Newspaper Ads Deliver Results For Political Campaigns

Experiment of voter behavior and reader opinions



MARKET RESEARCH









A recent experiment conducted by Dr. Ann Gordon, Director of the Ludie and David C. Henley Research Lab at Chapman University confirmed that:

Political candidates would do well to utilize newspaper advertising to increase favorable impressions among registered voters.



Experiment Methodology

Conducted on Friday March 28, 2008

- Each participant was randomly provided with a local section of The Register.
 - ➤ Half of the participants received a local section, which contained a <u>front page article</u> about a hypothetical candidate named George Osgood. (Control Group)
 - The other half received the same local section with the <u>front page article</u> plus a <u>full page campaign ad</u> within the section about the hypothetical candidate George Osgood.
- Each participant was instructed to read the section as they normally would. When they were done reading the section they were asked to return the paper and answer a survey developed by Dr. Gordon.
- Upon completion of the survey various participants were asked at random to participate in a focus group.
- Professor Ann Gordon and her students carefully analyzed the data and provided the following results.

Note: Findings presented in this report come from a relatively small sample of respondents and, since probability-sampling procedures were not used, resulting data are not necessarily projectable or definitive.

However, the make up of the experiment participants is representative of our demographic make-up of Registered voters in Orange County and Orange County Register readers.

Verbatim respondent quotes are noted to demonstrate consistently heard statements of the same nature.

Experiment designed & results analyzed by Professor Ann Gordon of Chapman University.







(Methodology cont.) Controlled Experiment: Red vs. Blue

Red Group (Control group): This group had a newspaper containing only the article. *The red group would only know:*

- George Osgood, Republican senator up for re-election.
- Osgood recently voted <u>against tax cuts</u> in 2001 and 2003.
- Other Republican's viewed Osgood as great on war and terrorism but, weak on domestic policy.
- Osgood is viewed by his peers as less conservative than his primary opponent.

Blue Group (Article and Ad): This group had a newspaper containing the same article as the control group <u>plus</u> a full page ad.

The blue group would know: All that the red group knew plus,

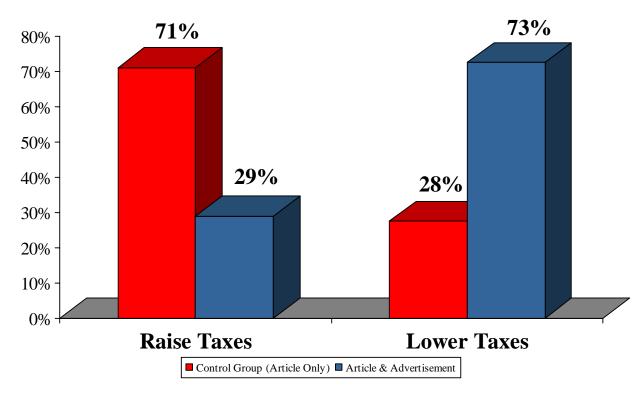
- George Osgood has <u>fought to cut taxes</u> and spending
- Osgood will cut wasteful spending
- George Osgood for senate 2008



Key Findings: The Ad had a greater influence

- The advertisement had a greater influence on the Blue Group's, perception of whether Senator Osgood was fighting to raise or lower taxes.
- Over 70% of voters who read the section containing both the article and the ad remembered the content in the ad more than the article, only 29% remembered the article.

Q: Do you believe George Osgood has fought to lower taxes or has voted to raise taxes?

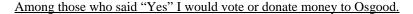


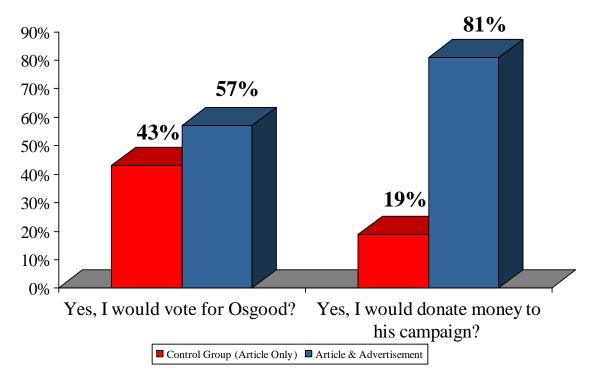
Please note: All data is based on a relatively small sample of registered voters.



The Ad generated a warmer disposition

- Participants who saw the ad were more likely to say they would consider voting and or donating money to the candidate's campaign.
 - Among those who said they would vote for Osgood, 57% saw the ad vs. 43% who only read the article.
 - Among those who said they would donate money to his campaign 81% saw the ad vs. 19% who only read the article.





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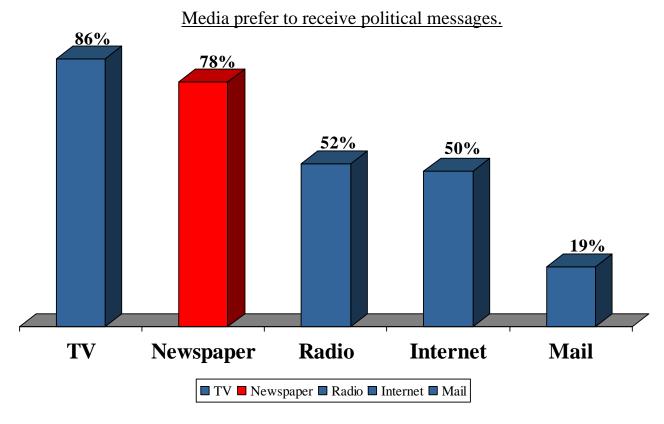


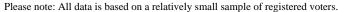




Participant Interest and Media Preference

- 88% Are interested in reading news about their political party, 59% are equally interested in news on candidates and issues.
- 37% Said political ads play an important role in forming their opinions about political issues or candidates and 92% felt it was important to receive information from both party perspectives.









Political Messages in Newspapers Are Effective

- Newspaper advertisements may be particularly useful for low information contests, or local races where the cost of television advertising is too great.
- On average, those that viewed the newspaper advertisement had <u>warmer</u> <u>feelings towards the candidate</u>, rating the candidate a full 11 degrees higher on a feeling thermometer (43 degrees vs. 54 degrees).
- They also were more likely to say they would <u>consider donating money to the candidate's campaign.</u>
- Subjects who viewed the advertisement also perceived the candidate to be more sophisticated and successful.
- When the advertisement contradicted the newspaper article, subjects were more likely to believe the advertisement, as those that saw the ad believed that the candidate fought to lower taxes (the ad text), rather than raise taxes, as reported in the article.
- On average, those that viewed the advertisement felt that the candidate was more <u>competent to deal with taxes and help senior citizens</u>, than those who only read the article.



The Focus Group

Overall participants felt political ads definitely reinforced their perception and awareness of political candidate's or issues, even if they did not believe or agree with the ad. The ad even prompted them to look further into the candidate.

- Nearly all participants would appreciate and welcome a special newspaper section on local politics.
- The section would be most useful for news and information on local government positions such as school board, city council and judicial elections.
- Although ads would not be the only selling point this group felt ads are just as important as the editorial or content because the ad may contain information on a candidate or an incident they may not have known about otherwise.
- Political ads in newspapers definitely spark interest and awareness about a candidate and their issues.
- The majority of participants agreed: "Although they do not read newspapers simply for the advertisements they appreciate the role political ads play in a political advertising campaign.



The Recruiting Process

- 80 Orange County registered voters who voted in the past three elections were recruited for this experiment.
- Over 200 registered voters responded to a newspaper ad seeking survey participants.
- Participants were told they would be participating in a readership survey.
- No other details beyond the recruiting requirements were disclosed.



Participants Profile

Political Party

- 51% Republican
- 30% Democrat
- 16% Independent
- 3% other

Political beliefs:

- 34% Conservative
- 19% Moderate; middle of the road
- 12% Very conservative
- 11% Liberal
- 10% Slightly Liberal
- 7% Very Liberal
- 8% Slightly conservative

Gender

53% Female / 47% Male

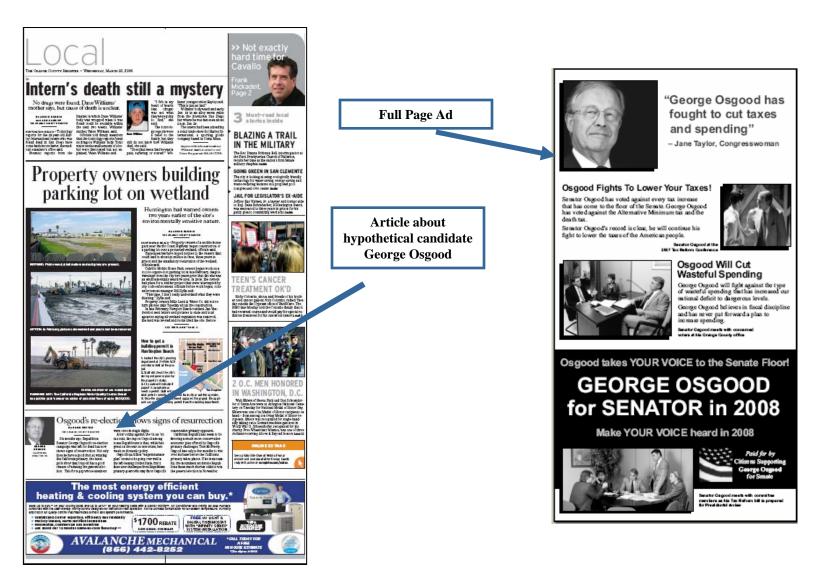
Ethnic Breakdown

- 77% Caucasian
- 7% Hispanic
- 3% Asian
- 10% Other
- 62% Never visit blogs
- 73% Never visit social network websites





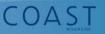
Experiment Components: Article and Ad



Additional Experiment Components: 9-page questionnaire containing 29 questions developed by Professor Gordon.









About Professor Ann Gordon

- Dr. Gordon specializes in research methods, women and politics, political communication, voting behavior and public opinion.
- She is co-editor of Anticipating Madam President (Lynne Rienner, 2002), author of Playing Politics: An Active Learning Approach to American National Government (McGraw-Hill, 2004) and co-author of When Stereotypes Collide: Race, Gender, and Videostyle in Congressional Campaigns (Peter Lang, 2005).

