

Role of the political advertisement in the television media in the Presidential Election of 2010 in Sri Lanka

A.H.D.Jayasekara, M.P.D.S.Somarathne, H.M.D.B.Herath

Abstract

The objective of the study was to identify in which ways political advertisements telecasted have influenced the results of the presidential election held in January 2010. The survey method was used to collect data for the study and the duration of the study was from the day of acceptance of nomination to the day of election propaganda was stopped. 100 questionnaires were distributed randomly among selected people in every district. The study analyzed the contents of political advertisements and their effect on different age groups. The study also aimed to find out the most effective channel with regard to the exposition of political advertisements. According to the research, television advertisements have helped to create public opinion. Advertisements which were telecasted on ITN channel created more impact on the audience. The survey identified eighteen advertisements which made a high impression on the audience. "Tharunyata Hetak" is one of the most effective advertisements created during the said period. Several techniques have been used to enhance the message in political advertisements and these include contents such as visuals, music and colour design. The content creativity plays a major role in making an advertisement effective.

Introduction

Throughout history politicians have used various methods, such as whistle-stop speeches, political advertising and political rallies, to achieve their primary goal, the winning of votes. Politicians have found that it is most advantageous to use political advertising to persuade voters. Political advertising has always been a central feature of every culture. As encountered in the mass media, it is pervasive and inescapable. Commercial advertisements are widely accepted

as fair and legitimate marketing. Political advertisements deal with the production, dissemination, procession and effects of information, both through media and interpersonally, within a political context. In recent years, political advertising has become essential to campaign strategy, and many regard it as far more intrusive than routine commercial advertising. Because political advertising, unlike product advertising, must get results in a short period of time, political practitioners use several kinds of political advertising: image, issue and negative advertising. Television media has a big power to change the behavior of the audience. Certain political activists have been struggling with the same task even longer, attempting to influence election outcomes by using media to communicate with the voters. Candidates issue position, image, voter group membership and retrospective voting. The message of the advertisement conveys what the candidate wants to share with the voters. The message often consists of several talking points about policy issues. The points summarize the main ideas of the political advertisements and are repeated frequently in order to create a lasting impression on the voters.

Research Problem

The research problem is to study how television advertisements have affected the final results of the presidential election of 2010.

Objectives

The objective of the research is to identify how television political advertisements have effected the presidential election of 2010.

The coverage of the television channels within Sri Lanka has many impacts on the presidential election of 2010.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is the survey method and comparative method. Observation and questionnaires were used as data collection methods. Data was collected randomly from people in 22 districts. 100 questionnaires were distributed per district.

Limitations

There are certain communication modes available within Sri Lanka such as Radio ,News papers etc, but for this study we select television advertisements only. The time frame available for this research is from the date of nomination to the date on which, election propaganda was stopped.

Theoretical Framework

Various theories have been developed for the study of political advertising. However, the present study adopts two theories concerning the effectiveness of television political advertising.

Expectancy theory:- Expectancy theory focuses on the content of the political advertising.

Most cultures and societies shape their own patterns of language and determine normative or non-normative patterns of language use. When messages conform to people's norms and expectations, "the norms and expectations are strengthened, but the messages exert minimal impact on attitudes."

Expectancy theory identifies two violations: positive or negative violation. In regard to the persuasion effects of the two violations, the theory assumes that when messages positively violate people's linguistic expectations, the violation has a positive impact toward people's attitudes and evokes persuasive effectiveness.

Most negative advertisements have been employed to attack the opponent's image or issues, people may expect negative political advertisements to have standard formats and intense messages. If negative political advertisements conform to people's normative expectations, expectancy theory defines it as a negative violation and predicts that it evokes negative effects toward the sponsor.

Cognitive response model-The cognitive response model was developed to monitor the effects of persuasive communications and was widely employed in many fields of study: "fear appeals, distraction, source credibility, and advertising effectiveness."

The response model assumes that when people are exposed to a message, they have psychological processes that determine the impact of the message.

Results and discussion

Television and political advertisements have always been bedfellows. From the time they were enough television sets available in the homes of the public, politics has been a part of the content of daily television. Television channels exerted a huge impact on the voters mind and all the potential candidates pay much attention to the television advertisement campaign. On the other hand, television advertisement is very effective because candidates are able to reach the majority of voters with limited resources and time. Because of this reason

most candidates preferred the mode of television advertising. Inventions such as the cable television now make it possible for the audience to watch programs without commercials. They can record showy and zap out advertisements. Using the remote while watching television means it is likely that, during the commercials the consumer is surfing through other channels to see what else is on. But the Sri Lankan audience doesn't do such things.

In political advertising, advertising agencies need to identify areas in which they can make a positive difference, because there is a big competition and advertising tactics being used to get the attention of the audience. Political knowledge is typically expressed in terms of an individual's ability to recall the candidate's names, personal characteristics.

Communication is transmitting, receiving and processing information. It is a two way path in which a sender must establish a clear connection with a receiver. Effective communication is the glue holding the relationship between two firms together.

An analysis of the political advertisements reveals that most of the advertisements are based on a major theme or a subtheme. Political advertisements developed the image of the candidate. Effective communication begins with the establishment of a clearly defined personnel image.

For the purpose of political advertisements, two important items are outlined as part of the communication analysis

1. The media usage habits of the target audience.
2. The media utilized by the competition.

In this research only the television media is considered.

Political advertisements are used for persuasion purposes. Advertising can convince the audience that a particular image is superior to the other one. Most of the advertisements are created for political purposes. The negative consequences of the other party used to create advertisements to get more attention. But not in a direct way. It helped to change the audience's attitudes by persuading them. Persuasion techniques are used to change the audience mind.

Creative strategy has given support for political advertising. Support takes the form of the facts that substantiate the message theme. Most of the advertisements used simple, attractive slogans, such as "Suba Anagathayak, Wishwasaneeya wenasak, Mata pera Rata".

One of the theoretical components of advertising design is the decision on creative makes to determine the degree of emphasis given to the visual elements. Visual images often lead to more favorable attitudes toward both the advertisements and the image of a person.

Political advertising, unlike product advertising, must get results in a short period of time. Politicians use several kinds of political advertising: image, issue and negative advertising. Candidates usually use issue or image advertisements at the beginning of a campaign to establish their positive image and then used negative advertisements at the end of the campaign to attack the opponent.

Randomly we selected 100 as a people sample in each district and distributed questionnaires among the sample.

Table.01

<i>Vocation</i>			
Govt. Sector	Pvt. Sector	Self Employed	Unemployed
20%	25%	30%	25%

From the selected population 20 % were government sector employees, 25 % were private sector employees and 30% were self employed and the other 25% were jobless.

Selected population can be categorized according to their age as follows.

Table. 02

<i>Age category</i>			
18- 25	26- 40	41- 55	More than 55
23%	33%	27%	17%

When we consider the contents of advertisement telecasted in this period most of them included hot topics that were discussed in the political stages. Mentioned below were some hot topics which were remembered by the population

1. Compromising the sovereignty of the mother land.
2. Corrupt arm deals
3. Corruption in the government.
4. The boycott of the Presidential election by UNP
5. The system of executive presidency.

6. Split in the JVP

7. Employment problem.

Chart 01

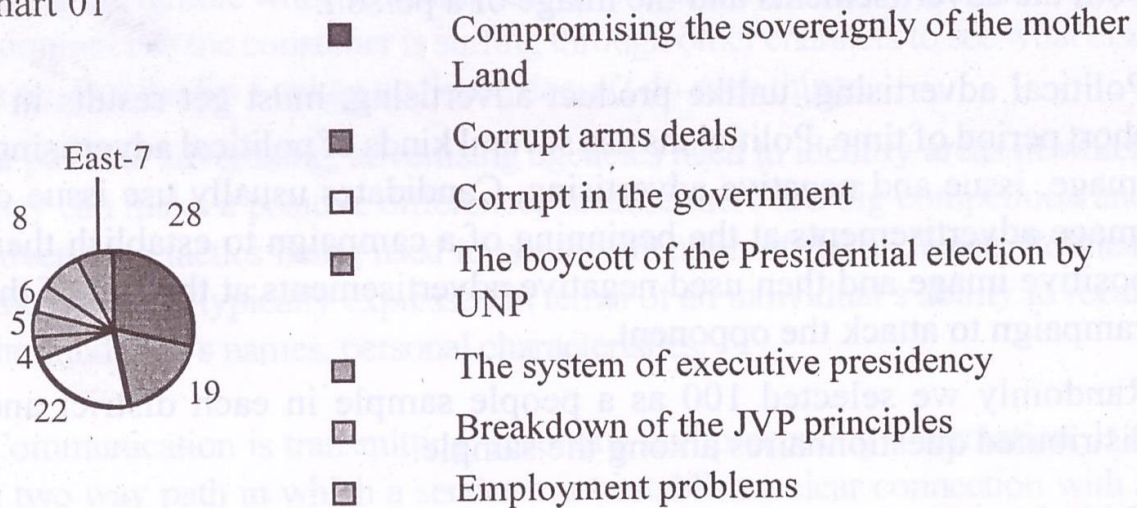


Chart 01 Depicts the percentage of each hot topic remembered by the population. Compromising the sovereignty of the motherland, corrupt arms deals were used to condemn Sarath Fonseka. Candidates make an attempt to ensure the reliability of the information they depicted in these advertisements. Both Sarath Fonseka, and Mahinda Rajapaksha used war victory against the L.T.T.E. for their political campaign. Defeated terrorists were the major weapon they used in their propaganda.

Basically there were 18 advertisements which were able to exert a big impact on the voters' mind.

Among these advertisements, below are 2 advertisements which were created for the UPFA candidate to attract the majority of the people's attention

Tharunyata Hetak .

Suba Anagathayak.

Among the advertisements which were created for opposition candidate, advertisements that caught the highest number of voters attention was Wishwasniya wenasak.

The content and the creativity, of the advertisement also play a major role in making an impact on the potential voters mind. Political parties and candidates increasingly use television advertisements to inform and influence voters during elections.

Simplicity, nationalism, religious back grounds are the other important factors that affect the attractiveness of the advertisement.

Table. 03.

The Presidential campaign advertisements which had the most impact on the people.

<i>The Presidential campaign advertisements which had the most impact on the people.</i>	
Tharunyayata Hetak	30%
Mata Pera Rata	07%
Suba Anagathayak	22%
Mavbima Dinavamu	01%
Hetak Nethi Tharunyaya	03%
Aluth Sri Lankavak	01%
Rata Rakaina Weerathvaya	00%
Podu Apekshawa	00%
Jaya Niyathai	01%
S F Balakaya	06%
Vanchavata ha Dooshnayata Thitha	01%
Pavul Palanayata Thitha	02%
Rajyaya Viyaruwata Thitha	01%
Vishvasaneeya Wenasak	12%
Rata Godanenveema ha Sanvardhanaya	01%
Uda Lahiru Se Song	02%
Nil Balakaya	01%
Niyare Gaman Kala Nayakaya	01%
Others/ Not Special	08%

In these advertisements some principles were used to get more attention.

Visual consistency

Campaign duration

Repeated tag lines

Consistent positioning

Simplicity

Identifiable selling point

Seeing a specific image or visual display over and over again helps to get it embedded in long term memory. Visual consistency is important because the audience spend very little time viewing advertisements.

Analyzing these advertisements using expectancy theory, Sri Lankan identity, cultural habits, and agricultural background used to create advertisements. Mahinda Rajapaksha's national dress, friendly personality, and Sarath Fonseka's uniform, previous position were used in advertising. Advertisements used to promote the image of the candidate to get positive motivation.

In Sri Lanka the national channel telecasted Mahinda Rajapaksha's advertisement more and more. It helped to get more attention to him. Music is extremely important in political advertisements. Music helps to capture the attention of listeners and is linked to emotions, memories, and other experiences. Especially a song or a music that is known to the people. Music can be the stimulus that ties a particular musical arrangement, jingles or a song to a certain impression.

"Jaya jaya we", "Maha rajaneni" were some background songs used in Mahinda Rajapaksha's advertisements.

Visual imagery is especially important in the international arena. Visual images are more powerful than verbal descriptions. Visual images also transcend cultural items. In political advertising, in a selected period advertisements used more visual treatments to get more attention.

The television channels which telecast these advertisements are shown in Table 04.

Table 04.

<i>The Television channels used</i>				
National TV	ITN	Sirasa/ Shakthi	Swarnawahini	Other
20	32	23	13	12

Political candidates were not in a position to address the entire population from their television campaign because within Sri Lanka all the channels were not clearly visible. Government channels mostly telecasted advertisements that benefited Mahanda Rajapaksha. Because of this Mahanda Rajapaksha got the majority support rather than Sarath Fonseka. On the other hand, Sirasa TV, Shakthi TV gave prominence to Sarath Fonseka.

Government channels ITN and National Television broadcast most of the political advertisements as a percentage of 52%.

In the Presidential election of 2010 there was a very close competition. Main candidates used more tactics to get the attention from the people. Candidates used modern forms of advertising to inform and influence the votes during the elections.

Conclusion

Television political advertisements specially affected the presidential election of 2010. Advertising agencies used many tactics to get more attention. There were two main candidates. Both of them used political advertisements to promote their names, logos and objectives. Creativity plays a major role in political advertising. Television advertisement is a very effective because candidates are able to reach the majority of voters with limited resources and time

Government channels, ITN and National Television broadcast most of the political advertisements as a percentage of 52% and they mostly telecasted advertisements that benefited Mahanda Rajapaksha. Sirasa TV, Shakthi TV gave more support to Sarath Fonseka.

Among these advertisements, Tharunyata Hetak, Suba Anagathayak, were created to promote the UPFA candidate who was able to attract the majority of people's attention. Among the advertisements which were created for the opposition candidate Wishwasniya wenasak advertisement caught the highest number of voters' attention.

References

Atkin, Charley and Heald, Gary, (1976), **Effect of political advertising**, Oxford University Press

Buru, Andrew and Parker, David, (2005), **Analysing media texts**, Continuum, London

Clow, E. Kenneth and Baack, Donald, (2002), **Integrated advertising promotion & marketing communication**, Prentice-Hall of India PVT, New Delhi

Hamelink and J. Cees, (1997), **The Politics of world communication**, Sage Publications, London

Kaid, L. Lynda, (2004), **Handbook of political campaign research**, Lawrence Erlbaum Association, U.S.A

Kaid, L. Linda and Johnston, Anne, (2001), **Videostyle in presidential campaign: style and Content of Televised Political Advertisements**.

Kern, Montague, (1942), **30-second politics: political advertising in the eighties**, Praeger Publishers, New York

Lee, Monke. Johnson, Carla, (2003), **Principles of advertising: global perspective**, Haworth Press, U.S.A

<http://www.museum.tv>

<http://www.jstor.org/>