Cognitive Voter Window: A Methodological Proposal to Better Understand Voters

Ventana Cognitiva del Elector: Una Propuesta Metodológica para Conocer Mejor a los Votantes

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Abstract

The article proposes a new methodology for the knowledge of the electorate, coming from the field of psychology, which can serve as part of the inputs to define political communication strategies to win elections. By knowing the electorate better, one has a competitive advantage that can be decisive in winning an electoral campaign. The importance of voter knowledge is exemplified by describing the cases of the presidential elections in Colombia and Mexico in 2018. It is concluded that the cognitive window of the voter enables a better knowledge of the voters, and consequently, can help to improve the strategic sense in the struggle to occupy spaces of public representation in democratic regimes.

Keywords: Voter's cognitive window, methodology, citizens, electoral campaigns, democratic systems, presidential election

Resumen

El artículo propone una nueva metodología para el conocimiento del electorado, proveniente del campo de la psicología, misma que puede servir como parte de los insumos

para definir las estrategias de comunicación política que permita ganar elecciones. Al conocer mejor al elector, se cuenta con una ventaja competitiva que puede ser determinante para ganar una campaña electoral. Se ejemplifica la importancia del conocimiento del elector describiendo los casos de las elecciones presidenciales en Colombia y México en el 2018. Se concluye, que la ventana cognitiva del elector posibilita un mejor conocimiento de los votantes, y en consecuencia, puede ayudar a mejorar el tino estratégico en la lucha por ocupar espacios de representación pública en regímenes de cuño democrático.

Introduction

Since the time of the Caesars, during the Roman democracy, the need to know the voters during political campaigns was raised, since there was the intuition that from a deep knowledge of the citizens, it would be much easier to propose the necessary strategies to persuade them and be able to win their vote. In this regard, Quintus Cicero wrote in 64 B.C. the Electoral Campaign Manual to help his brother, Marcus Tullius Cicero, to win the election for the Roman consulship, a high position of public representation.

In this campaign manual, Quintus Cicero points out "There are three things in particular that lead men to show a good disposition and to give their support in an election; namely, benefits, expectations and sincere sympathy. It is necessary to study carefully in what way these resources can be availed of." That is to say, Quintus Cicero already raised since 64 B.C. the need to know the voters in depth in order to use this knowledge to propose the strategy to win the elections.

Nowadays, there are several methodologies used in the field of politics, whose main objective is to know voters in depth in order to use this knowledge to articulate strategies to persuade them and thus obtain their vote. Thus, before and during electoral campaigns, a series of quantitative and qualitative or mixed methodologies are used, seeking to know the motivations, reasons and non-reasons of voters, in order to influence their conduct and behavior.

One of the tools of cognitive psychology used to try to learn about people's interaction is the Johary Window, which can also be used to learn about voters.

In this article, the Johary window is described, as well as a new methodology to be applied in the process of interpersonal interaction and knowledge of voters is presented. It is exemplified with the cases of the presidential elections in Colombia and Mexico in 2018. The objective is to achieve a new methodological approach that allows a better knowledge of the voters and thus to better articulate the strategies to try to persuade them and obtain their vote.

Materials and methods

The Johary window was created in order to get to know human beings better and to know how they interact. It also helps to know oneself and to know about one's reputation in a given space and time. The window is composed of four parts, also called rooms, quadrants or areas: the public, the blind, the hidden and the unknown. The public area is composed of information known to the person and also known to others. The blind area is composed of information that is unknown to the person but known to others. The hidden area is composed of information that the person knows but others do not know. And finally, the unknown area is composed of information that the person does not know and that others do not know.
The public area is made up of that which is known by oneself and also

by others. That is, it is the part of ourselves that others also know. The blind area is that which we do not know about ourselves, but which is known to others. That is, it is the part that others perceive but we do not. What others know about us and do not tell us or say. It is the impression we make on others. The hidden area is that which is known to oneself but not to others. What we know about ourselves but do not want to share with others (feelings, ideas, secrets, fears, etc.). And the unknown area is what we do not know about ourselves and what others do not know about us. It is the most mysterious part of the sub-conscious and that neither oneself nor others can perceive. It is a kind of hidden capacities and abilities that we have but we are not conscious of.

In the business area, the Johary window is very useful to know how customers interact with brands and in the processes of improving reputation, image, perception and personal branding.

In addition, this methodology is very good to know the human interaction process and to improve the communication processes and the perspective of interpersonal relationships, since it uses two very important points of view. The Self and the Others. That is, the internal and external point of view, allowing self-evaluation and feedback.

Based on Johary's window, we can work on the construction of a new tool to try to better understand the processes of interaction and communication in an electoral campaign and, above all, it allows us to better understand voter behavior, which is an important cognitive basis to be able to propose a successful strategy during campaigns. For this, it is necessary to build a new window formed by four areas (very similar to Johary's window). These are: the public area, the private area, the unknown area and the hidden area.

The public area is constituted by information that, as its name indicates, is of a public nature or that can be public by being obtained through the use of diverse research methods of a quantitative or qualitative nature. The private area is constituted by information that we generally do not know about the voter, but if we investigate it properly we can obtain such information through different research methods and strategies. The unknown area is constituted by

information that we do not know about the voter. And the hidden area is constituted with information that we do not know about the voter and that, as its name indicates, the voter hides from us. These areas are illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 1. The VAZA Window
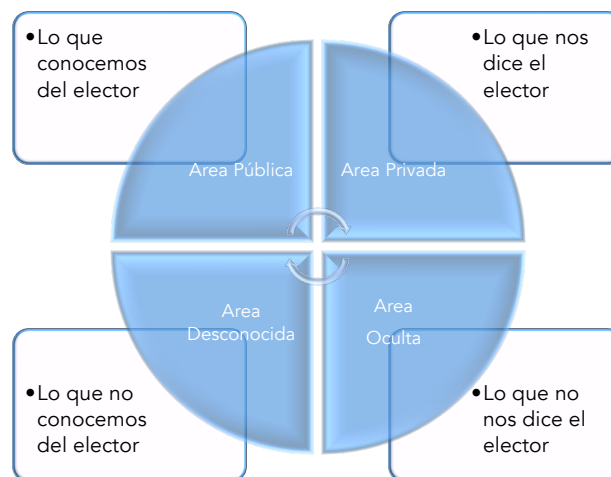
Source: Prepared by Andrés Valdez Zepeda, 2018.

The public area: What we know about the voter. It is public knowledge and is obtained by information that is published mainly in statistics, mass media and social networks. For example, average age, sex, place of origin, level of employment, per capita income, religion, social class, etc. It is knowledge that is available in censuses, reports, surveys and social networks.

b. The private area: What is private but generally made public by the voter. It is a specific knowledge of the voter that is generally obtained through a process of research by opinion polls and qualitative and quantitative studies on his behavior and political preference. For example, it is information that the voter can keep confidential but generally makes public about his electoral preference, voting habits, political militancy, party identity and ideology. It also includes information about their beliefs, values, attitudes, motivations and

behavior, as well as their electoral loyalty and level of vulnerability to seduction, courtship and persuasion strategies by parties and candidates.

c. The unknown area: What we do not know about the voter. This is more precise information about the voter's capacity for indignation, the magnitude of his or her anger, the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the government and the politicians in office, his or her party affiliations and phobias, as well as his or her political sympathies and antipathies. This information can be obtained through indirect means such as interviews with relatives, neighbors, friends of the voter and through what is known as "data mining" on what the voter does and publishes in his social networks.

The hidden area: What the voter does not tell us. It is information about their real intentions, their true preference, about the motivations of their behavior, their prejudices, traumas and resentments in relation to politics and their interests. This information can be obtained by indirect means through the analysis of the elector's behavior, electoral results and neuro-marketing.

These four windows allow us to have a broader and deeper knowledge of the voter, using both traditional and modern research methodologies of voter behavior. Knowledge of the public and private area of the voter is important but insufficient. Therefore, relevant information is also required about what has been called here the unknown area and, above all, about the hidden area. The knowledge obtained with this new instrument allows the design and articulation of the strategy, since knowledge underpins any successful strategy.

Results

In order to try to exemplify the use of both the Cognitive Voter Window and the CEA Technique, two election cases are presented below, in which the deep knowledge of voters and their motivations

supported the strategy that, applied during the campaigns, led to the triumph of two presidential elections in Latin America.

a. The case of the Colombian presidential election, 2018.

The presidential elections in Colombia were held, in its second round, on June 17, 2018. Iván Duque, candidate of the Democratic Center Party, won this election with 53.98 percent of the votes, against Gustavo Petro, candidate of Colombia Humana, who obtained 41.81 percent of the votes.

This result can be explained by an adequate diagnosis of the feelings of Colombian citizens and an adequate segmentation of markets, in addition to the strategic outline that allowed mobilizing the fear and anger of the voters towards the ballot box to turn them into electoral victory. That is to say, there was an adequate diagnosis of the Colombian voter, including information on "what we traditionally do not know" and "what the electro does not say" in traditional surveys, but which is intuited or known by indirect means or sources. Thus, in this presidential election, the deep knowledge of the voter was the determining factor in defining the strategy, which, when put into action, made possible the victory of the candidate of the Democratic Center Party.

In the first place, Duque's strategists took advantage of the crisis in Venezuela, a neighboring and close country, to frighten Colombian voters, advertising that, if the candidate of the left, Gustavo Petro, won, Colombia would be like Venezuela, with serious economic and political problems. In fact, in their advertisements in electronic media, social networks and billboards throughout the country it was stated "so that Colombia is not another Venezuela, vote for Duque". That is to say, they knew in depth and in advance of the elections, the fear generated among voters by the current situation in Venezuela, which they used for political-electoral purposes.

Secondly, Duque managed to mobilize the most conservative sector in Colombia that in recent years has opposed the peace process, unifying with his message the radical and moderate right, as well as the different Christian and Catholic churches that oppose abortion,

same-sex marriage and the use of marijuana for medicinal and recreational purposes, among other things.

Thirdly, Duque managed to mobilize the social discontent generated by the government of Juan Manuel Santos, regarding the peace process itself and the "impunity" towards the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), by the increase in taxes and by a decrease in public investment generated by the drop in international oil prices, among others. In addition, Duque had the support of former president Álvaro Uribe, who has broad social support, mainly from conservative groups that have opposed the Santos government and the past pacification process in Colombia.

In short, an adequate diagnosis of the electorate and an analysis of the prevailing political context itself, through what we have called here as the voter's cognitive window, allowed them to carry out the strategic outline and political communication focused on specific groups and sectors of voters, which finally helped Iván Duque Márquez win the Colombian presidential election.

b. The case of the presidential election in Mexico, 2018.

On July 1, 2018, general elections were held in Mexico to elect the president of the republic, 500 federal deputies and 128 senators of the republic, in addition to elections for governor in 9 different states or entities of the republic. According to the National Electoral Institute (INE), Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), candidate of the Coalition Juntos Haremos Historia, was elected as president of Mexico for the 2018-2024 term after obtaining 52.9 percent of the votes.

What explains this result and what role did the CEA technique and the knowledge of voters play in the campaign strategy that led AMLO to victory? Undoubtedly, a deep knowledge of the voters, an adequate segmentation of the electoral market and a good strategic judgment were decisive in AMLO's success in the 2018 presidential election.

First of all, AMLO's campaign team detected very well the grievance of millions of voters and the great social unrest generated by the abuses of power, the corruptness in government and the lack of

solutions to the problems of poverty, insecurity and impunity of the current political class, represented by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN). In fact, President Enrique Peña Nieto had the highest disapproval rating in Mexico's political history, since according to the newspaper El Economista/Consulta Mitosfky, nine months before the end of his term, the president only had 21 percent approval rating from Mexicans.

Secondly, a good market segmentation, since AMLO's campaign communication was aimed mainly at young people, the sectors with higher education levels and those citizens who disapproved of the actions of the current government, focusing its messages on criticizing the high levels of corruption and the management crisis, presenting itself as the only option for a real change for Mexico.

Thirdly, AMLO's strategic good sense, which included the creation of strategic alliances with other political parties (Partido del Trabajo and Partido Encuentro Social), with social organizations and diverse social and political leaders, in addition to moderating his discourse, being more inclusive and building a dynamic and strong structure for the promotion, care and defense of the vote, as well as taking advantage of the division of the opposition and the erosion of the incumbent government.

In sum, using the CEA technique and the voter's cognitive window, AMLO achieved a milestone in Mexico's modern history, winning with a large margin the presidency of the republic, most of the governorships in dispute and the majority of the Congress of the Union.

Due to population growth and thus the need for territorial expansion, there is a need to implement new wastewater treatment plants, which also leads to an increase in the generation of sewage sludge, thus becoming a waste requiring treatment. The current systems for the treatment of this sludge entail construction, energy, operation and mechanical costs, as well as impacts due to atmospheric emissions and noise. For this reason it is important to develop and research new

low-cost technologies with less impact on the environment, such as artificial wetlands and vericomposting.

Wetlands and vermicomposting, when used separately, demonstrate high efficiencies in the removal of contaminants such as pathogens and heavy metals from the sewage sludge, also achieving the respective dewatering and mineralization. Both are low-cost technologies in construction and operation.

Constructed wetlands depend on climatic conditions for a correct and rapid stabilization of organic matter. Within these, the microbiological and biochemical parameters vary during the sludge supply and settling stages, and it is therefore essential to consider the duration of the process at the time of use. Drying is essentially due to evapotranspiration carried out by plants.

Vermicomposting in sewage sludge leaves a product with good characteristics to be used as fertilizer. The worms through their digestive system process the organic matter and release a product rich in nutrients.

The use of earthworms in artificial wetlands provides an additional and effective aid when dewatering and stabilizing the sewage sludge for use in agricultural soil, so this combination should be studied in greater detail focusing on the removal of contaminants such as antibiotics, antibiotic resistance genes, heavy metals, microplastics, emerging pollutants, viruses. In the latter, the Sars-cov-2 virus and its permanence in the sewage sludge after going through the treatment process and applied as fertilizer should be the object of study.

Results

The word strategy was first used by the Greeks. It arises from the word strategos, which initially meant general in chief of the army. This term was given the meaning of planning the destruction of the enemy through the efficient use of resources. The concept evolved until it became the art of winning the war. In antiquity, Homer testified in his classic work (The Iliad) about some successful military strategies, such as the narrative of the Trojan Horse. Zun Tzu, the great master of

strategy, wrote his book, "The Art of War," 500 years before Christ, in which a series of strategies aimed at defeating the enemy and winning the war are recounted. Other great strategists were Napoleon, Lenin and Mao Tse Tung, to name a few.

Today, the term strategy connotes an intelligent and creative way of doing things in order to achieve the objectives sought, being applied not only in the military field, but also, among other fields such as business, sports and, above all, in politics and electoral campaigns. In the latter field, the campaign strategy consists of a linked and coherent set of action parameters that seek to minimize efforts and optimize results, leading the partisan and political actions to triumph.1 According to Tony Schwartz (1974), the right strategy allows to touch the right keys to play the "comprehensive chord", the message that moves the voter. Strategies include taking advantage of the opportunities and strengths of the campaign itself, party (s) and candidate (s), as well as the weaknesses and threats of the adversaries, minimizing the risks, obstacles and strengths of the opponents.

However, every electoral campaign is won at a strategic and tactical level. The battle to conquer the voters is becoming more intense, in such a way that the partisan formations and, in particular, the candidates seek strategies and tactical applications that generate comparative advantages over the opposition in order to win the elections, since, to a great extent, the success or failure of a campaign is determined in terms of the strategy it uses. That is, the strategy used in the campaign defines an outcome. It defines whether the election is won or lost, but for that the strategies have to be well articulated. That is, a campaign with disarticulated strategies is also a campaign that fails.

The strategy is the general plan, a set of action guidelines that allows the campaign to achieve the objectives it has set. Tactics are specific, highly particularized actions and moves. In other words, strategy involves much more general issues and approaches, while tactics refer

to much more specific issues. Strategy, moreover, is long-term, tactics short-term. Strategy is macro and tactics is micro. One is the whole and the other is the parts. Strategy tells us what needs to be done, while tactics is how to get what needs to be done done.

According to political theory, strategy has five special characteristics: first, they are elaborated before actions are taken; second, they are developed consciously; third, they are purposeful; fourth, they provide advantages over competitors; and fifth, they must always be renewed. The only certainty is that nothing is certain. Therefore, they require frequent reinvention, not only of strategies, but also of the way of thinking about strategy. In other words, strategy is also subject to change.

Now, knowledge of the electorate is the basis for the design of the strategy. If we know what moves voters, then we are in a position to articulate various strategies that allow us to persuade and mobilize them to the ballot box. In this sense, the information that can be obtained using the Cognitive Voter Window is fundamental to be more competitive and to be able to win elections. That is to say, in order to win elections, a deep knowledge of the electorate is required and from this knowledge, it is necessary to design a winning strategy. However, for the strategy to work, it is not enough just to be able to devise it, think about it or put it down on paper in a strategic campaign plan. For the strategy to work, it is necessary to put it into operation and fine-tune it as necessary as the campaign progresses.

The strategy in action implies the capacity to put it into operation, to make it work so that it generates the expected results, since a good strategy is useless if it is not implemented according to the circumstances and the context in which the election takes place. In this way, research, strategy and action constitute a very important tool to be successful during the electoral campaigns. This triad forms a basic methodology that every professionalized electoral campaign must follow and which is called the CEA technique (Knowledge, Strategy and Action). Below is the diagram of this technique that allows winning elections.

Source: Prepared by Andrés Valdez Zepeda, 2017.

Conclusions

In an electoral campaign, knowledge of the voter is extremely important to be able to make the strategic outline that allows to persuade them better and thus obtain their vote. In other words, understanding the voter and knowing him in depth is key to winning elections.

In order to know the voter it is important to use different means and tools that allow us to get closer to the knowledge of his behavior and conduct. Therefore, it is necessary to use new tools, which are part of the so-called strategic intelligence, to be more competitive and win the dispute for political power, under a democratic system.

One of these new tools is the Cognitive Voter Window, which is composed of four quadrants: the public area (what is known about the voter); the private area (what is private but the voter makes public); the unknown area (what we do not know about the voter) and the hidden area (what the voter does not tell us and tries to hide).

In many electoral campaigns, the voter is not really known, what moves him and motivates him to participate or not in the electoral

processes, so many candidates and political parties appeal to occurrences or assumptions, promoting strategies without having certainty of the impact they have on the behavior of voters.

For the strategy of an electoral campaign to be successful, as in the cases of the elections in Colombia and Mexico described above, it is necessary to consider the four quadrants of the Cognitive Window, which allows a deeper understanding of the behavior and conduct of voters. This new tool summons us and allows us to think beyond the traditional, trying to know what is unknown and often hidden by the voter, but which is an important motivator of their behavior.

Thus, the Cognitive Window is a new tool based on quantitative and qualitative methods that allows us a better cognitive approach to try to understand the voter in greater depth, in order to achieve greater connectivity with him and to be able to touch his sensitive cords that allow us to achieve his vote. However, the strategy must know how to apply or operate to ensure that it generates the expected results, adjusting to the context and the particular circumstances of the election.

Finally, it only remains to say that although implementation is the biggest challenge of the strategy, it can also be said that knowledge defines the strategy. In other words, tools such as the Elector's Cognitive Window allow us to know the electorate better and this knowledge becomes the basis of a winning strategy during electoral campaigns.

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