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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STRATEGIC INNOVATION AND POLITICAL TRIUMPH: APPLYING THE BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY APPROACH IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

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Abstract

In the dynamic realm of electoral politics, achieving victory hinges on strategic innovation and the ability to capture voter sentiment effectively. This paper explores the application of the "Blue Ocean Strategy" to electoral campaigns, drawing parallels between business strategy and political success. Originating from the business sector, the Blue Ocean Strategy advocates creating uncontested market spaces by simultaneously enhancing value and reducing costs, thereby redefining competitive dynamics. By analyzing Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's electoral triumph in 2015, where innovative strategies targeted non-traditional voters through positive messaging and digital engagement, this paper illustrates how political actors can transcend traditional partisan strategies. It delves into key components of the Blue Ocean Strategy adapted to the electoral context, emphasizing the importance of strategic divergence from conventional tactics. This study offers insights for future electoral campaigns seeking to navigate and innovate in the complex landscape of contemporary politics.

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Introduction:-

In the ever-evolving landscape of electoral politics, the pursuit of victory has long been a game of strategy and innovation. Politicians, campaign managers, and parties constantly seek novel ways to capture the hearts and minds of voters, gain a competitive edge, and secure political triumph. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the importance of strategic innovation in electoral campaigns cannot be overstated.

This paper delves into the intriguing intersection of politics and business strategy, drawing inspiration from the highly regarded concept of the "Blue Ocean Strategy", a strategy which focuses on creating untapped market spaces where competition becomes irrelevant (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). By applying the principles of the Blue Ocean Strategy to electoral campaigns, political actors can chart a course that diverges from traditional partisan politics, engaging with voters in innovative and impactful ways.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the key components of the Blue Ocean Strategy and how they can be tailored to the unique challenges of electoral campaigns and discuss the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's election victory, showcasing an instance where strategic innovation led to political triumph. Furthermore, this paper sheds light on the implications of adopting a Blue Ocean approach in the context of democratic processes, addressing questions of ethics, inclusivity, and the potential for long-term policy effectiveness.

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In essence, this paper offers a fresh perspective on modern politics, one that seeks to transcend the traditional red-blue divide and inspire a new era of dynamic, voter-centric engagement. By exploring the synergy between business strategy and political campaigns, this paper aims to provide a roadmap for aspiring politicians and campaign managers looking to navigate uncharted waters and secure electoral success in the 21st century.

What is the “Blue Ocean” Strategy?

Blue Ocean Strategy is a business strategy designed to help businesses break out of the traditional competitive mindset and create new, untapped market spaces or "blue oceans" where they can thrive without direct competition (Sari, Triani, & Purnama, 2023; Yunus & Sijabat, 2021). In the traditional business environment, companies operate in what is often referred to as the "red ocean." This represents a crowded marketplace where competition is fierce, and businesses vie for the same customers, often leading to price wars and diminishing profits. In contrast, a "blue ocean" represents a new, uncontested market space where competition is irrelevant or nonexistent (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Kumar, 2022; Raewf, 2021). Figure 1 provided below offers a concise overview of the unique attributes associated with engaging in red ocean competition (Red Ocean Strategy) as opposed to forging a blue ocean (Blue Ocean Strategy) (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023a).

RED OCEAN STRATEGY	BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY
Compete in existing market space	Create uncontested market space
Beat the competition	Make the competition irrelevant
Exploit existing demand	Create and capture new demand
Make the value-cost trade-off	Break the value-cost trade-off
Align the whole system of a firm's activities with its strategic choice of differentiation or low cost	Align the whole system of a firm's activities in pursuit of differentiation and low cost

Figure 1:- The Difference Between Red Ocean Strategy and Blue Ocean Strategy.

According to the Blue Ocean Team (2023a) the Blue Ocean Strategy has been applied successfully by various companies across different industries to create new markets, attract customers, and differentiate themselves from competitors. By focusing on value innovation and thinking outside of traditional industry boundaries, companies can chart their own course to success in uncontested market spaces.

Magued (2023) asserted that the principles of the Blue Ocean strategy can be effectively used to revamp the public and nonprofit sectors in developing nations, aiming to enhance organizational performance while addressing the prevailing opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, she illustrated how the Blue Ocean strategy has facilitated the development and execution of a tailored approach to human resources strategic management within administrative reforms indicating while the Blue Ocean Strategy was originally designed for business applications, its principles can be adapted to various contexts.

The Six Key “Blue Ocean Strategy” Components and Their Application to Electoral Campaigns:

1) Value Innovation:

Value innovation involves both distinguishing a product or service while maintaining cost efficiency, resulting in a significant increase in value for both customers and the company (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023a). In a business context,

this means developing a distinctive value proposition that both lowers expenses and enhances customer value concurrently (Hammer, 2022). Value innovation aims to break free from the red ocean of competition, where companies often engage in head-to-head battles for a share of existing markets, and instead enter blue oceans, where they can chart new territory and experience less competition through a shift from competition to creating new demand (Leavy, 2018). Applying this component in the context of electoral campaigns, value innovation means creating a unique and attractive political platform that connects with voters. This may entail addressing urgent concerns and challenges in a manner that sets the candidate apart from competitors, all while efficiently managing campaign resources.

2) Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create (ERRC) Grid:

The ERRC Grid is a straightforward tool, resembling a matrix, that complements the Four Actions Framework, which will be further elucidated and expounded upon in the subsequent sections. It not only poses the same questions as the Four Actions Framework but also prompts action across all four dimensions to craft a fresh value curve, which is crucial for opening up new blue oceans of opportunity. The immediate advantages of using this tool include (1) encouraging businesses to simultaneously pursue both differentiation and cost reduction, thereby breaking free from the value-cost trade-off, (2) highlighting businesses that solely focus on raising and creating, potentially leading to increased costs and unnecessary product/service complexity, (3) being easily comprehensible for managers at all organizational levels, which fosters a high level of engagement during its application, and (4) compelling companies to meticulously analyze every competitive factor within their industry, aiding them in uncovering the range of implicit assumptions that often go unexamined in the competitive landscape (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023b). In a business context this means the ERRC grid helps identify factors to eliminate, reduce, raise, or create to shift the focus from competing in existing market space to creating a new one. In terms of electoral campaigns, candidates can apply the ERRC grid by identifying and eliminating or reducing negative issues or perceptions associated with them. They can raise attention to key issues that resonate with voters and create unique campaign strategies or messages that set them apart from their opponents.

3) Six Paths Framework:

The Six Paths Framework presents managers with the capability to effectively mitigate the search risk prevalent in many entities. This framework empowers them to proficiently discern, amidst the myriad of potential opportunities, commercially alluring blue oceans through the strategic reconfiguration of market boundaries (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). Figure 2 distinguishes the “Head-to-Head Competition” and the “Blue Ocean Creation” (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023c).

As shown in Figure 2, the six paths framework outlines six systematic approaches for changing one’s perspective on the market and discovering new value-cost opportunities. It encourages thinking beyond industry boundaries, breaking free from conventional competition-focused views. By exploring different industries, strategic groups, buyer segments, complementary offerings, industry orientations, and historical shifts, this framework helps one to uncover blue ocean possibilities (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023c).

In the context of electoral campaigns, the Six Paths Framework can be applied by looking at alternative approaches to campaigning. For instance, candidates or their campaign managers can embark on the exploration of distinctive strategies to foster voter engagement, engage in partnerships with non-traditional campaign stakeholders, or tap into underrepresented voter segments such as voter demographics that are typically overlooked.

4) Four Actions Framework:

The Four Actions Framework, conceptualized by Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne (2015), serves to reconstruct constituent elements of buyer value in formulating a novel value curve or strategic profile. By endeavoring to overcome the traditional trade-off between differentiation and cost minimization in the formulation of a fresh value curve, the framework articulates four pivotal questions, as depicted in Figure 3, aimed at challenging the prevailing strategic rationale within an industry (Blue Ocean Team, 2023b).

	Head-to-Head Competition	Blue Ocean Creation
Industry	Focuses on rivals within its industry	Looks across alternative industries
Strategic Group	Focuses on competitive position within strategic group	Looks across strategic groups within industry
Buyer Group	Focuses on better serving the buyer group	Redefines the industry buyer group
Scope of Product or Service Offering	Focuses on maximizing the value of product and service offerings within the bounds of its industry	Looks across to complementary product and service offerings
Functional-emotional Orientation	Focuses on improving the price performance within the functional-emotional orientation of its industry	Rethinks the functional-emotional orientation of its industry
Time	Focuses on adapting to external trends as they occur	Participates in shaping external trends over time

Figure 2:- Path by Path Differences Between Head-to-Head Competition (Red Ocean Strategy) and Blue Ocean Creation (Blue Ocean Strategy) of the Six Paths Framework.

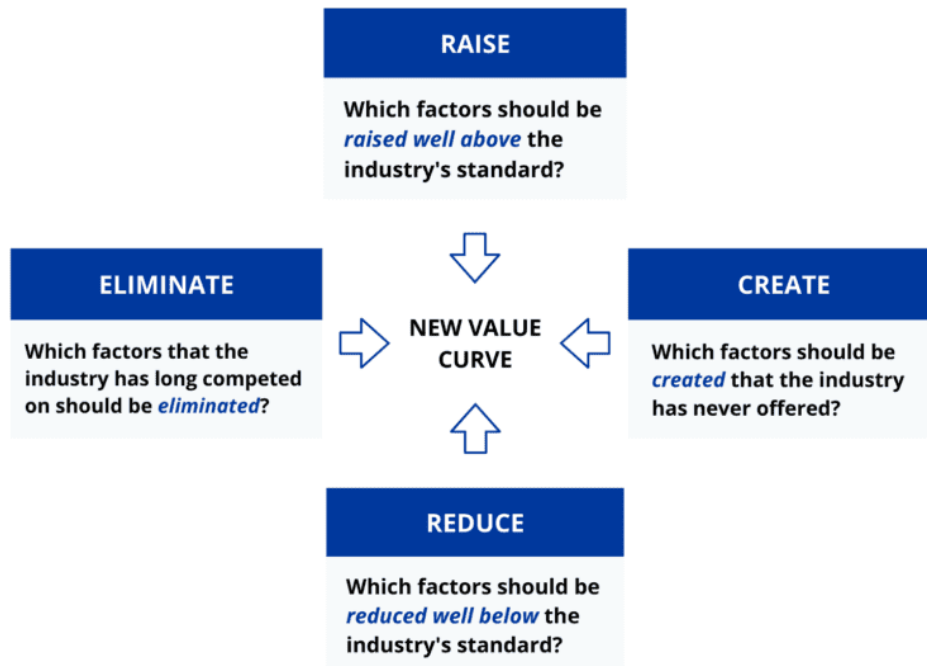


Figure 3:- The Four Actions Framework.

In a business context, this framework challenges organizations to simultaneously reduce costs, increase customer value, and set themselves apart from competitors. For instance, a company might achieve this by implementing lean production techniques to streamline operations, enhancing product features based on customer feedback, and creating a unique brand identity through innovative marketing strategies (Papazov&Mihaylova, 2016).

In the electoral campaign context, this translates to candidates using the Four Actions Framework to identify campaign activities that can be streamlined or made more efficient, such as leveraging digital platforms for outreach or optimizing campaign resources allocation. They should also seek ways to increase voter engagement, such as hosting public forums or open meetings or utilizing social media interactions effectively and differentiate their campaign from others by emphasizing distinctive policy proposals or highlighting their personal backgrounds and experiences.

5) Non-Customer Segments:

Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne (2023d) have introduced a conceptual model termed the "three tiers of noncustomers", aimed at assisting enterprises in identifying untapped market opportunities. Typically, businesses prioritize customer retention and expansion strategies to bolster their market presence. However, there exists a significant cohort of individuals who have yet to engage with the company's offerings. This sizable demographic represents considerable potential for business growth. Surprisingly, many organizations lack comprehensive insights into the characteristics and preferences of these prospective customers, impeding their ability to effectively target this segment. To convert latent demand into tangible market expansion, companies must enhance their understanding of noncustomer demographics and behaviors. Figure 4 presents the three tiers of noncustomers as they appeared in Kim & Mauborgne (2023d).

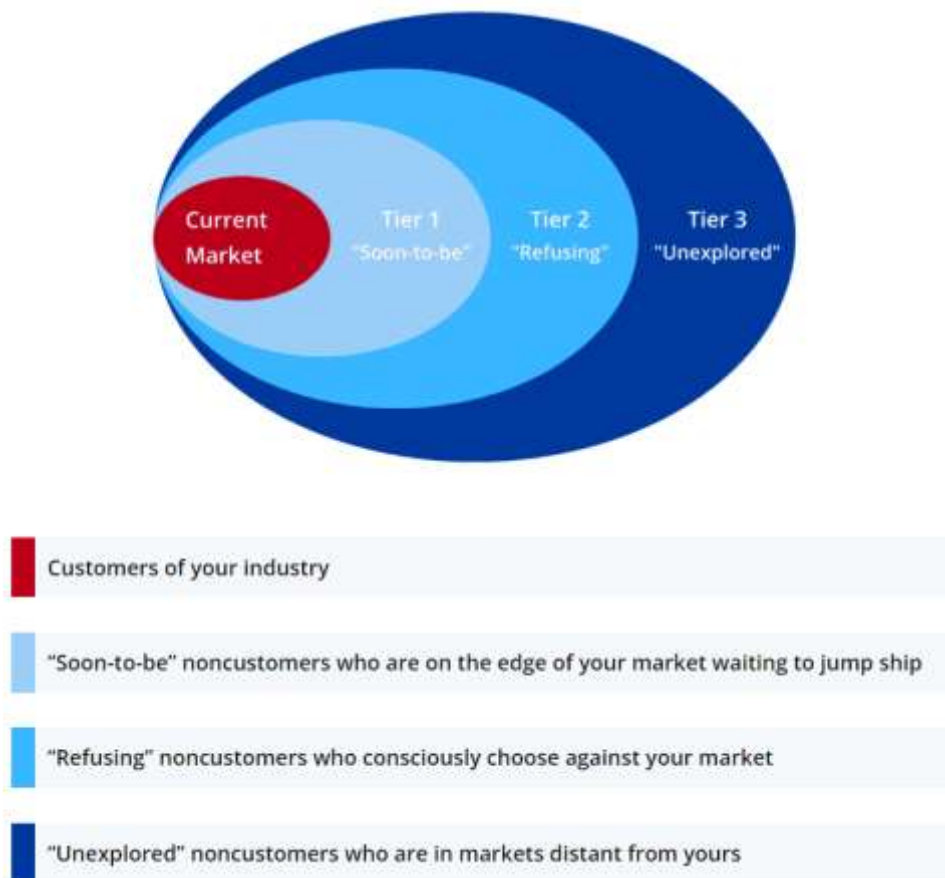


Figure 4:- Three Tiers of Noncustomers.

As shown in Figure 4 (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023d), the initial tier of noncustomers, situated proximately to the prevailing market, represents individuals who engage minimally with an industry's offerings out of sheer necessity, yet harbor a mental disposition akin to noncustomers regarding the industry itself. The subsequent tier encompasses

individuals who actively reject the utilization of an industry's offerings, having deemed them unsuitable for fulfilling their needs, despite considering them as potential options. Finally, the third tier consists of noncustomers who remain distanced from the market, having never contemplated the industry's offerings as viable solutions. By discerning the fundamental similarities shared among these noncustomer segments and extant customers, companies can glean insights on how to effectively attract them to their new market endeavors.

Within the framework of electoral campaigns, a critical imperative emerges in the form of outreach strategies targeting non-traditional voter cohorts, characterized by their historical disengagement from the electoral process. This strategic approach entails the customization of campaign messaging to resonate with the unique concerns, values, and sociopolitical orientations of these demographic segments, thereby fostering heightened political participation. In the context of the 2023 Maldivian presidential election, candidates adopted multifaceted strategies to engage with the electorate, particularly targeting younger voters who constitute a substantial segment of the voting populace. Employing social media platforms as pivotal communication channels, candidates actively disseminated their campaign messages and interacted with the youth demographic, recognizing the influential role of online platforms in shaping political discourse and mobilizing support. Concurrently, the electoral landscape witnessed concerted efforts to advance gender equality and enhance women's participation in politics. Campaign initiatives featured tailored messaging addressing issues such as gender parity, women's rights, and the imperative to elevate the representation of women in senior or policy-making roles within the political arena (People's National Congress, 2023). Other initiatives included housing for youth and advocating for working from home during the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan or making these days public holidays. Additionally, there were plans to develop large islands as well as small islands, along with promises regarding airport infrastructure (Hassan, 2023a; 2023b; Nizar, 2023). By prioritizing outreach to both younger demographics and women, candidates aimed to foster a more inclusive and representative democratic process in the Maldives, amplifying voices that had historically been marginalized or underrepresented.

6) Tipping Point Leadership:

The concept of tipping points, originating from epidemiological frameworks, is widely acknowledged (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; 2015). It revolves around the notion that within any organizational context, once a critical mass of individuals become actively involved in endorsing a new idea, its adoption spreads akin to an epidemic, precipitating profound transformations expeditiously. This theory posits that such momentum can only be instigated by catalysts who issue indelible and incontrovertible appeals for change, strategically allocate resources towards pivotal objectives, galvanize the dedication of influential stakeholders within the organization, and effectively counter dissenting voices. Figure 5 shows Tipping Point Leadership at a glance (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003, p. 40).

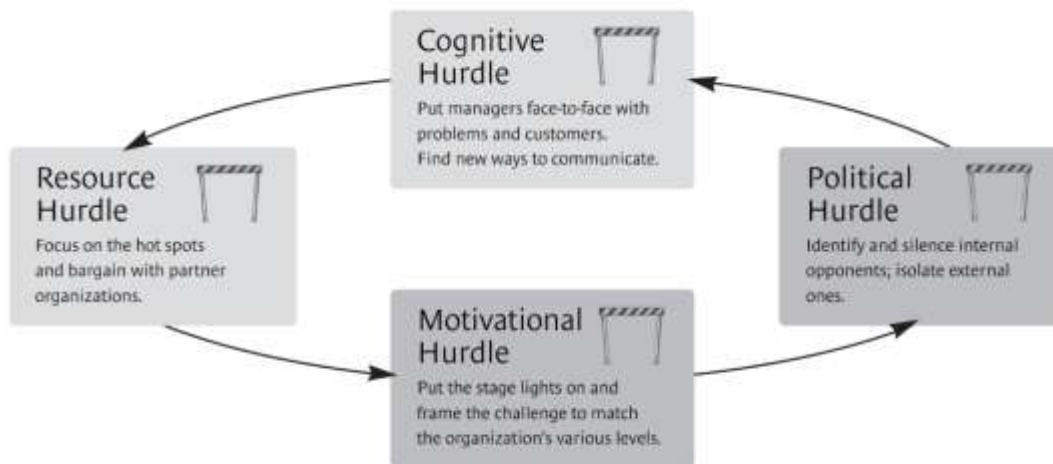


Figure 5:- Tipping Point Leadership.

Tipping Point Leadership constitutes a set of guiding principles empowering managers to swiftly and cost-effectively overcome execution hurdles while garnering employee support in executing a transformative strategy. Rooted in the often overlooked reality that certain individuals, actions, and initiatives exert a disproportionate impact on organizational performance, tipping point leadership diverges from conventional approaches by

prioritizing resource conservation and time efficiency (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023e). Tipping point leaders achieve this by meticulously identifying and leveraging factors of disproportionate influence within the organization. Central to this approach are key inquiries: What factors or actions possess a disproportionately positive impact on disrupting the status quo? How can resources be optimized to yield maximum returns? What strategies effectively motivate key stakeholders to embrace change enthusiastically? And how can political obstacles, notorious for impeding even the most robust strategies, be effectively dismantled? By steadfastly focusing on points of disproportionate influence, tipping point leaders can swiftly surmount the four primary hurdles constraining the execution of Blue Ocean Strategy, achieving rapid progress at a reduced cost (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023e).

Tipping point leadership, whether in business or electoral campaigns, focuses on sparking a movement to enact change. It relies on gathering enough support or activity to reach a critical mass where momentum propels the desired outcome. In business, this means motivating employees across all levels to embrace a change initiative. Leaders achieve this by nurturing a shared vision, empowering advocates, and fostering an innovative and collaborative culture (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; 2015). This creates conditions for widespread adoption of new strategies, processes, or cultural shifts.

Similarly, in an electoral campaign, tipping point leadership entails rallying supporters, volunteers, and grassroots organizers around a candidate's platform and vision. By energizing and empowering these stakeholders, candidates can build momentum, expand their reach, and mobilize voters to support their campaign. This often involves leveraging social media, community organizing efforts, and persuasive messaging to galvanize support and drive voter turnout. Ultimately, whether in business or politics, tipping point leadership is about harnessing the collective power of individuals to drive meaningful change and achieve strategic objectives. It requires vision, strategy, and effective communication to mobilize stakeholders and create a movement that propels the organization or campaign forward.

Triumph of Prime Minister Trudeau in the Canadian Elections:

While the blue ocean strategy was originally developed for the business sector, there is mounting evidence suggesting its applicability in diverse contexts such as public policy and election campaigns. Fares Boulos (2016), Professor of Practice in Strategy at INSEAD, characterized Trudeau's 2015 victory as a quintessential 'Blue' Victory. Boulos explained that Trudeau departed from traditional strategic logic in political campaigns by committing to three years of deficits to finance national infrastructure projects, advocating for an activist agenda, and conducting a positive campaign. These actions align with blue ocean strategy principles, marking a stark deviation from traditional campaign strategies, as illustrated by Boulos (2016), depicted in Figure 6.

Traditional Candidates	Justin Trudeau
Portray deficits as an evil	Promises 3 years of deficits to invest in the country's infrastructure
Skeptic towards role of government	Presents an activist agenda
Bring competing politicians down by negative attacks	Runs a positive campaign

Figure 6:- Comparison of Strategies Used by Traditional Candidates and Trudeau.

According to Boulos (2016), in the 2015 Canadian election, Justin Trudeau effectively mobilized 'non-voters,' who had comprised approximately 40% of the electorate in 2011 due to disillusionment with traditional politics characterized by negativity. Trudeau specifically targeted these individuals, including youth and indigenous communities, through extensive university visits, active social media engagement, and a positive campaign devoid of attack ads (Boulos, 2016). His strategy, centered around the slogan "This is Canada, and in Canada better is always possible!", significantly boosted voter turnout, increasing the Liberal Party's popular vote from 61% to nearly 70% (Boulos, 2016). This focused approach on non-voters played a pivotal role in securing Trudeau's electoral victory, underscoring their decisive influence on the election's outcome (Boulos, 2016).

In the 2015 Canadian election, Boulos (2016) highlighted Justin Trudeau's innovative campaign strategy. Unlike conventional practices where candidates typically relied on expensive negative TV ads, Trudeau pursued a cost-effective approach. He invested in positive and unconventional TV advertisements while extensively touring the country to personally deliver his message. According to Boulos (2016), the resulting video footage from these activities was widely disseminated via both traditional and social media, significantly enhancing Trudeau's outreach at a fraction of the cost incurred by his rivals.

Conclusion:-

According to Boulos (2016), the three essential principles of blue ocean strategy that facilitate the assessment of whether a strategic move qualifies as 'blue' are as follows. It must:

1. Challenge the conventional strategic logic of the industry by breaking established competitive rules.
2. Target 'noncustomers' and dissolve market segments to create vast, untapped markets, known as 'blue oceans.'
3. Overcome the value-cost trade-off by simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost.

Professor Boulos (2016) elucidated the application of these blue ocean strategy principles within the context of a political campaign, outlining the following:

1. Disrupting the established norms of political strategy by challenging conventional rules of competitive engagement.
2. Targeting 'non-voters' to expand the electorate significantly, creating expansive pools akin to 'blue oceans' of potential voters.
3. Achieving differentiation and cost efficiency simultaneously through a constructive campaign approach and leveraging media-driven publicity without additional cost.

Based on an extensive exploration of strategic innovation in electoral campaigns through the lens of the Blue Ocean Strategy and an insightful case study of Prime Minister Trudeau's electoral triumph, it is evident that embracing novel, voter-centric approaches can redefine political success in the 21st century. Trudeau's victory exemplifies how departing from traditional campaign tactics, emphasizing positivity, engaging non-traditional voter segments, and leveraging digital platforms, can resonate deeply with the electorate and drive unprecedented electoral outcomes. As political landscapes continue to evolve, this study underscores the imperative for aspiring leaders and campaign strategists to innovate boldly, transcend partisan divides, and forge new paths to meaningful voter engagement and electoral triumph.

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