REVIEW ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN CASTING VOTE AMONG THE NEW ELECTORATES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The main agenda of this paper is to reveal the facts behind the influence of political advertisement captions at the time of Kerala Assembly Election-2016. Three captions, 'LDF Varum Ellam Sariyakum', 'Valaranami Nadu Thudaranam E Bharanam' (UDF), 'Vazhimuttiya Keralam Vazhikaattan NDA' were studied using survey method. The paper attempts to study their impact upon the new voters or first time voters. Research methods used in this study are qualitative by nature. 305 Samples under the age group 18-25 were involved in the study. These samples were taken from twelve colleges at Kannur University in Kannur district. Research findings show that even if we consider it is an era of new media, still there is a huge importance for oral communication and exterior advertising media like hoarding and posters and repetitive listening of these captions influence voters. Large number of voters casted vote to their own political ideology, but some of them decided to cast vote for a particular candidate is changed their choice after reading/ listening/ watching political advertisements. Political advertisements that raised voice against the improper development created a favourable stand towards political parties.

INTRODUCTION

This study researched into the impact and influence of political advertisement campaigns such as *LDF Varum Ellam Sariyakum, Valaranami Nadu Thudaranam Ee Bharanam'* (UDF), and *Vazhimuttiya Keralam Vazhikaattan NDA* on the new voters / first time voters during the Kerala Assembly Election-2016. The population for the study was the college students who were newly enrolled as voters for the Kerala Assembly Election-2016. A Stratified Random Sampling method was used for data collection from the students of twelve colleges registered under Kannur University: Kannur University Campus- Mangattuparamba, Krishna Menon Women's College- Pallipuram, Brunnan College- Thalassery, Nirmalgiri College- Kuthuparamba, Chinmaya Arts and Science College- Chala, Sir Sayed Arts and Science College- Thaliprambu, Sir Sayed Engineering College- Thaliprambu, S N College- Veerpadu, De PaulArts and Science College- Kakayangadu, M G College- Iritty, IHRD- Kunnoth, Don Bosco Arts and Science College- Angadikadavu. The sample size consisted of 305 newly enrolled voters within the age group of 18-25. A quantitative research method with questionnaire as tool was used for data collection.

Literature on political advertising: The political scientist, Bernard Cohen said that "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think,

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but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." Cohen's dictum suggested that the media have indirect effects along with, in certain cases, direct effects. As a form of political communication, political advertising is both celebrated and reviled. Over the past five decades, since its first appearance in campaigns in the1950s, political advertising has evolved into the dominant form of communication between candidates and voters in the United States. In a variety of forms and styles, political advertising has also become a staple of communication in democracies around the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that the research on political advertising has become one of the most significant components of the political communication discipline. In the first review of research on political advertising in the Handbook of Political Communication in 1981, Kaid defined political advertising as "the communication process by which a source (usually a political candidate or party) purchases the opportunity to expose receivers through mass channels to political messages with the intended effect of influencing their political attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors" (Kaid, 1981, p. 250). This definition, of course, also placed the review in the context of the traditional study of communication as a study of "who says what, to whom, in what channel, with what effect," the famous Lasswell (1948) description of communication, later restated as the process model of communication (source–message–channel–receiver and effect) by Berlo (1960). However, the limitations of that early definition of political advertising are clear when it is applied to the broader use of political promotion and political marketing in a worldwide context.

Many countries, for instance, do not require or even allow their candidates or parties to purchase space or time for political advertising. In a later review of political advertising research, Kaid suggested that "the defining characteristics of modern political advertising are (1) control of the message and (2) use of mass communication channels for message distribution" (Kaid, 1999, p. 423). This ability to control completely the message presented to an audience is one of the greatest advantages of all forms of political advertising. Other forms of political communication, from speeches to debates, are subject to interpretation or filtering by news media or other participants in the political process. This interpretation suggests that political advertising should be considered quite broadly as any message primarily under the control of a source used to promote political candidates, parties, policy issues, and/or ideas through mass channels. This definition requires that the message be controlled by the source it promotes (thus distinguishing such messages from news content). It allows for inclusion of messages that advocate the election of candidates, parties, and propositions, as well as for advertising about policy issues or the advocacy of interested viewpoints on political ideas. The political advertising campaign for the Kerala Assembly Election-2016 by the various political parties was created by professional advertising agencies. For example, the campaign '*LDF varum elaam sheri akum*' was coined after a survey headed by media person John Brittas and the creative team from an advertising agency, Maitri.

Channels: While it requires the dissemination of the message through some type of mass channel, distinguishing political advertising from interpersonal communication and from general public communication such as political speeches or rallies, it allows for a broad interpretation that encompasses all types of political advertising channels including posters and display advertising like flex and hoarding, TV advertising, Radio advertising and Internet or other electronic distribution systems. The definition also does not require that the source must purchase the access necessary for dissemination of the message, thereby including the free broadcast time given to candidates and parties in some countries. In the United States the study of political advertising is largely about the role of political television advertising. Televised political advertising is now the dominant form of communication between candidates and voters in presidential elections and in most major state wide contests (Kaid, 1999; Kaid and Johnston, 2001). One measure of this dominance, of course, is the large amount of campaign funds spent on political television advertising. More modern forms of political advertising, emphasizing the results of research on the content and effects of newspaper print, electronic advertising via radio and television, and new forms of advertising dissemination such as the Internet, are prevalent. A study on 'Political Advert Campaigns and Voting Behaviour' (Ojekwe, 2015) revealed that the political advertising plays some role in influencing the electorates. However, this effect is minimal and could be a conscious effect or subliminal effect. From this, it is inferred that the political advertising campaigns have minimal effect on voting behavior. In addition, political advertising campaigns remain pervasive which still makes it useful in the election campaign process. The study also concludes that using theme songs in political advertising campaigns are very effective in seizing the electorates' attention which could in turn mean change of choice of candidate.

Literature on issues versus images : More than five decades of research on political advertising, no topic has been more

dominant than the discussion of whether or not political campaign advertisements are dominated by image information or issue information. Rooted in the classic democratic voting model that insists rational voting decisions should be made on the basis of policy issues (Berelson, 1966), one of the perennial criticisms of advertising in politics is that it trivializes political discourse by concentrating more on candidate personalities and images than on issues. However, this has proven to be an unfounded concern since research has shown that most political advertising, whatever the medium, concentrates more often on issues than on candidate image. Joslyn (1980) opines that political advertising concentrates more often on issues (usually between 60 and 80%) than on candidate images (Joslyn, 1980). Patterson and McClure's (1976) classic study of the 1972 presidential campaign found that issue information overshadowed image content. Early political advertising in newspapers, however, was not dominated by issues. But here, in 2016 assembly election it was found that the central focus of the advertisement was not the candidate; development issues and social issues played a much significant role. Analysis of political advertisement campaigns of different parties found differences in issues stressed by the political party. UDF stressed more on the development in various sectors, whereas LDF focused on unemployment, problems in education and health sector, and corruption. Meanwhile, BJP concentrated more on the personality of the candidate.

Analysis

Analysis and interpretation of the study was based on the response given by 305 respondents. The proposed data is presented with the help of tables and interpretations.

Table 1. Word of mouth

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	LDF	270	88.5	88.5
	NDA	13	4.3	4.3
	UDF	22	7.2	7.2
	Total	305	100	100

About 88.5% of the voters indicated that they orally heard LDF slogan and influenced them a lot. Only 7.2% of the total population taken for the survey heard UDF slogan orally. In the case of NDA it was only 4.3%.

Table 2. Best advertising slogan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	LDF	226	74.1	74.1
	NDA	22	7.2	7.2
	UDF	57	18.7	18.7
	Total	305	100	100

As per the Table 2, the new voters strongly supported LDF's slogan *LDF Varum Ellam Sariyakum'*. 74.1 % chose LDF's slogan as best. However, the research also found that 18.7 % of the new young voters preferred the UDF slogan *'Valaranami Nadu Thudaranam E Bharanam'*, and only 7.2% liked NDA's *'Vazhimuttiya Keralam Vazhikaattan NDA'*. According to the survey, Television is the most effective political advertising media influencing the voting behavior of new voters. Study revealed that 35.7% of population watched TV advertisements and were extremely effective than newspaper advertisements in influencing their voting behavior. All candidates tried for 'a speed of light' political propagation of advertising messages through the Internet but the study

showed that traditional media such as flex and posters were more effective than new media and print. 30.5% of new voters saw advertisements via flex, where as 4.3 % through the posters.

Table 3. Medium of knowing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Newspaper	46	15.1	15.1
	TV	109	35.7	35.7
	Radio	4	1.3	1.3
	Flex	93	30.5	30.5
	Poster	13	4.3	4.3
	New Media	40	13.1	13.1
	Total	305	100	100

Table 4. Picture influence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	142	46.6	46.6
	No	109	35.7	35.7
	Sometimes	54	17.7	17.7
	Total	305	100	100

Table 4 A. type of the visual

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Development issues	179	58.7	58.7
	Social	98	32.1	32.1
	Person oriented	28	9.2	9.2
	Total	305	100	100

Table 5. Voting decision before the ads

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	274	89.8	89.8
	No	31	10.2	10.2
	Total	305	100	100

Table 5a. Voted for the same party

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	235	77	77
	No	70	23	23
	Total	305	100	100

Table 6. Advertisements casusing irritation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	53	17.4	17.4
	No	179	58.7	58.7
	Sometimes	73	23.9	23.9
	Total	305	100.0	100.0

Thus, a total of 34.8% either read or viewed political advertisements on traditional media. Research found that political advertisements emphasized issues much more than person oriented political advertisement. 46.6% of the electorate revealed that pictures used in the campaign influenced the electorate. And the advertisements that showed the negative and positive phase of the development and social issues impacted more than the person oriented advertisements. According the survey, majority of the voters (89.8%) felt that advertising campaign did not much influence them to change their state of mind. Before the campaign began 77% of them decided to vote for their favourite party. Only 10.2% was influenced by the campaign and changed their choice after the exposure to the political advertising campaign. Does the clutter of the political advertisements irritate you? While answering this question 58.7% of the sample indicated that clutter of advertisements did not irritate, whereas, 17.4% reveled that it was irritating. 23.9% revealed that it caused irritation sometimes.

FINDINGS

The study researched into new voters' exposure to political advertising campaign and their attitude towards political advertising campaigns. People expressed more favourable attitudes toward political advertising. The present research showed that in an era of the New Media, still there is a huge importance for oral communication and exterior advertising media like hoarding and posters, and the repetitive listening of these captions through oral communication influence the voters. And overall, this age group found all other political formats, such as print and flex to be very effective in influencing the voting behavior more. Large number of voters casted their vote to their own political ideology, but some of them decided to cast vote for a particular candidate of their choice after reading/ listening/ watching political advertisements. Political advertisements that raised voice against the improper development created a favourable stand towards political parties. One of the perennial criticisms of advertising in politics is that it trivializes political discourse by concentrating more on candidate personalities and images than on issues. However, this has proven to be an unfounded concern since research has shown that most political advertising, whatever the medium, concentrates more often on issues than on the image of the candidate.

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