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AES RACT

One previously untested benefit of political advertising before elections may be that it serves "internal" as well as "external" needs, i.e., it bocsts the morale of the campaign staff and provides them with informaticn to persuade voters. This proposition was tested during the 1970 Wisconsin gubernatorial campaign by means of a questionnaire mailed to volunteer campaign workers. Workers frcm bcth major parties reported that they had paid clcse attention to advertising for both their own and the oppcsitic candidate. They felt the ads boosted staff morale and made them feel more confident cf victory. They discussed among themselves the ads for both candidates and used infcrmaticn from them to sway voters. The need to persuade voters led workers to watch and read the opponents' ads and think cf ccunter-arguments to rebut them. Strong correlation is reported between the workers' opinion of the ads and their belief that the ads bocsted confidence and morale and increased the amcunt of discussion and information gain. Advertisements were not a significant factor in recruiting new volunteers. (JK)

THE FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING FOR CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS

by

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There are a number of interesting similarities between "corporate" or "institutional" advertising and "political" advertising. Both types attempt to woo public support and confidence by selling carefully honed images and ideologies.[1] The manufacturer hopes for a favorable product response, while the political party seeks electoral advantage for its candidate. Implicitly, each acknowledges a subtle interface between attitudes and behavior. Both assume that if the buyer (voter) accepts the corporate (party) image, he will also accept and respond to elements of the image, i.e., the company's product or the party's candidate.

Like most statements of human behavior, a great deal is lost in the process of simplification and explanation. The cautious observer would be quick to point out that both product and candidate response are mediated by a number of constraints and contingencies that vitiate simple cause-and-effect explanations. Undoubtedly, some observers would alert us to recent arguments concerning political behavior which suggest that candidates and issues now hold greater sway in voting behavior than party affiliation. Such objections seem well-taken; yet there is one area of interface between corporate and political advertising that is often overlooked in most discussions of effects: its role in organizational stability during the brief but turbulent political campaign.

One of the many auxiliary benefits desired of corporate or

institutional advertising is that it help build and maintain worker confidence and morale. Some practitioners even speak of its role in recruiting new workers. These "internal" goals stand in sharp relief to the "external" goals of winning public support and confidence for the corporate image or philosophy. If the corporation's public communications favorably impress the corporate laity as well as the general public, it would be a bonus well-received but largely unanticipated. In practice, little reliance is placed on the role of public communication in personnel management and recruitment. Evidently, corporate strategists feel that worker loyalty and morale can be most effectively maintained through substsntive improvements in pay, working conditions, fringe benefits, etc., rather than through their public relations advertising. Few would argue with such a position. After all, the concrete and the tangible are always preferable to the abstract and ephemeral. However, when such concrete rewards are <u>not</u> available, and when the benefits of a particular activity are not personally redeemable -- as is the case for the unpaid campaign volunteer -- then the role of public communication may assume new dimensions. In particular, it may be a major input promoting satisfaction among party workers.

It is generally agreed that the successful political party organization is difficult to mobilize, direct and control under hectic campaign conditions. Given the constraints of time, money, pressure, and the uncertainities inherent in political life, the party organization places special demands on its members. In short, the leadership must build a cohesive group in a short time, maintain the group's morale, and service the needs of its members. According to Nimmo, one of the basic problems facing the campaign organization is "to keep

the morale of . . . volunteers sufficiently high so they do not quit working in discouragement at critical junctures."[2]

While volunteer political partisans are often seen as serving personal goals and ideals, it would be unfair to claim that they do not require many of the same encouragements that spur their industrial counterparts. From a systems maintenance view, they must be made to feel that the objectives they're working for are commendable, that their efforts are not only noticed but appreciated, and that the day-to-day tedium of canvassing, phone-calls, letter-writing, and envelope-stuffing will be rewarded on election day.[3]

As part of a larger campaign effort designed to influence the electorate, they must be reassured that their private opinions and perceptions are not only important to the task at hand but are one and the same with the campaig s objectives. Political advertising not only provides an opportunity for such comparisons, it may also provide the base for organizational solidarity by establishing a superordinate frame of reference.

Moreover, as a public statement of position, political advertising may provide additional information for the campaign worker in his efforts to persuade wavering voters.

In sum, political advertising may serve both "internal" needs as well as "external" goals -- an attractive but untested proposition.

Study Hypotheses

In the absence of any empirical research on the functions of political communications for such systemic factors as morale, worker loyalty, confidence, intragroup communication, etc., we posed a

number of exploratory hypotheses concerning the impact of political advertising on the volunteer campaign organization. Specifically, we expected that:

H_1 : Since political advertising is one of the major products of any political campaign, volunteer workers are likely to pay closer attention to ads for their own candidate and party than they are to the opposition's advertising. However, as a matter of political survival and campaign orientation, we also expect party workers to attend to and use the opposition's advertising for informational purposes, e.g., provide information for counter-arguments, as conversational gambits with co-workers, etc.

H_2 : In the absence of immediate or tangible rewards for their efforts, volunteer campaign workers are likely to look to political advertising for personal reassurances, morale maintenance and bolstering of confidence that their candidate will do well in the election.

H_3 : As a major informational input into the campaign, political advertising will provide campaign workers with ideas, arguments, and information to persuade others to vote for their candidate.

H_4 : Since political advertising expresses the party's position with respect to the major issues in the campaign, and since internal stability inheres in a common frame of reference, volunteer campaign workers are likely to use their party's advertising as a topic for discussion with co-workers.

H_5 : Political advertising will assist in the recruiting of new workers as more people are exposed to the party's position and policies concerning major campaign issues.

H_6 : The more favorable the evaluation given to own party's advertising, the more likely worker's reports of morale, confidence, intragroup communication, and persuasive utility of the party's advertising will also be high.

H_7 : Political advertising will serve differential functions for campaign party workers according to their position with the status hierarchy. It is expected that low- and middle-status members will report greater impact for political advertising on their morale, confidence, persuasive utility, etc., than will high status members.

Study Background

The exploratory hypotheses were tested in the context of the 1970 gubernatorial campaign in Wisconsin. Pre-election news reports indicated that the governor's race was a "toss-up" between current Lt. Governor Jack Olson, the Republican, and former Lt. Governor Patrick Lucey, the Democrat. The Republican party was outspending the Democrats by about a 2-to-1 ratio in mass media advertising, with most of their $200,000 budget devoted to television spots.[4] The two candidates offered differing styles of television advertising. Olson's spot ads pictured him as the "man for the job," frequently showing him walking through the Statehouse, talking with the current governor, but rarely speaking out on the issues. By contrast, Lucey's ads focused on his concern for the farmer, high taxes, state budgetary problems, etc., in which he expressed his positions in conversation with typical voters.

Both candidates' advertising campaigns were handled by professional advertising agencies, employing the services of two of the most famous media advisory teams headed by Roger Ailes and Charles Guggenheim. The TV advertising campaigns started early in October with 60-second spots, changing primarily to 30-second spots later in the month. Most of Lucey's ads were presented in prime time, while Olson strategists bought many of the cheaper day-time spots.[5] Newspaper advertisements appeared later and less frequently, representing only a small portion of the advertising budget.

The election was won by Democratic candidate Lucey with 55% of the vote.

Method

The data were collected by means of a mail questionnaire returned by campaign workers throughout the state of Wisconsin. Both the Republican and Democratic state headquarters cooperated with us by endorsing the study and providing the names and addresses of party workers. The Democrats supplied approximately 300 names, from which 200 were drawn to represent one-half party "elite"-- county chairmen, city-wide coordinators, and party officials -- and the other half "subordinates" -- clerical helpers, canvassers, and publicity distributors. About 175 of the 200 names furnished by the Republicans were selected for the mail survey.

A cover letter that accompanied the mailing explained that the study was being conducted with the encouragement and approval of the state party headquarters, and emphasized that anonymity would be protected. A return envelope was included that was addressed to the University of Wisconsin Mass Communications Research Center on the Madison campus.

The questionnaires for the Democratic sample were mailed from party headquarters a week before the general election, and all were completed on or before election day. Unfortunately, the Republicans decided at the last minute to withhold their mailing until election day. (A party spokesman claimed they did not want to bother their workers during the final days of the campaign). The cover letter for the Republican party workers stressed the instruction that they should attempt to fill out the questionnaire as they would have prior to the election, but knowledge of Olson's defeat may have biased some responses.

A total of 160 completed questionnaires were returned (90 Democrat and 70 Republican), a response rate of 43%.

The questionnaire contained items designed to measure exposure frequency and attention level to each candidate's ads, and self-reported effect of the advertising on morale, confidence, persuasive utility, recruitment, and interpersonal communication. All workers answered both fixed-alternative and open-ended questions evaluating each candidate's advertising. Because of the late response of the Republican party workers, no inferences will be drawn concerning differences between data for workers of each party, although few basic differences were anticipated.

Findings and Discussion

Political organization members were highly exposed to each candidate's advertising both on television and in newspapers. Overall, only 3% reported that they paid "little" attention to either candidate's television advertising, while only 8% reported they did not read any newspaper ads. [These findings can be compared to the attention patterns of a general public sample interviewed during the Olson-Lucey campaign.[6] The study found that one-fourth of the voters paid little attention to each candidate's TV ads, and an additional 8% did not see any political advertising on television. Almost one-third of the general public read no newspaper ads]. There is some evidence of selective attention to advertisements for one's own candidate. For Olson's TV ads, 70% of the Republicans vs. 53% of the Democrats paid close attention; on the other hand, 80% of the Democrats vs. 69% of the Republicans gave close attention to Lucey's ads. In addition, 57% of the Republicans vs. 41% of the Democrats reported that they

read Olson newspaper advertisements closely, while Lucey ads were read closely by 54% of the Democrats and 46% of the Republicans.

When sheer frequency of exposure to television advertising is considered, a different pattern emerges. Twice as many Republicans indicated that they had watched a greater number of Lucey ads than their own candidate's ads (34% to 16%, with the others watching about the same amount of each). Similarly, almost twice as many Democrats said they more often viewed the opponent's advertisements (42% to 22%).

Across the total sample, 73% of the party volunteers felt that their candidate's advertisements helped to keep up their campaign morale, and 78% reported that the ads boosted the morale of co-workers (Table 1). The mean level of self-reported impact on morale was somewhat above the midpoint on the four-step scale ranging from "not at all" to "quite a lot."

Three-quarters of the sample felt that political advertisements bolstered their confidence that the party's candidate would do well in the election (Table 1, second page). This was particularly the case for the rank-and-file campaign workers, who differed significantly from the party elite [$p<.01$, chi-square test]. More than two-thirds of the middle- and low-level workers indicated that the ads made them at least "somewhat" more confident of success.

On the other hand, the impact of advertising on recruitment of new volunteers appears to be minimal. None of the respondents said that political ads were a factor in their decision to help in the election campaign, possibly due to the fact that the state party organization's mailing lists were compiled early in the campaign.

Nevertheless, only 8% of the sample knew of any other workers who were working for the candidate because of political advertising.

Television advertisements for both candidates provided an important conversation topic within the party organizations. More than four-fifths of the respondents talked with co-workers about each candidate's ads (Table 2). County chairmen tended to talk about television advertising more often than the rank-and-file workers [$p<.02$ for own candidate's advertising, $p<.01$ for opposition candidate's advertising, by chi-square test].

The TV ads were a useful information source for subsequent persuasion activities of a majority of the party members. Almost two-thirds of the sample replied that their own candidate's advertising provided them with ideas and arguments to use when interacting with the public (Table 2, second page). The lower-level campaign workers found the ads more valuable for this purpose than the chairmen [$p<.001$, chi-square test]. County chairmen indicated that the opponent's ads were much more useful than the ads for their party's candidate. Overall, about three-quarters of the respondents said the opposition advertisements provided them with ammunition for their efforts to sway the voters.

The campaign volunteers were also asked to evaluate both candidates' television advertising on five attributes, and were given the opportunity to express favorable and critical comments on two open-ended questions. Own candidate advertising evaluations were then correlated with the measures of advertising impact. The results are quite striking: respondents who rated their candidate's ads more favorably tended to report a much greater effect on morale, confidence,

discussion, and information gain (Table 3). The feeling that ads helped to keep up morale correlated very strongly with evaluations that the ads were interesting [r = +.58], informative [+.52], and honest [+.51]. The report that ads bolstered confidence of doing well in the election was highly associated with advertisement ratings as interesting [+.62], informative [+.58], honest [+.46], and entertaining [+.41]. The degree to which ads were thought to be useful in persuasion efforts was related to the attributes of being interesting [+.57], informative [+.56], and honest [+.44]. The frequency of discussing the ads was less strongly related to these variables, especially among Republicans. The rating of the technical quality of the ads was only slightly correlated with the various effects of advertising, despite the fact that highly-paid professional producers were responsible for the ads.

The degree of attention given to TV ads is also positively related to political advertising effects reported by the party members, although the correlations are less strong. The average association between attention and morale for each organization's workers is +.27, and quite similar correlations are found between attention and confidence [+.28], intra-group discussion [+.20], and persuasive usefulness [+.24].

Finding the interface between communication, attitudes, and behavior is difficult under optimal conditions. Given the weaknesses of the mail survey technique and the reliance on self-reported measures of advertising impact, any conclusions must be of a tentative nature. Nevertheless, the strong and consistent pattern of the study's findings suggest a number of interesting inferences concerning the functions of political advertising as a systems maintenance factor.

Generally, political advertising seems to make a substantial contribution to those factors that facilitate the effective operation of the political party system. For most party workers, their candidate's ads boost morale, intra-group interaction, and the expectation of electoral success, three elements that are critical to promoting maximum productivity from a volunteer work force. The ads also provide an informational input into the system by stimulating interpersonal communication and suggesting ideas and arguments useful in persuading the voting public. Thus, political advertising helps to establish a common frame of reference for members of the organization, and shaping individual orientations toward the goals and objectives of the campaign.

An unexpected finding of this investigation indicates that party members also use the opponent's advertising for many of these same purposes. In particular, they discuss these ads among themselves, and utilize the content in their persuasive activities. This suggests that the worker's needs for information may override partisan defense mechanisms that would predict a selective exposure to own candidate advertising. It is possible that the opposition's advertising may act as a countervailing force that introduces imbalances into the system which are likely to be equilibrated through intra-group discussion.

The manner in which the own candidate advertising is perceived and evaluated appears to be a major contingent condition mediating advertising impact. The qualitative aspects of the ads, particularly the level of interest, honesty, and information, are strongly associated with reactions of the volunteers to the advertising they see.

The overall evidence indicates that political advertising campaigns, primarily devoted to mass persuasion, may also serve important, but little recognized, systems maintenance functions for the campaign organization.

F O O T N O T E S

1. For a review of the functions of corporate advertising, see: Leo Bogart, Strategy in Advertising (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World), 1967, p. 16; S. Watson Dunn, Advertising: Its Role in Modern Marketing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 2nd ed., 1969, pp. 557-572; Otto Kleppner, Advertising Procedure (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 5th ed., 1966, pp. 57-58; Maurice I. Mandell, Advertising (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 1968, pp. 5-8, 584-585, and John S. Wright and Daniel S. Warner, Advertising (New York: McGraw-Hill), 2nd ed., 1966, pp. 129-132.

   The role of political advertising in political life has been debated from many quarters in recent years. Primarily, the debate has focused on social and ethical issues; however, some overlap with the functions of corporate and institutional advertising may be found or inferred by reviewing: Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang, Politics and Television (Chicago: Quadrangle), 1968; Robert A. Liston, Politics from Precinct to Presidency (New York: Dell), 1970; Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968 (New York: Trident), 1969; Harold Mendelsohn and Irving Crespi, Polls, Television, and the New Politics (Scranton, Pa.: Chandler), 1970; Dan Nimmo, The Political Persuaders (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 1970, and Gene Wyckoff, The Image Candidates (New York: Macmillan), 1968.

2. Nimmo, ibid.

3. Robert E. Lane, Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics (New York: Free Press of Glencoe), 1959.

4. Charles K. Atkin, Lawrence Bowen, Oguz B. Nayman, and Kenneth G. Sheinkopf, "Electronic Politics and the Voter: Conventional Wisdom and Empirical Evidence" (Paper presented to International Communication Association convention, Phoenix, Ariz., 1971).

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

TABLE 1

Effect of Political Advertising on Morale and Expectation of Success for Party Organization Members

"Do (Lucey's, Olson's) ads help to keep up your morale while working on his campaign?"	Overall	Republicans N=70	Democrats N=90	County Chairmen N=78	Campaign Workers N=70 *
Not at all	19 %	23 %	17 %	19 %	20 %
A Little	20	29	13	23	19
Somewhat	23	24	22	29	16
Quite a lot	30	20	38	24	39
NA	8	4	10	5	6
Means: (Not at all = 0, Quite a lot = 3)	1.69	1.43	1.90	1.61	1.78

"Do you feel that his advertising helps to keep up the morale of campaign workers you know?	Overall				
Not at all	11 %	17 %	7 %	12 %	10 %
A Little	19	24	14	22	18
Somewhat	26	29	23	29	23
Quite a lot	33	21	42	29	39
NA	11	9	14	8	10
Means: (Not at all = 0, Quite a lot = 3)	1.91	1.59	2.17	1.83	2.00

(Continued)

* 12 respondents did not identify their campaign responsibilities

TABLE 1 (continued)

"When you watch (Lucey's, Olson's) advertising, does it bolster your confidence that he will do well in the election?	Overall	Republicans N=70	Democrats N=90	County Chairmen N=78	Campaign Workers N=70
Not at all	18 %	30 %	8 %	27 % **	9 %
A Little	21	36	10	26	16
Somewhat	24	10	34	18	33
Quite a lot	29	20	37	24	33
NA	8	4	11	5	9
Means: (Not at all = 0, Quite a lot = 3)	1.71	1.21	2.13	1.42	2.00

"Do you know of any of your co-workers in the campaign organization who are working for (Lucey, Olson) because they saw his advertisments?	Overall				
None	49 %	67 %	36 %	55 %	47 %
One, Several	5	3	7	5	6
Quite a Few	3	1	3	1	4
Don't Know	43	29	54	39	43
Means: (None =0, Quite a few = 3)	.31	.14	.51	.23	.43

** Difference between frequency distribution for county chairmen and volunteer campaign workers significant, $p < .01$ (chi square = 12.7, df = 3, excluding NA).

TABLE 2

Effect of Political Advertising on Interpersonal Discussion and Persuasion Attempts of Party Organization Members

"Within the last two weeks, how often have you talked about (own candidate's) TV advertisments with your co-workers in the campaign organization.?"	Overall	Republicans N=70	Democrats N=90	County Chairmen N=78	Campaign Workers N=70
Never	12 %	7 %	17 %	9 % *	17 %
Once or twice	27	21	31	19	34
3 or 4 times	23	26	20	32	14
More often	36	44	30	40	33
NA	2	2	2	0	2
Means: (Never = 0, More often = 3)	1.84	2.09	1.65	2.03	1.64

"And how many times have you talked about (opposition candidate's) ads with yo.r co-workers in the campaign?"	Overall				
Never	16 %	9 %	22 %	8 % **	23 %
Once or twice	22	17	26	18	29
3 or 4 times	26	29	24	29	24
More often	34	44	26	45	23
NA	2	1	2	0	1
Means: Never = 0, More often = 3)	1.79	2.10	1.55	2.12	1.48

(Continued)

* Difference between frequency distributions for chairmen and workers significant, $p < .02$ (chi square = 10.8, df = 3, excluding NA).

**Difference significant, $p < .01$ (chi square = 13.2, df = 3, excluding NA).

TABLE 2 (continued)

"Do the (own candidate) ads provide you with ideas and arguments to use when trying to persuade the public to vote for him?"	Overall	Republicans	Democrats	County Chairmen	Campaign Workers
		N=70	N=90	N=78	N=70
Not at all	32 %	40 %	26 %	35 % ***	31 %
A little	24	31	18	35	11
Somewhat	27	19	33	26	30
Quite a lot	14	7	19	4	23
NA	3	3	4	0	5
Means: (Not at all = 0, Quite a lot = 3)	1.23	.93	1.48	.99	1.46

"Do the (opposite candidate) ads provide you with information to use when trying to persuade hesitant voters to vote for (own candidate)?"	Overall				
Not at all	22 %	20 %	23 %	18 %	27 %
A little	29	39	21	33	26
Somewhat	26	23	28	32	21
Quite a lot	19	13	24	14	23
NA	4	5	4	3	3
Means: (Not at all = 0, Quite a lot = 3)	1.44	1.30	1.55	1.43	1.41

*** Difference between frequency distributions for county chairmen and volunteer campaign workers significant, $p < .001$ (chi square = 19.7, df = 3, excluding NA)

TABLE 3

Correlations Between Own Candidate Advertising Evaluations and Morale, Expectation of Success, Interpersonal Discussion, and Persuasion Utility for Party Organization Members

	Republicans N=70	Democrats N=90	Average N=160
Ads help keep up your morale: (Not at all =0, Quite a lot =3)			
Fixed-Alternative Evaluations-- (Not at all =0, Extremely =3)			
Interesting	+.69	+.47	+.58
Honest	+.45	+.56	+.51
Informative	+.63	+.41	+.52
Entertaining	+.44	+.29	+.37
Professionally produced	+.41	-.13	+.14
Summed index	+.74	+.43	+.59
Open-Ended Evaluation Index-- (Negative =0, Positive =9)	+.48	+.15	+.32
Ads bolster your confidence: (Not at all =0, Quite a lot =3)			
Fixed-Alternative Evaluations--			
Interesting	+.65	+.58	+.62
Honest	+.35	+.56	+.46
Informative	+.66	+.50	+.58
Entertaining	+.35	+.46	+.41
Professionally produced	+.44	-.13	+.16
Summed index	+.70	+.51	+.61
Open-Ended Evaluation Index--	+.43	+.24	+.34

Note: All values are Pearson r zero-order correlation coefficients, between the self-reported impact of political advertising (along a four-step scale in each case) and party organization members' evaluations of their own candidate's advertising (either along four-step forced-choice scales or an index constructed from scoring comments dealing with likes and dislikes for the ads, with each positive comment =2, no negative comments =1, and each negative comment =0 in three possible response categories).

TABLE 3 (continued)

Frequency of discussing ads: (Never =0, More often =3)	Republicans N=70	Democrats N=90	Average N=160
Fixed-Alternative Evaluations--			
Interesting	+.07	+.44	+.26
Honest	+.10	+.43	+.27
Informative	+.06	+.43	+.25
Entertaining	-.02	+.32	+.15
Professionally produced	-.05	.00	-.03
Summed index	+.04	+.43	+.24
Open-Ended Evaluation Index--	-.03	+.26	+.12
Ads give ideas for persuasion attempts: (Not at all =0, Quite a lot =3)			
Fixed-Alternative Evaluations--			
Interesting	+.54	+.59	+.57
Honest	+.40	+.48	+.44
Informative	+.61	+.50	+.56
Entertaining	+.27	+.17	+.22
Professionally produced	+.15	+.07	+.11
Summed index	+.56	+.48	+.52
Open-Ended Evaluation Index--	+.44	+.24	+.34

Evaluation items: "Briefly, is there anything about (own candidate's) advertising that you particularly like? What impresses you?"
"Is there anything about his ads that you particularly dislike? What annoys you?"
"How would you evaluate (own candidate's) TV advertising on each of these attributes?" Items rated on four-step scale ranging from Not at all, to Slightly, to Quite, to Extremely.