The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment

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Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results	
22. Kaid, Chanslor, and Hovind 1992	Exposure to different types of actual political ads (positive, negative, issue, image) and the type of television program surrounding the ad	Experiment with a 3 × 3 factorial design varying program and commercial type, involving a convenience sample of 283 members of civic groups and college students	Vote intention  Affect for sponsor	Positive image ads produced greater likelihood of voting than negative ads, $d = -2.40$ . Positive issue ads produced higher candidate evaluations for the sponsor than negative commercials, $d = -2.05$ .	
			Memory for ad	Aspects of positive issue ads were remembered more frequently than aspects of negative ads, $d = -1.15$ .	
23. Kaid, Leland, and Whitney 1992	Exposure to positive and negative ads from Bush and Dukakis campaigns	112 undergraduates saw 3 Bush ads (2 positive, 1 negative), 3 Dukakis ads (2 positive, 1 negative), or 3 ads from both candidates (2/3 positive for each)	Memory for ads	Positive ads more likely to be remembered than expected by chance (i.e., .67), $d =30$ .	
24. King, Henderson, and Chen 1998  Exposure to single positive or negative ad from Clinton or Dole campaigns, near end of 1996 U.S. presidential election campaign	negative ad from Clinton or Dole campaigns, near end of 1996 U.S. presidential election	2 × 2 × 2 experimental design using 137 undergraduates, varying positive/negative nature of ad, Clinton/Dole as sponsor of ad, and controlling on prior liking of the candidates (median split)	Liking for sponsor of ads	Clinton liked less when exposed to his negative ad, but no effect of exposure to Dole ads, mean $d =32$ .	
			Liking for target of ads	Dole liked less after exposure to negative Clinton ad, but no effect of exposure to Dole ads, mean $d = .31$ .	
		Vote intention	Likelihood of voting for Clinton decreased after exposure to his negative ad, but no effect of exposure to Dole ads, mean $d =23$ .		
				Liking for ads	Exposure to positive ads associated with more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions compared to exposure to positive ads in $15/18$ tests, mean $d =51$ .
			Memory for ads	Positive Clinton ads better recalled than negative Clinton ads, but no effect of exposure to Dole ads, mean $d =40$ .	

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Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results
25. Lang 1991	Exposure to 8 randomly selected positive and negative ads varying emotional appeal and audio-visual format	Experiment using a 4 (order)  × 2 (emotion) × 2 (format) × 4 (repetition) mixed model factorial design with 67 undergraduates	Memory for ads	More information was recalled about negative ads than positive ads, $d = .83$ .
26. Lau, Pomper, and Mumoli 1998	Positive/negative "tone" of 1988, 1990, 1994, and 1996 U.S. Senate campaigns, coded from newspaper accounts	Ratings of both candidates by 2,686 ANES respondents, and aggregate analysis of vote totals from 122 Senate elections	Differential ratings of sponsor and target of ads	Relative liking for sponsor of ads decreased as those ads became more negative,
			Reported vote	<ul> <li>d =18.</li> <li>Candidates employing relatively more negative campaigning received relatively fewer votes,</li> <li>d =17.</li> </ul>
			Actual election outcomes	Vote total lower than expected for candidate sponsoring more negative ads, $d =26$ .
			Turnout	Turnout higher with relatively more negative campaigning at both the individual ( $d = .06$ ) and aggregate level, $d = .39$ .
27. Lemert, Elliot, Bernstein, Rosenberg, and Nestvold	Survey respondents reflecting on a positive or negative ad they could recall seeing during 1988 presidential election	Representative sample of 1,256 respondents	Affect for sponsor of recalled ad	Sponsor of ad was liked less if a negative ad was recalled, $d =34$ .
1991			Affect for target of recalled ad	Target of ad was liked more if a negative ad was recalled, $d =13$ .
			Type of ad recalled	Negative ads were more likely to be recalled, $d = 3.86$ .
28. Luskin and Bratcher 1994	Authors' rating of "negativity" of 1986–92 U.S. Senate election campaigns, based on their reading of various campaign reports	Aggregate analysis of vote totals from 125 Senate elections	Turnout	Campaign negativity decreased turnout in states with high proportion of independents $(d =30)$ , but otherwise increased turnout $(d = .27)$ ; overall $d =12$ .

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TABLE A-1. (Continued)

Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results
29. Martinez and Delegal 1990	Exposure to negative ads from one or both candidates in a hypothetical election	Pre/post experiment with 131 college students as subjects	Trust in government	Trust in government increased after exposure to negative ads, $d = .14$ .
	Perceived positive/negative nature of 1988 Bush and Dukakis campaigns	Representative survey of 420 respondents	Affect for sponsor of ads	The more a candidate's campaign was perceived as negative, the less the sponsor was liked, $d =28$ .
			Affect for target of ads	The more the opposing candidate's campaign was perceived as negative, the more the target was liked, $d =48$ .
30. Mathews and Dietz-Uhler 1998	Exposure to positive or negative "family values" ad from mock Democratic or Republican Senate candidate	Experiment with 125 college students as subjects	Affect toward sponsor of ad	Sponsor of positive ad liked much more than sponsor of negative ad, $d =52$ .
			Likelihood of voting for sponsor of ad	Subjects much more likely to intend to vote for sponsor of positive ad than sponsor of negative ad, $d =62$ .
31. McBride, Toburen, and Thomas 1993	Exposure to four negative ads from a 1990 Louisiana senate	Two experiments involving 223 undergraduates from three	Intended turnout	Ad valence did not significantly affect voter turnout, $d = .12$ .
	race for the first experiment; exposure to a description of four negative ads from the 1992 presidential race in the second experiment	midwestern universities, 70 of whom were recontacted after the election to measure actual turnout	Actual turnout	Controlling on race, income, interest in the campaign, and vote intention, subjects expose to negative ads were slightly (and nonsignificantly) less likely to actually vote, $d =06$ .
32. Merritt 1984	Exposure to negative and neutral ads from candidates in a 1982 California Assembly race	Representative survey of 314 respondents in the candidates' district	Affect toward sponsor of attack ad	More negative affect toward sponsor when ad was negative rather than positive, $d =86$ .
			Affect toward target of attack ad	More negative affect toward target after negative rather than positive ad, $d = .77$ .
			Correct recall of ad	Negative ad was more likely to be correctly recalled, $d = .29$ .
33. Newhagen and Reeves 1991	Reactions to actual Bush and Dukakis positive, negative, or comparative ads	Within-subjects design; 30 residents reacting to 28 different ads	Memory for each ad	Recall was more accurate (and quicker) for negative rather than positive ads, $d = 1.30$ .

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Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results
4. Pfau, Kenski, Nitz, and Sorenson 1989	Exposure to attack ad from least preferred candidate during 1988 presidential campaign, vs. no exposure control group	Representative sample of 374 likely voters	Affect toward sponsor of ad  Vote intention	Sponsor of negative ad was liked more after exposure to ad, compared to control group, $d = .75$ .  Respondents were more likely to intend to vote for sponsor of negative ad compared to
				control group, $d = .92$ .
5. Pinkleton 1997	Amount of negative information about target included in ad about fictitious candidates	165 college students assigned to between-groups pre-post design (including a no ad control group)	Affect toward sponsor of ad Affect toward target of ad Affect toward ad itself	More negative the ad, less sponsor was liked, $d=44$ . More negative the ad, less target was liked, $d=.67$ . More negative information in the ad, less it was liked, $d=31$ .
6. Pinkleton 1998	Amount of negative information about target included in ad about fictitious candidates	165 college students assigned to between-groups pre-post design (including a no ad control group)	Affect toward sponsor of ad Affect toward target of ad Likelihood of voting for target and sponsor	Sponsor liked slightly less if attacked opponent, $d=40$ . Target liked slightly less if attacked, $d=.04$ . Likelihood of voting for sponsor decreased slightly if attacked opponent, $d=03$ .
37. Pinkleton and Garramone 1992	Number of negative ads recalled from each candidate	Phone survey of 405 likely voters just before 1990 Michigan senatorial and	Intended turnout	Intention to vote slightly higher, the more negative ads seen, $d = .01$ .
		gubernatorial election	Affect for ads themselves	The more negative ads seen, the less they were approved of and the less informative they were judged to be, $d =18$ .
8. Rahn and Hirshorn 1995	Exposure to 4 positive or 4 negative ads from the 1988 presidential election	Experiment with 53 8–13-year- old children	Public mood	Mood was lower for children exposed to 4 negative ads two years after the election, $d = -1.45$ .
9. Roberts 1995	Memory for Bush or Clinton ads	Representative phone survey of 931 respondents after the 1992 presidential election	Memory for ad	Negative Bush and Clinton ads slightly more likely to be recalled than would be expected by chance, $d = .05$ .

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The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment

TABLE A-1. (Continued)

Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results
10. Roddy and Garramone 1988	Positive or negative response to opponent's attack ad	2 × 2 experiment with 274 undergraduates varying type of attack (issue or image)	Affect for sponsor of response ad	Candidate who responded positively rather than negatively was liked more, $d =09$ .
		and nature of response (positive or negative)	Affect for target of response ad	Target was liked less after negative response compared to positive response, $d = .06$ .
			Intended vote for/against sponsor of response ad	Intention to vote for candidate who responded negatively rather than positively was higher, $d = .10$ .
			Affect for response ad itself	Positive response ad was liked more than negative response ad, $d =33$ .
41. Schultz and Pancer 1997	Whether fictitious candidate attacks character of opponent	134 undergraduates randomly assigned to 2 × 2 experiment, varying sex of	Affect for sponsor of attack	"No significant difference" in evaluations of sponsor, (assumed) $d = 0$ .
		candidate and whether s/he attacks opponent	Vote intention	"No significant difference" in vote intention, (assumed) $d = 0$ .
42. Shapiro and Rieger 1992	Positive or negative radio ads from two fictitious candidates in two local elections	106 undergraduates in 2 × 2 mixed design; subjects heard 1 positive and 1 negative	Affect for sponsor of ad	Sponsor of negative ads was liked less than sponsor of positive ads, $d = -1.89$ .
	III WO IOOLI GIOGIONI	image or issue ad	Affect for target of ad	Target of negative ad was liked less than target of positive ad, $d = .50$ .
			Vote intention	Subjects were more likely to intend to vote for sponsor of positive ad rather than negative ad, $d = -1.29$ .
			Affect toward ad itself	Positive ads were seen as more fair than negative ads, $d = -3.12$ .
			Memory for ad	Negative ads were more likely to be remembered, $d = .54$ .
43. Sulfaro 1998	Reported memory for positive or negative ad from 1992 and 1996 U.S. presidential campaigns	1992 and 1996 ANES surveys, N = 4,054	Affect for target of ads	Negative ads increased liking of target for both low education $(d =02)$ and high education respondents $(d =01)$ ; weighted mean $d =02$ .
			Affect for sponsor of ads	Affect toward sponsor of negative ad decreased for low education $(d =03)$ but not high education respondents $(d = 0)$ ; weighted mean $d =02$ .

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Study	Independent Variable	Subjects and Design	Dependent Variables	Results
			Memory for ads	Negative ads recalled better than positive ads by both low education ( $d = .39$ ) and high education respondents, $d = .39$ .
44. Thorson, Christ, and Caywood 1991	Fictitious support or attack ads created for actual Senate candidates	161 undergraduates assigned to 2 (issue vs. image) × 2 (support or attack) × 2	Affect toward sponsor of ad Vote intention	Sponsor of ad was liked less if attacking, $d =35$ .  "No significant difference" on vote intention, (assumed) $d = 0$ .
		(presence of music) × 2 (visual background) experiment	Affect for ad itself	Attack ad was liked less than support ad, $d =35$ .
		баренный	Memory for ad	Memory was better for support than attack ad, $d =35$ .
45. Thorson, Ognianova, Coyle, and Denton 1996	Reported exposure to positive and negative ads during the campaign	Random survey of 657 residents of a northern city after gubernatorial and senatorial election	Turnout	"No significant relationship" between relative exposure to positive and negative ads and reported turnout, (assumed) $d = 0$ .
			Public mood	Exposure to negative ads was negatively related to four measures of public mood, average $d =30$ .
			Political efficacy	Relatively greater exposure to negative ads related to lower political efficacy, $d =22$ .
			Trust in government	Exposure to negative ads was negatively related to trust in government, $d =31$ .
			Knowledge of candidates	Exposure to negative ads increased knowledge of candidates more than exposure to positive ads, $d =01$ .
6. Tinkham and Weaver- Lariscy 1991	Media strategy, as reported by actual congressional candidates (positive issue, positive image, or focus on opponent)	240 responses to survey of both major party candidates in all 333 competitive congressional races in 1982	Actual outcome (i.e., did respondent win or lose election?)	Challengers who went negative were more likely to win, $d = .14$ ; incumbents who wen negative were more likely to lose, $d =16$ ; candidates in open seats who went negative were much more likely to lose, $d =68$ ; weighted average, $d =10$ .

A Meta-Analytic Assessment

The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements:

Results

differential affect for sponsor of

7 negative ads were rated as less

more effective than positive ad,

d = .72.

ethical than 3 positive ads,

Positive ads produced greater

ad, d = -4.38.

TABLE A-1. (Continued)

47. Tinkham and Weaver-

48. Tinkham and Weaver-

Lariscy 1993

Lariscy 1994

Study

Independent Variable

Positive or negative nature of 10

Positive or negative nature of 10

actual political ads

actual political ads

Subjects and Design

Within-subjects design, with

Within-subjects design, with

201 undergraduates

201 undergraduates

Dependent Variables

("Source utility"-

Judgments about ads

(Sponsor-Target)

"Target utility")

Differential affect

themselves

"Only the "weighted average" effect size was used in the meta-analysis.

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