

APPLICABILITY OF BRANDING PRINCIPLES AND LAWS IN POLITICS

Lately branding has experienced fast development as an individual part of commercial marketing, whose object of knowledge is the creation, maintaining and protection of the trade mark. Gradually it turned into the main marketing instrument and main goal of commercial marketing. We can easily say that it is the main focus, gradually replacing everything else.

In parallel with the development of branding there are realized the first attempts with respect to its principles and methods in the creation, maintenance and protection of the trade mark to be used also in other areas of public life and mostly in politics. Contemporary politics in the conditions of a democratic transition and market organization of society is oriented towards rational political and the connected with those economic programs. The creation and the lasting presence in the minds of people require stability, transparency and predictability. Contemporary political marketing originates from the same principle of new consumer culture, trying through branding to form in society or certain segments of it a stable and heightened interest in political parties as in a "group of homonymous goods" and this is understandable since it is easier to raise and impose a whole party (or rather its brand) than each separate candidate for a position of authority. Branding is not only a modern word in the vocabulary of marketeers, but an activity, which prospering companies do every day in order to keep their competitiveness. The same also goes for political subjects which in time turn into sustainable political brands through the creation of trust between their own brand and its supporters.

The object of this study is to reveal how the principles and laws of branding in the creation, affirmation and protection of the trade mark can also be applied in politics or at least to find specific similarities between the trade mark and the political brand. The main objective is to initiate an academic discussion on the applicability of the laws and principles of branding in politics as a specific area of public life.

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The only major difference between running a political campaign and creating a brand is that with the brand the campaign is never over ...

David F. D'Alessandro

Branding as a specific area, whose object of cognition is building and maintaining the trade mark, has developed very fast in modern marketing. There have appeared a number of research works, which developed the theory and laid the foundations of the practical and applied nature of branding.²

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² See Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга. С., "Класика и Стил" ООД, 2000; Эллууд, Я, 100 приемов эффективного брендинга. СПб, Питер, 2002; Темпорал, П., Эффективный бренд мениджмънт. Санкт Петербург, 2003; Aaker, D., Managing Brand Equity. Free

In recent years many Bulgarian authors, namely Dimitar Doganov, Boyan Dourankev, Hristo Katrandjiyev, Lilyana Mencheva, Oleg Lozanov, Velko Avramov, working on the issues of marketing communications and the communication policy of the company, have also devoted part of their publications to some branding issues.³

In most publications we already spot the idea that it is time branding established itself as an independent discipline within the field of marketing. There can be found even more courageous statements such as those of Al and Laura Ries, who believe that "marketing constitutes the building of a trade mark"⁴, that "it won't be long before the concept of marketing itself is replaced by a new concept called branding"⁵. Naturally, such an affirmation at the present stage of the development of marketing sounds almost like heresy and will definitely be confronted with fierce opposition, however, only time will tell. What is more important is that at the present moment branding has affirmed itself as a differentiated part of marketing and relates to it as a part to the whole. It is a matter of future developments and the subject of numerous scientific disputes whether it will be established as an independent academic subject or will keep its close relationship with marketing.

There are a great number of definitions of branding, but nearly all authors agree that its principal subject is the trade mark - its creation, support and protection. The American Marketing Association defines the trade mark as a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or their combination, whose aim is to identify the goods and services of a manufacturer or a group of manufacturers and to distinguish them from those of the competition. The contemporary coryphaeus of marketing Philip Kotler points out that "irrespective of whether it is a name, trade mark, logo or another symbol, the brand is essentially the promise of the seller to deliver consistently a fixed set of characteristics, benefits and services to buyers"⁶. Branding is now not just an element of the marketing mix, but rather one of the major marketing tools. In a sense the evolution of marketing in the direction towards branding is best expressed in the concept of "brand value", created as early as the middle of the 1980s.⁷ There have appeared a great number of

press, 1991; Crawford, M., *New products management*. IRWIN, Boston, 1991; Cunningham, I., A. Hardy, G. Imperia, *Generic Brands versus National Brands and Store Brands*. - *Journal of Advertising Research*, October/November 1982; Farquhar, P., *Managing Brand Equity*. - *Marketing Research*, September 1989; Gardner, B., S. Levy, *The Product and the Brand*. - *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 33, March-April 1955; Joachimsthaler, E., D. Aaker, *Building Brands Without Mass Media*. - *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1997; Keller, K., *Conceptualising, Measuring and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity*. - *Journal of Marketing*, January 1993; Kohli, Ch., D. La Bachn, *Creating Effective Brand Names: A Study of the Naming Process*. - *Journal of Advertising Research*, January/February 1997; Miller, S., L. Berry, *Brand Salience versus Brand Image: Two Theories of Advertising Effectiveness*. - *Journal of Advertising Research*, September/October 1998; Murphy, J., *Brand Strategy*. Director Books, 1990; Park, C., B. Jaworski, D. MacInnis, *Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management*. - *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50, October 1985.

³ Доганов, Д., Б. Дуранкев, Хр. Катранджиев, *Интегрирани маркетингови комуникации*. Университетско издателство "Стопанство", С., 2003; Менчева, Л., О. Лозанов, *Маркетингови комуникации*. Тракия-М, С., 2003; Аврамов, В., *Комуникационна политика на фирмата*. Сиела, С., 2005.

⁴ Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга. р. 7.

⁵ Ibid., р. 8.

⁶ Котлър, Ф., *Управление на маркетинга*. С., 1996, pp. 356-357.

⁷ Swann, J., D. Aaker, M. Reback, *Trademarks and Marketing*. - *The Trademark Reporter*, Vol. 91, July-August 2001.

publications dealing with the issues of the creation, support and the protection of the trade mark.⁸

In the course of time, along with the development of branding there appeared the first attempts for its principles and approaches in the creation, support and protection of the trade mark to be used also in other spheres of social life and above all in politics. A pioneer in those first attempts is the eminent French political consultant Jacques Segela who in his book "Hollywood Launderers Best", published in this country as well, uses the notions "brand-object" and "brand-personality"⁹. In the election campaign for president of France in 1981 there participated "the four existing brands: Giscard, Chirac, Marchais and Mitterand"¹⁰. In that campaign Jacques Segela and his team applied the laws of branding, however, they were building a political brand, not a trade mark. "From that moment on we started applying our approach item by item. At the initial stage it consisted in determining the so-called by us physique of the brand - in that instance it was the programme; then - its character, that is, its deep nature, and finally - its style."¹¹ Segela skillfully uses the analogies with building a trade mark, to formulate his theory of "brand-personality". Each trade mark possesses a brand character, brand identity and brand image, while Segela's "brand-personality" has physique, character and style. It becomes immediately clear how close and nearly identical the concepts used are. "Physique, character, style - that is our daily trilogy. The brand is nothing else but the mysterious fusion of the three components".¹²

The significant contribution of Segela is not just the introduction of the concept of "brand-personality", but also its turning into a "brand-star" not only in the area of art, but also in politics. To support the development of his "star theory" the author

⁸ Котлър, Ф., Котлър за маркетинга. "Класика и Стил" ООД, С., 2000, Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга. С., 2002; Прайд, У., О. Ферел, Маркетинг: концепции и стратегии. С., 1994; Мариоти, Д., Хитрините на бизнеса. За търговските марки. С., Фокус, 2001; Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките. 10 правила за създаване на марка победител. "Ройккомюникейшън" ЕООД, 2003; Доганов, Д., Реализаци на търговската марка. С., 1989; Караянев, П., Търговските марки и наименования за произход. С., Техника, 1989; Прингл, Х., М.Томпсон, Энергия торговой марки. СП, Питер, 2001; Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки. Кръгзор, С., 2004; Преглед на системата за закрила на търговските марки на Европейската общност – семинар на БТПП. С., 4-5 септември 2000 г.; Предложение за ратифициране на присъединяването на ЕО към Протокола към Мадридската спогодба за международна регистрация на марки. – сп. Интелектуална собственост, 9-10/1998; Davies, I., R. Annand, European Court of Justice: Sable v. Puma. - Trademark World, January 1998; Diamond, S., Trademark Problems and How to Avoid Them. Chicago, 1981; Dubois, P., Three Years Later: Canada and Trademark Licencing, - Trademark World, May 1996; Hines, J., The Trademark Law Treaty, The Trademark Law Treaty Implementation Act, and Changes in United States Trademark Practice, - The Trademark Reporter. Vol.90, May-June 2000; How to Protect your Trade Mark and Design in the European Union. Seminar organized by Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market, Sofia, June 2003; Jacoby, J., The Psychological Foundation of Trademark Law: Secondary Meaning, Genericism, Fame, Confusion and Dilution. - The Trademark Reporter, Vol. 91, September-October, 2001; Kelly, D., A. Mondini, Intend to Use It or Lose It. Useful tips for foreign applicants to obtain and maintain US trademark registrations. - Trademark World, November 1995; Landes, W., R. Posner, The Economics of Trademark Law. The Trademark Reporter, Vol. 78, 1988; Nette, Alexander, The community Trade Mark: After its start. - Trademark World, June/July 1996; Squyres, M., Trademark Use on the Internet – A Global Analysis, - Trademark World, March 1996; Swann, J., D. Aaker, M. Reback, Trademarks and Marketing. - The trademark Reporter, Vol. 91, July-August, 2001; Zdatny, B., Current Promo Policies Miss the Mark. - Progressive Grocer, December 1982.

⁹ Сегела, Ж., Холивуд пере най-добре, ИВИДИМ, С., 2004.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹² Ibid., p. 51.

provides a multitude of examples from Hollywood - "the dream factory". In order to turn the "brand-personality" into a "star", it must have the gift to sell dreams, to make the public buy it. The principal characteristic of every "brand-star" is its persuasiveness, durability, its ability to stir an uncontrollable desire to imitate, communicate and fascinate.¹³ "Stars are not born, they are created. What is needed is brains, perseverance, method, talent. The same applies to brands."¹⁴

The contemporary politics in conditions of a democratic transition and market organization of society gets oriented towards rational political programmes and the connected with them economic ones. Its creation and the sustained presence in people's minds requires stability, transparency and predictability. Most modern goods, intended for the market, are mass produced, which increases commodity volume and reduces production costs. Mass production, however, has a major drawback - the manufactured goods are identical, they are not unique and in order to ensure their recognizability on the part of customers and create a system of consumer preferences it is necessary to develop a complex of trade marks (brands). (Note: the author of the present study perceives the concepts of "mark" and "brand" as having the same meaning and uses them synonymously.) There arises another factor of psychological nature, which is of considerable importance in the formation of the territory of branding, noticed by one of the greatest researchers of brands and brand culture - Laurence Vincent. In his recently published book "Legendary Brands", he mentions a true fact: "more and more consumers determine part of their identity by means of the brands they use."¹⁵ They crave for brands, which help them find purpose and order in their own life, and that is a manifestation of a new consumer culture.¹⁶ The principal psychological task of branding in the creation of trade marks is to form a permanent range of consumers with a new consumer culture with respect to a particular good or group of goods, in order for them to make multiple repeat purchases so that goods become favoured and preferred.

Contemporary political marketing is based on the same principle of consumer culture, and by way of branding it is trying to shape in society as a whole, or in certain social segments a steady, increased attention, a sustained interest towards political parties as "groups of homonymous, homogeneous goods" and that is perfectly understandable, since it is easier to promote and impose upon the social consciousness an entire party (to be more precise its brand), rather than each individual nominee for president, member of parliament or member of the municipal council.

If we go back in time, we will find out that as early as in ancient times the classical Hellenic and Roman civilizations, without being aware of branding in the modern sense of that concept, made use of its principles and laws in the creation of original political brands, coloured in the two contrasting colours - blue and red. A specific field for manifestation of brands are also the renowned Olympic games, which for a long period of time permanently impressed memorable sports brands in the minds of spectators. In the area of ancient politics most characteristic is the case of the

¹³ Ibid., p. 57-61.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁵ Винцент, Л., Легендарните марки. Кръгзор, С., 2004, p. 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

"brand-personality" Cicero. In modern times, after the victory of the English bourgeois revolution, those are the political brands of "whigs" and "tories"; in the USA - the brands "democrats" and "republicans", etc.¹⁷ Laurence Vincent points out that "political parties are brand cultures of conflicting, organized social philosophies"¹⁸. Nowadays there are created not only collective party brands, but also personal, characteristic not only of the democratic, but also of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Thus following the coming into power of Hitler there was created not only the collective party brand of national socialism, but also the one-man brand of the leader ("fuhrer"). In the former Soviet Union, along with the party brand Communist Party of the Soviet Union (КПСС), there is also the brand of "Stalin", which, during World War II reached its apogee, finding an expression in the device "for Stalin, for Motherland". In Bulgarian political life, too, after 9 Sept 1944, there was the stable and persistent creation of the brand-personality "Zhivkov", which, towards the end of socialism gradually grew into the brand-personality "Tato". There are numerous examples in that respect, which, by the way, also pose the absolutely reasonable question: Where and in which sphere did branding appear for the first time as a tool for creating a brand? Was it politics, sport, art, or should it (branding) be connected solely with marketing as a modern science? However, that is a question, which can be the subject of another study. Our purpose here is more modest - to point out *how in present times the principles and laws of branding in the creation, establishment and protection of the trade mark can be applied in politics as the object of study, or at least discover certain similarities between the trade mark and the political brand. An ambitious task, which requires the overcoming of an already established stereotype of research not only in marketing, but also in political science. The stand expressed here and its defense represents an attempt to present a new view and reading of branding in the political sphere, to build a new model, in the centre of which is the creation, establishment and protection of the political brand.*

For the purpose of the present study we will discuss in greater detail the issues, related with the creation and permanent establishment in the consciousness of society of the political brand (mark), which wins the decisive battle for power in the election marathon. And in order to convey a certain notion of that process, we will repeatedly correlate the trade mark and the political brand, only we will do it in various categories and on the basis of certain specific features between the economy and politics.

In modern marketing branding is already turning into the main focus of the former, gradually pushing everything else in the background. The eminent experts in the area of marketing and branding Al and Laura Ries point out that the most important purpose and major task of marketing "is the process of building the trade mark, or the so-called branding."¹⁹ The promotion of the above bold thesis has its supporters, as well as its opponents. However, the authors are undoubtedly right in the assertion that marketing constitutes the building of the trade mark and that the two concepts are so closely connected that it would be difficult to separate them. "If you succeed in establishing a powerful trade mark, you will have a powerful

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 304.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 304.

¹⁹ Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга. Как да превърнем един продукт или услуга в търговска марка. "Класика и Стил" ООД, С., 2000, p. 7.

marketing programme. If you are unsuccessful, then all the world's advertising, all the different packages, promotions and public relations will be unable to help you achieve your goals."²⁰ In recent years even the coryphaeus of modern marketing Philip Kotler, in one of his works entitled "The Ten Deadly Sins of Marketing"²¹ is willing to accept some of the views of Al and Laura Ries, especially with respect to the priority of Public Relations over Advertising in the creation, support and protection of the brand.²²

Those claims of Al and Laura Ries are perfectly valid also for political marketing, where, undoubtedly, in its focus there lies the creation and establishment of a lasting impression of a particular political brand in the minds of voters. That subject has not yet been discussed in publications in this country and abroad and in marketing and political marketing studies. For its clarification there are required the efforts of a broad circle of specialists - marketologists, politologists, scientologists, sociologists, lawyers, psychologists, etc. That is why we will make a modest attempt to open a discussion aimed at its clarification, without claiming that the theses we put forward here are indisputable.

The Brand Concept

Most often in literature and marketing studies the notion of "brand" (mark) is defined as the closest to the mind of the consumer image of the brand of a certain good or service. The literal translation of brand from English into Bulgarian is търговска марка, вид, дамга, дамгосвам, запечатвам, позоря.²³ The notion of branding (marking, staining) originated from the practice of American farmers to mark their livestock by means of branding, so that they could distinguish them from those of other farmers. It acquired a new meaning with the advent of the railway. Its development made possible the mass distribution of goods and raised the need for producers to distinguish their products from those of the competition. The problem is solved through placing patented marks on the packaging of products. That practice began to be denoted by the term branding. There is no true translation of the concepts of brand, branding in Bulgarian language. In the modern usage of the concept of brand the negative nuance (жигосвам, дамгосвам, позоря) has changed to positive one and the brand is already a "mark" of high quality, which has found a lasting place in the minds of consumers or that of a certain consumer segment. The brand (mark) - is something durable, which is known to everyone and which has left a lasting trace ("brand") in people's minds.

The concept of mark (brand) came into wide circulation during the previous century, after the end of the Second World War and is used mainly in the area of trade. Then there appear some of the most popular trade marks, as well as the science of their management expressed in the famous AIDA models (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) and "the four P's" (product, price, promotion, place). According to the first model, first of all we need to build in the mind of the consumer Awareness of the trade mark, after that create Interest, further on stimulate a Desire to buy and, finally, he must be urged into Action to make the purchase. In

²⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

²¹ Вж Котлър, Ф., Десетте смъртни греха на маркетинга. Симптоми и решения. Локус Пъблишинг, С., 2005.

²² Ibid., с. 93-97.

²³ See Английско-български речник. Хемус, С., 1992.

fact those four elements establish a comprehensive image of the trade mark in the mind of the potential consumer. Each marketing programme, in order to be successful, is first and foremost based upon a powerful trade mark, built and maintained by means of appropriate advertising, luxurious packaging, promotional sales and public relations.²⁴ That also applies fully to every party brand (a party or party candidate), who, in order to win the confidence of voters, must engage in a daily struggle for the confidence of the electorate, to try to keep it for a long period of time by means of the appropriate campaigning and canvassing, public relations and effective advertising. With the party brand, what makes parties or candidates differ from each other is the Unique Political Proposition (UPP), aimed at the voters.

With the second model, the correct, balanced combination of the four P's is turning into a reliable guarantee for the success of trade marks. In conditions of keen competition and decreasing profits only the most flexible management and aggressive marketing are able to maintain the prices of goods and services at a high level, which requires also changes in the management of the trade mark. There is created a vast field for the development and establishment of a new area - branding. The four whales, on which the latter builds its foundation and reveals the character and the nature of the trade mark are:

- it should be different (differ from the other brands, something, which makes it unique);
- be appropriate (in terms of price, packaging, form, etc.);
- be appreciated (to meet the expectations of the consumer, to be special for him/her);
- be familiar (be well-known to consumers)²⁵.

Those principles are fully applicable to the building and establishment of the mark in the political spectrum (brand-party, brand-politician). It should be different from the others and the basis of that difference should be the UPP, with which it will win the loyalty of its supporters and the voters in a campaign. "The choice teaches consumers, D'Alessandro points out, to make ever finer distinctions between what they like and what they don't like. In the course of time that raises the bar for everyone who tries to sell something to them - from a political idea to a bottle of shampoo."²⁶ It is good for the mark to be appreciated on the political market and above all in time of elections, when it is the principal issue that is at stake - the question of political power. That can be achieved only if a given political brand (a party, leader, candidate running for member of parliament) meets the expectations of the electorate supporting it, if it is more special than the others.

Branding is not just a fashionable word in the vocabulary of marketologists, rather it is something, which prospering companies do on a daily basis in order to maintain their competitiveness. The same also applies to political parties and their leaders, who, as time goes by, turn into steady political brands, through establishing a relationship of trust between their own mark and its followers. The trade mark or the political brand represent a set of associations, connected with them. Those associations are in the minds of consumers or supporters and help them to

²⁴ Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга ..., р. 7.

²⁵ Quoted from: Мариоти, Дж., Хитрините на бизнеса: За търговските марки..., р. 17.

²⁶ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките..., р. 11.

understand what the mark stands for, why it is potentially beneficial for them, what makes it different from or similar to competing brands. The associations themselves are built as a result of various actions on the part of the firm or the political subject, such as media communications, PR and advertising, distribution, promotions, and also as a result of the characteristics of the brand itself (including the name, logo, slogan, the emotional impact of colours). Branding is trying to conquer people's hearts also through the experience they have with a certain brand and to turn them into loyal customers or supporters, who would preach in favor of the mark and make multiple, repeat buys. Branding is above all an emotion. It is building the value of a mark in the mind of the consumer in the case of the trade mark and that of the voter in the case of the political mark.

Here is a simple example from our recent political past: the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) is a stable political brand in Bulgaria, regardless of the ratings of the differing colours of people's political awareness. In the course of time, however, the political brand of BCP gradually fades away, it ceases to exist in the minds of the young generation, who have no memories of it (or rather memories of the myth of BCP). Then in the place of that faded memory (myth) there comes a new political brand - the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), which, too, is trying to form a lasting impression in the minds of a certain electoral segment of hard-line supporters of the old brand as well as win new ones. That happens in various ways and with the use of different means and approaches. The formation of such firmly impressed in people's minds brands (connected with certain mythology) is one of the untraditional mechanisms of psychological influence in politics. Probably the most fundamental among them is the mythology of marks, which "affects the cognitive centres of orientation of the mind in the same way as does religion and the other philosophical beliefs"²⁷. According to Laurence Vincent, mythology as a type of narrative connects the consumer with the mark and builds the power of the latter by means of a set of mental constructs (or what he calls "sacred beliefs"), providing the opportunity for existential orientation.²⁸ "Sacred beliefs" exist in a multitude of forms and are at the basis of the rise of myths. "Western mythology of ancient civilizations serves to explain the mysterious development of the natural world by way of stories about the battles and conquests of Gods and heroes. Nowadays the mythology of marks serves a similar purpose."²⁹

In terms of psychological impact the political brand greatly resembles the myth. Unlike the purely virtual myth, however, the brand is the kind of myth, which can be acquired and used at a later stage. One particular instance: Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha - prime-minister of Bulgaria of the recent past. Naturally, image-makers create various images of him, on the basis of which in the minds of the public there is created the myth of "the Tsar". But even before that those images are integrated into a brand, promptly used by politicians and journalists in the expression: "When the time comes". There can be given more examples of political brands: party brands - The National Movement "Simeon II" (NMSS), the BSP, the United Democratic Forces (UDF), the Movement for Rights and Liberties (MRL), etc.; brands of political figures - Simeon, President Parvanov, the eccentric brand Georges Ganchev, the Commander - Ivan Kostov, etc. In the above cases the well-

²⁷ Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки..., p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 28-33.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

positioned political mark confirms the classic rule of marketing that the good positioning of the trade mark of a new a product exhausts the name of an entire commodity group. Thus, for instance, NMSS is identified with Simeon II, DPB with Ivan Kostov, MRL with Ahmed Dogan, etc.

A classical example of a brand in commercial marketing is the name of the Xerox company. The company no longer exists, but the name has become a brand, designating an entire commodity group. Now all copiers are called "Xerox". It is the same with politics. Lenin, Stalin and Hitler all died a long time ago, however, they have turned into brands through political mythology.

Frequently there is put a sign of equality between the mark and its image. However, they are not the same. The concept of "image" in political marketing reflects the external aspect, it is created by someone and is perceived by people's minds, but it does not exist by itself. As an object of perception the image is transformed into other psychological formations - the very myths of Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, etc. The brand (mark) does not exist outside the mind. Every politician may create a new image for himself/herself, but his/her name will only become a brand when it begins to live in the minds of people, notwithstanding external manipulations, connected with the formation of the image, or, in other words: the image is an inseparable part (one of the most important ones) of each brand, irrespective of whether it is commercial or political. Another example once again from our not too distant political past: as a politician, Todor Zhivkov had various images and frequently changed them very skillfully, depending on the particular situation and the commitment to the policy of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the CPSU. However, the name Zhivkov (including its derivatives, such as e.g. "Zhivkovism") becomes a brand outside the dependency on manipulations, while the various "Tato" images, perceived by the people, are expressed in one myth - "Tato". To this day that myth is still firmly embedded in the minds of certain people. The established political brands possess one important characteristic - they are able to live for decades after their bearers have disappeared, even when nobody is interested in their images any more. What is left is the myth. Actually the image and the brand go hand-in-hand in politics - so tight is their connection, but they correlate as parts of the whole.

In "Marketing Management" P. Kotler emphasizes that "probably the most distinguishing skill of professional experts in marketing is their ability to create, support, protect and promote the mark".³⁰ In answering the question what is a mark, Philip Kotler gives six levels of significance the mark possesses: properties, benefits, values, culture, individuality, consumer. Each mark evokes in the mind of consumers certain properties, which need to be "transformed" into functional and emotional benefits. The mark must be associated with certain values of its producer, it should represent a certain culture and convey certain individuality, distinguishing it from the competition. At the same time it should hint at the kind of consumer it has been intended for.³¹ The greatest art and challenge "is to create deep positive associations with the mark"³².

³⁰ Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга. Структура на управлението на пазарното предлагане. "Класика и Стил" ООД, С., 2002, р. 356

³¹ Ibid., р. 357.

³² Ibid., р. 358.

In real life there are no eternal marks - neither political, nor commercial and the term of their existence is connected with a merciless fight in order to win the confidence of consumers (voters) and keep it in their minds. It won't be long before both in commercial and in political marketing "the very concept of marketing will become outdated and will be replaced by a new concept, called branding".³³

The building of a brand (mark) in business and in politics (brand of the party, the coalition, the leader) begins with the choice of a name - for instance: Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), UdDF, BSP, MRL, NMSS, DPB. The political mark is a brief way of expressing the complicated mixture of ideological and political value and the registered sign (the little lion, the rose, the hedgehog, etc.). In order to determine the importance and the functions of a given commercial or political mark, there is an emphasis on its character (brand character), its identity (brand identity) and image (brand image). These concepts are related to the associations, which the use or mentioning of a commercial or political mark may create among consumers (voters).

After establishing the character, identity and image of the trade mark or the political mark (in an election campaign), there arises the question: how can we sell it (win the greatest number of votes in the campaign) and guarantee a long life cycle to it? It is supposed to attract the consumer (voter), so that he prefers it to the other competitive marks and "buys" it. In order to win the loyalty of voters, the party or its election nominees should offer what the political brand has promised. It is no accident that Philip Kotler in "Marketing Management" emphasizes that "the most appropriate direction of marketing planning is towards expanding the life-long loyalty of the consumer, for which brand management serves as the principal marketing tool".³⁴ In commercial marketing the brand equity shows the combined value of the awareness, loyalty, perception and associations of the consumer. One of the greatest specialists in the area of branding David F. D'Alessandro points out that "the mark is all you would like to tell consumers and all it tells them in spite of you. By definition the mark is everything the consumer thinks of, whenever he/she hears the name of your company".³⁵ In political marketing the mark is assessed by the voter and its real (fundamental) value is the number of votes the political brand wins at the election. When speaking of trade marks, P. Kotler points out that "the fundamental value in the basis of brand value is the consumer value".³⁶ The same also applies to the political mark. It should form a consumer value with the voters, in order to be preferred to the others and "bought".

On the analogy of creating the trade mark, the political should also be protected from emulation, cheap imitation and theft. And that is the next step in its affirmation in the minds of voters. The last stage in the political marketing process is the skillful management of the mark, turning it into a "star", so that it becomes profitable.³⁷

Just like trade marks, political brands are of great importance, especially on the eve of the elections, when the electorate is faced with an entire universe of propositions and they as consumers of a particular type of good - the political good - have to make their choice. The well-established mark usually gains the choice of

³³ Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга..., р. 8.

³⁴ Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга..., р. 359.

³⁵ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките..., р. xiv.

³⁶ Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга..., р. 359.

³⁷ See Сегела, Ж., Холивуд пере най-добре..., р. 57-61

the consumer both in the commercial and political marketing, unless its owners act foolishly and ruin it, the way things worked with the UDF during the last parliamentary elections. The only way in political marketing to facilitate voters in their decision for who they should vote is the offering of famous and trustworthy political marks. The best of them develop in time and acquire their own individuality along with the loyalty of their supporters and sympathizers. "The high value of the mark refers to its wide appreciation, high perceived quality, powerful association and other important assets."³⁸ And that becomes possible through "the birth of brand culture, creating a sense of involvement and the feeling of unified community. Brand culture is created by people possessing a very strong emotional and personal attachment to the mark - commercial or political. The real nature and dynamics of brand culture cannot be understood, "if you do not dive into the crowd and join its narrative journey. That is the best way to understand the live cinema that is acted out among people."³⁹

In business the most popular trade marks are arranged in 15 sectors of industry - fashion and luxury goods, automobiles and oil, foodstuffs, financial services, technologies, wholesale, retail sale and media. In the drawing up of the list, each trade mark is evaluated according to four criteria:

- impact of the trade mark on the market (influence or excellence over the competition);
- scope of action of the trade mark (over which market segments does it have any effect and how it is expanding towards others);
- coverage of the trade mark (regardless of age, religion, nationality, ethnicity etc.);
- penetration of the trade mark into the minds of consumers and the electorate.⁴⁰

If we use this methodology for assessment of the political marks (parties, organizations, coalitions, unions, leaders), we could also make an approximately true assessment of each one of them and develop the adequate winning marketing strategy in the course of the election campaign in order to realize maximum "sales". In the actual political practice in the preelection period as well as during the campaign itself when determining his/her own choice the voter also builds in his/her mind a sort of a "list" of his/her political preferences. His/her decision is also affected by a number of factors such as: prestige of the mark, fidelity and loyalty to it, etc.⁴¹ Whether he/she should vote for the BSP, NMSS, MRL, DPB or another political party - that is the principal issue that bothers him/her. And then he/she inevitably realizes the weight of a certain political mark, its scope and influence, its dedication to the preferences of the electorate. However, the choice is sometimes irrational and defies logic. A typical example in that aspect is the "Ataka". The consumer (in the case of the trade mark) and the voter (in the case of the political mark) sometimes does not study the qualities of the mark, but rather just "buys" it, because they already prefer it to the rest. "Therefore the success in sales is already in focusing on the mind of the purchaser, rather than on the qualities of the product."⁴² Brand culture plays a tremendous role in that process.

³⁸ Котляр, Ф., Управление на маркетинга..., р. 373.

³⁹ Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки..., р. 215.

⁴⁰ Мариоти, Дж., Хитрините на бизнеса: ..., р. 5-7.

⁴¹ Илева, Р., Маркетинг, Абагар, В.Т., 2005, р. 68

⁴² Райков, Здр., PR технологията на успеха. Дармон, С., 2003, pp. 139-140.

In view of the lack of time nowadays it is common for habits or the formulation of a counterpoint to decide the choice of the consumer (voter). Having chosen a given mark (whether commercial or political), he/she usually remains loyal to it (provided it does not ruin itself). And it is precisely his/her loyalty that boosts the value of the mark, which in politics is measured by the number of votes won in a particular election campaign or by the number of multiple repeat buys (with the trade mark). As David F. D'Alessandro points out "brandmania is in no way restricted to business only. It is more than any other modern business concept that the idea of the brand penetrates culture."⁴³ The marketing activity does not end with the choice itself, rather it continues in the postelection period. There has to be established the degree of satisfaction of voters, which is expressed as the ratio of their expectations over their ratings of the political production during or after the elections.

In marketing the concept of "trade mark" (brand) is usually understood as a brief, "shorthand" description of a package of values, which the consumer can be certain will remain unaltered for a long period of time. In The Law on Marks and Geographical Symbols of Republic of Bulgaria it is defined and characterized as follows: "the mark is a sign that is capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one person from those of other persons and can be presented graphically. Such signs may be words, including names of persons, characters, digits, designs, figures, the shape of the good or its packaging, a set of colours, sound signs, or any combination thereof."⁴⁴ Further on the law specifies the kinds of marks: "the mark can be a trade mark, a service mark, a collective mark and a certificate mark."⁴⁵

Upon registration the political party acquires the statute of a legal entity and can also be treated as a specific type of mark, connected with a particular type of services - political services. However, its registration is not carried out in accordance with the Law on Marks and Geographical Symbols, but rather in accordance with the Law on Political Parties and is entered into the register of Sofia City Court.⁴⁶

The mark distinguishes a product or service from competitive offers and "most creators of marks have to engage in two wars simultaneously - to achieve victory over the competing marks and to make their way through the corporate lianas in their own organizations."⁴⁷ Correlated to political marketing, that concept is also applicable, since it is a matter of the USP of a particular party or candidate, whereby the consumer of the political "good" or "service" develops in himself/herself an idea of its value and decides whether to "buy" it, giving his/her vote for it in the elections or else to choose another political brand.

The political mark must be familiar, to be firmly established in the minds of voters and to attract the highest possible percentage of them at election time. It should rely not only on "its own", but also be attractive to "the others". In terms of ideological platform, form and contents of the USP, it should be suitable for

⁴³ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. хiii.

⁴⁴ Закон за марките и географските означения, чл. 9(1).

⁴⁵ Ibid., чл. 9(2).

⁴⁶ Закон за политическите партии, чл. 18(4).

⁴⁷ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. xv.

adoption by a maximum number of voters, who provide the political mark with a fixed position in the ratings of authority.

The purpose of each trade mark is to distinguish its message to consumers (while that of each political mark - the message to the voters) from that of the competition, in the form of a UPP (for instance that of the NMSS - the 800 days of the change). When talking about the powerful, unique message, D'Alessandro compares it to an unbroken wild stallion, who will not stand still even for a moment; "it must be constantly changed, along with time and the competition ... You had better hold on, do not give up but ride that message before the cheering crowd, as long and as steady as possible."⁴⁸ That uniqueness should turn into a winning formula of the mark. Through the promise for change, which made the NMSS different from the other political players in the previous parliamentary elections, the Movement won the minds and the loyalty of a greater number of Bulgarian voters, which made it successful. It turned out to be a successful political brand. That marked the end of the first period of its development. The next step is more difficult - to keep steadily its place in the minds of those who already voted for it. That marks the second period in "the life" of the political mark of the NMSS. In the recent parliamentary elections of 2005 there appeared a new phenomenon - the "Ataka" Coalition, which staked on extreme nationalism, opposing mainly the MRL and the other well-established political marks. What will be the destiny of the coalition in its ambition to impose itself as a political mark of nationalism, in denial of "the Bulgarian ethnic model", only time and its activities will tell.

Talking about the strong competition among trade marks, D'Alessandro points out that "more and more often consumers do not just want milk, they are looking for milk of the "Horizon organic" brand, the price of which is almost twice as high. They do not just drink plain water from the well or reservoir any more, rather they drink "Evian" ... "⁴⁹ The mark is everything in the modern world of business and politics. In this period, a crucial role for maintaining the popularity of the mark of NMSS, as well as of any other political mark, is played by the political PR, the canvassing, campaigning and political advertising. They are a powerful means of communication for the definitive establishment of the political mark's own identity. This is where the struggle to win the next elections starts. There are required even greater efforts in order to keep not only our own identity, but to defend the USP, to keep steady the attention and loyalty of the majority of the participants on the political market. "Because consumers today have so many options to choose from that they do not need to buy something which does not bring them pleasure. Buying powerful brands is simply more enjoyable, so, if you hope to take part in the competition, you had better have one of those."⁵⁰ That rule also applies fully to the political sphere, where there meet competing political parties, coalitions, movements and leaders.

In time political marks become more and more autonomous and turn into a tool with which the electorate is manipulated. In order to keep its attention steady, they use all communication channels and invest considerable amounts of capital in advertising campaigns and promotional techniques. Persistency and frequent appearances before the electorate make the political mark recognizable, which

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 13

boosts its value on the political market. People prefer political products, which can get them closer to what they want to be. Analyzing the trade mark, Al and Laura Ries emphasize one important feature of the psychology of the consumer, which is also valid for the political mark: in the mind of the potential customer there must be created the feeling that on the market there is no other product that matches the one on offer. "A successful branding program is based on the idea of uniqueness."⁵¹

The mark (commercial or political) is a promise to the consumer (elector) of quality, benefit and value and "even the greatest mark remains great only thanks to the will of consumers".⁵² In the political process it is an important asset of the party and its leaders. It gets established in time and is proved by way of satisfying the interests of its followers and sympathizers. The mark is a powerful visual, emotional, rational and cultural image, which voters associate with the party, its candidates and the USP. As Laurence Vincent points out, "the skillful and strategic positioning of brand symbols is a powerful way of developing brand culture."⁵³ Symbols are the most easily accepted connection between consumers or electors and the brand message. They possess an enormous impact potential through a limited vocabulary. "Nothing pleases the marketologist more than seeing consumers wear, send or display his/her brand symbols. It is a clear sign that a culture is being formed around the brand narrative."⁵⁴

The mark through its *symbols* is the core of every strategy, its DNA. It embodies the image of a certain subject, "defines marketing from the level of "concept" to the level of "execution", it includes assets and liabilities and affects internal and external customers."⁵⁵ People all around the world recognize the symbols of the Christian Cross, the Olympic circles, the Red Cross, the swastika, the pothook of "Nike", the shape of "Shell", the golden arches of "McDonalds", etc. The symbolism of the mark has the purpose of conveying messages and promising certain political values to the electorate between or during elections. "The marks are simply the production equivalent of stenography, which we use for interpretation of the world as a whole."⁵⁶

The *slogan* is an important element of the commercial and the political mark. Often it is an inseparable element of the mark and helps the manufacturer or the political subject to express his/her identity, to achieve a more distinct positioning or to emphasize differences. The slogan can play different roles in the overall presentation of the trade mark or the political brand. With the latter it can:

- express the orientation of the mark to a particular target market more clearly than the political brand itself ("Let's go ahead, in order to be proud of Bulgaria" - NMSS; "For you" - the Coalition of the Rose);
- inform about the advantages over the competition - the slogan may serve as a metaphor, synthesizing the advantages of a particular political mark in comparison with the competition ("One for all - all for one" - the Coalition "For Bulgaria");

⁵¹ Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона на брендинга..., р. 11.

⁵² Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р.1.

⁵³ Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки..., р. 217.

⁵⁴ Ibid., р. 222.

⁵⁵ Quoted from: Джон Мариоти, Хитрините на бизнеса: За търговските марки..., р. 14.

⁵⁶ Д'Алесандро..., р. 16.

- affect the emotions - the slogan can express strong emotion or influence the emotions of voters ("Be Respectable", "Be a Winner", "Be Bulgarian" - Bulgarian National Union (BNU); "Make Reason the Winner" - MRL; "Bulgaria - That's You" - UDF; "Bulgarians, Let's Get Bulgaria Back" - the Coalition National Alliance "Ataka"; "Bulgaria Can" - the Federation "Active Civil Society" (FACS);
- focus on a desired characteristic - by means of advertising slogans the political parties, coalitions and leaders can emphasize the desired characteristics of their own brand ("Hit the Bull's Eye. Strike Down Your Problems, Striking Down Number 10" - the Euroroma; "For a Powerful Bulgaria in United Europe" - the Democrats for Powerful Bulgaria (DPB);
- emphasize its difference and new style in brand policy ("Now's the Time" - "The New Times"; "Strong Business, Wealthy People, Powerful Bulgaria" - the Federation of Free Business "Bulgaria Union").

Despite its different roles in the overall presentation of the commercial or political mark, the slogan must be short, easy to remember, it should not change in the course of the campaign and should contain the principal characteristics of its bearer.⁵⁷

The name of the mark and its main slogan personify it, while the *logo* is its key visual element. The logo was used as early as in the ancient and classical civilizations and it shows the origin or the ownership of the mark. Political marketing uses the logo for the same purpose - to identify the political subject, to build a high level of recognition and loyalty. In today's political reality there exist several kinds of party logo:⁵⁸

- name (title) of the political brand, written in a distinct manner - that is the simplest type of logo, belonging to a political subject. The name of the political brand is given an additional attribute by way of either font or colour. In this version the denomination of the mark is the principal element of communication, whereas the distinctive visual form in which the name is presented, serves as an additional differentiation of the mark. In this version the political brand does not contain a logo as a separate graphical element. But even so the brand name turns into a distinguishing feature in itself. (the NMSS);
- a relatively independent graphical (image) logo, which can be used separately from the brand name of the political subject itself. (In the previous campaign of the UDF, before the splitting up, there was the little lion, and in the recent campaign - the rose of the Coalition "For Bulgaria", the hedgehog of "the New Times", the torch of the DPB, etc.);
- a combined (pictorial-verbal) - combines several elements of various types - a name, image and colour, united in a general concept. ("the New Times").

The choice of *colour* is the finishing ornamental element of the brand identity. It is a universally recognized fact that colours are noticed faster than the figures and shapes in every advertisement and they keep the attention for a longer period. Colours affect emotions in a different way and in the course of time they have acquired traditional significance. Within a particular culture a given colour symbolizes certain qualities and characteristics. Thus for example in Western

⁵⁷ Аврамов, В., Комуникационна политика на фирмата. Сиела, С., 2005, р. 288-289.

⁵⁸ За логото на марката виж: Менчева, Л., О. Лозанов, Маркетингови комуникации. Тракия-М, С., 2003, р. 228-229.

cultures it has been established that colours affect peoples' minds in the following way:

- red is taken as a vigorous, passionate and extroverted colour, used to attract the attention of the public;
- blue symbolizes power, responsibility, calmness, stability;
- brown is the colour of the earth, suggesting respect and a sensation of strong and powerful roots, virility;
- green is a cold, refreshing, calm colour - gravitating to blue, rather than to red;
- grey emanates confidence and dignity;
- yellow is a friendly and amusing colour emanating a sense of happiness;
- black and white, gold and silver are prestigious colours.⁵⁹

The choice of colour for the trade mark or the political brand is a rather responsible and complicated task, since the particular colour symbolism identifies itself with the mark and leads to specific suggestions. Sometimes it is not just one colour that is chosen, but a combination of colours, which would lead to achieving certain effect on the minds of the electorate. The colour can even symbolize the mark on its own. The most typical examples of our political reality with respect to the choice of colour and the symbolism associated with that are the political brands of the BSP - the red colour, the NMSS - the yellow colour, whereas the UDF and the DPB "share" the blue colour, to which there are certain claims on the part of the MRL as well. And while in real life the two contrasting colours are white and black, in politics as early as in ancient times those were red and blue. That turned into a tradition, which has endured time, circumstances and people.

The confrontation effect of choosing contrasting colours is very often used by competing trade marks. A classical example are the brands of "Coca Cola" and "Pepsi Cola". When choosing a colour for a trade mark or a political brand, the one that symbolizes the category is best. So for instance Coca Cola is a reddish-brown beverage and therefore the logical colour for its brand is red. The colour of the other in the category of non-alcoholic beverages - "Pepsi Cola" - is blue, the exact opposite of the colour of its main competitor.

At the dawn of Bulgarian democracy, the UDF arose as the real political opponent of the BCP (later on BSP), it chose blue colour, in contrast to red, as a symbol of radical change, corporativity, stability and denial of the main political rival. Blue symbolizes the leadership positions the UDF hoped to get and believed it would take in our political life. The BSP, as a successor of the former BCP, kept for itself the red colour, symbol of blood and fire.

Both with the trade mark and the political brand, whenever a certain colour is used invariably through the years and is imposed with the means of marketing and branding, it may independently symbolize the mark. Red - Coca-Cola, blue - Pepsi-Cola; red - BSP, blue - UDF and DPB. Actually, the choice of the blue colour by the UDF and the DPB shows similar identity and a common electoral segment. There arises the question: which one of those two political parties - the UDF or the DPB, has the justified right to be coloured in blue ? The answer can be the following: colours are not what they used to be any more ...

⁵⁹ On the issue of choosing the colour of the brand see especially: Дулинг, Г., Създаване на корпоративна репутация. "Рой комюникейшънс" ЕООД, С., 2005, р. 196-197; Брестничка, Р., Управление на търговските марки. "Стопанство", С., 2004, р. 33-35.

The principal factors, on account of which people prefer a certain mark over another and make a real purchase, in the case of the trade mark, or give their vote for it in the case of the political brand, are the following: quality, durability, recognition, trust, acceptance (on the part of the consumer of the political product or that of the customer with the trade mark). Those categories are interrelated and function as a unified complex over the minds of people when choosing a particular political brand (UDF or NMSS, NMSS or BSP, etc.)

The durability of a commercial or political mark is closely dependent on the recognition and confidence of consumers or the electorate, won by means of high-quality commercial or political products, accepted by the latter. It is no accident that D'Alessandro, when talking about the devotion of consumers to brands, emphasizes that "as time goes by the adherence of consumers to brands does not seem to decrease, but rather to increase."⁶⁰

The influence of each political mark lies in the importance it has to the voters. The good marks (commercial or political) perform three particularly significant functions: they save time, convey the right message, ensure identity.⁶¹ The principal criterion, by which brands are divided into "good" and "bad" is the image each one of them builds in the minds of consumers of merchandise or the political product. The good mark saves their time, since it is equal to the best product and that equation is unshakable. It conveys the right message to people, who will evaluate it, it gives them its identity, which makes them feel secure, "as though they belong to a group of voyagers having similar interests"⁶², while in fact they belong to the same brand culture. The good mark makes people feel as if they were members of one and the same community, of the same brand culture, and the most inventive politicians manage to make use of that intellectual and emotional attitude of the electorate.

Strategic planning and building the identity and image of the brand.

Political marks, like the commercial marks, are created intentionally or accidentally and some of them bear the names of their founders (NMSS), suggest a certain cause (UDF) or are deliberately "projected" (MRL, BSP), and sometimes are also the result of "secession" from the former mark (DPB). The process of their founding, registration, constitution, activity and termination is regulated by the Law on Political Parties (Art. 1), and their statutes state the name of the party and its symbols (Art. 14). According to the law it is forbidden to repeat the name or the abbreviation of another party, or to add words, letters, digits, numbers or other signs to it. (Art. 14, S. 12 (2)). A requirement at the registration itself is a name uniqueness certificate (Art. 15 (9)). An accurately selected name is a mandatory prerequisite for a successful political message. In politics it is not only the major parties, but also the smaller ones that can have their own mark. Even if they do not have the popularity, scale or efficiency of the large political parties, the small ones ("The New Times", FACS, etc.) are no less important in the context of their electoral segment, no matter whether it is a tiny niche, a small settlement or a group of followers and sympathizers in the Internet. The success of each political

⁶⁰ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. 17.

⁶¹ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. 17.

⁶² Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. 19-20.

mark is born in the correlation between its strategy, the advantages of its political production and its brand culture.

The creation and development of the political brand needs to be integrated with the development of political products and services and with the establishment of the appropriate brand culture. If the development of the strategy does not precede or coincide with the development of the political mark and the culture pertaining to it, there is the real hazard of a negative outcome. A political marketing strategy, which does not offer something different from what is already existing, would hardly lead to the anticipated demand for a particular political brand. Behind each major action undertaken by a political subject (identifying itself with a given political mark), there has to be a strategic reason or goal. That rule is particularly important in the creation, choice and promotion of each new mark (commercial or political) and if it is underestimated, the result fails to meet the expectations of impact and relative political or commercial weight. "The mark offers reassurance, trust, comfort and identity in a rather complicated world. In return consumers provide the mark with their predisposition and prefer to buy it to any other. That is a really enjoyable state of interdependence, which every brand maker should try to achieve."⁶³ That state of involvement and interdependence is already a clear sign of an existing brand culture.

The first stage in the development of the strategy of each mark (whether commercial or political) is finding out what the already existing mark means to consumers (voters) and how familiar it is to them. This stage usually includes a precise sociological and statistical analysis. Laurence Vincent expresses that stage with the greatest accuracy, stating: "listen, watch and participate".⁶⁴ The weak or wrong selection and study of the political market may lead to pointless investments and wrong decisions, and hence affect the expected political or election results. Very often "after a group of consumers has accepted the mark rather quickly, the manager directs his entire attention towards it, instead of developing the mark also in other segments, or study the kind of cultural aspect that has been activated."⁶⁵ The specialists in political marketing should go beyond the various influences over the voters and to look deeply into the question how voters actually make the decisions regarding their choice. In particular, they should establish who it is that makes the decision to choose, the kinds of decisions and the stages in the process of making a choice. When Philip Kotler examines the process and stages of making the decision to purchase, he greatly emphasizes that "far-sighted companies carry out research also of the process of decision-making in their product category. They ask consumers when they first met the product category and the mark, what their convictions concerning the marks are, how tightly they are bound by the product, how they make their choice of mark and how satisfied they are after the purchase."⁶⁶

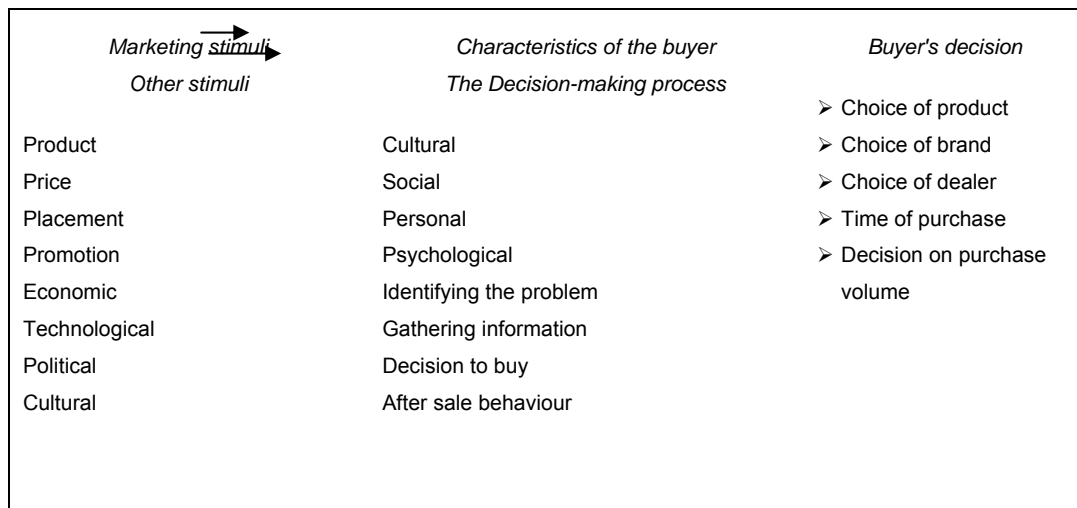
In 1980 Philip Kotler proposed as the basic model of behaviour of the consumer the following diagram, which became widely known as "Kotler's black box":

⁶³ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. 22.

⁶⁴ Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки..., р. 231.

⁶⁵ Ibid., р. 220-221.

⁶⁶ Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга, р.185-186.



The idea behind the model lies in that between the stimuli and advantages offered by the producer to the consumer and the response of the latter in the form of a decision to buy there exists a kind of "black box", which contains the principal characteristics of the consumer and the major regularities of the process of making the decision to buy. The behaviour of the consumer is affected by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors and the main task of the marketologist is to establish how "the black box" of the consumer's mind works between the moment of entry of the external stimuli and the moment of making a decision.

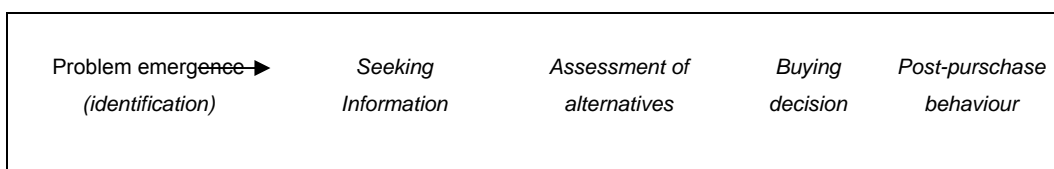
That model of consumer behaviour is perfectly applicable in political marketing as well. The principal task of the politologist is to establish all factors and circumstances, which form the group of external stimuli, "their passing through the black box" of the voter, in which they are refracted in a specific manner, determined by the elements of its major characteristics and finding an external expression in the decision to make a choice and the choice that is made.

In the analysis of consumer markets and the behaviour of the buyer, along with Kotler's model, there should also be assessed and taken into consideration the process of making the decision to buy. When clarifying it marketing specialists and political consultants should look deeply into the way consumers (voters) make a decision to buy (choose). According to Assail there are four types of shopping behaviour, based on the degree of participation of consumers and brand differences:

- complex shopping behaviour;
- shopping behaviour, decreasing disappointment;
- habitual shopping behaviour;
- behaviour seeking variety.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Quoted from: Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга, р. 184-185.

With the complex shopping behaviour the consumer forms a conviction about the product, after that an attitude towards it and finally makes a rational choice. With the shopping behaviour decreasing disappointment, after the consumer has made the purchase he may be disappointed after noticing some disturbing things or hearing laudatory words of other marks, which he did not prefer when making a choice. With the habitual shopping behaviour, consumers continue to buy the same mark out of habit, not so much driven by loyalty towards it, but rather because they are passive recipients of the information they gather through various communication channels. And finally, with the behaviour seeking variety, consumers frequently change marks because they desire and seek greater variety. In spite of the differences in shopping behaviour, there is an almost universal five-stage model of the purchasing process⁶⁸:



The above model makes it clear that the shopping process begins far before the proper purchase with the identification of the problem, goes through the stages of gathering information, assessment of alternatives, the decision to buy and the behaviour after the purchase. The model reflects not only the process of purchase in the area of commercial marketing with trade marks, but it is also fully applicable to political marks.

In politics the process of "shopping" (selection) begins at the moment in which the voter identifies a certain problem or need, triggered by internal or external stimuli, which turns into a motive power. And here, at this stage, the most important is that the expert in political marketing should identify the most frequent stimuli, which trigger the interest towards a given political mark, after which he/she should develop a winning marketing strategy, provoking the interest of the voter, which, in its turn, would lead to the process of a real "purchase".

The aroused interest of the voter (who has identified his/her problem or need) will try to seek even more information about the mark, which is preferable to him/her. The sources of information may be varied - personal, public, based on experience, etc. Having gathered the required information, the voter already identifies the group of marks from which he/she will make a choice.

⁶⁸ Котлър, Ф., Управление на маркетинга, р. 187.

<i>Common group</i>	<i>Familiar group</i>	<i>Group for consideration</i>	<i>Selection group</i>	<i>Choice</i>
NMSS Coalition "For Bulgaria" MRL UDF DPB BNU Ataka FACS Coalition of the Rose	NMSS Coalition "For Bulgaria" MRL UDF DPB	NMSS Coalition "For Bulgaria" MRL	NMSS Coalition "For Bulgaria"	?

In the sample scheme given above we can see that the political party, coalition or movement, their leaders and the team of consultants should strive to make their own organizations part of the groups of familiar marks, so that the voter is able to think about and make his/her choice. There must also be specified the competitive marks in the selection group, so that the specific messages targeted at the voter can be planned. After the latter has conducted his/her information research (which may be influenced by various factors), he/she already forms his/her rating mainly on deliberate and rational arguments. In the process of assessment the voter builds his/her own convictions about the political marks, during which each one of them stands out by a particular characteristic or features, making it different from the competition. The conviction to give his/her preference to a political party, leader or its candidates in an election campaign, who shape the image of the political mark in one way or another in comparison with the competition, predetermines the choice of the decision to "buy".

As early as the stage of evaluation, the voter forms his/her preferences on political marks in the selection group and his/her own opinion concerning the choice of the most preferable among them. His/her intention is influenced by the attitude of other people, unexpected situational factors and the assumed risk.⁶⁹ Along the way to making the decision to choose a political mark the voter performs routine actions aimed at reducing the risk, narrowing the focus of his/her preferences towards political marks which have proven their character, identity and image. And finally he/she makes a choice.

Having voted, the voter enters the last stage of the "shopping" process, during which he/she feels a certain degree of satisfaction or disappointment. Depending on that his subsequent behaviour is affected with respect to the chosen political mark. If he/she is satisfied, at the following elections he/she will prefer it once again, and if he/she is disappointed, he/she will choose another. For that reason, the far-sighted political leaders of the well-established political marks try to ensure the satisfaction of the electorate at every stage of the process of "purchasing" their own mark.

The next stage that the political subject needs to carry out, is to specify what the strategies of the party are (or those of its representatives in the election coalition) as a whole and what should its marketing efforts constitute, particularly in respect of the political mark and its management. A great number of political parties and

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

their leaders skip that stage and go straight to political advertising, expecting quick results from it. Completely wrong. If you don't pay the required attention to party strategy and the marketing plan, the funds invested in political advertising and public relations, may be wasted and surely will not lead to the desired and expected effect.

Before developing their marketing plans the respective specialists and the political parties and their leaders should use marketing research and procedures in order to study the behaviour of voters, which is influenced by various factors. Their research may hint at the key to achieving more effective results during the proper elections.

The third stage is connected with the decision of a particular political party and its leaders what should the political mark mean and suggest and whether that can be achieved according to the results of the previous two stages. After that way has been passed and in essence the strategy of the political mark has been developed, there comes the building of a positive image and establishing the nature and the character of the mark.

The realization of the outlined strategy with the political mark may include the following model steps:

- development of a strategy for advertising and promotion;
- development of criteria on how, where and when the mark is to be used;
- development of a winning strategy for the "sale" of the UPP and winning a maximum number of votes in election campaigns;
- development of additional materials for the realization of the strategy and development of the criteria;
- distribution of "political products" by means of effective campaigning and canvassing.

The next stage of the implementation of these steps is evaluation and adaptation:

- assessment of the initial results and opinions on the basis of the way of perception of the mark by potential supporters and sympathizers;
- measurement of the degree of familiarity with the mark, assessment of the response of competitors, supporters and sympathizers.

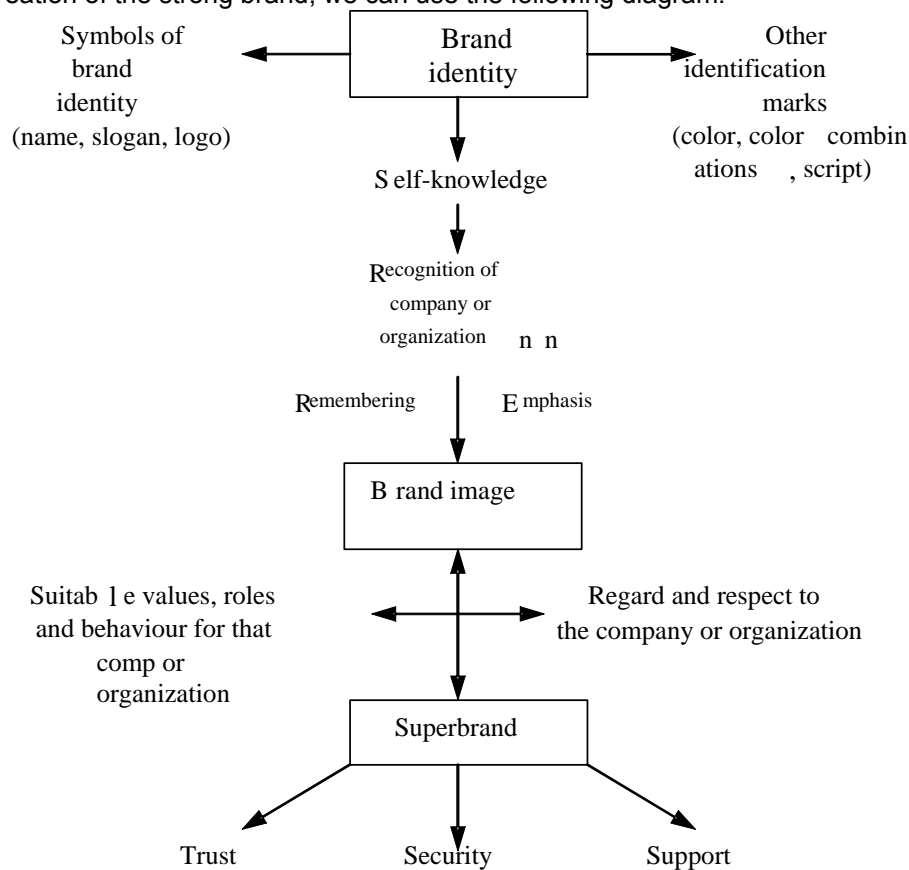
The mark has to go a long way in order to get established firmly in the minds of people, to demonstrate its advantages and uniqueness, to build its image and trust, in order to be favoured. David Ogilvy, one of the leading figures in contemporary advertising put forward the idea that consumers are not just buying the product, rather they are buying marks having their own personality⁷⁰. Successful marks, according to David Ogilvy, are those, in which there is correspondence between the image of the brand and the desired image of a certain target group. People in that group buy many products and services not only because of the actual benefits, but also because of what the mark means to the person and the group to which he/she belongs, i.e. marks offer both functional and psychological benefits. The image exists in the minds of people rather than being a fixed attribute of the mark or organization, while its identity helps people to discover or recognize the mark.

The image of the brand (commercial or political), as well as that of its identity, can be defined as the aspect of a product, organization, personality, symbol and the

⁷⁰ David Ogilvy's book on his approach to advertising is worth reading: D.Ogilvy, "Ogilvy on Advertising", (London: Pan books, 1983)

connected with them visual images and signs. The purpose of identifying symbols is to be remembered, to cause the recognition of the company or organization and to arouse its already existing image in the minds of people. The identity is more of a tactical rather than a strategic tool. The semantics of the terms used (brand image and brand identity) should not affect the interpretation of the indicators of significance of the commercial or political mark - what it means to the potential consumers or voters. Brand recognition is a powerful tool. As already emphasized, the major constructive elements of the identity of each mark, by which it is recognized and remembered are: the name, the writing style, the logo, the symbol, the slogan and the colours. Each one of them is visual and it is not just the simple sum total, but rather their comprehensive impact that leads to the formation of a good corporate image. To the consumer of a good or a political product "increasingly what is more important is the image, rather than the specific features of its bearer."⁷¹

The brand identity and image are at the base of building of the superbrand (the strong brand). In order to determine how the identity and image influence the creation of the strong brand, we can use the following diagram:



⁷¹ Райков, Здр., PR..., p. 142

The creation of identity and brand image, which lie at the basis of the superbrand, is achieved in a certain sequence.

First of all - self-knowledge of the mark. In order to build a strong brand message, it is important to understand your own brand. In the best business structures (that is also valid for the political parties) each employee (or party member) shares instinctively the power of the brand message. After the self-knowledge and our own idea of the mark, the focus is shifted to the consumers (the electorate).

Secondly - both the consumers and the voters should be acquainted with the mark, after which they should develop a preference, based on personal favourable experience, good reviews or a feeling, created by the various means or channels of communication. Only after multiple purchases with the trade mark or satisfaction of their expectations of a given political subject, do they become loyal to the mark and begin to prefer it over the competition, i.e. there is satisfaction of the customer (the electorate) - an attitude, ensuing from their expectations and the perception of the actual outcome. When Al and Laura Ries formulate the basic laws of branding, they stress out that "the power of a trade mark hides in its ability to influence the behaviour of the buyer"⁷² (respectively the voter).

In order to get an idea of the recognizability of the mark (commercial or political) there must be assessed the extent of its presence in the minds of consumers (voters). Parallel with that there should be reached the correct understanding "How well are people acquainted with your brand ? What makes it popular ? Does it have to do with confidence ? Price ? Diligence ? Care ? What does it have to do with ? What do people like about your brand ?"⁷³

With the trade mark there exist the following levels of awareness, which can also be applicable to the political brand:

- conscious familiarity - the first step which study participants remember, without any additional hints or enumeration of other marks. That approach to measurement in branding is also known as "brand excellence";
- unaided familiarity - one of the marks (commercial or political), mentioned in the study, without any hints or mentioning of other brands. The term used is "brand reminding";
- aided familiarity - recognition of the trade mark (or the political brand), after a list of their names has been presented;
- brand emphasis - the order in which brands appear in the mind of the consumer (the electorate).

The powerful marks (superbrands) are built gradually - first there is created the "aided" familiarity, then there begins to increase the "unaided" familiarity and finally there is the "dominant" familiarity, which is achieved in the slowest way. That progression should be based on consecutive and constant advertisements and promotions.

The achieved good brand identity can have two effects on the brand image. First of all, people are able to make the correct associations between the company or organization and its identifying symbols, i.e. to recognize and remember it. Secondly - on the basis of the achieved effect of the recognition and remembering there is created the effect of a certain uniqueness, by emphasizing the differences

⁷² Рийс, Ал, Л.Рийс, 22 неизменни закона..., p. 10.

⁷³ Д'Алесандро, Д, М.Оуенс, Войната на маркиите, p. 33.

from other firms or organizations, i.e. in the minds of people there is built a certain idea of it (logical and emotional), which is actually the nature of the brand image. When that idea is positive and has an emotional impact on people, around the mark there are created positive attitudes and preferences, which may grow into respect and esteem towards the firm or organization. Along with that there are formed appropriate values, roles and behaviour for them, which is nothing else, but the formed brand culture. With the interaction of all these factors in the human mind there is built the idea of the powerful brand (the superbrand), suggesting *confidence, security and support*, lying at the base of its choice by consumers. They prefer it over other marks and make multiple, repeat purchases. In the case of the political brand, those are the preferences of the electorate, who have voted for it in the election campaign. Actually the road to the creation of a powerful brand goes through the design of the desired image (as a set of opinions and feelings) and its commitment to values, important to the target group, at which the commercial or political mark is aimed. And that in its turn causes the loyalty of the target groups.

Loyalty to the mark is achieved, when it also brings prestige to consumers. The cause for the loyalty, based on the image, is the sum total of a small dose of higher quality workmanship and a large dose of brand image, guaranteeing prestige. Keeping the consumer is a major characteristic of brand loyalty. Loyalty means making the consumer (the electorate), who has already made a preference for a particular mark, keep choosing it in the future. As long as the marks of certain political subjects keep their promises and are faithful to their image, preferences towards them are high. The image of the brand is difficult to change, but if it is to be kept in the foreground in the minds of consumers (the electorate), there must be invested a great amount of funds in permanent advertising, campaigning and public relations. We can not build familiarity with the trade mark and manifestation of loyalty towards it, without providing information and creating specific impressions of the mark. The idea of the mark is everything. Psychologists call it "configuration and conditions", which work hand-in-hand. The configuration builds the model of thinking, whereas the conditions give rise to the image, which is impressed in the mind.

The electorate or a certain segment of it often like popular marks solely because of their fame. When familiarity with the mark is connected with appropriate identity and the created favourable image, it already turns into a mark with a specific political identity. However, in countries where democracy is still in a process of settling and establishing itself, very often it happens so that a duplicate is created to substitute for a well-established mark. The political practice in this country also offers such examples - DPB, which is a sort of a political replica of the UDF, and also the National Movement for Rights and Liberties (NMRL) - a replica of the MRL, etc.

In order to build a powerful brand (commercial or political) with a positive image, it should suggest stability, trust and security, to carry information about its production, to avoid negative imagery or identification. The popularity of each mark (political or commercial) is connected above all with its image, based on a sense of the market and carefully fed with public relations, campaigning, propaganda and advertising through the various channels of communication. The consumers of political products and services, however, cannot be cheated (or at least those who

are more intelligent). Just like in real life, placing a "Mercedes" emblem on the old "Moskvich" will not automatically turn the latter into a "Mercedes". We should never forget what a particular mark means to consumers of material or political products. "The truth is that consumers need marks - both good and bad in order to help them get oriented in a world, in which the possibilities to choose are almost infinite."⁷⁴ The difference between good and bad marks, however, is that the former remain on the shelves, while the latter are bought. The same also applies to the strong and weak political brands - the former enter Parliament and the executive and determine the course and direction of politics, while the latter remain overboard. The way to creating a superbrand goes through creating the desired image and the confirmation that it is committed to the values of consumers or voters. There is something else we should not forget - customers or voters buy or prefer only two types of things from the company or political organization - advantages and/or solutions to their problems.

That simple truth refers to both sales or service and political preferences. The needs and values of the personality affect the advantages, which a particular person or group of people expect of a given company or political organization, or the problems, which they will be able to solve with their help. It is precisely that circumstance that pushes the positioning of the mark or political brand in the foreground.

Positioning of the Mark

The positioning is probably the most important decision in the preparation of the communication strategy for a commercial or political mark. By it we determine what the company or organization is, what its activity is and what advantages it offers. In the 1980s, Al Ries and Jak Trout published the book "Positioning - the Battle for Your Mind", in which they affirmed the principal idea that positioning is mainly responsible for the creation of the trade mark.⁷⁵ Positioning is at the basis of the creation and building of brand value and through it people perceive the product or the service independently and in comparison with the competition. Then that realized value actually describes "the position" in their minds. "Market success is connected with the creation of an idea of the product, and not just with emphasizing its innate characteristics."⁷⁶

In the same or similar way is also positioned in the minds of the electorate or a part of it a certain political mark in the keen rivalry with other marks, especially in the period of election campaigns. In the practice of trade marks there are several approaches to positioning, which corresponds in essence to the positioning of the political mark, namely:

- value positioning: used by trade marks, which can convince consumers that they have a high ratio of extras in relation to the price. With the political mark the value positioning aims at winning the confidence and conviction of voters that a particular political mark by its ideological platform and political production excels in comparison with the others and is adequate to their hopes and

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁵ Al Ries and Jak Trout, Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

⁷⁶ Райков, Здр., PR..., p. 140

preferences. Therefore they give it credit of confidence during elections and vote for it;

- comparative positioning: when a trade mark is trying to convince the consumer that it is the better choice than the other mark or group of comparable trade marks. In politics value positioning and comparative positioning are the very nature of the political mark on account of the ideological, not the material character of the political product. The voter, in order to form in his mind the conviction that he/she will vote for one political party or other, compares their ideological platforms and real political activity, seeking a match to his/her own idea of the future. Or, to paraphrase Jacques Segela: every voter "satisfies his needs, but before that he quenches his desires".⁷⁷
- positioning by unique property: the trade mark uses a specific or unique property, in order to differentiate itself or make the consumer to prefer it to the alternative marks, which either possess or do not possess this property. With the political mark this specific or unique property is the UPP, which distinguishes a party and its candidates from another in its battle to win the votes of the electorate. The UPP is a concentrated expression of the ideology and the programme of the party, the means whereby we aim at penetrating deeply into the minds of the electorate and its manipulation in the interest of a particular political party and its candidates in the election marathon. The UPP is the core of the respective brand culture. For the purpose of that positioning there are used various channels of communication for a suggestion of great intensity and recurrence.
- positioning by fame or popularity: in this case the positions of the trade mark are based on its relation to particular events or a popular personality. With political positioning examples in that respect are the NMSS (the charisma of Simeon), the UDF (as a movement, and later as a party of the change), the DPB (as a party of "the Commander"), etc.

The successful positioning turns the marks into guides, which direct the consumers of a particular product or service to the value they desire, as well as those, who can offer it to them. Although not always clear, the most important assets of a political party (movement, coalition, union) are the political mark, the symbols, the slogans, the skills of the human resource and everything else, which builds the face of the political subject and describes its positions in the minds of the electorate (the voter in the election campaign). Those assets build the "brand value", which includes the loyalty and familiarity with the political mark, the perceived quality, the associations with it. The value of the political mark creates a "consumer value" on the political market. It is achieved by means of aiding the process of processing the obtained by the electorate "market information" and reaching the right decisions. The brand value increases the level of satisfaction of the electorate while using the political products and services.

Through increasing the effectiveness of marketing programmes the brand value of the political subject causes a higher corporate value. The components of the value of the political mark allow the party to develop a competitive advantage over the other political subjects. "The best thing that can happen to a mark is for it to turn into a sort of a stereotype in the eyes of the consumers - the embodiment of a mark

⁷⁷ Cerena, Ж., ... p. 80

worthy of confidence, style, admiration or any other of that series of wonderful qualities, which require their loyalty and respect."⁷⁸ That eventually leads to higher purchases or election results, caused by the loyalty of the customer, of the supporters and sympathizers of the mark.

The brand value of a given political subject is a sum of assets (and liabilities), connected with the name and the symbol of the political mark, which add to (or lower) the characteristic of the respective political products or services value. That value is directly proportionate to the familiarity with the name of the mark, the perceived quality and character, the associations with the political mark, the loyalty to it. Nothing dies faster than the incorrectly positioned and supported political mark. The electorate has a short memory and it is also covered with new marks, to which it can give its preferences and make the "political purchase" during the elections. As the final outcome, the value of the political mark is the sum total of the familiarity with it, the loyalty to it, the perceptions and associations of voters, which are formed in their minds. "One of the rules of marketing is, - emphasizes D'Alessandro - that there are only three ways to identify yourself - to become better, to offer a lower price or to attack. In politics it is almost the same, with the exception that you only have several months, rather than years, to identify your mark."⁷⁹

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The communication policy is a structured combination of all forms of communication, used by the company or the political organization and its leaders to inform, create an attitude, conviction or a reminder to people with reference to their products, services, image, ideas, public activity or influence in society.

The main components of the communication policy during the building and support of the trade marks are the popularization, the advertising campaign, the promotions, the distribution and sales promotion, while the stability and the value of the mark are determined by the proper realization of the processes of creation, launching and support. That also applies fully to the building of the political mark.

Nowadays, in order to achieve success both in the economy and in politics there must be created good marks.

Within the framework of the present work, however, the study of the communication policy is not a principal objective, but rather plays an auxiliary role in the context of the building, support and protection of the political mark. The study of the former could be the object of a fully independent study.

Good marks take a long time to build and require skillful management. Each subject, who wants to build a good mark, should first and foremost know himself and his environment well. The good marks penetrate the emotions, they are stories, which have never been told to the end. "These stories are passed on from generation to generation through the tale, the myth, the legend and they almost never disappear from the collective subconsciousness, they create to people a sensible way to get oriented and to understand their world. Those are prototype stories, hidden in the secret sphere of our cognitive abilities."⁸⁰ We should never forget, however, that "it may take 100 years to build a good mark, but only 30 days

⁷⁸ Д'Алесандро, Д., М.Оуенс, Войната на марките, р. 23.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁸⁰ Винсент, Л., Легендарните марки..., р. 73.

of notoriety to destroy it".⁸¹ Nowadays consumers seek the marks (commercial or political) they like and strive to get them by all means. It is hardly reasonable to resist !

The building, management and the responsibility to the mark is a very responsible task. That is all someone thinks of, when he sees the logo, the advertising slogan and hears the name of the mark. The main responsibility for its building, protection and establishment lies with managers and political leaders. A business or political activity, focusing on maintaining the image, identity and quality of the mark, on the understanding that its associates or party members, the present and future customer or electorate, the partners in the actual and potential mergers or acquisitions should be satisfied, is successful. In business those are the repeat multiple purchases of the trade mark, whereas in politics - the success in the election marathon and the acquisition of political power.

⁸¹ Д'Алесандро..., р. 122.