

It's My Campaign I'll Cry if I Want to: How and When Campaigns Use Emotional Appeals

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Problem

- Recent research in the arena of campaign advertising suggests that emotional appeals influence political attitudes and behaviors

- However, most of these studies focus on individual-level effects in a laboratory setting
- Assumption is that campaigns purposefully manipulate voter emotions

Research Question

- When do campaign's "go emotional", and which types of candidates are more likely to do so?

Affective Theory

- Antecedent of emotion
 - Cognitive appraisal theory
 - Attribution theory
- Consequences of emotion
 - Affect-as-information, i.e. mood theory
- Interdependence of emotion/cognition
 - Appraisal tendency effect
 - Affective intelligence theory

Expectations/Hypotheses

- Campaigns make enthusiasm, pride, compassion and anger appeals to shore up partisan support and thus maintain the status quo
- Campaigns make enthusiasm appeals to get out the vote
- Campaigns make fear appeals to release voters from their partisan anchors

Data and Method

- All ads from 26 different 2004 U.S. Senate races, Wisconsin Advertising Project
- Logit model clustered on state

Use of Appeals Over-time Predictors of Use of Each Emotional Appeal

Predictors of Use of Each Emotional Appeal by Incumbency Status

Results

- Trailing candidates were significantly more likely to use fear, while leading candidates were significantly more likely to use enthusiasm/pride
- Trailing candidates were more likely to use anger appeals
- Party and gender differences
- Competitive races more likely to use anger appeals
- Fear appeals are used later in the race for challengers
- Anger ads are used later in the campaign by both challengers and incumbents
- Enthusiasm/pride appeals were

more likely to be used early in the campaign by both challengers and incumbents

Conclusions

- We find support for patterned use of specific emotional appeals
- Discrete emotions model worked well for predicting fear and enthusiasm/pride appeals, anger and compassion appeals were less predictable
- This research contributes to understanding of the use of emotional appeals in real world of political campaigns