



IMAGE BUILDING FOR POLITICAL LEADERS IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of image building in contemporary political campaigns, in particular, to what extent that can determine the winners of the election. Building the image of a political leader since the beginnings of psychological, sociological and communication studies, is an unavoidable part of a successful campaign. The case studies of several world famous politicians show that the image-building tactics were changed over the years. Specifically, this paper deals with 1. The importance of building a media image; 2. Types of profile images and 3. Characteristics of profile images.

Keywords: Image, Politicians, Political Campaign, Election, Types.

Introduction

Since the early days of psychological, sociological and media studies in the 1950s, media images have been an inevitable part of a successful election campaign. Several studies show that image-building tactics have changed over the years.

According to Lilleker (2006: 95), personal image is the public representation of political leaders, candidates in elections, political parties, etc. The representative viewers of political leader candidates taking on public issues, etc. are the intersection of the messages the political leaders sending and the way they behave on the one hand and the expectations that the audience has for the political leaders on the other (Trent, Friedenber and Denton, 2011: 73). As a construct, image exists in the heads/minds of audience, but it is based on the ability of individuals to decode messages and interpret the behavior of political leaders, parties or candidates in elections. Besides their behavior and the messages that political leaders, candidates and parties send while projecting their images, what is important is the level of media coverage of their activities. political parties and leaders, as well as the communication skills and styles of those leaders and political parties.

The central image in elections is largely based on the representation we have of a certain politician or political party. In this sense, the image is based on the idea that the media provides us with an objective image of a given politician, of how he looks and reacts with verbal or non-verbal response to certain situations.

In this respect, only one photo on the cover that can be seen quickly and easily, most commonly is much more meaningful than the speeches of politicians and the articles written about them or by them.

1. The importance of building media images

1.1. Definition

The concept of the image of a political leader is multifaceted, multifunctional and is the intersection of several social sciences: psychology, sociology, political science... Each scientific discipline studies specific aspects of images. Therefore, for a comprehensive understanding, let us consider the main methodological approaches to determining the image of a political leader.

Initially, the definition of the image of a political leader was taken from the conceptual system of psychological science. Therefore, we should start studying this definition in particular and political psychology in general, that is, consider the psychological approach to determining the image of a leader. It must be stated immediately that in no dictionary of general psychology can one find a definition of "political image of a leader" or at least "image of a leader". However, in the psychology dictionary you can find another but similar concept - "image". It is through "image/imagery" that general psychology understands the phenomenon we are studying.

Thus, in line with the traditional psychological approach, an image is defined as “an emotionally charged image of someone that has developed in the popular consciousness and is stereotypical in nature... This is the set of personal characteristics of an individual, reflected in the perceptions of others...” (A.V. Petrovsky, M.G. Yaroshevsky. M. Politizdat, 1990: 494–495). Therefore, the authors consider the image as the outer shell of a person, motivated by internal characteristics, character traits, through which his communication with the external environment takes place. The activity of a person's sensory reception in assimilating the information received, which represents a comprehensive reflection of reality, is emphasized. It is emotions that seem to be determining the understanding of visual perception mechanisms.

The authors of another psychology dictionary complement the concept of image: “...performs the function of regulating behavior taking into account external circumstances” (V.V. Davydova, A.V. Zaporozhets, B.F. Lomova, 2013: 223–224). Indeed, one cannot disagree with this addition. “Image” is not just a stereotype, it is also a certain psychological attitude, a call to action. Possessing a powerful motivating potential, “images” are capable of setting the vector of human behavior within certain limits. After all, like any installation, it performs the function of directing, distorting or preventing human behavior.

N.I. Konyukhov took the mentioned approaches as a basis, clarified and supplemented them with logical and psychological categories: “An image is a form of reflection of an object, a phenomenon in consciousness, a subjective picture of the world, constructed in accordance with the temporal space, cause and effect models and depending on the meaning system in which the subject operates. At the stage of sensory perception, the basis for images to appear is sensation, perception and visualization; at the level of logical thinking - concepts, judgments, inferences. The image that appears in consciousness depends on all mental phenomena - volition, emotions, attitudes, motives, etc.” (N.I. Konyukhov, 2004: 59).

However, these definitions of images from the point of view of applied political science are incomplete. This is largely due to the difference between the concept of “image” in general and the “image of a political leader” in particular. Although the fact that “image” is a concept is a prerequisite for converting it into the concept “image of a political leader”, the latter has a slightly different meaning and has wider range.

First, the main difference is that the “image” is presented as a received stereotype, reflected through the lens of emotions and senses, thereby indicating a one-way direction of psychological impact of “images,” or something like that -called one-way communication. However, there is a reliance on the presence of feedback and, therefore, there are specific filters in the process of perceiving the leader's image. It seems that these are the factors that edit image information, affecting its content.

Second, the relationship between the “image” and the object representing it, that is, the political leader himself, is not considered at all. Although such relationships, in our opinion, not only exist but also have a huge impact on the final “product”, that is, the image itself. Thus, it can be argued that the definitions of “image” and “leader image” are inherently ambiguous. They have different volumes and differences in content.

Comprehensively, the main differences between the concepts of “image” and “image of a political leader” can be presented in tabular form (see Table 1).

Table 1. Differences between “image” and “image of a political leader”

Standard	Image	Image of a political leader
The specialness of perception	It is not clearly perceived, it is reflected in consciousness, the cognitive perspective is deliberately shifted.	Shown more clearly as symbols, direct perception
Depth of understanding	A complex idea of personality, referring to a certain personality, a certain way of accumulating experience, emphasizing certain aspects of an object.	A clear idea of a fragment of political reality, a stereotyped idea of an object as a “sample”, perception of an image in the primary cycle.
Idealization	An image repeats an ideal, a model of political behavior of the entire subject.	The image is part of an ideal object, a fragment, an integral part of a political action, an event.
Feedback to the topic	Presence of feedback and interdependence.	Feedback is not clearly expressed.

E.V. Egorova-Gantman and O.I. Gardeev emphasizes the symbolic weight of the image: “The image of a political leader is an image that is constantly reproduced by the very subject and means of communication: certain characteristics, qualities of that political leader, expressed in political unity, worldview... qualities that resonate in the aspirations of voters” (E.V. Egorova-Gantman, 2013:113–114).

K.S. Stanislavsky draws attention to the behavioral, socio-psychological aspects of the image of a political leader. Thus, that image, according to him, is: “...the behavior, thinking, and actions of a person participating in group communication. Image search is a change in human behavior during role-playing activities” (quoted ID Ladanov, 2015: 88).

J. Yager, in addition to psychosocial characteristics, also included external personal data in his definition: “The image of a political leader includes the entire set of physical, verbal, demeanor and even the ability to communicate with people” [D.J. Yager, 2014: 28–29].

With such multifaceted and multifunctional definitions of and different approaches to the image of a political leader, we will continue studying on this issue.

1.2. Political leader images from election campaigns

Information that is not covered properly loses a significant portion of its value. One of the biggest advantages of images is that they shorten the time it takes to receive a message. Especially today when people to some extent show saturation from politics, shortening the time in which people receive the message is extremely important. In electronic media, viewers remember the impression politicians leave with their performances longer than the exact words they use during their performances (Grabe and

Bucy, 2009: 53). Perhaps for this reason, according to Manin (1997), politicians in contemporary politics have increasingly begun to behave like media personalities. Manin finds that representative democracy transforms into a democracy in which "audience" is the last and most important word. Possibly the first politician who was aware of the influence in creating representations of politicians and seriously took care of his image was Roosevelt, who was also the first to use the abilities provided by radio as a means to communicate with voters. An important element of Roosevelt's image was his focus on his own image being able to walk independently despite his disability. Of the 50,000 photos in his summer mansion in New York, there are only two of him in a wheelchair.

The beginnings of the scientific study of images in political campaigns as a concept began in the 1950s. Most important elements on which images are built include: symbols, colors, interior, exterior, clothing, logo, advertising, etc. As Orzekauskas Petras and Smaiziane Ingrida (2007) note, over time the concept of the image deepens, becomes more complex, and it no longer relies on impressions or structures created by graphic designers. The contemporary concept of image is multidisciplinary and includes the maintenance of images that have been created. Therefore, a feature of the scientific debates about images in the 1950s was: the connection of images with a specific product, politician or political party ignored the influencing emotional factors to the creation of images, ignoring the rigid systematization and goal orientation of images. As Orzekauskas Petras and Smaiziane Ingrida (2007: 91) note, in the 1980s, these trends changed: paid more attention to media in image building and the influences of emotional factors in image building, pointed out the importance of building a system of relationships and opened up more factors that contribute to image building

The importance of the image of a particular person today is also reflected in the fact that some politicians have engaged professional stylists who not only arrange clothes and hairstyles for the public performance, but they also pay attention to the style and appropriate arrangement of the interview in a family atmosphere (furniture, pictures, etc.), the cars used in the campaigns, even the right types of music to achieve effects among specific groups of voters. Former US President Barack Obama is a typical example of success in building the image of a friendly, attractive, knowledgeable black politician with outstanding inspirational speaking ability to represent "a Future American President", consistent with "a modern America ready to innovate".

1.3. Image and voting behavior

As Rein, Kotler, and Stoller (1987) point out, politics is a profession where image building and transformation predominate. All political communication, and especially during the campaign, can be identified as an attempt to create an image that will be acceptable to most voters. Voters often vote for politicians and political organizations with the most acceptable image and less for political programs that they usually do not read. Image is closely related to the reputation that politicians have. Politicians with a well-built image, such as Barak Obama, Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Tony Blair, have a high reputation, which facilitates their work in election campaigns (Orzekauskas and Smaiziane, 2007: 90).

Image has always been important to the election results of political leaders, candidates and political parties. However, it seems that in the contemporary socio-political situations and the reduction of

ideological differences between political parties and their leaders, the distinctive image through which their credibility is reflected is an increasingly important factor in differentiating candidates and political parties as well as in making voting decisions for candidates in specific elections. Especially, if political parties focus on average voters rather than representative voters, and do not express important ideological differences in their electoral programs, there will be many weaknesses.

More important factors for voters in deciding whom to vote for are the image of the political leader and party and the trust or distrust he reflects. According to Lilleker (2006: 96), 30-40% of voters make the decision to vote for a certain candidate based on his/her personal image. Personal image is a particularly important factor when making voting decisions for undecided voters. A MORI study of the 1987 British parliamentary election found that 44% of undecided voters made decisions on the basis of party policies, 35% of undecided voters making decisions on the basis of the personal images of political leaders, while 21% of undecided voters intend to make decisions on the basis of the images of political parties (McNair, 2011: 32).

1.4. The socio-political role of personal image

Lilleker (2006: 95) finds two sources of the growing importance of personal image in politics and political election campaigns: one is the lack of media attention to politics and politicians in general, and the second source is the interest that the media shows in celebrities. The existential need of the media during elections is not to limit the public presence of politicians only to programs related to politics, but also to programs of humor, sports, music, make politicians famous and "trivialize" politics. Lilleker (2006: 96) points to the example of the former chairman of the British Labor Party, Tony Blair, and his newborn son Leo Blair; The same was true for his successor as chairman of the British Labor Party, Gordon Brown, and the loss of his first child and the birth of his son John Brown. The former president of the United States, George W. Bush, has the image of a man of the people, who gives short and easy-to-understand messages, dresses simply (Silverblatt, Bruns and Jensen, 2006: 13-17) .

Rosemberg and McCafferty's study showed a series of images of imaginary election candidates to a group of students at American universities. Although there was no real political context, the results showed that certain characteristics of the imaginary candidates influenced perceptions of the candidates and their ascribed qualities such as competitiveness, legitimacy, integrity and attractiveness are important factors when deciding who to elect (McNair, 2011: 32). With this in mind, organizers of election campaigns have engaged in the building of candidates' images and advertisements that focus on the candidates' personalities. Richard Joslyn, observing political advertisements on American television from 1960 to 1984, concluded that only 15% focused on specific political issues, while 57% focused on personality and the quality of the candidates (McNair, 2011: 92). There are many factors in the process of building an image, starting from color, through logo, clothing, hairstyle, speaking style... Building a personal image always aims to cause positive emotions for audiences. Testing emotions from different types of images can be done by testing the responses of focus groups. Like the importance of the message that political parties send, the clothes worn by candidates must be appropriate to the given context, the candidate's hairstyle, colors used in the campaign, logos, special personality traits, etc. are all

extremely important. All of these factors, like political messages, are based on the emotions they evoke in voters.

2. Personal image types

As Orzeauskas and Smaiziane (2007: 90) reveal, there are two distinguishable types of personal image: long-term and short-term. Long-term image is a sustainable image that is continuously built over long periods of time using permanent campaign communication tools, while short-term image is built for the needs of a specific election campaign. Although they are different, these long-term and short-term images should not conflict. Specifically, the short-term image should build on what has been built as a long-term image for a politician or political entity and it should reveal only a certain aspect of the long-term image of that politician or political entity.

Build personal image for candidates

The image of serious political entities and political leaders is not a random mixture of spontaneous circumstances, but is well planned; Communication specialists take care of and determine the main characteristics of the image of a political entity or candidate, they manage its development and modify it when necessary. Rein, Kotler and Stoller (1987) point out that to build the image of a politician or a political entity, it must first be recognized by the people, which is the first and possibly the most important step in image building. Therefore, the main task in image creation is the visibility and recognizability of the politician (i.e. political entity) in public. Next is the trust that citizens should have in politicians or political entities.

Orzeauskas and Smaiziane (2007: 94) point out seven steps to determine the current image and build the desired image as follows:

- Accurate analysis of existing images with relevant indicators
- Analyze existing identity building elements
- Determine the desired identity
- Determine the gap between reality and the desired image
- Prepare a plan to reduce the gap between reality and the desired image
- Make an implementation plan
- Evaluate the impact of implementing the plan on that image

Orzeauskas and Smaiziane (2007) also point out that according to Gee (2000), there are four levels of image building:

Basic image: the first level of image building includes the individual and the principles, philosophies, goals and action standards of the organization.

Internal image: includes the planning and conducts of organizational politics and activities directed towards members of the political party to strengthen their loyalty to the party, as well as party unity.

External image: includes the activities through which politicians and political entities are presented to the public, the building of appropriate relationships with the media and the general public, behavior of a politician or political entity in a public place.

Unattainable image: includes the influence of behavior on factors related to the politician or political entity, their cultural

matrix, education, motivation, etc. Those who create the image are aware that it consists of at least two elements, one of which is easier to control than the object the image is constructing, such as a politician or members of a political entity, and the other is more difficult to control such as the media, voters and the audiences they address.

There have been many attempts to classify audiences according to their influence on image production (Orzeauskas and Smaiziane, 2007: 95). We can classify primary, secondary and marginal audiences. Mainstream audiences have the greatest influences in shaping the image of political entities, while marginal audiences have the least influence. Depending on the primary and secondary rankings, audiences can be classified into traditional and prospective or potential. A traditional audience is an audience that has long followed a political entity or politics in general, while a prospective audience is an audience that political entities want to attract in the future, perhaps includes those who did not show an interest in following politics and did not vote in the previous period, or those who were unable to do so before because of age. Depending on the relationship with the political entity, we can divide the audience into supporters, opponents and undecideds. Those who create images of political entities clearly understand that they should prepare different activities to build images for each of these objects.

I think we can point to a number of characteristics that are of key importance for image building: physical and psychological characteristics, cultural characteristics, organizational/individual identity of the party entity / politician, a reflection of the previously indicated factors in society and their internal characteristics. What is most important, and perhaps even dominant, in building a successful personal image are the personality traits of the candidate or political leader. Usually, the image should emphasize the candidate's good side and wishes. In this regard, it would be a wrong strategy to construct an image of a certain politician that strays from his personality traits, like wearing someone else's clothes. Hilary Clinton has received countless criticisms and ridicule from voters and audiences of all factions when trying to build an image of closeness and cultural understanding of the representative or majority community at the polling station by carrying chili sauce in a book bag when interviewing African-American reporters and impersonating a Southern accent when campaigning in the southern states of the United States. The public image that politicians create is also intended to express certain attitudes. In this sense, a politician can build an image of being tough and uncompromising on certain issues, or prepare and fight to take on political issues, passionately and understandingly know for certain matters or be a rational and pragmatic person.

There are two levels of image building: personal communication style with standard skills on the one hand and reporting on the activities of political parties on the other. The image of political parties is the result of teams of public relations specialists to create images at the level of interpersonal communication or at the level of mass communication and citizens' perception of certain political leaders. Specifically, in a particular social context, citizens prefer politicians with specific characteristics or images. Therefore, strategic studies are carried out to show what the image of candidates at certain elections should be like. For example, the image of an ideal candidate that prevailed in 2004 when the "war on terror" theme dominated must have been different from 2008 when the "economic crisis" theme dominated.

3. Characteristics of personal image

An important feature in the image of every politician is credibility built on the basis of competence for the job they run for and honesty with voters. Competence involves understanding the job a candidate politician must undertake, while honesty is recognized through exposure to complete and accurate information. These characteristics help increase people's trust in candidates, and on the other hand help politicians and candidates perform in public offices, convincing voters of the benefits of their political proposals. Trust gives additional values to the information presented by the political entities to which they belong. What is often more important is who is speaking (what is his credibility), what point of view is he speaking from, and how well can he do it. If the candidate has experience and success in the job for which they are running or a job related to it, then when building their image, politicians put these experiences first and in this way, suggests to voters that they guarantee the security of their choice. That is one of the great advantages of candidates running for the same office a second time.

Conclusion

Over the past few decades, issues of image building have been studied more deeply and extensively. Today, it is widely acknowledged that image building can be shaped by both tangible and intangible characteristics. The impact of formal and informal information factors is emphasized. In politics and public administration, positive image and reputation are extremely important. In politics, this is considered an "image-intensive field" due to the increased need for transparency of public organizations going up. The increasingly sophisticated development of society, dynamic environment, increasing media power, etc. make the need to seek a sustainable image and positive reputation increasingly stronger. The search for a sustainable image should start with an identity that clearly represents values and performance standards. Therefore, image building in political campaigns in general and elections in particular will certainly attract more and more attention and stronger research.

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