ABSTRACT
        Designed to explore the relationship between the mass
media and candidate image, a single interview questionnaire was
prepared to be administered during the two weeks prior to election
day, November 7, 1972. It was hypothesized that the amount of
information which respondents indicated they received from paid
political advertisements, editorials, supporters of the candidates,
news reporters, and the candidates themselves and the amount of
information available about the candidates' personal lives, campaign
issues, the candidates' personal characters, and the candidates'
political backgrounds would have a greater than chance relationship
to the semantic differential scales for George McGovern and Richard
Nixon. Respondents were drawn from three Southern Illinois counties
and St. Louis County in Missouri. While both hypotheses were
confirmed, it appears that it is the message type rather than the
amount of information received which affects candidate image. Further
research relative to the content of the messages within various media
is necessary before any definitive explanation of the effect of
sources, message, and channel on candidate image can be made. (RB)

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SOURCE, MESSAGE, CHANNEL AND CANDIDATE IMAGE
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

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Source, Message, Channel and Candidate Image
An Exploratory Study

Since the 1940's researchers in political science and communication have
constructed models that attempt to explain electoral behavior. Such variables as
sex, age, occupation, education level, religion, socio-economic class, party
affiliation, issue awareness and attitudes toward party platforms were thought
to exert influence on the voter; hence, knowledge of their influence could be
used to predict the final decision of the electorate.

While many early and later researchers suspected that the mass media
also commanded some form of influence on the voter, they were never able to support
successfully a direct relationship between media usage and voting behavior. The
emergence of television as an important campaign tool, however, created a signifi-
cant variable which would be employed in almost all subsequent models of electoral
behavior: candidate image. Converse (1963), Lang and Lang (1968), Alexander (1969)
and others have suggested that candidate image is the prime requirement for
electoral success; recent research by Jackson and Miller (1973) and Kokkeler (1973)
support the importance of candidate image scores as predictors of electoral be-
havior.

Almost every current researcher treats candidate image as an indepen-
dent variable in his predictor models. Few scholars have attempted to study the
relationship of the media to candidate image. Lang and Lang (1968) have suggested
that media impact on voter behavior might be assessed through this type of examin-
ation:

> ...as long as imagery of the electorate are treated as "givens"
> as they have been, rather than as themselves in need of explana-
> tion, the probability of understanding the nature of the mass
> media impact is duly minimized.

The present study began to explore the relationship between mass media and candidate image. Two hypotheses were tested:

1. The amount of information which respondents indicated they received from paid political advertisements, editorials, supporters of the candidates, news reporters and the candidates themselves will have a greater than chance relationship to the semantic differential scales for George McGovern and Richard Nixon.

2. The amount of information the respondents indicated they received about the candidates' personal lives, campaign issues, the candidates' personal characters, and the candidates' political backgrounds will have a greater than chance relationship to the semantic differential scales for George McGovern and Richard Nixon.

Each of these hypotheses was tested for respondents indicating they received most of their political information from television and respondents indicating they received most of their political information from newspapers (see data analysis section for selection criteria).

METHOD

The study was designed to be a single interview questionnaire to be conducted during the two weeks prior to election day, November 7, 1972. The questionnaire collected the following data: (1)basic demographic information about each voter, (2) electorate images of the ideal president, electorate images of Richard Nixon, the incumbent Republican president, electorate images of George McGovern, the Democratic nominee for president, (3) the amount of information the electorate perceived they were receiving from various media, (4) the amount of specific types of messages the electorate perceived they were receiving, and (5) the amount of information the electorate perceived they were receiving from specific sources within the media.

MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The pre-tested questionnaire required twenty minutes to two and one half
hours to administer depending on the sophistication of the respondent and the
interviewer. A five point measurement scale was employed for each variable
utilized in this study except candidate image. Candidate image was measured
by a 12 scale seven point semantic differential.

SAMPLE

Respondents were drawn from three southern Illinois counties and
St. Louis county in Missouri. The three southern Illinois counties were strati-
fied into three strata. Within each stratum a complete list of precincts was
obtained. From the list of precincts a randomly selected number were drawn; the
most recent lists of registered voters for each precinct were then obtained and
individual voters were randomly chosen. This technique was employed to ensure
that all areas within the three counties would be represented in the final
sample. Respondents from St. Louis county, Missouri were selected through a
block sampling technique. Census blocks were drawn at random and interviewers
were given a specific number of interviews to complete within each census block.
Four hundred and fifty-four names were randomly selected; however, because of
respondent refusals, respondents having moved, and incorrect addresses on voter
lists, a total of 169 usable interviews were gathered. A similar number of in
interviews was obtained from St. Louis county.

DATA ANALYSIS

Much of the experimental and theoretical work on electoral behavior
and mass media indicates that the medium through which a candidate communicates
may affect the resulting image held by those who recieve his message. To test
the relationship between sources and message types and candidate images within

various media, respondents were sorted into five groups on the basis of their answer to the following question:

> I'd like to ask you from which of the five major communication media you are getting most of your information about the election, from magazines, from television, from newspapers, from radio or from people you talked to?

Because an extremely small number of respondents indicated radio, magazines or other people as the medium from which they received most of their information about the election, those media were dropped from the analysis. The two hypotheses of this study were tested for two groups of respondents: high newspaper consumers and high television consumers. To test the relationship between sources within a medium and candidate image and between message types within a medium and candidate image, canonical correlation models were computed for each relationship under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four canonical models were computed in testing the relationship between sources of information and candidate image. Only one of these models had a statistically significant root. The following table reports the results of this model.

TABLE 1

Canonical Correlations Between Original
Variables and Derived Canonical Variates
For George McGovern's Image and Newspaper
Sources

Successful-Unsuccessful	-.37	Paid Political Ads	-.67
Friendly	-.29	Supporters	-.12
Modern-Old Fashioned	-.21		
Handsome-Ugly	-.20	Candidates	.66
Saver-Spender	-.18	News Reporters	.45
Qualified-Unqualified	-.15	Editorials	.22
Honest-Dishonest	-.14		
Sincere-Insincere	-.14	Canonical Correlation	.52
Liberal-Conservative	.57	Probability	.04
Sophisticated-Unsophisticated	.11		
Calm-Excitable	.06		

The amount of information which high newspaper consumers perceived they were receiving from the candidates and news reporters was related to perceptions of McGovern as liberal but unsuccessful. However, the amount of information these respondents said they received from paid political advertisements was related to perceptions of McGovern as conservative and successful. One might speculate that McGovern's political advertisements tended to portray him as successful and conservative while McGovern himself and the news reporters suggested an image of liberalism and ultimate failure. Content analysis of the types of information which these sources sent through the newspaper medium might provide some insight into the types of information which affect these image scales.

There was no relationship between the sources of information whether in newspapers or over television and the image of Richard Nixon. Similarly, television sources bore no relationship to the perceived image of George McGovern. Hypothesis one was partically supported. The sources of information, particularly in the newspaper, appear to have a relationship to the image of a non-incumbent but have no relationship to the image of the incumbent. Thus for those respondents who received most of their political information from newspapers, the source of that information is related to the resulting image of the challenger.

The second hypothesis tested the relationship between the types of messages received from newspapers and television and the perceived candidates' images. Four canonical models were computed, two were significant beyond .05.

TABLE 2

Canonical Correlations Between Original
Variables and Derived Canonical Variates
For George McGovern's Image and Television
Messages

Modern-Old Fashioned	.65	Personal Life	.04
Serious-Humorous	.59	Issues	.91
Handsome-Ugly	.52	Personal Character	.49
Sincere-Insincere	.46	Political Background	.26
Qualified-Unqualified	.31		
Sophisticated-Unsophisticated	.23	Canonical Correlation	.35
Honest-Dishonest	.20		
Liberal-Conservative	.18	Probability	.005
Friendly-Unfriendly	.05		
Saver-Spender	.02		
Calm-Excitable	.11		

This canonical root may be characterized as an issue orientation dimension.
Messages related to campaign issues and to a lesser degree messages concerning
personal character are related to respondent perceptions of McGovern as modern,
serious, handsome, sincere and successful. Perceptions of his qualifications,
sophistication, honesty and ideological position on the liberal-conservative con-
tinuum are also related to issue and character messages. A purely visual
characteristic, handsome-ugly, shows a strong relationship to issue and character
messages. This is not surprising, however, since these messages were communicated
over a visual medium, television.

TABLE 3

Canonical Correlations Between Original
Variables and Derived Canonical Variates
For George McGovern's Image and Newspaper
Messages

Sophisticated-Unsophisticated	-.52	Personal Character	.76
Modern-Old Fashioned	-.45	Personal Life	.35
Serious-Humorous	-.11	Issues	.18
Calm-Excitable	-.07		
Successful-Unsuccessful	-.03	Canonical Correlation	.53
Qualified-Unqualified	-.01		
Handsome-Ugly	-.00	Probability	.01
Liberal-Conservative	-.00		
		Political Background	-.14
Honest-Dishonest	.41		
Sincere-Insincere	.42		
Friendly-Unfriendly	.30		
Saver-Spender	.00		

This canonical root can be described as a personality dimension for George McGovern. Messages about the personal character of the candidates and their personal lives are related to perceptions of McGovern as honest, sincere, friendly, unsophisticated and old-fashioned. This finding adds support to Graber's report that 97% of all presidential qualities mentioned in newspapers dealt with personality traits. In the present case, newspaper messages dealing with the personal characters of the candidates are related to personality traits of one of the candidates.

Of the four canonical models which were computed in the examination of the relationship between types of messages and presidential candidate images, no significant relationships were discovered between Richard Nixon's image and the types of messages respondents received over either medium.

The two significant relationships discovered for George McGovern's image present an interesting sidelight. Messages that high newspaper consumers received were related to McGovern's personality whereas messages high television consumers received were related to McGovern's approach to the issues of the campaign. An examination of the content of the messages sent through each medium may provide an explanation for the differential perceptions of McGovern held by these two groups.

CONCLUSIONS

There appears to be an interaction between the channel over which respondents gain most of their political information, the type of message they receive through that medium and the dimensions of the specific candidate's image. This interaction appears to affect only the image of the challenger and not the incumbent. Further, it appears that the affect message types have on candidate

image is based more upon the content of the message than on the amount of information received.

More than 60% of the respondents in both groups indicated they received 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' of their political information about campaign issues. But this message type was related to candidate image only within the television medium. A little more that 45% of the respondents in both groups indicated they received 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' of their information about the personal character of the candidates. But this message type was related to candidate image only within the newspaper medium. Thus it appears that it is the message type received rather than the amount of information received which affects candidate image. It should further be noted that differing dimensions of candidate image are affected within the different media and by different message types. Further research relative to the content of the messages within various media appears necessary before any definitive explanation of the effect of sources, message and channel on candidate image can be made.

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7. Data gathered and used in this study was taken from an interdisciplinary research project involving Dr. John Jackson and Dr. Roy Miller, Department of Public Affairs, Dr. Erwin Atwood, Department of Journalism, Dr. Keith Sanders and the author, Department of Speech, all of Southern Illinois University. Gratitude is also expressed to the graduate students from all the above mentioned disciplines who painstakingly interviewed the sample.