

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to communicate recently with members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

I am availing of the invitation to follow up with supplementary information. A point that I sought to impress is that government communications encompasses much more than advertising. We tend to focus on that for obvious reasons. One reason is that advertising is easy to quantify in dollar amounts. Attached is an illustration that might help impress the point that focusing on advertising is important but would be incomplete. Marketing textbooks typically convey similar sorts of information, using terminology such as “the marketing mix.”

In my opinion, it is in the public interest to quantify public resources that are associated with the government’s public and media relations activities. It would be helpful to know about direct marketing too. Though to be clear my greatest concern is that Canadians are unable to quantify the public resources associated with photo-ops (e.g., news conferences, staged events) which are a hallmark of what some academics call permanent campaigning. In my opinion information about photo-ops ought to be proactively disclosed in a similar manner as with advertising and public opinion research. Otherwise, a government is prone to spend less on the latter in favour of more on the former. Without it we also lack an ability to contextualize the dollar amounts spent on advertising.

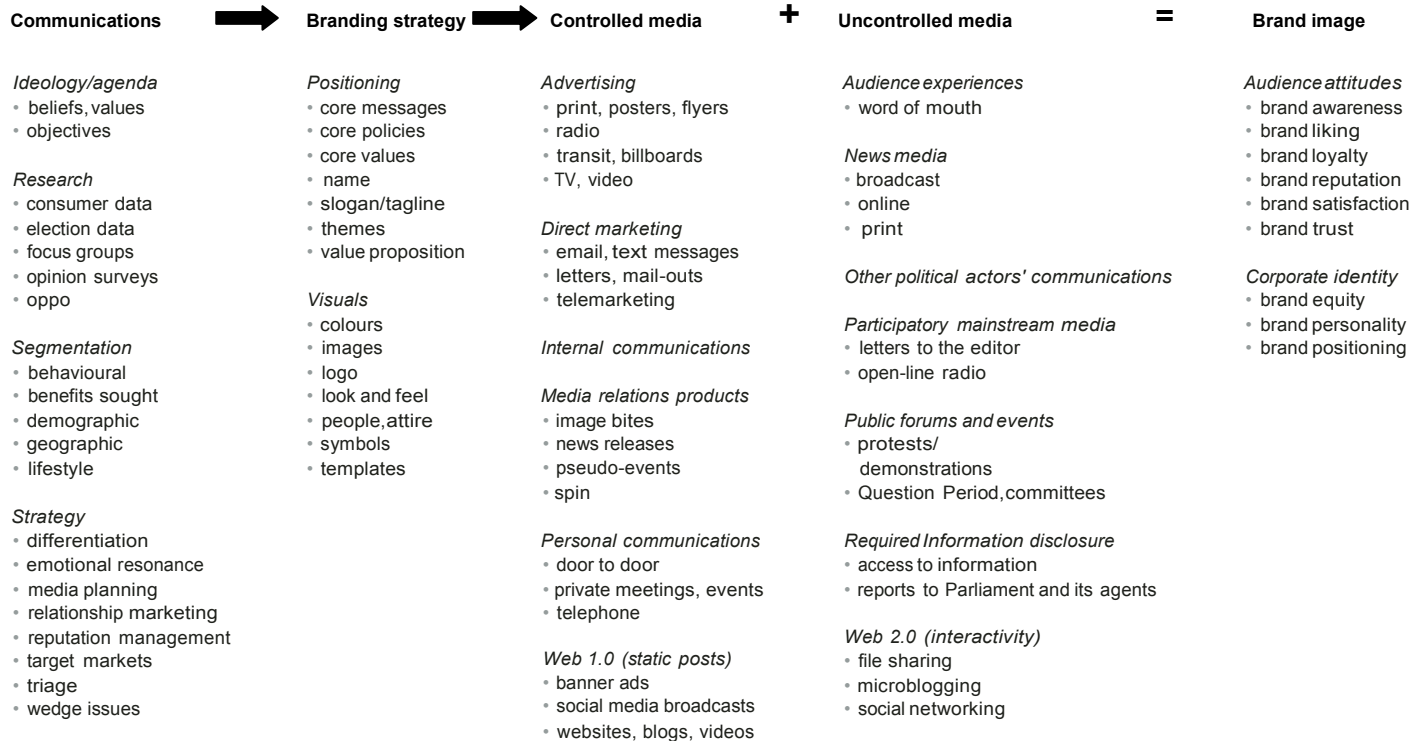
Thank you once again for the opportunity. I very much look forward to the outcome of the Committee’s work.

Alex

Alex Marland
Professor, Political Science
Memorial University of Newfoundland
www.mun.ca/posc/people/Marland.php

FIGURE 2.3

Public sector branding strategy and communications tactics



Source: Page 41 in *Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control* (UBC Press, 2016).