver what they want. In order to survive in this new electoral market, where voters act like consumers, parties are acting like businesses.

The most of theorists on subject have used an evolutionary model originally devised by Keith (Keith,

1960, pp.36-38), to explain the evolution of marketing as a commercial philosophy. Within this framework the initial stage, the so-called “production” orientation takes a classical view of business and assumes the customer will, with minimum encouragement, purchase what the firm makes.

Many researchers acknowledge that the turning point of the new marketing orientation era is the Watergate accident, and the post Watergate era characterized by greater utilizing the marketing concept philosophy. This concept allows for a more flexible approach towards the electorate. It is founded on voter-orientation and takes into account the electorate’s needs and wants, and it tries to achieve a high level of satisfaction. Thus the campaigning of political candidates is becoming more: (1) voter-oriented – candidates are selected for their potential to fully satisfy the voters’ needs and expectations; (2) integrated – the various marketing activities are organized for maximum impact; (3) long term oriented – build up long-run voter preference for the party and the candidate (Shama, 1976, p.770).

In marketing orientation stage a thorough study of the voter market is the basis. Such a study is concerned with researching generic behavioural processes are related to voter behaviour, for instance, political attitude formation, image formation, needs for political involvement, and so on, as well as conducting periodic polls to find out voters’ opinions on issues and candidate performance.

The second characteristic of this stage, integrated marketing, involves the set of such activities as simultaneous study, analysis, and segmentation of voters; candidate positioning, and candidate development; promotion and use of media so that to reach an integrated marketing plan that satisfies the voters (Henneberg, 2002, p.147). In turn, Shama asserts that in marketing orientation stage such activities must take a policymaking approach “…rather than the simple or complex decision making approach employed by the candidate oriented and sales management oriented stages…” (Shama, 1976, p.772).

In the stage of marketing orientation the campaign efforts are not only aimed at winning the current election, but rather at winning the election and serving the voters in a satisfying manner. Consequently, the long run voter preference for the party and the candidate is built up.

As we could see the conceptual and technical parallels between the conventional marketing and political marketing are visible. Therefore, it is fair to say that political marketing can be included within the boundaries of existing general marketing theory, and to consider the development of its idea through the evolution of the concept of traditional marketing.

IV. Party Positioning in Political Market

Since we recognize to consider party politics through marketing perspective thoroughly, it would be fair to keep discussion such a way. In previous sections we have discussed how party changes its behaviour and product in order to respond adequately to political environment. We have considered the internal structure and processes of the party. In this section the explanation of external process is provided. Parties are considered in terms of their relative market standing or competitive position. The political positioning process is a determination of how best to present a candidate or party to the voters. It is important for a candidate or political party to understand its own strengths and weaknesses because this allows the strategies to determine what the candidate or party can or cannot do. Once a candidate or political party has determined who its competitors are, what its own and its competitors' strengths and weaknesses are, and which competitive strategy it will adopt, it is necessary to target the appropriate segments with the appropriate message and policies.

The types used to describe the parties are market leader, challenger, follower and nicher. In fact, these are drawn from the business strategy literature. They have been widely used for the analysis of business strategy and have been popularized by Porter (1980) and Kotler (1994). This framework offers a competitive positioning map of the market that will inform marketing and campaign decisions and guide strategic direction. Researchers on this subject claim that there be one particular advantage of this model, that it be applicable in an arena where fewer players operate – unlike models with a greater number of positions (Collins and Butler, 1996, p.28). In this respect Mauser (1983) notes that political markets tend to have fewer participants than commercial markets (p.7).

As far as political party is considered as commercial organization, it must have inherent or instinctive strategic perspectives. For example, mature parties in the West have strong party discipline, are established, and have clear lines of authority as do typical business organizations. The thinking that election is the market, the political party is the company and the vote is the purchase is widely recognized by Reid (1988), O'Shaughnessy (1990), and Niffenegger (1989).

Reid (1988) notes that politicians often confuse marketing with advertising and in this confusion tend to "…ignore several important phenomena which are germane to the business of winning votes" (p.36). These phenomena include the marketing strategy which has to be adopted by the party in order to win elections.

Niffenegger (1989) adapts the "four P's" (concept of the 4 Ps has been discussed briefly in previous

subsection) of the marketing mix to analysis of political campaigning. He determines the product, price, place, and promotion as follow: 1. “the product offered by political marketers is really a complex blend of many potential benefits voters believe will be brought result if the candidate is elected” (p.47); 2. Price includes such costs as economic costs of candidate (tax policy, government benefits policy and others), national image effects (“do voters perceive the new leader as strong, and will he bring about increased national pride?” (p.48)), psychological costs (“can voters feel comfortable with the candidate’s religious and ethnic background?” (p.48)); 3. “Place strategy deals with the methods or channels used to get the candidate across in a personal way to the voters” (p.48). It includes a personal appearance program and volunteer worker program; 4. Promotion is often viewed as the key marketing elements used by candidates. It involves a concentration strategy[6], timing strategy, and strategy of misdirection (avoiding a direct frontal assault against an opponent whose strength is superior) (p.49).

O’Shaughnessy (1990) identifies politics with the business activities: “… politics are shaped by the need to market candidates and parties as if they were soap powder, employing techniques taken from the world business” (p.1).

The analysis of market positioning can be addressed from many perspectives. In this section we discuss at least two common approaches to positioning candidates or parties. One is suggested by the top management-consulting firm of Arthur D. Little “…that a firm in a market will occupy one of six competitive positions: dominant, strong, favourable, tenable, weak, or non-viable” (Collins and Butler, 2002, p.5). Then, Kotler (1994) popularized this framework and drew four main positions, which were expected to be more appropriate to politics: leader, challenger, follower, and nicher.

According to various conditions of market, firms can take certain strategic positions. The market conditions can involve such aspects as voters’ behaviour pattern, positions of competitors, history of market evolution, pattern of product conflict, and others.

Since we admit to consider political parties as commercial organization to analyze the mechanism of their positioning similarly to business, it can take certain positions according to various conditions of political market. Kotler (1994) defines market positioning as the “act of designing the company’s offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customers’ mind” (p.307). He classified firms by the role they play in the target market, that of leading, challenging, following, or niching (p.382). Kotler assumed that leader occupies forty percent of the market. It is the firm with the largest market share. 30% is in the hands of market challenger, a runner-up firm that is fighting hard for an increased market share. Another 20%

is in the hands of a market follower, another running-up firm that is willing to maintain its market share. The remaining 10% is in the hands of market nichers, firms that serve small market segments not being served by lager firms (p.382).

4.1. Leader

Market leader usually leads other firms in price changes, new product introductions, distribution coverage, and promotional intensity. It may or may not be admired or respected, but other players acknowledge its dominance. Typical market leaders in a variety of product markets include Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Xerox, YKK and Kodak. In fact, a number of strategic directions are common among market leaders. Kotler (1994) identifies three fronts of action for commercial firms that want to remain number one in the market. These fronts are expanding total market demand, protecting its current market share through good defensive and offensive actions, and increasing its market share even if market size remains constant (p.383). Collins and Butler try to apply these three strategies in party politics (1996, 2002). Accordingly, political party in position of market leader expands the total political market, increases and defends market share. Defensive strategies are very important for the leader because it is subject to continuous attack. There are many stories in the world of commerce that the market leaders were successfully beaten into a lesser place or vanished in a tough competitive environment.

The strategy of market expanding involves adding a new group of voters to the targeting area. As Kotler (1994) notes, “every product class has the potential of attracting buyers who are unaware of the product or who are resisting it…” (p.383). For instance, the electorate may expand significantly as a new group of eighteen-year-olds or women. Also, leader can expand its market in cases of some geographical retransformations of states, when new territory is added, or two states are united. However, there is one significant problem in process of increasing party’s market. In political market the leader has to appeal to a broad range of voters, but it seems to be quite difficult for a leader to be explicit across a wide number of issues. As a rule the interests of different groups of voters do not lie in the same line. It is not normally seen to be easy for a leader to keep the balance in attempts to appeal sincerely to all of these groups.

Beside the question of defence, there is one more serious problem for a leader in its strategy that is to retain the traditional base of support which could be lost by the party as a result of drastic demographical changes. When the population to whom political party appeals is in decline, party needs to call a strategy of increasing market share rather than relying on defence. In marketing when the number of customers who

purchase the organization's products or services goes down, the organization normally needs to introduce a new product, or renew existing product so that it would attractive for new target customers. Similarly, in politics parties are required to present new policies or candidates to uncertain competitive environment. It mostly connected to the techniques of targeting. Targeting approaches should be reconsidered according to the patterns of voting behaviour. Recent developments in product technologies offer political campaigners new powerful techniques for assessing their strategic opportunities. The spatial models of the patterns of competition among brands or products seem to be a most effective technique. These spatial models are used by management as "market maps" to identify opportunities for new products. Recently, such mapping procedures are utilized by campaign managers in electoral politics. Booz, Allen and Hamilton in their "Management of new products" (1968) present in detail the common stages in process of new product development[7].

However, in this regard there is one significant difference between political party and commercial organization. The sudden loss of leadership position is more likely to occur in the political market than its commercial equivalent. The electorate give its verdict suddenly and once, thus a political market is a volatile one.

So, we can conclude the explanation of leader-party by words of Collins and Butler (2002): "for the market leader to position itself as dominant/stable as well as innovative/responsive requires a particular blend of product (policies) and promotion (communications)" (p.8).

Firms that occupy second, third, and lower ranks in an industry are called runner-up, or trailing firms. Runner-up challenging firms adopt only one posture, that is, to attack the leader. There are many cases of market challengers that gained ground on the market leader or even overtook the leader: Canon, which was only one tenth the size of Xerox in the mid-1970s, today produces more copier machines than Xerox; British Airways flies more international passengers than the former leader, Pan Am.

4.2. Challenger

The most well-known commercial organizations are viewed as challengers. Normally, such companies recognize that their market share is less than the leader's, and they pursue, active, aggressive strategies with the aim of becoming leader. Commonly, the challenger is the next biggest player after the leader, but it does not necessarily to take that position. Rather, its main feature is that the challenger is called to depose the leader; and it has a realistic chance to do so. Certainly, there may be a number of challengers.

A market challenger must first define its strategic objectives.

Indeed, the basic strategic objective of the challenger is to attack. Collins and Butler (2002) identify three general levels of attacking. The aggressor can target the market leader directly, attack competitors of its own size, or attack small local and regional competitors (p.9). Attacking the market leader is high-risk but potentially high-payoff strategy. Kotler (1994) determines for the challenger a major task that is to examine consumers' needs and dissatisfactions (p.394). If a substantial segment is unserved or poorly served, it provides an excellent strategic target. Thus, the market challenger should be largely concerned with targeting on such segments of voters. Consequently, regarding such segments challenger should create and communicate more attractive products than the leader does. Kotler suggests one more alternative strategy for the challenger that is to out-innovate the leader across the whole segment (p.394). Such strategy can be reconsidered in terms of political marketing. Some political party, which is on market challenger position, should concentrate on seeking a new and more attractive solution to the political issue. It is fair to say that recent political challengers are not capable enough to generate the solutions which would basically differ from the leader's one, and attract the dissatisfied segment of voters. As a rule the solutions offered by the challenger are seen by voters as similar to those suggested by the leader.

As in commercial markets, there may be no clear leader in some political markets. In this regard the political market in France could be seen as a market without clear leader. It involves several challengers, which, in terms of Porter, are "jockeying for position".

In many instances, the challenger adopts strategies similar to those that had previously been used by the leader when it first came to dominance. Challengers' basic strategic objective requires an aggressive approach. Porter in is his article "How to attack the leader" in 1985 identifies three basic conditions for a successful attack on the market leader: the challenger must have a sustainable competitive advantage; the challenger must be able to neutralize the leader's other advantages; and there must be some impediment to the leader's retaliating (cited in Collins and Butler, 1996, p.30).

Surely, the challenger's strategies differ according to the electoral systems. In comparison to proportional electoral system, it is well-known that FPP-system[8] is somewhat inequitable in the votes-to-seats process. Thus, it is expected that the strategy of challenger in countries with such electoral system is more aggressive. Since the proportional electoral systems "encourage a system of parties that are multiple, rigid, independent, and stable" (Duverger, 1954, p.205), the challenger's strategy is expected to be less aggressive because it can survive or maintain its position as a challenger for a long period. Beside the extent of strategy aggression,

researchers define two general ways of challenges according to characteristics of competitive environment. As a rule, in a competitive environment where the products offered by parties are similar (for instance, in case of Japan's political situation) challenger attack the leader head-on. Such strategy often involves the direct charging that the leader is corrupt and incompetent. The history of politics knows the classic case of charging with corruption and incompetent the leader, British Conservatives, by the classic challenger, British Labour party. Another way is so-called "back-door" strategy, which often seems to be attractive for challengers. Collins and Butler (1996) determine this strategy as follows: "If a policy can be "branded" before its appeal is widely recognized, a party can steal a march on its opponents" (p.31).

Certainly, there is no fixed strategy model to compete leader for the challenger. Before defining the strategy it is necessary to investigate and analyze all characteristics of competition context. There must be a number of opportunities to take a certain strategy to attack the leader on various levels, or extend the market share by targeting smaller parties.

4.3. Follower

Many runner-up companies prefer to follow rather than challenge the market leader. This is not to say that market followers lack strategies. A market follower must know how to hold current customers and win a share of new customers. Followship is not the same as being passive or a carbon copy of the leader.

This position that political party can take is based on strategy of imitation. But, as Porter (1985) asserts, the imitation of successful strategy can be more or less difficult because organization holding such strategy tries to protect and defend its position against imitators (p.171). It seems that the most important advantage of follower position is that it eschews the expense of research and development, gaining distribution, and communications and selling in favour of simply copying the leader. However, it does not necessarily to imitate only the leader; it can copy another market leader. Collins and Butler (1996) note that, "In industries where opportunities for differentiation are limited and where price sensitivity is high, there can be a real attraction to the position of follower" (p.31). Perhaps, superficial observation on Japanese politics can provides the assumption that it could be identified as such a case. Thus, it would be fair to assume that there must be attractive environment for market follower in Japanese political market. However, since the essence of party politics is that it involves the drastic process of permanent changes, the position of follower could be taken by different parties over the time. Moreover, in addition to concept of market follower developed by Kotler (1994), and further popularized by Collins and Butler (1996, 2002), one can assume that such a

position can be taken by several parties at the time; similarly to business competition a number of firms can be identified as followers.

Despite the simple copying the leader or other market players, the follower is not passive. Collins and Butler (2002) highlights that concept of follower implies a “purposeful concentration, mainly on looking after the interests of existing customers” (p.11). Researchers on subject identify three broad strategies for a follower: 1) cloning (the leader’s advantages are copied assiduously; Collins and Butler (2002) associate such strategy with the counterfeit trade (p.11)). Kotler characterizes cloner as emulating the leader’s products, distribution, advertising, and so on. The cloner does not originate anything but parasitically lives off the market leader’s investments (p.401); 2) imitating (the leader’s product is replicated but with enough differentiation to avoid retaliation). Kotler’s characteristic of imitator is that,

The imitator copies some things from the leader but maintains differentiation in terms of packaging, advertising, pricing, and so on. The leader does not mind the imitator as long as the imitator does not attack the leader aggressively. The imitator even helps the leader avoid the charge of monopoly. (p.402).

3) adapting (the leader’s product is adapted by the follower, and sold in a different market to avoid direct confrontation. In fact, many Japanese commercial firms often engaged in such a strategy in several technological fields, later becoming challengers and, ultimately, leaders). The adapter takes the leader’s products and adapts and often improves them. The adapter may choose to sell to different markets to avoid direct confrontation with the leader. But often the adapter grows into the future challenger (Kotler, 1994). Thus, it could serve as basis for assumption that once political followers can radically change their strategies into refusing imitation the leader and pursuing the position of challenger.

It is the well-known assumption that followers in some political systems tend to nominate candidates in a restricted number of constituencies across the nation. Parties do not, of course, declare themselves openly as followers. Such categorization is useful only for observers. Normally, followers are large parties with stable market shares. Their strategy is to protect that share rather than challenge for leadership. For the followers dangers of an all-out attack outweigh the benefits.

They try to avoid alienating large numbers of traditional supporters. Collins and Butler (2002) note,

Such a party may pay special attention to local networks and the quality of its local representation, but

less to national slogans and aggressive advertising. (p.12).

As far as followers try to imitate the leader the targeting audience seem to be the same. Party tries to appeal to voters who are the supporters, or potential ones of the leader. Consequently, there is a real danger for the leader that its market share would be spited by the follower, therefore, as a rule, leader and follower form a coalition to fight an election together, and then compose the government. Follower is rewarded through the political system by cabinet appointments or other rewards of office.

In comparison to challengers, followers, in adopting defensive strategies, are careful not to change their core product too radically, and they tend to avoid attacking opponents in the communications media. Collins and Butler (2002) call their marketing communications as “below-the-line,” with greater emphasis on local networking approaches rather than the national mass media” (p.12).

4.4. Nicher

An alternative to being a follower in a large market is to be a leader in a small market, or niche. Smaller firms normally avoid competing with larger firms by targeting small markets of little or no interest to the larger firms. The market or niche of the nicher is normally well-defined and narrow. The main point is that firms with low shares of the total market can be highly profitable through smart niching.

Traditionally, nicher carefully defines and successfully targets a market segment where it specializes in serving the needs of those customers. The critical success factor for the nicher is that it serves the demands of its niche better than other competitors. Long-term, strong relationships are central to this approach. The main strategic tasks are to create, expand and defend niches. In turn, the major danger is that, “in a dynamic and competitive environment or industry, the niche might either disappear or be invaded by a bigger, more resourceful, player determined to success” (Collins and Butler, 2002, p.12). In fact, commercial companies can engage in multiple niching, thereby avoiding so-called “all-eggs-in-one-basket” problems. However, in the political marketing, where the votes of different special interest segments might oppose each other on basic principles, party which tends to cover a number of niches could be seen “as not taking a strong, defining stance on any important issue” (Collins and Butler, 1996, p.32).

The trend of niche marketing was caused by quite strict conditions of competition in market. Similarly, as far as the competitive situation in a political market is becoming severe, such kind of party’s strategic position has emerged. In this respect the Komeito party of Japan can serve as a striking example of nicher.

This party affiliated with religious movement Soka Gakkai and widely understood to be the political arm of Soka Gakkai to achieve the aim of making Soka Buddhism the state religion of Japan and, ultimately, the world[9].

Niche parties and candidates normally use a range of marketing instruments to achieve their strategies.

Table 2. Market positions

Position	Characteristic	Strategic directions
Leader	- highest share; - acknowledged orientation point; - subject to continuous attack;	- expand total market; - expand share; - defend share;
Challenger	- chosen to depose leader; - may be several challengers;	- attack leader; - attack similar competitors; - attack smaller competitors;
Follower	- purposeful concentration on target market; - imitative rather than innovative; - local/regional strengths; - broad line;	- clone; - adapt; - imitate;
Nicher	- leader in narrowly defined market or niche; - specialist appeal;	- create niche; - expand niche; - defend niche;

Based on Collins and Butler, 2002, p.6.

Marketing strategies are highly dependent on whether the company is a market leader, challenger, follower, or nicher. A market leader faces three challenges: expanding the total market, protecting market share, and expanding market share. A market challenger aggressively tries to expand its market share by attacking the leader, other runner-up players, or smaller players. A follower is a runner-up player that chooses not to “rock the boat”, usually out of fear that it stands to lose more than it might gain. A market nicher is a smaller competitor that chooses to operate in some specialized part of the market that is unlikely to attract the larger players.

The basic standpoint, from which the analysis is provided here, is that political market like a commercial one consists of a number of strategic positions which can be taken by parties. Certainly, such positions can be determined only by results of periodic elections. A party may move in rapid order from being the leader to being the challenger or follower. Moreover, the history of political processes knows cases when the leader becomes the

nicher following a swift declining of population of supporters[10] (White, Rose and McAllister, 1997).

Consideration on party politics in perspective which has been mentioned above is relatively new approach. It is expected to reveal some new sides of strategic positioning in political market. All political markets where the free competition is adopted can be analyzed in perspective of strategic positioning. Consequently, it can be utilized as a new framework to explain the structure and process of party politics in particular country.

V. Conclusion

Many authors on party politics assert that party is in decline. Parties become weak, and its membership has also declined. The major role of party has been changing. As Katz and Mair note, parties act as brokers or agents between state and civil society (Katz and Mair, 1995, p.14). Party identification has fallen, and electoral volatility has increased. There is no longer ideology basis on which party founded its structure and behavior. In many countries the candidate is no longer dependent on the party for his candidacy and support and can appeal via the paid media direct to the voters. But from another point of view such process of “party declining” could be seen as simply the changing the forms of party behavior. As far as the essence of politics and the pattern of electoral behaviour have been changing, it is fair to assert that the party’s behavioural structure has been changed too. Parties try to respond to the changes in political environment and evolve stage by stage changing itself. The mass-party was required by society with strong political cleavage to provide the essential linkage between citizens and the state. As far as ideology, concept of social cleavage, and party identification have been declined, and on the other hand electoral volatility, variability of party support, and instability of party systems have been increased parties reflecting such changes have transformed towards catch-all, electoral-professional, and cartel. As Katz and Mair (1995) contented,

The development of parties in western democracies has been reflective of a dialectical process in which each new party type generates a reaction that stimulates further development, thus leading to yet another new party type, and to another set of reactions, and so on. (p.6).

From Katz and Mair’s perspective each type of party is simply a stage in continuing process. Accordingly, a market-oriented party could be seen as one of these stages in the line of behavioral changing.

Structurally, party could be catch-all, electoral-professional or cartel one, but behaviourally it has transformed toward market-oriented organization. Certainly, it has its own specific characteristics, tasks, means, goals, and requires specific environmental conditions to be implemented. It can be executed in society with specific social and political structure. Lees-Marshment (2001) notes in this respect, “a country which still has clearly defined political cleavage might be less likely to use [political] marketing…” (p.219); in such countries a product-oriented party may be more appropriate in some circumstances.

Once offered by Kotler in 1994 the framework for analysis of organization position in competitive perspective has been popularized in both marketing management and political science. It enables researchers to analyze party politics from new marketing strategy perspective. In fact, the similarities between this framework and the approach to analyze the strategic positioning of military are visible. Once the positions of all competitors have been determined party can create the strategy according its position in the political market. In order to determine effective campaign strategies party “needs to have as accurate a map as they can get of voters’ perceptions and preferences, much as military strategists need a map of the terrain of the battlefield” (Mauser, 1983, p.47).

The leader, as it is an object for continual attacks from other competitors, must pay great attention to determining effective defensive strategy. On the other hand, challenger, as its main task is to aggressively attack the leader, should to strategically position itself so that it would be seen as a contrast player to the leader, and take the opposite stand on the same issue. Certainly, the strategies of both players should reflect the voters’ demands and preferences. Saying simply, the leader’s main task is to defend the voters’ loyalty, while the challenger’s one is to exploit the “floating vote” or the “undecided vote”.

As many Japanese commercial firms, the follower, imitating leader for a long time, one day can become a challenger, and then gain the leader position. Thus, the leader should determine its defensive strategy not only regarding a challenger, but a follower too. As for the leader, a follower is seen as a latent danger in this respect.

Endnote

1 For more details about such changes in voter behavior see Franklin (1985), Rose and McAllister (1986 and 1990).
2 Arthur D. Little, Inc. is the name of the world's first management consulting firm founded in 1886 by Arthur Dehon Little.
3 For more details see Downs, 1957.
4 For more details see Perloff, 1999.
5 For more details about recent electoral changes see Lees-Marshment, 2001, Webb, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2002, Norris, 1997.
6 Concentration strategy has been successfully used by both Hart and Reagan in 1984, involved concentrating a

disproportionately high amount of media dollars and other promotional efforts.

7 For more detail about the process of new product development see: Booz, Allen and Hamilton Inc., (1968). Management of new product. New York.

8 The First Past the Post electoral system, is a voting system for single-member districts (小選挙区制).

9 For more detail see: http://www.komei.or.jp/en/about/view.html

10 The communist party of Russian Federation was the leader in early 90s, but following the drastic political and economic changes in the country it lost the large part of supporters. Nowadays it represents only one narrow segment of the voters. For more details about changes in Russian party politics see: White, S., Rose, R., McAllister, I. (1997). How Russia votes. Chatham House Publishers.

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