

Image Ads and Issue Ads in U.S. Presidential Advertising: Using Videostyle to Explore Stylistic Differences in Televised Political Ads From 1952 to 2000

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This study explores the differences in techniques, strategies, narratives, and symbols used in televised issue ads and image ads from U.S. presidential campaigns. A content analysis was done of 1,213 ads from the past 13 U.S. presidential elections coded as either issue ads or image ads. Findings indicate that there are key differences in the style of image ads and issue ads. In issue ads, the candidate tends to speak for himself, appear on camera speaking to the viewer, and use emotional language in making the appeal. In image ads, an anonymous announcer is the dominant speaker, and source credibility appeals are the most popular appeals. Although the majority of both types of ads were positive, negative appeals dominated a higher percentage of issue ads as compared with image ads.

As a campaign communication tool, political advertising serves many functions for candidates. In particular, research has shown that political advertising can make unknown candidates better known by establishing name identification, can connect the candidate with particular demographic groups, can attract new supporters, stimulate participation in the campaign, help raise money for the candidate, and attack the opponent (Devlin, 1986; Sabato, 1981). Among all of the functions of political advertising, particularly of televised political ads, two of the most important functions are helping the candidate define or redefine his or her image and providing a forum where campaign issues can be explained and developed. Issue discussion and image construction have been central to televised political ads, particularly those used by presidential candidates, for a half century of campaigning.

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Candidates have not been the only ones concerned with issue and image content of their ads; researchers over the past several decades have struggled with studying and analyzing the content and effects of image and issue ads, so much so that “no topic has been more dominant across the five decades of research on political advertising than the discussion of whether or not campaign commercials are dominated by image information or by issue information” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 16). One reason for the concern about the content of political advertising as being either issue or image focused is based on the democratic belief that to make rational decisions, a voting public must be able to consider the candidates’ stands on the campaign issues. Critics of televised political ads argue that ads are filled with image construction, not issue discussions, and that televised political ads, averaging 30 seconds each, are not an appropriate forum for discussion of complex campaign issues. Related to this, of course, is the notion that any attempt to “construct” an image via a political ad, is somehow more manipulative or sinister than the everyday image construction that happens via all mediated sources of information. The concern over image construction and manipulation in ads and the subsequent abandonment of rational discussion of issues is not just a thing of modern, sophisticated campaigning and advertising techniques. The concern has existed since political spots first came on the presidential campaign scene in 1952 when a campaign volunteer for the Democratic presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, complained that Eisenhower’s 20-second televised spots were selling the Republican candidate in the same way as “soap, ammoniated toothpaste, hair tonic or bubble gum” (“Ball blasts plan,” 1952; Blair, 1952; “Like bubble gum,” 1952).

In addition to a general concern about the actual content of political ads, researchers have also struggled to define what makes something an image ad and what makes something an issue ad. Although many researchers now argue that defining an ad exclusively as issue or image is becoming increasingly difficult, the desire to be able to look at ads in this way still directs much research. Traditionally, researchers have explained in their research how they operationalized issue ads and image ads for coding. For example, early research defined issue content as dealing with specific policy stands, policies tied to concerns of citizenry, topics and concerns linked to the national interest, statements of candidate positions on policy issues, or preferences on issues or problems of public concern (Hofstetter & Zukin, 1979; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Patterson & McClure, 1976) whereas images have been coded as a concentration on candidate qualities or characteristics (Kaid & Johnston, 1991; Kaid & Sanders, 1978). Benoit and his colleagues have incorporated issue and image qualities into their categorization of political advertising functions as acclaiming, attacking, and defending (Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997).

One important finding from a variety of scholars over the past several decades has been that political ads are as much about issue discussion as they are about image construction. Evidence has indicated that political candidates have used their ads to put forward an agenda of issues as well as an agenda of personality characteristics for voters to consider. Specifically, several early campaign studies found that ads concentrated more on issues than on image (Joslyn, 1980; Patterson & McClure, 1976). Research exploring the political advertising and the network

news coverage during the presidential campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s found that there was more issue content contained in the ads than in the campaign coverage of network news (Hofstetter & Zukin, 1979; Kern, 1989; Patterson & McClure, 1976). The evidence that there is issue discussion in presidential campaign ads has been substantiated in more recent research on political advertising. Analysis of presidential primaries and general elections of the 1990s found that issues continued to be more frequently stressed in campaign spots than image and sometimes were more prevalent in the ads than in television news (Center for Media and Public Affairs, 1996; Kaid, 1994, 1998; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Lichter & Noyes, 1996).

Although evidence suggests that political advertising contains issue information, how have issues been discussed in political advertising over the years? And how have researchers attempted to distinguish between issue ads and image ads? Most researchers have found that the issues discussed in political ads have been general or vague statements of issue concerns or stands and that there has not been a lot of discussion of specific policy stands, or proposals (Joslyn, 1980, 1986; Payne, Marlier, & Baukus, 1989; West, 1993). Many of these researchers found that issue ads were filled with image messages also and certainly could not be categorized strictly as issue ads. Payne, Marlier, and Baukus, for example, found that vague statements of policy were combined with images and symbols in their analysis of the 1988 presidential primary spots. West's finding was interesting in that he found that spots had become more, not less, policy oriented in recent presidential campaigns.

There have been other studies that have explored historical and more specific dimensions of issue or image ads. For example, Shyles, in his study of 1980 presidential primary spots found that the candidates strongly emphasized defense and foreign policy but also used the spots to convey their image characteristics (Shyles, 1983, 1984a, 1984b). In addition, Shyles (1984b) found presentational style differences in image or issue spots. Shyles explored, for the first time, some of the stylistic differences in presidential ads, finding that, in fact, there were differences in the ways that candidates might use production techniques, attire, or language to emphasize issue concerns or character traits in their ads.

Because image ads and issue ads sometimes contain elements of both types of information, trying to dichotomize image ads and issue ads may become increasingly difficult. Image ads, for example, may contain some mention of issues, whereas ads coded as issue ads may also address the candidate's personality characteristics. Rudd (1986) argued that issues spots can be used to define or redefine parts of a candidate's image. In more recent presidential campaigns, we have seen an even grayer line between image and issue concerns when a characteristic such as honesty or integrity became as important an issue in the election as a candidate's specific stand on a particular issue. Therefore, for some voters during certain elections, the personal character of the candidate might be the critical campaign issue. In past elections, there have been ads that have used narrative techniques to dramatize an issue; the "issue dramatization" ads of the presidential campaigns during the 1960s and 1980s certainly illustrated the power of visual images to drive home the importance of a particular issue without much verbal content or

hard sell. The 1964 "Daisy Girl" commercial is perhaps the most famous of the ads that used imagery to present a campaign issue.

In a comprehensive study of televised ads from presidential campaigns, Kaid and Johnston (2001) found that issues and images have both had their place in election ads. In a study of 1,204 presidential ads used between 1952 and 1996, the authors found that 66% of the ads were coded as issue spots. The authors also reported that the advertising in certain years tended to be more issue focused than in other years. For example, in the 1960 Kennedy vs. Nixon campaign, 84% of the ads were coded as issue ads, whereas in the 1968 campaign of Humphrey and Nixon only 47% of the ads were coded as issue ads. The authors also explored the specific issues and specific candidate characteristics that were mentioned in the ads over time. Economic concerns, taxes, international/foreign affairs, and military spending dominated the issues mentioned in the ads from 1952 to 1996. Although most of the political ads analyzed were judged to be dominantly issue ads, 59% of all of the ads contained some image content or tried to promote through words or images the personal qualities of the candidate. Kaid and Johnston (2001) found that the most popular personal qualities featured in the 1,204 ads were aggressiveness, competency and performance, and success. The authors also found that honesty, not surprisingly, was becoming increasingly important for candidates to mention in their ads.

Issue and image spot distinctions are also important because there is considerable evidence to support the claim that different types of spots (image versus issue) may result in different effects on candidate recall and evaluation. Image ads often produce greater recall of information (Kaid & Sanders, 1978), particularly when a candidate is less well known (Schleuder, 1990). Conversely, issue ads seem to be particularly effective in raising a candidate's image ratings (Kaid, Chanslor, & Hovind, 1992; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Thorson, Christ, & Caywood, 1991a, 1991b).

As past research has shown, political advertising contains issue information as well as image information. Some evidence suggests that ads may provide a way for candidates to state their issue concerns as well as a way for candidates to construct or define their images, and that issue ads and image ads may differ stylistically, but researchers continue to explore how best to analyze issue ads and image ads in their studies.

The purpose of this research was to study the stylistic elements of issue ads and image ads—the differences and similarities between issue ads and image ads in terms of content and style. In this study, we explored these differences in issue ads and image ads from U.S. presidential races from 1952 to 2000.

Theory and Method

Videostyle is a framework that the authors and others have used to analyze televised political ads. Videostyle represents the way candidates present themselves to voters through the television medium, encompassing the "techniques, strategies, narratives, and symbols that a candidate decides to use in television advertis-

ing” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 26). It includes all the elements of television’s language (verbal, production, and nonverbal components). The ads analyzed in this research were coded using the videostyle code sheet, which has been used for over 20 years to analyze televised political ads. (For a detailed discussion of the theory and method of videostyle, as well as a copy of the codesheet, see Kaid & Johnston, 2001).

Over the past several decades, videostyle has been used to study presidential, senatorial, and gubernatorial campaign ads in the United States (Johnston, 1999; Kaid, 1994, 1998; Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2000; Kaid & Tedesco, 1999; Kaid, Tedesco, Chanslor, & Roper, 1993); it has been used to make comparisons in televised political ads across gender and across nations (Bystrom, 1995; Bystrom & Miller, 1999; Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Holtz-Bacha, Kaid, & Johnston, 1994; Johnston, 1991; Johnston & White, 1994; Kaid & Tedesco, 1993; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997); and it has been used to explore stylistic elements of negative advertising (Kaid & Johnston, 1991). In all of these studies, researchers combined an exploration of the videostyle of the ads with a discussion of the context and culture of a campaign and the personal style and political position of a candidate to explore how all of these factors influenced the style of the ads used by political candidates. In this study, we used videostyle to explore similarities and differences between different types of ads, not candidates, in order to understand if in fact there are stylistic differences in image and issue ads used since 1952 in presidential campaigns. By exploring the styles of issue ads and image ads, we hoped to be able to say something about the stylistic framework into which issue and image presidential campaign ads have been placed and to further understanding of the distinction between these types of ads.

The sample used for this study was a subset of the 1,365 televised political ads from the 1952 to 2000 U.S. presidential campaigns. This set of ads includes all televised presidential ads from the general elections obtained from the Political Commercial Archive in the Department of Communication at the University of Oklahoma. Trained graduate students coded all the ads, and intercoder reliability across all categories averaged $+.86$. To calculate intercoder reliability, we used Holsti’s formula (North, Holsti, Zaninovich, & Zinnes, 1963). Given for two coders, it can be modified for any number of coders. Using the videostyle coding instrument, coders recorded a variety of components of the political ads, including negative advertising styles and strategies, production and format styles of ads, types of appeals or evidence (logical, emotional, or source credibility), presence of fear appeals, and strategies typically used by incumbents and challengers (as identified by Trent & Friedenber, 1983, 1995). Coders were also asked to code for setting of the ads, dress of the candidates, and dominant speaker in the ad as well as special effects present in the ads.

Unlike most previous videostyle studies, our major focus was not on the overall styles and strategies of particular candidates, but in how issue ads and image ads were stylistically alike and different. To focus on the stylistic dimensions of issue and image ads, we recoded the set of 1,365 ads from the 1952–2000 U.S. presidential campaigns. In the original coding of the dataset, coders were asked to indicate the “dominant” content of each ad, choosing from the following categories: ap-

peals to partisanship; vague statement of an issue concern; vague statement of a policy preference; specific issue or policy proposal; discussion of the personal characteristics of the candidate; and discussion of the candidate's group associations or alignments. For the purposes of this article, we used only the three issue-related concerns (issue concern, vague policy preference, and specific policy proposal) and the personality characteristics categories to divide the ads into issue or image ads. Ads coded as having any of the three issue concerns as their dominant content were coded as issue ads and ads coded as having the personality characteristics of the candidate as their dominant content were coded as image ads. Ads dominated by partisanship appeals and appeals to groups were coded as missing variables and deleted from the analysis. This recoding resulted in a subset of 1,213 ads from general election presidential campaigns from 1952 through 2000.

Results and Discussion

Of the 1,213 ads in our sample, 35%, or 429 ads, qualified as image ads because they had been coded as dominated by personality characteristics of the candidate. Sixty-five percent or 784 ads, qualified as issue ads because coders identified them as dominated by issue-related concerns (vague concern, policy preference, or specific proposal).

Content and Appeals in Issue and Image Ads

As Table 1 indicates, image and issue ads differed on the type of appeals and content contained in the ads. Perhaps most interesting is that 70% of the image ads, compared to 56% of the issue ads, focused on the positive characteristics of the sponsoring candidate. So, although both types of ads were more frequently positive than negative, there were more issue ads than image ads that denigrated the opponent.

This is interesting in light of the popular concern that it is the softer, image-type ads that are also the more negative. Public concern about negative advertising sometimes is focused on the worry that negative ads are designed to fool voters into thinking negatively about the personality or image of the opponent. Past research, however, supports the finding that negative ads and issue appeals tend to be more frequently combined in ads than are personality or image characteristics and negative attacks (Kaid & Johnston, 1991; West, 1993).

Although the ads in this subset were separated by dominant content, we did look at the type of content mentioned in the ads. According to Table 1, image ads (by definition) were not dominated by issue concerns, but they often did mention issue concerns within the ad. Thirty-nine percent of image ads contained a statement of an issue concern; 24% contained a vague policy preference. This 1968 Humphrey ad focused mostly on Humphrey's personal qualities, but it used the issue of civil rights as an illustration:

Humphrey: Uh, I was brought up in the spirit of, uh, well really, to put it simply, of brotherhood. We never, we had no real religious or racial prejudice

Table 1. Verbal Components of Image and Issue Ads: Focus, Content of Spots, Types of Appeals (N = 1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Content mentioned in spot		
Partisanship**	8%	12%
Candidate issue concerns***	39%	78%
Vague policy preference***	24%	55%
Specific proposal***	4%	19%
Personal characteristics of candidate***	100%	34%
Appeals to groups*	13%	17%
Focus of spot***		
Candidate positive	70%	56%
Opponent negative	30%	45%
Presence of appeals		
Logical***	57%	81%
Emotional*	83%	78%
Source credibility***	83%	52%
Dominant appeal***		
Logical	10%	38%
Emotional	34%	44%
Ethical/source credibility	54%	18%
Use of fear appeals***	14%	26%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

in our home. I've had many people ask me how I got interested in civil rights, I said, well just because I'm a person. . . . I guess we just were brought up to believe that people are people.

Announcer: Humphrey-Muskie, two you can trust.

In the same way that image ads may mention issue concerns, issue ads in this sample mentioned candidate personality characteristics: In 34% of the issue ads, there is some reference to personality characteristics. For instance, in this 1976 spot, President Gerald Ford focused on the issue of health care, but the spot also made sure to characterize Ford's position on health care as illustrating his personal qualities of "sensitivity" and "concern":

Ford: We should, in the field of health, take a major step to protect older people from what I call catastrophic or prolonged illnesses. Under the proposals that I recommended, no person would have to pay more than seven hundred fifty dollars a year for both hospital care and medical care. With that kind

of protection then nobody really has to fear all of their resources being depleted. I'm sure everybody here has a friend or relative, I certainly did in my family, individuals who were ill for a very long time that just eats up all of the financial reserves that people have saved. I say frequently, and I mean it, there is no reason somebody should go broke just to get well.

Announcer: Sensitivity. Concern. A willingness to listen and to act. Let's keep President Ford in charge.

This finding, that issue ads contain image characteristics and image ads deal with issues, provides support for the notion that both types of ads, although coded as being dominated by one type of content, may function in a variety of ways for the candidate. It also suggests that it may, in fact, be a false dichotomy to argue that issue ads are exclusively issue oriented and image ads are exclusively image oriented.

An important component of a candidate's videostyle concerns the types of appeals or arguments used in the ads. Table 1 also shows that image and issue ads are different in the presence of particular appeals and on which of those appeals dominate the ads. Issue ads are dominated by emotional, rather than logical, appeals. Emotional appeals in ads attempt to use language and imagery in order to evoke certain feelings, whereas logical appeals use the language of evidence and facts to prove a point. Image ads are dominated by ethical or source credibility appeals. Presidential candidates appear to be making their image appeal based on their credibility or trustworthiness. This focus on ethical or source credibility appeals to try to convince the voter of a candidate's worthiness and presence of good personality traits means that, although image ads include emotional appeals (34% of image ads are dominated by emotional appeals), they focus on the trustworthiness or credibility of the candidate.

As Table 1 indicates, fear appeals have been used significantly more in issue ads to make the voter afraid about an issue than they are used in image ads to make a voter afraid about the candidate's personality. It may, in fact, be riskier to try to use fear appeals against an opponent's image. In the worst cases, that tactic can backfire on the sponsoring candidate. For example, during the 1980 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter unsuccessfully tried to portray Ronald Reagan as a scary supporter of guns and nuclear weaponry. The fear appeals used to try to attack Reagan's image only backfired on Carter and made him look petty, politically unsure, and lacking credibility.

Certainly, war and peace have traditionally been issues where fear appeals could be easily used in political spots. No one used this technique more fully than Lyndon Johnson in his 1964 attacks on Barry Goldwater and nuclear weapons. However, issues such as crime, Social Security, and health care have also provided ripe opportunities for fear appeals. A 1968 Richard Nixon ad took advantage of voter concerns about crime in an ad that showed a woman walking alone at night in a suspenseful situation, while a voice-over proclaimed:

Announcer: Crimes of violence in the United States have almost doubled in recent years. Today a violent crime is committed every 60 seconds, a robbery

Table 2. Types of Negative Attacks and Strategies in Image and Issue Ads (N=1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Purpose of negative ad		
Attack personal characteristics***	25%	16%
Attack issue stands/consistency***	20%	41%
Attack group affiliations	6%	9%
Strategy in negative ad		
Humor/ridicule*	13%	19%
Negative association**	15%	31%
Name calling	6%	5%
Guilt by association**	4%	10%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

every 2 1/2 minutes, a mugging every 6 minutes, a murder every 43 minutes, and it will get worse unless we take the offensive. Freedom from fear is a basic right of every American. We must restore it. THIS TIME VOTE LIKE YOUR WHOLE WORLD DEPENDS ON IT. NIXON

Although neither image ads nor issue ads were primarily negative, a certain percentage did contain negative attacks and strategies to make those attacks. According to Table 2, image ads more frequently contained attacks on personal characteristics (25%) and issue ads more frequently contained attacks on issue stands and consistency (41%).

However, image ads also featured almost as many attacks on the opposing candidate's issue stands and consistency (20%) as they did attacks on personal characteristics. One conclusion is that, generally, for issue or image ads used in presidential campaigns, attacks on issue stands have been more popular than attacks on personality characteristics, a finding that is in line with research results that show issue attacks to be a more successful strategy for candidates (Roddy & Garramone, 1988).

Nonverbal Elements of Issue and Image Ads

There also were some stylistic differences in the nonverbal components of presidential issue and image ads. Nonverbal elements of the ads, like nonverbal components of all communication, provide a way for interpreting the language and the appeals in the ads. Nonverbal communication provides cues for voters to help them construct the meaning of the ads. Past research has shown that, in terms of political advertising over the years in presidential campaigns, the anonymous announcer has replaced the candidate as the primary speaker in the ads (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). As Table 3 shows, televised presidential issue and image ads differed in who speaks in the ads.

Table 3. Nonverbal Components of Image and Issue Ads: Candidate Speaking, Setting, and Dress (N = 1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Dominant speaker***		
Candidate	21%	45%
Government official	13%	6%
Anonymous announcer	45%	41%
Nongovernment celebrity	4%	1%
Spouse or family member	2%	<1%
Combination or other	3%	3%
Sound		
Live or natural sound	49%	53%
Sound-over	49%	45%
Not applicable	2%	2%
Setting of spot***		
Formal indoors	24%	40%
Informal indoors	13%	13%
Formal outdoors	6%	8%
Informal outdoors	7%	9%
Combination	12%	6%
Not applicable	38%	25%
Candidate dress***		
Formal	35%	52%
Casual	8%	13%
Varied	3%	1%
Not applicable	54%	34%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

The candidate (45%) and an anonymous announcer (41%) are most frequently used in ads dominated by appeals to issue concerns. For presidential ads that focused on the personality characteristics or image of the candidate, an anonymous announcer (providing a third-person narration of the ad) was used in twice as many ads (45%) as the candidate (21%). In addition, live or natural sound (the person on camera is speaking) was used in over half of the issue ads (53%); the type of sound in image ads is split between live or natural sound and sound-over (49% each). Ads that use sound-over featured the voice of an unseen person narrating what the viewer is seeing in the ad. As Table 3 indicates, issue ads were more likely to feature a formal indoor setting (40%) and a formally dressed candidate (52%) than image ads (24% and 35%, respectively), although formal setting and candidate dress were the most popular for both types of ads.

Table 4. Production Components of Image and Issue Ads: Length, Format, and Production Style (N = 1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Length**		
20–30 seconds	56%	64%
60 seconds	30%	26%
2–5 minutes	14%	10%
Format of spot***		
Documentary style	15%	4%
Video clip/music video	12%	7%
Testimonial	26%	7%
Introspection	14%	25%
Issue statement	2%	3%
Opposition focused	19%	24%
Issue dramatization	6%	17%
Question/answer/confrontation	6%	11%
Other	<1%	2%
Production style of spot***		
Cinema verité	37%	26%
Slides with print, movement, voice-over	15%	18%
Candidate head-on	8%	32%
Other person head-on	18%	9%
Animation and special techniques	11%	9%
Combination and outdoors	11%	7%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

Production Components of Issue and Image ads

Perhaps of all of the concerns about political advertising, the production techniques used by candidates to sell themselves to voters are of most concern. In particular, much of the criticism of image ads has focused on their use of all types of “sneaky” editing and special effects to completely overwhelm the gullible voter. Certainly we know that voters are not as gullible as they sometimes have been portrayed, but do image ads in fact use more special effects and sophisticated production techniques to define the candidate’s image?

Although there are differences in image and issue ads in the use of production techniques, image ads are not dominated by special effects. As indicated in Table 4, most issue ads and most image ads have historically tended to be 20–30 seconds in length. However, a greater percentage of issue ads (64%) than image ads (56%) fell into this range of the shortest commercial length.

The most popular formats for issue ads were introspection (25%) and opposition-focused or negative ads (24%). In presidential introspection ads, the candidate was usually shown reflecting on his own campaign vision and issue concerns

Table 5. Production Components of Image and Issue Ads: Production Techniques (N = 1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Presence of music	46%	41%
Presence of special effects		
Computer graphics	31%	32%
Slow motion***	7%	16%
Fast motion	2%	2%
Reverse motion	2%	1%
Freeze frame	10%	10%
Split screen	3%	5%
Superimpositions**	11%	17%
Montage	13%	10%
Stop motion	8%	6%
Stills***	47%	30%
Dominant camera angle***		
High angle	2%	2%
Straight-on	39%	57%
Low angle	6%	8%
Combination	4%	2%
Candidate not present	49%	31%
Dominant camera shot***		
Tight (head and shoulders)	24%	39%
Medium (waist up)	16%	23%
Long (full length)	3%	1%
Combination	8%	5%
Candidate not present	49%	32%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

and offering insights into his work and beliefs. Image ads tended to be testimonials (26%) and opposition focused (19%). Testimonial ads are ads that show a group of average Americans, some public figure (politician, celebrity), or a family member endorsing the candidate. John Kennedy's 1960 campaign produced testimonial format spots that used political figures like Adlai Stevenson, Senator William Fulbright, and Eleanor Roosevelt and celebrities like Harry Belafonte, Henry Fonda, and Dr. Benjamin Spock. President Eisenhower spoke for Kennedy's opponent, then-Vice President Richard Nixon. In 1964, Barry Goldwater's ads displayed testimonials from actors Ronald Reagan and John Wayne and political figures Eisenhower and Maine Senator Margaret Chase Smith. In 1968 Hubert Humphrey used a Ted Kennedy endorsement, as well as celebrity testimonials from E. G. Marshall, Douglas Fairbanks, and Frank Sinatra. While the 1968 Nixon campaign used singer Pat Boone to speak for Nixon, the spots relied more on

political than celebrity endorsements, including Illinois Senators Everett Dirksen and Charles Percy, New York Senator Jacob Javits, Texas Senator John Tower and Congressman George Bush, and Tennessee Senator Howard Baker.

Image ads and issue ads also differed in terms of their production styles. The most popular style for presidential image ads used between 1952 and 2000 was a cinema vérité style (37%), followed by a person other than the candidate speaking directly to the camera (18%). For issue ads, the most popular production style featured the candidate speaking directly into the camera (32%), followed by cinema vérité (26%). Cinema vérité, popular in image and issue ads, provides the viewer a window on the candidate's world. It is usually meant to give viewers the feeling that they are following the presidential candidate as he meets with groups of people or as he does his work. Cinema vérité political ads are sometimes minidocumentaries of the candidate and his background or campaign.

Table 5 shows that music was featured in a higher percentage of image ads (46%) than issue ads (41%). Computer graphics were the most popular type of special effect for issue ads (32%), followed by stills (30%). The use of computer graphics in image ads was about the same as it was for issue ads at 31%, but the most popular special effect for image ads was stills (47%). Stills are photos or pictures, and they have been used throughout the 48 years of presidential advertising. The stills used in political ads during presidential campaigns have frequently been photos of the candidates or of the opponent, but they can also be photos of other politicians or events. Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign was characterized by this production technique in which still images were often used in innovative ways, often creating the effect of movement. This technique allowed the production team to create effective commercials without using the candidate himself in live or sound-on moving images.

The only special effects that were significantly different for image and issue ads were stills (used more in image ads), slow motion, and superimpositions. Interestingly, it was issue ads, not image ads, that used slow motion and superimpositions as special effects significantly more often. This could be the result of a high usage of such techniques in negative ads, which tend also to be more often issue than image ads. When movement is slowed down in political ads it is usually to emphasize a scene or part of an action that is taking place. Superimpositions are used to connect two images, by imposing the image of one picture over another.

In our previous videostyle studies, we have analyzed the presence of challenger and incumbent communication strategies in the presidential ads. These strategies, according to Trent and Friedenber (1983, 1995), are better suited to certain types of candidates as they position themselves in their general communication with voters. In past videostyle studies, these communication strategies have also been found in the televised political ads. In this study, we looked at these strategies as they might relate to issue and image ads.

As Table 6 shows, generally, more image ads than issue ads contain the strategies identified by Trent and Friedenber. The most popular strategies contained in image ads include promoting competency and the presidency (69%) and depending on surrogates to speak (59%). For issue ads, the most popular strategies are calling for changes (55%), taking the offensive on issues (52%), and attacking the

Table 6. Strategies Used in Image and Issue Ads (N = 1,213)

	Image N = 429	Issue N = 784
Use of symbolic trappings***	22%	11%
Presidency stands for legitimacy***	24%	13%
Competency and the office***	69%	47%
Consulting with world leaders	10%	7%
Charisma and the office***	15%	7%
Using endorsements by leaders***	18%	9%
Emphasizing accomplishments***	39%	25%
Above the trenches posture**	27%	21%
Depending on surrogates to speak***	59%	20%
Calling for changes***	29%	55%
Speaking to traditional values	40%	44%
Taking the offensive position***	26%	52%
Emphasizing optimism	36%	42%
Representing center of party	13%	15%
Attacking the record of opponent***	30%	49%

*Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .05$ for difference between image and issue ads.

**Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .01$ for difference between image and issue ads.

***Indicates χ^2 is significant at $p < .001$ for difference between image and issue ads.

record of the opponent (49%). Using these strategies, issue ads are more often the place where attacks are made and candidates critique the stands of their opponents.

Overall Style of Image and Issue Ads

The content analysis of the presidential ads identified some specific strategies and techniques used in the ads and revealed that image ads and issue ads are similar in a variety of ways: They tend to be positive not negative and they tend to feature a more formal setting and the candidate in more formal attire. However, there were some differences in ads coded as image ads and those coded as issue ads.

Image style. Those ads coded as image ads tended to be positive not negative; in fact, image rather than issue ads historically have more frequently focused on positive aspects of the sponsoring candidate and his campaign. Image ads also contain issue information and are not used solely by candidates for image construction; about one fourth of the 429 image ads contained some statement in the ad about the candidate's issue concerns.

We also found that in those ads coded as image ads, the appeals to the voters are typically focused on the candidate's credibility. In addition, although presidential advertising has been more positive than negative, image ads tend to make their attacks almost equally on personal characteristics of the opponents and on the issue stands of the opponents. Almost half of the image ads used in these

presidential campaigns featured an anonymous announcer as the main speaker. Image ads are not dominated by special effects any more than are issue ads. Image ads tend to feature formats that allow others to provide testimonials about the good job the candidate has done or how trustworthy he is. They also tend to be dominated by production styles that appear to be on opposite ends of the production style continuum. Image ads tend to feature a natural, “window on the world” format or a very formal talking-head (but not the candidate’s) style. This style would, of course, reinforce the use of image ads to provide testimonials about the candidate. This suggests that image ads in presidential campaigns have not only allowed for the construction of image by the candidate but also via the support and kind words of others. This is further reinforced by the finding that over half of image ads use surrogates to speak in the ad.

Issue style. Over half of the issue ads focused on positive aspects of the candidate, and about one third contain some mention of an “image” quality or mention the personal characteristics of the candidate. Issue ads do not feature lots of data and facts to make their point. Issue ads use emotional language to appeal to voters, and slightly over one fourth use fear appeals. Issue ads do feature the candidate as the main speaker and an anonymous announcer in almost equal percentages of ads, with the candidate as the main speaker edging out the anonymous announcer. Candidates in issue ads tend to speak for themselves almost twice as often as they do in image ads. Issue ads feature formats that allow the candidate to directly address the voters (introspection) or that allow him to attack the opponent, and the production styles support those formats with the candidate featured as directly talking to the voters (via the camera) or in a natural, cinema vérité style. Finally, candidates have used issue ads to call for changes and to attack their opponents.

Conclusion

Although our focus in this article is on the specific aspects of issue and image ads, our data allow us to examine the trends in the use of these ad types over time. As Figure 1 shows, the campaigns in the 1990s and the first one in this decade have featured the highest percentages of issue ads.

The 1970s and 1980s featured an overall decrease in issue ads and an overall increase in image ads being used by the presidential candidates. There are probably several explanations for this high use of issue ads in the 1950s and 1960s, then a decline during the next 2 decades, followed by a resurgence of issue ads in the last three presidential campaigns. One explanation might be that it was during the 1970s and 1980s that many of the special effects technologies began to appear in presidential ads, and product advertisers were experimenting and applying advertising strategies to all types of advertising, including political.

At the end of the 1980s, the American public was not only growing more distrustful of ads, but also of the mainstream news media in their reporting on the political campaigns. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw growth in the public’s use of alternative media sources and programs such as talk shows to provide political

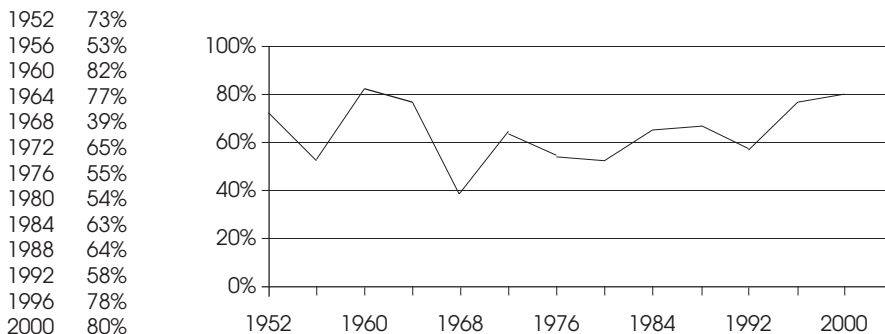


Figure 1. Issue ads by year.

information. The 1988 campaign began a new trend of media ad watches to analyze the messages in the ads. In the 1990s candidates returned to focusing on issue concerns in their ads. However, the ads of the 1990s were not without image information. As we have mentioned, issue ads do contain image information, but they are seen as being dominated by issue concerns, policy statements, or policy proposals. The political advertising in the last three presidential elections certainly contained issue information, but many of them featured a particular issue as the dominant focus of the ad, using the issue as the setting into which they also featured image construction.

Individual candidates over the years have also differed in their use of issue and image ads. As Table 7 shows, the highest percentages of issue ads were used by Walter Mondale in 1984, Dwight Eisenhower in 1952, Bill Clinton in 1996, and Al Gore in 2000. The lowest percentages of issue ads were used by Dwight Eisenhower in 1956, Hubert Humphrey in 1968, Adlai Stevenson in 1952, and Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Although professionals and academics have long known that political advertising serves the candidates well in both image construction and issue discussion, one problem has been defining exactly which ads were helping to negotiate an image and which were presenting an issue. In this study, by looking at the stylistic elements of image and issue ads, we found that there were some differences between image and issue ads over the past 48 years of presidential campaigning in terms of content, appeals, commercial formats, productions styles, language used, and communication strategies. Stylistically at least, image ads function to portray positively the personal characteristics of the candidate, not to denigrate the opposition. Attacks on the opponent, when they have been made over the past half century, have been made in issue ads and typically on the issue positions and consistency of the opponent. Both types of ads have featured formal settings and formally attired candidates, but presidential candidates have talked for themselves in twice as many ads dominated by issue content than by image content.

Historically, then, presidential candidates have taken advantage of the direct and intimate nature of television to come to the American public with their issue concerns, their policy preferences, or their specific proposals, and to provide the

Table 7. Presidential Candidates' Use of Image and Issue Ads Over the Campaign Years

	Image Ads	Issue Ads
1952		
Stevenson (15 ads)	60%	40%
Eisenhower (26 ads)	10	90
1956		
Eisenhower (5 ads)	100	0
Stevenson (12 ads)	20	80
1960		
Nixon (44 ads)	18	82
Kennedy (62 ads)	18	82
1964		
Johnson (25 ads)	28	72
Goldwater (37 ads)	19	81
1968		
Humphrey (32 ads)	69	31
Nixon (35 ads)	54	46
1972		
Nixon (24 ads)	46	54
McGovern (44 ads)	30	70
1976		
Ford (76 ads)	51	49
Carter (50 ads)	36	64
1980		
Carter (64 ads)	55	45
Reagan (171 ads)	43	57
1984		
Reagan (66 ads)	47	53
Mondale (24 ads)	8	92
1988		
Bush, Sr. (44 ads)	46	54
Dukakis (64 ads)	30	70
1992		
Bush, Sr. (32 ads)	50	50
Clinton (30 ads)	33	67
1996		
Clinton (74 ads)	14	86
Dole (39 ads)	38	62
2000		
Gore (81 ads)	16	84
Bush, Jr. (36 ads)	28	72

Note. First candidate listed is incumbent or presumed incumbent (vice president or candidate from party occupying presidency.)

American voter with some insight into their campaign. They have also taken advantage of the growth of the anonymous announcer, however, more so in image construction than in issue discussion, to provide an unseen commentary on their personality characteristics and campaign issues, or to attack their opponent. Image ads have been used to allow others to comment or provide glowing testimonials about the candidate or provide the public a front row seat to follow the candidate and see his personal characteristics, his competency, dedication, and

trustworthiness, as he moves through the campaign. The language used in image ads is not designed to create fear or stir emotions in voters; the majority to date has used language to create or construct an image based on the credibility of the presidential candidate. If it is surprising that image ads do not use emotion to appeal to voters, it may be even more surprising that issue ads do. For almost half of the issue ads, the language was not factual or data laden; it was emotional, designed to make voters feel something, not know something. This does support critics' concerns that televised presidential advertising is not the best place for the discussion of complex issues or details of policy concerns; in fact, political ads have not been the site (with some exceptions) where details of issues and policy proposals can be addressed. In many ways, political ads are not designed to do that. They function as information shortcuts, providing cues for voters to remember what issues the candidate has already discussed in news reports, debates, or personal appearances.

Finally, this research supports the notion that image and issue ads are not mutually exclusive. They do function in different ways for the candidate, they are dominated by certain types of appeals (issues concerns or personal characteristics), and they are different in several stylistic ways. However, in a percentage of both ad types, they are used to provide a setting into which the other type of content might also be addressed. So, although a presidential ad might be said to be dominated by issue concerns or appeals, one third of those issue ads still contained some attempt to define or redefine the image of the candidate. This certainly lends support to research that has called for attempting to understand the issue and image content and effects of advertising by opening up how we might define, operationalize, and look at types of ads.

As with most research, this study suggests more questions and provides areas for future research. One area that the authors are exploring is how issue and image ads have been used to frame and discuss specific issues, such as economic issues or defense policies, or specific qualities or characteristics, such as honesty or trustworthiness, over the decades of presidential advertising. Another interesting area would be to track a particular issue, personality characteristic, or cultural symbol over the decades to see stylistically how presentation and framing of that issue or image in political advertising has changed. For example, the use of "family" to frame a particular issue or to construct an image for a candidate most certainly has changed in presidential ads from 1952 to 2000.

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