
**A CONSTRUCTIVIST READING OF RHETORIC AND
RECURRENCE OF POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS
ON TV FOR THE 2010 NATIONAL ELECTION**

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the rhetoric and recurrence of political ads on TV for the 2010 national election. It made use of content analysis of the twenty-two advertisements for presidential candidates and ten advertisements for vice-presidential candidates. In terms of rhetoric, majority of the political ads use propaganda devices. Of the 7 propaganda devices, glittering generalities rank first with 22 advertisements or 25.89% followed by assertion with 19 advertisements or 21.84% and card stacking with 13 advertisements or 14.94%. Conversely, testimonial and plain folks tied in the number of advertisements with 9 or 10.34% while the least, transfer got 8 advertisements or 9.20% and bandwagon with 7 advertisements or 8.05%. In terms of exposure, most of the political ads aired on television were highly dynamic considering their recurrence in their use of airtime through the duration of their advertisements and the number of advertisements in each candidate. However, in terms of its influence to the candidates winnability, it was noticed that the number and popularity of advertisements are not a guarantee of the winning of a candidate. This was shown in the results of the candidates votes in May 2010 national election.

INTRODUCTION*Rationale*

The information revolution has led to information overload, and people are confronted with hundreds of messages each day. Propaganda analysis exposes the tricks that propagandists use and suggests ways of resisting the short-cuts that they promote. As Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson (1992) point out, "every day, people are bombarded with one persuasive communication after another." These appeals persuade not through the give-and-take of argument and debate, but through the manipulation of symbols and of one's most basic human emotion. The ultimate goal of the propagandists is to change the way people act and to leave them believing that those actions are voluntary, that the newly adopted behaviours and the opinions underlying them-are their own. Its persuasive techniques are regularly applied by politicians, advertisers, journalists, radio personalities, and others who are interested in influencing human behavior.

Likewise, messages appearing in advertising are contagious. They continue to influence audience' perceptions and even change their views through their appeal as seen in their slogan, brand, and endorser. Even in the recent 2010 national election, the political advertisements shown on television were highly persuasive in bringing their message to the voting public. Television, as one important medium had contributed a wider share in the airing of political advertisements among national candidates. The display of political advertisements before and during the actual campaign period is already a proof of how television served as an important tool in delivering the message to the public.

The advertisements shown vary in terms of politicians' image projection, message coining, jingle accompaniment, inclusion of celebrities and their own personal branding. These were emphasized through their use of persuasive propaganda techniques like: assertion, transfer, glittering generalities, card stacking, testimonial, plain folks, and band wagon. Moreover, the frequency of advertisement and the length of airtime are contributory in determining the recurrence as employed in the political advertisements.

Nelson and Boynton (1997) cited that, the harsh tone of political advertising, the often controversial techniques employed by political advertisers, and the fact that the competing claims made in campaign advertisements are beyond review, have raised questions about the goals of

political advertisers. Many critics have suggested that political advertisers seek votes at any cost, even including a degraded sense of public regard for the candidates and the electoral process. Moreover, Maslog (2001) pointed out that advertisements that are literally true yet present an inaccurate picture are the rule in political campaigns increasingly driven by paid advertising. Political advertisements mislead voters with deceptions blatant and subtle, through “what is said and what is shown,” “what is unsaid and what is implied.” Sometimes even the grammar is deliberately misleading (Maslog, 2001).

Parallel to this, television became an effective medium in advertising. Like the vote videos, TV commercials often sell images rather than discuss issues. These ads are cleverly designed and carefully produced to achieve maximum results. They are often pretested before airing. Television has had a tremendous impact on both political campaigns and candidates. Campaigns use television commercials as one way to deliver their message (Baran & Davis, 2003).

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to analyze the political advertisements on television for 2010 National Election among the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the country. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. identify the common rhetorical techniques employed in political ads on TV in terms of assertion, transfer, glittering generalities, card stacking, testimonial, plain folks, and band wagon;
2. determine the recurrence of these rhetorical techniques as employed in political ads in terms of frequency of ads and airtime duration; and,
3. determine based on the analysis of the study whether rhetoric and recurrence of political ads on television influence the candidates' votes in the national election.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study was anchored on the constructivist theory. This was used to show on how understanding is constructed and how the structure of cognition affects message production. The theory suggests that individuals interpret and act according to conceptual categories in the cognition system. It further stressed that an event does not just present itself to the individual in raw form

rather the person constructs experiences according to the organization of the cognitive system (Delia in Finegan, 2004).

Constructivists view learning as an active process in which the learners actively construct knowledge as they try to comprehend their worlds. Each person generates his/her own mental models or schemas through which we make sense of individual experiences. These mental models are constructed by prior knowledge, current mental structures and existing beliefs. Thus, the views toward political ads were analyzed based on their portrayal of images through the use of aspiring candidates' rhetoric. The constant exposure of political advertisements in television will formulate certain background for the voting public to determine the impact of the aspiring candidates' messages through their political advertisements.

The theory has been supported with Agenda-Setting theory of Bernard Cohen. It stresses that the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The media's agenda-setting effect on the public has been found in a wide array of national and local issues, during elections and off election political times, in a variety of national and local settings. This however, provides the knowledge of the public about the possible candidate for public office by way of judging them through different information attached to their campaign ads.

Definition of Terms

The terms are defined both conceptually and operationally in this study.

Constructivist reading. This refers to the approach which aims to create meaning based on varied texts, specifically those texts appearing in political ads on television (Baran & Davis, 2003).

National election. This refers to an important event in every country where the citizens exercise their right to suffrage. In the Philippines, this is held every six years, specifically in the month of May.

Political advertisement. It refers to any matter broadcasted, published, printed or exhibited which is intended to draw the attention of the public or a segment thereof to promote or oppose, directly or indirectly, the election of a particular candidate or candidates to a public office. In the broadcast media, political ads may take the form of spots, guestings in TV shows and radio

programs, live or taped announcements, teasers, and other forms of advertising messages or announcements used by commercial advertisers. (Section 10, COMELEC RESOLUTION No. 6520, On Fair Election Act as cited in the book of Pagunsan, 2004).

As used in the study, this includes the sample of political TV ads used by the candidates.

Propaganda techniques. These are techniques that attempt to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of a group in order to benefit the sponsor. This include:

Assertion. It is an enthusiastic or energetic statement presented as a fact, although it is not necessarily true. They often imply that the statement requires no explanation or back up, but that it should merely be accepted without question.

Bandwagon. It is an appeal to the subject to follow the crowd, to join in because others are doing so as well. Bandwagon propaganda is, essentially, trying to convince the subject that one side is the winning side, because more people have joined it.

Card stacking. It is also known as selective omission involves by only presenting information that is positive to an idea or proposal and omitting information contrary to it.

Glittering generalities. These are words that have different positive meaning for individual subjects, but are linked to highly valued concepts. When these words are used, they demand approval without thinking, simply because such an important concept is involved.

Plain folks. These are attempts to use the accent of a specific audience as well as using specific idioms or jokes. This technique is usually most effective when used with glittering generalities, in an attempt to convince the public that the propagandist views about highly valued ideas are similar to their own and therefore more valid.

Testimonials. These are quotations or endorsements, in or out of context, which attempt to connect a famous or respectable person with a product or item. Testimonials are very closely connected to the transfer technique, in that an attempt is made to connect an agreeable person to another item.

Transfers. It is an attempt to make the subject view a certain item in the

same way as they view another item, to link the two in the subjects mind. Although this technique is often used to transfer negative feelings for one object to another, it can also be used in positive ways. By linking an item to something the subject respects or enjoys, positive feelings can be generated for it.

Rhetoric. This refers to a skill in the effective use of speech as a means of communication and persuasion (Merriam-Webster, 2006). In this study, it pertains to the propaganda techniques.

Recurrence. This refers to the recourse after an interval, (Merriam-Webster, 2006). As used in the study, this is mainly focused on the number of political ads used and their airtime frequency.

Significance of the Study

The study will contribute not only to advertising industry but even to ordinary citizens of the country where everybody is exposed to different messages conveyed through the use of media forms, particularly television. Specifically it will make use of the results as a tool in the analysis of different advertisements on television through classes in advertising, media communication ethics and broadcast media. Also, this will benefit the following group of people:

Mass Communication students. The study will help students become more politically aware and participative in exercising their rights to suffrage. Furthermore, the output will be a springboard in their study in media specifically in advertising, broadcast media and other related fields in communication.

Teachers. The study will strengthen their commitment as educators by giving students varied strategies in learning the lessons in major subjects through in-depth analysis of advertisements shown on TV and in other media forms. This will specifically help teachers in Mass Communication for them to develop a curriculum integrating the appreciation of good advertisements and designing an output for further evaluation of advertisements.

Future researchers. The study will give additional resources to those who are interested to conduct a similar study through the use of its results.

Filipino voters. The results of the study will help enlighten Filipino voters in making their decisions of who to vote during elections if proper

dissemination of information regarding advertisement campaigns will be reinforced.

Scope and Limitation

The study analyzed the political ads on TV specifically from national elective positions of the aspiring presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The samples of political ads were taken from December 2009 to March 2010. Twenty-two political ads from the presidential candidates and ten political ads from the vice-presidential candidates were taken as samples in this study. Only those politicians who have aired their political ads on television were considered, since not all of them availed of television slots for placement of advertisements.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the descriptive-analytical design. This was utilized in determining and analyzing the content of the political ads on television based on its rhetoric and recurrence.

Data Collection

The proposal was submitted to the University Research Center for approval of the study. Upon approval, the viewing and recording of ads from television and internet (www.youtube.com) were made. After which, the compilation of the recorded ads were used for coding and tabulation. In addition, broadcast logs of the political ads from the two television networks: ABS-CBN and GMA 7 were considered together with the reports from Nielsen Media within December 2009 to March 2010. This was done through the researcher's monitoring based on the updates from the identified sources.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected were utilized for analysis and interpretation. In the analysis part, both Filipino and English presentation of advertisements on TV were utilized. Since most advertisements appear in Filipino, the context and the message employed in advertisements were retained in the use of its

original language, however the interpretations were done in English. Interpretation was supported with the data gathered and the related literature and studies. Frequency and percentage were utilized in presenting the results.

RESULTS

In terms of propaganda techniques used among the presidential candidates, assertion and glittering generalities got the highest each with 15 advertisements or 25.42% while card stacking got 10 advertisements or 16.95%. It can be observed that through assertion, the presidential candidates were firm and vision-laden in terms of how they would like to lead the country through different platforms that they offer to the public. On the other hand, to support these assertions, the use of glittery words like: *walang corrupt; walang mahirap; bayan muna bago ang lahat; kaunlaran parating na; Pilipinas ay gagawing Bagumbayan; dapat may galing at talino; gaganda ang buhay kay Binay; and paglilingkod na walang katulad* underscore the public's attention. On the contrary, card stacking is dominantly used to differentiate one's ability from the other through the use of distinct words associated to them like: *laging gising para sa kababayan; ganito kami sa Makati; papunta pa lang, Erap pabalik na;* and leadership result integrity. These provided even more emphasis on one's character that sets him apart from the others. Bandwagon, testimonial, plain folks and transfer are the least among the propaganda devices used.

Table 1. Propaganda Techniques Employed by Presidentiables Across Political Ads (Multiple Response)

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES	f	%
Assertion	15	25.42
Glittering Generalities	15	25.42
Card Stacking	10	16.95
Bandwagon	6	10.17
Transfer	5	8.48
Plain Folks	4	6.78
Testimonial	4	6.78

Showing similar views, the popular propaganda techniques used among the vice-presidential candidates are also that of glittering generalities with 7 advertisements or 25% followed by a tie between plain folks and testimonial with 5 advertisements or 17.86%. Assertion got 4 advertisements or 14.29%. With the same results as regards the commonality of propaganda techniques, it only shows that these techniques were important factors in bringing one's advocacy to the public.

In the case of plain folks, the lines like: *babalik na ang pwersa ng masa; si Villar ang tunay na mahirap; Loren, tunay na kaibigan; and kung may tapat na partner, tiyak ang asenso*, added more emphasis especially to programs that will not only benefit individual concern, but as a group like that of and among women, family and the poor. On the contrary, card stacking, transfer and bandwagon were last with few manifestations in the ads used among the vice-presidential candidates.

Table 2. Propaganda Techniques Employed by Vice-Presidential Candidates Across Political Advertisements (Multiple Response)

Propaganda Techniques	f	%
Glittering Generalities	7	25
Plain Folks	5	17.86
Testimonial	5	17.86
Assertion	4	14.29
Card Stacking	3	10.71
Transfer	3	10.71
Bandwagon	1	3.57

In summary, majority of the propaganda techniques used among the presidential and vice-presidential candidates is glittering generalities with 22 advertisements or 25.29% followed by assertion with 19 or 21.84%, card stacking with 13 or 14.94% and a tie between plain folks and testimonial with 9 advertisements or 10.34%.

Conversely, transfer and bandwagon are two of the least utilized propaganda devices with only 8 advertisements or 9.20% and 7 advertisements or 8.05%.

Table 3. Propaganda Techniques Employed Across Political Ads (Mutiple Response)

Propaganda Techniques	f	%
Glittering Generalities	22	25.29
Assertion	19	21.84
Card Stacking	13	14.94
Testimonial	9	10.34
Plain Folks	9	10.34
Transfer	8	9.20
Bandwagon	7	8.05

Data in Table 4 shows the recurrence of propaganda techniques used in political ads based on its airtime duration and frequency of appearance on television. Twenty-two political advertisement of presidential candidates and ten political ads of vice-presidential candidates from December 2009 to March 2010 were recorded and coded. This period was considered to include the advertisements that were aired before and after the official campaign period set by COMELEC (Commission on Elections).

Table 4. Recurrence of Political Ads on TV in terms of Airtime Duration of Ads

Name of Candidate	Political Ad	Duration of Ads
PRESIDENTIABLES		
AQUINO, BENIGNO SIMEON III COJUANGCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindi ka Nag-iisa • Hindi ako Magnanakaw TVC • Noynoy with music/ with baby james • Kung Walang Corrupt, walang mahirap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 min & 20sec • 1 minute • 58 sec • 39 sec
ESTRADA EJERCITO, JOSEPH MARCELO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erap magbabalik • Erap for President 2010 Erap: Karanasan • Erap: tuloy ang laban • Erap: Reform peace and order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 sec • 41 sec • 39 sec • 41 sec
GORDON, RICHARD JUICO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dick Gordon Bagumbayan Movement • Go Pilipinas • Gordon's Di natutulog (with silent night jingle) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 min & • 6 sec • 1 min & 5 sec
MADRIGAL, JAMBY AS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamby Madrigal for President with Jose Abad Santos History • Jamby Madrigal for President with music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 min & 2 secs • 1min & 33 secs

Table 4 Continued.

Name of Candidate	Political Ad	Duration of Ads
PRESIDENTIABLES		
TEODORO, GILBERTO JR. COJUANGCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galing at Talino 1 (Possible-the controversial musical jingle) Sulong Gibo Dapat Gibo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2min & 25 sec 32sec 47sec
VILLANUEVA, EDUARDO CRUZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eddie Ako by Gloc 9 Ako ay para kay Bro. Eddie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 min 4 min & 46 sec
VILLAR, MANUEL JR. BAMBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Akala Mo Video Manny Villar's "magtatapos ang kahirapan" Vision niVillar Dolphy on Manny Villar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37 sec 45 sec 46 secs 55 sec
VICE-PRESIDENTIABLES		
Political Ad		
Duration of Ads		
BINAY, JEJOMAR CABAUATAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ganito Kami sa Makati May Pagahon, may bukas pa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45seconds 32seconds
FERNANDO, BAYANI FLORES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Bawat Gawain, Pinagbubuti." Mr. Political Will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17 sec 22 sec
LEGARDA, LOREN BAUTISTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official Global Warming Ad Pilipinas kong Mahal (jingle) Loren Ikaw by Sarah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 sec 1 min & 25 sec 31 sec
ROXAS, MANUEL ARANETA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sacrifice TVC Hindi Namin kayo iiwan Mar Roxas campaign ad: tatak ng mahusay na lider Buhay Palengke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 min & 5 sec 1 min & 2 sec 33 sec

Of the seven (7) presidential candidates in this study, Manny Villar got a number of advertisement placements in two networks within the specified months. It has been observed that before the actual campaign period, he already aired political ads like: *Akala mo Video* and *Ang Magtatapos ng Kahirapan*. The advertisement placements continue to dominate in the broadcast industry with his campaign advertisements with children as endorsers even during the conduct of the study. On the other hand, Aquino's advertisements started only later than that of Manny Villar but he was able to compete in the recent race of campaign ads because of the support coming from the different sectors. Most of these support which also help in the "paid for" ads are from entertainment personalities.

Meanwhile, GiboTeodoro, a relative of Noynoy Aquino who is the fore-runner in the administration side only displayed his ads mid-December and onwards. While Dick made an early campaign with his ad placement as seen in November 2009.

The same is true with Eddie Villanueva whose campaign jingles came last

December 2009. Bro. Eddie's campaign advertisement was highly emphasized in its mass appeal, the fact that the artists and music used were easy to recall.

On the other hand, Erap Estrada, who is known for his "masa appeal" did not show much of his ad campaigns on TV not until the latter part of December. He only shows bits of information before it came with a full blown advertisement about his plan in running for national seat. However, Jamby Madrigal who only participated in the placement of ads on TV in 2010 got the least share among her rivals for the presidential race. She claimed in most of her TV appearances that she would rather do a house to house campaign than invest on TV advertisement.

In the case of the vice-presidential candidates, Jojo Binay succeeded over Mar Roxas and Loren Legarda as his close rivals in the race for vice-presidential candidates. He invested more on the repetition of his ads which rank him first in the four-month period while Manuel Roxas who at first aired his political ads as early as July of 2009 for his plan to run for president but gave way for Noynoy's candidacy has minimized his ads. On the other hand, Loren Legarda also competes in the race with her ad campaigns focusing on women and environment advocacies while Bayani Fernando's got fourth among the candidates for the vice-presidential race.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study reveal that both presidential and vice-presidential candidates utilize television as their tool in disseminating the message that they want to send to the public through the use of political advertisements. Rhetoric is analyzed through the use of propaganda devices while recurrence is determined through the number of advertisements each candidate has and the number of minutes spent in advertisement placements.

Previous studies also provide related truths as regards the dominant use of television during election campaign. Television is still considered as an effective medium in informing the public about issues confronting the people and society. Thus, the recent national election is of no exception since through television, advertisements are seen and the results of the election are broadcasted and opinions are discussed.

Parallel to this, research on Learning and Memory Retention shows that people retain only 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and 50% of what they hear and see. Television creates more

impact than any other advertising medium, making TV's cost per impression even more cost effective.(from: <http://www.allpromedia.com/adplacement.html>).

Furthermore, the recurrence of political ads through the number of advertisements present in each candidate and the duration of ads through the minutes spent show that it may yield a positive result to some candidates like in the case of Aquino and Binay. The two candidates' use of political advertisements are highly observed before the actual campaign period and during the actual period set by COMELEC. On the contrary, the case of Villar, yields a negative impact, though of all the presidential candidates, he got the highest number of ads and was known to be one of the candidates who made an early announcement of his desire to run for presidential seat. However, the result of the election is not favorable to Villar for he only rank third among the presidential candidates.

In the case of recurrence pertaining to the number of advertisements shown and the duration of airtime, a report from (Walker in Baran and Davis 2003) stressed that, whatever its positive or negative effects, exposure to the news media does influence public awareness of elections. In a study of the 1988 Southern "Super Tuesday" regional primary, researchers found exposure to all media to be positively and significantly related to voter awareness of the campaign, as well as to voter perceptions of increased campaign activity and perceptions of increased Southern political prominence. Exposure to partisan political information was found to be significantly related only to perceptions of increased campaign activity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Television was dominantly used as an effective medium in the utilization of political ads in order to gain public attention, and eventually, the public's judgment on the political candidates to vote during election.
2. Glittering generalities, assertion and card stacking were among the popularly used propaganda devices during the election campaign. On the contrary, plain folks and testimonials, transfer, and bandwagon were the least employed devices in their use of rhetoric.
3. The recurrence of ads in terms of its airtime used and the number of ads placed on television contribute to constant public awareness of the political candidates. However, Villar who got the highest advertisement placement and expenses surprisingly ranked third in the final results of votes during the

national election. This shows that the number and popularity of advertisements are not a guarantee of the winning of a candidate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are offered:

1. Through the findings of the study, teachers especially in Mass Communication subjects like advertising, media ethics and media management should orient properly their students in determining the good advertisements portrayed on TV and other media forms. Teachers should strengthen the ability of their students to analyze and evaluate the importance of advertising and its usefulness in daily undertaking.

2. Student leaders, through active participation, should responsibly disseminate information using available media regarding the right candidates for government positions. This will work best if these student leaders will also be oriented as regards the applicability of good advertisements and its relevance to campaigns and the images portrayed by any possible candidate in public office.

3. To establish political awareness among Filipino voters, a program of action should be facilitated like invitation from non-government agencies (NGO) for a possible talk regarding responsible voting and preparing the next generation to understand the rationale of election in the country. Other possible linkages should be tapped in order to create connections where information may be widely disseminated and / or to initiate school programs like information drive through leaflets, pamphlets and other resourceful materials to be facilitated by Mass Communication group in order to intensify the campaign for responsible and honest election.

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