

Models of political consulting in Poland, 1989–2009, in a comparative perspective



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ABSTRACT: Alongside the breakdown of authoritarian regimes and the restitution of democratic order in Poland and other Central East European countries, the first open election campaigns accompanied by political consultants emerged. Since the beginning of the transition, the role of consultants as well as consultants themselves have been going through constant changes bound up with modernizing the political scene and system and ways of leading political campaigns. The present article seeks to interrogate the categories of political consulting models we have been facing in Poland and refers them to worldwide tendencies. This study analyses the ways in which political consultants have arisen, their institutional adherence, methods of action, roles in the political communication process, as well as changeovers and development tendencies to this extent. The article provides a comparative analysis of three campaign models defined by Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic and the types of political consultants reviewed by the scope literature. This study concludes with a prognosis of the development of political consulting tendencies in Poland in a worldwide context.

KEYWORDS: Poland, political consulting, political campaign, electoral campaign, political marketing, political communication.



INTRODUCTION

As a country of emerging democracy, Poland is now catching up in various areas, trying to offset the losses against Western Europe and the USA. What is worth emphasizing is that such gaps were not a result of our own desire and experience. They constituted rather a result of historical developments, which, as a nation, we had little effect on. This catching-up is obviously related also to political marketing and political consulting, the areas that have been developing in Poland over the last 20 years, while they have been evolving in most developed countries for at least sixty years (Johnson, 2000; Maarek, 1995; Ulicka, 1996;). Thus, the 20 years of political consulting embraced in this study are certainly only the beginning of a road that needs to be taken in order to develop this field of study in Poland. However, this beginning is also quite dynamic and versatile, and is setting trends for the future.

external experts. However, they would get engaged in the party's structures. The result of this was the fact that a Western European consultant was permanently associated with one political party (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2006, p. 260; Herbut, 2002, p. 97–98). Nevertheless, with the weakening of political parties characterized by strong structures with a large membership base, one can observe an increased demand for independent external experts, which, however, does not indicate the switch to the US model. In Western Europe, campaigns still rely on political parties and their members. They, the party representatives, also have a major impact on the way the campaign is shaped and are accountable for it to their constituents. Therefore, the Western European model is only merely affected by the phenomenon of "Americanization" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), much as some of the American patterns could be adapted to the needs of the old continent.

The third type is the New Democracies Model, or the model of countries developing and shaping their political system. Throughout history, they have developed neither the tradition of conducting election campaigns nor the considerably strong party structures. The access to new technologies, particularly the development of mass media and its consequences, and the mediatization of politics has allowed the societies of these countries to stay up-to-date with the phenomena occurring in election campaigns conducted around the world and to derive patterns from other countries. In comparison with others, the American campaigns appear as the most colorful, complex and dynamic in attracting crowds. Therefore, the tendency for young democracies to adopt the American and not the European models is natural. What favors this phenomenon is the fact that certain countries have a similar political system with the US, that is semi-presidential or presidential (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2006, p. 263; Mazur, 2002, p. 269). International data also indicates that politicians from young democracies are advised by many consultants from developed countries, but primarily from the US (Bowler & Farrell, 2000). All these factors make the young democracy model very similar to the American one. However, in my opinion, such proximity is rather related to the techniques and tools of political marketing which are transferred or adapted from the US, and it affects the impact of political consultants on the campaign to a lesser extent. The impact is more significant than in the Western European model, but not as profound as in the United States.

By classifying political consultants according to certain criteria, such as their affiliation with the party or the fact of working for the government, their typology was established (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2006, p. 251–256). It is important to emphasize, however, that this typology corresponds solely to the US market. The first historically constituted group comprised marketers who used to work in the economic markets and who were not affiliated with any political party. The representatives of this group worked mainly for non-governmental clients. The second group was formed by sellers, individuals or enterprises were not affiliated with political parties, but worked mainly for them and provided professional, specialized services, such

sulting is based on planning and conducting overall political and election campaigns, from running public opinion polls, conducting research on the political and performing analysis of the initial situation, through drawing up a strategy up to selecting and implementing the tools of a political and election campaign. It also includes training for politicians and campaign teams and other services necessary in communication, such as coordinating work on campaign spots and media advertising, production of election campaign materials, or services related to image creation. Finally, personal consulting corresponds to assistance in planning and developing the careers of politicians, both beginner and experienced. To meet this goal, modern and original analytical and research methods are used. Such a type of consulting also deals with the development of personal competencies and political skills in the form of coaching.

The thesis of this research is that during the progress of political transition in Poland, political consulting and its types has had to evolve, too. To verify this thesis one should put the following questions: (1) in what features is the evolution of political consulting shown, (2) what kind of political consulting exists in Poland in the research period, (3) how the global changes in communication like professionalization, Americanization, mediatization etc. affect political consulting in Poland.

Most of the empirical data and conclusions derive from in-depth interviews with political consultants in Poland lead by me from 2000 to 2009, including 37 IDI with persons responsible for election campaigns from 1991 to 2009 in Poland. There were politicians as well as external consultants. Falsification of their opinions was based on interviews with other consultants working for the same party and on the historical mass media news.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION IN POLAND

Over the twenty years described in the study, 17 election campaigns took place in Poland. This number does not include the elections in 1989, since they were only partially free, and the post-communist party that was supposed to relinquish power, secured itself two thirds of the seats in the Sejm. Apart from this exception, there were 4 presidential campaigns (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005), 6 parliamentary campaigns (1991, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007), 5 local government (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006) and 2 European Parliament campaigns (2004, 2009). Moreover there were also 3 referendum campaigns: for general property enfranchisement of citizens (1996), Referendum on the Constitution (1997) and Polish European Union membership referendum (2003). These election campaigns can be divided into three main stages, according to the type of tools used and the manner in which they were conducted:

1. The period of “first marketing experience” between 1990 and 1994, characterized by the use of basic marketing techniques, attempts to transfer the experience of other countries on Polish ground, and the involvement of many people in the

In fact, the team was composed of two friends working part-time for the campaign and totally free of charge.

The POC was also endorsed by a director supporting the party, Paweł Pitera. In fact, the practice of hiring professionals only on exceptional occasions and in technical matters was dominant. The KLD (Liberal Democratic Congress) hired a few experts for a training course for candidates that took place in Cetniewo. The experts' team included psychologists, sociologists, as well as a choreographer and a costume designer. However, none of them was a consultant. Usually it was the technical preparation of materials that external companies were entrusted with. SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) hired an external company to prepare TV spots, posters and folders. Similarly, SLD cooperated with several advertising agencies. During this campaign, foreign consultants made an appearance for the first time. They were independent and not affiliated to any political party, and offered free assistance. For instance, Americans from the National Institute for International Affairs offered training for all political parties. SLD received the help of the United Left (Spain).

In the parliamentary campaign of 1993 the involvement of external firms in planning and conducting the campaign increased significantly. KLD demonstrated this new phenomenon in the largest and on an unprecedented scale, by entrusting the company Saatchi & Saatchi with almost the entire campaign, from its launch through to the printing of posters and the production of TV spots. In the organizational chart of KLD's campaign, the consulting company constituted a virtually separate and parallel structure, whose recommendations were pursued by the members of the campaign's main team. Also BBWR (Nonpartisan Bloc for Support of Reforms) delegated the planning of the campaign to a marketing company. The company agreed to run the campaign at cost price, without generating benefits. However, in this case the involvement of the company in the campaign was related mainly to the preparation of graphics for the campaign's materials and, to a lesser extent, to strategic consulting. Yet, most political groups continued to depreciate the role of external consultants (Biskup, 2007, p. 138).

Similarly, there was little involvement of external consultants in conducting public opinion polls. The campaign team of Stanisław Tymiński was probably the only one to delegate this task to an external institution during the presidential campaign of 1990. During the subsequent campaigns, public *tracking* opinion polls were used, conducted each month by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Center for Social Opinion Research, and later also by Demoskop and the Laboratory for Public Research. In 1993, the Liberal Democratic Congress for the first time commissioned to conduct a *benchmark poll*. Again, the Liberal Democratic Congress was the first to conduct a few *focus group interview* polls. To sum up, at this stage of the campaign, political consultants acted mainly as consulting staff responsible for content and communication issues. They were usually the candidates' supporters, who often worked free of charge or were recruited on an ad hoc basis.

experts, and media training was conducted by the party's spokesman, Jacek Kurski. Western training institutes also provided many political parties with their support during the campaign, mostly for free. Scott Carpenter from the International Republican Institute provided advice to AWS, UW and ROP (Movement for Reconstruction of Poland). He trained from 150 to 200 people. Andrew Young from the National Democratic Institute, conducted training for UP, Conservative Party, the KPN (Confederation of Independent Poland), Ruch 100 (Movement 100) and ROP.

The next presidential campaign brought a further increase in the involvement of political advisors, including those more professional. The campaign team of Jarosław Kalinowski involved Gerald Abramczyk, a highly-educated consultant who gained his experience in political marketing in the United States. Marian Krzaklewski was supported by specialists in image creation and cooperation with the media, Joanna Gepfert, Piotr Tymochowicz and a specialist in public opinion polls, Bartłomiej Pawlak. Aleksander Kwaśniewski for a second time accessed the services of Jacques Seguela. During the parliamentary campaign of 2001 the biggest impact among the external consultants was made by American consultants working for UW. They played a major role in the campaign team and had an impact on all other structures at all stages of action. Other sections of the team implemented the concepts of American advisors. Other parties also benefited from external assistance, mainly from Polish companies and advisors. They benefited from the services of advertising agencies, which were entrusted with the preparation of promotional materials as well as television and radio spots. Also, individual consultants were hired in the form of companies or individual experts, as in the most famous case of Piotr Tymochowicz, working with Andrzej Lepper and Samoobrona (Self-Defense).

Throughout the local elections of 2002 and parliamentary elections of 2001 political consultants were gaining larger and larger areas of local and regional political markets. They advised, among others, candidates for councilors of different levels of government, candidates for mayors and conducted local parliamentary election campaigns. Among the external consultants certain names are especially worth mentioning. These are: Wiesław Gałązka, Marzena Cichosz, Sergiusz Trzeciak, Eryk Miste-wicz, Sebastian Drobczyński, Sylwia Wilkos and Witold Ferenc (Polcam Consulting).

During the catching-up period, the importance of external consultants soared, but it was still the best-known politicians and heads of political parties that had a decisive impact on the campaign. Moreover, the use of public opinion polls increased considerably. Ordering benchmark polls and FGI research became the norm.

THE PERIOD OF PERMANENT CAMPAIGN

I defined the years 2004–2009 as a period of permanent campaign, as conducting campaigns in this period were characterized by significant use of the mass media (in various forms) and an ongoing use of public opinion polls, not only before the elections themselves, but also during the period between the elections (Ornstein &

tions was the European Parliament campaign of SLD in 2009, when the Polish left again used the help of Jacques Seguela's company. The cooperation with media houses responsible for booking advertising space became the norm.

A particular importance was attached to market analysis carried out in the form of political opinion polls by different research centers. Out of approximately 120 companies performing market research and public opinion polls in Poland (data by the Polish Association of Market and Opinion Researchers), only ten receive orders from the world of politics. Recently these were: the Center for Social Opinion Research, GfK Polonia, Homo Homini, Ipsos-Demoskop, TNS OBOP, PBS DGA, Pentor, and The Polish Research Group, SMG/KRC.

TYPES OF POLITICAL CONSULTING IN POLAND

What then, are the types and models of consulting that have been developing in Poland in recent years? One shall obtain the answer to this question by comparing the various periods of conducting campaigns and placing this comparison against a background of global phenomena. A five-degree frequency scale was implemented (never, rarely, moderately often, often and very often).

Table 1. Incidence of types of consultants in Poland, according to the typology by Farell, Kolodny, Medvic

Type of consultants	Election campaign period		
	First marketing experience (1990–1994)	Catching up (1995–2003)	Permanent campaign (2004–2009)
Marketers	often	moderately often	never
Sellers	never	rarely	often
Traditional <i>politicos</i>	never	rarely	moderately often
Strategists	never	never	rarely

Source: author.

What stems from the data in Table 1 is that the historically earliest type of consultants, that is the marketers, disappears in Polish political campaigns. On the other hand, the “sellers”, that is external companies providing specialized services for political entities, become more and more popular. In Poland, these are above all the entities involved in the production of political advertising, election market research, internet communication services and mediation in the sale of advertising space. The category of traditional *politicos* keeps on growing, although at a slower pace. What makes our country specific in this matter is the fact that *politicos* are mostly internal consultants, working within specific political parties. Few of them (mainly those less known to the public) decide to quit their job for their mother

I suggested the completion of existing types of consulting by new types in the introduction of this article. Table 3 demonstrates that supplement and shows that the most popular form is communication consulting, that is, advising on how to show, communicate or colloquially speaking, how to “sell”. Know-how consulting has a small share, as it is carried out mainly by research and parascience centers and still forming think-tanks (e.g. the Institute of Public Affairs, the Sobieski Institute, the Jagiellonian Institute, the Adam Smith Center, etc.). Finally, personal consulting is barely present, as is the career development of politicians. This type of consulting is represented by only a few cases in Poland. It is possible to estimate that after 20 years of transformation of know-how consulting corresponds to 10%, communication consulting equals 85% and 5% refers to the work of personal consultants.

CONCLUSION

Taking the above statements into consideration and with reference to the campaign models established by Farrell, Kolodny and Medvic, one can reason that Poland corresponds to the young democracy model. The New Democracies Model is applicable, as one could distinguish such characteristic features as the quick learning of political marketing methods and techniques, or transferring the tools of American campaigns to Polish ground. On the other hand, the role of advisers, although steadily rising, is closer to the Western European model. This is because these are the party leaders, not advisors, who are responsible for election campaigns in Poland and take all the key decisions. Even the two exceptions to this rule highlighted in this study (the SLD campaign of 1993 and UW campaign of 2001) did not make a break with traditional patterns. Thus, political parties remain the base of a campaign. What can have the impact on such a lack of evolution in the direction of the American Exception Model is the fact that Poland has a parliamentary cabinet system in Poland with a significant role of the president, not the classic presidential one.

The studies presented above, as well as the careful observation and analysis of the political consulting market in Poland allow us to outline the likely vision of the development of political consulting, which can be found in the following areas:

Firstly, the number and the role of strategists as political advisors will increase. This is due to the improving training of specialists in this field, growing possibilities for international exchange and opportunities to participate in political campaigns in other countries, as well as with more better-trained local specialists in this field, who transfer their knowledge to future generations. The popularity of specializations related to marketing and political consulting is constantly rising, and university units specialized in this area are besieged with candidates. A lot of educated young people express their willingness to work for political parties and to learn this profession in practice.

Secondly, personal consulting also indicates a potential for growth. Of course, planning the career of a politician with the right expertise and research is expensive,

but Polish society is becoming more affluent and politicians will start to recognize the profitability of such expenses having political careers in perspective. They will begin to see personal consulting as an investment that might protect them from major personal and political errors.

Thirdly, a chance for the development of personal consulting will be local government elections. They remain an area irregularly penetrated by advisors, but indicate the growing need of campaign professionalization.

Fourthly, the role of long-term strategic consulting, developing coherent and durable concepts in politics, may also increase.

To conclude, political consulting in Poland has gone through a rather rapid and dynamic evolution. It has offset many historical losses against the United States and Western Europe, refusing however to accept entirely any of the principal models. By following the “third” way of new democracies we develop our specific, national models of action. Time will tell which way we go further. After all, we are only 20 years after the change in political regimes and still at the stage of transition.

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