This collection provides detailed tracking data on when and where political ads aired during the year 2012. It covers all broadcast television stations in all media markets in the United States. Ads aired in U.S. Senate, U.S. House and gubernatorial races are also coded for their content. Presidential ads are not included in this release. They will be available after November 2016.

DATABASES

The data collection comes in four different files (unlike 2010, estimated spending information is available for each ad within each file):

1. wmp-senate-2012: contains information on all ads aired in U.S. Senate races
2. wmp-house-2012: contains information on all ads aired in U.S. House races
3. wmp-gov-2012: contains information on all ads aired in gubernatorial races
4. wmp-down-ballot-2012: contains information all ads aired in other races. Only information about when and where each ad aired is listed. The Wesleyan Media Project did not code these ads.

CITATION

Publications based on this data collection should acknowledge this source by means of bibliographic citation. The bibliographic citation for this data collection is:


SUPPORT

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DATA COLLECTION AND CODING

The source for the ad data is Kantar Media/CMAG. This commercial firm specializes in providing detailed, real-time tracking information to corporate and political clients. These tracking data represent the most comprehensive and systematic collection on the content and targeting of political advertisements. The data include two types of information. First, frequency information tells when and where ads aired. It contains precise and detailed information on the date, time, market, station, and television show of each airing. Second, the data provide information about each ad’s content in the form of a video file for each unique creative or individual ad.
CMAG gathers such data by using a market-based tracking system, deploying “Ad Detectors” in each media market in the U.S. In addition to all local advertising activity, these detectors track advertisements on the major national networks, as well as national cable networks. The system’s software recognizes the electronic seams between programming and advertising and identifies the “digital fingerprints” of specific advertisements. When the system does not recognize the fingerprints of a particular spot, the advertisement is captured and downloaded. Thereafter, the system automatically recognizes and logs that particular commercial wherever and whenever it airs. Studies that examine advertisers’ “buy sheets” obtained from television stations and compare them with this CMAG data find that the company’s system is highly reliable in tracking the universe of ads aired.

After receiving the data from CMAG, the Wesleyan Media Project processes and codes the ad tracking data from all media markets in the United States. In this process, using videos of ads captured by CMAG, project staff first research the entity responsible for airing each political spot, distinguishing between those paid for by candidates, parties, and interest groups. Finally, the Wesleyan Media Project codes the content of each ad on an extensive battery of questions using a web-based content analysis platform called Academiclip, a CommIT media research application.

VARIABLES

creative: name of specific advertisement

l: length of ad in seconds

market: media market where ad aired

dmaid: media market ID

station: name of television station

affiliate: name of television affiliate

airdate: date on which ad aired

airtime: time at which ad aired

media: television medium

daypart: time of day during which ad aired

program: television program during which ad aired

programtype: type of television program during which ad aired

category: category of race
categorystate: state in which the race took place

election:
    Primary
    General
    N/A

issue: key issues discussed: identified by CMAG

level: level of race

race: type of race

tonecmag:
    Pos
    Neg

adtypecmag:
    Ballot Measure
    Candidate
    Candidate & Party
    Issue-Election
    Party

sponsorcmag: ad sponsor

district: congressional district (for House races)

party: party of favored candidate

est_cost:

sponsor:
    1  Candidate
    2  Party
    3  Coordinated between a candidate and party
    4  Interest Group/other

sponsor_name: name of interest group, party, candidate, etc. sponsoring the ad

cand_id: Name of the favored candidate

tgt_id: Name of the targeted candidate
**mag_wrd:** Does the ad mention any of the following specific words or phrases: vote for, elect, support, cast your ballot, [Smith] for Congress, vote against, defeat, or reject?
0  No
1  Yes
2  Yes, But Only in the Paid for By (PFB) tag

Does the ad provide a….
0  No
1  Yes

**phone:** Does the ad provide a phone number to call?

**website:** Does the ad provide a website to visit?

**mail:** Does the ad provide a mailing address?

**twitter:** Does the ad provide a Twitter handle?

**youtube:** Does the ad provide a YouTube channel?

**approve:** Where does the candidate’s oral approval of the spot appear?
0  No Oral Statement of Approval/Authorization
1  Beginning of the Spot
2  Middle of the Spot
3  End of the Spot

**vid:** Does the candidate physically appear on screen and speak to the audience during oral approval?
0  No, Authorization Stated in Voiceover
1  Yes

Excluding the “oral approval,” is the…
0  No
1  Yes

**f_mention:** Favored candidate mentioned by name in the ad?

**f_picture:** Favored candidate pictured in the ad?

**f_narrate:** Favored candidate narrating the ad?

**o_mention:** Opposing candidate mentioned by name in the ad?

**o_picture:** Opposing candidate pictured in the ad?

**narrate:** Is there someone doing a voiceover (narrating the ad) separate from a candidate?
0  No
1  Yes, a female
2  Yes, a male
3  Yes, both female and male voiceover
**ad_tone**: In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack a candidate, or contrast the candidates?
1  Contrast
2  Promote
3  Attack

**cnt_prp**: If the ad is a contrast ad, what proportion of the ad promotes (as opposed to attacks) a candidate?
1  More Promote Than Attack
2  About Equal Attack and Promote
3  More Attack Than Promote
4  Only Contrasting Element is Brief Statement in Oral Authorization

**cnt_fin**: If the ad is a contrast ad, does it finish by promoting a candidate or attacking a candidate?
1  Finishes by Promoting
2  Finishes by Attacking

**ad_civ**: In your judgment, are the attack portions of the ad mostly civil or mostly uncivil?
1  Mostly civil
2  Mostly uncivil

**prty_mn**: Does the ad mention the party label of the favored candidate or the opponent?
0  No
1  Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party
2  Yes, Opposing Candidate’s Party
3  Yes, Both Candidates’ Parties
4  Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party but Only in Paid For By (PFB) line

**per_ply**: In your judgment, is the primary focus of the ad personal characteristics of either candidate or policy matters?
0  Neither
1  Personal Characteristics
2  Policy Matters
3  Both Personal Characteristics and Policy Matters

**flag**: Does an American flag appear in the ad?
0  No
1  Yes
Are any of the following mentioned or pictured in the ad?
   0  No
   1  Yes, in a way to show approval or support
   2  Yes, in a way to show disapproval or opposition
   3  Yes, unclear whether in support or opposition

prsment:  Is Barack Obama mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gbush:  Is George W. Bush mentioned or pictured in the ad?
reagan:  Is Ronald Reagan mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gophse:  Is John Boehner mentioned or pictured in the ad?
demhse:  Is Nancy Pelosi mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gopsen:  Is Mitch McConnell mentioned or pictured in the ad?
demsen:  Is Harry Reid mentioned or pictured in the ad?
congmt:  Is Congress mentioned or pictured in the ad?
democrats:  Are Democrats mentioned or pictured in the ad?
republicans:  Are Republicans mentioned or pictured in the ad?

Does the ad cite any of the following sources to bolster various claims?
   0  No
   1  Yes
cite1:  Does the ad cite a newspaper to bolster various claims?
cite2:  Does the ad cite a website to bolster various claims?
cite3:  Does the ad cite another media source to bolster various claims?
cite4:  Does the ad cite an opponent’s ad to bolster various claims?
cite5:  Does the ad cite legislation to bolster various claims?
cite90:  Does the ad cite another source to bolster various claims?
cite90txt:  Description of other source

op_media:  If an opponent’s ad was mentioned, did the ad cite a media source that speaks to the accuracy or fairness of the ad?
   0  No
   1  Yes

Are the following seen endorsing in the ad?
   0  No
   1  Yes
endorse1:  Law enforcement
endorse2:  A politician
endorse3:  A labor union
endorse4:  An interest group
endorse5:  A teacher group
endorse6:  A celebrity
endorse90:  Another person
endorse90txt:  Description of other person endorsing in the ad
Please assess the intent of the ad maker (not your own personal reaction) below. Does the ad make an appeal to the following emotions?

0  No
1  Some appeal
2  Strong appeal

**fear**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**enthusiasm**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**anger**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**pride**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**humor**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**sadness**: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

**music0**: There is no music in the ad

0  There IS music in the ad
1  There is NO MUSIC in the ad

If music is played during the ad, how would it best be described?

0  No
1  Yes

**music1**: Ominous/tense music

**music2**: Uplifting music

**music3**: Sad or sorrowful music

**music90**: Another type of music

**music90_txt**: Description of other type of music

Are any of these words/phrases specifically mentioned in the ad?

0  No
1  Yes

**mention1**: Tea Party

**mention2**: God

**mention3**: Hope

**mention4**: Change

**mention5**: Experience

**mention6**: Liberal

**mention7**: Conservative

**mention8**: Special Interests

**mention14**: Dirty or negative campaigner

**mention15**: Main Street

**mention16**: Wall Street

**mention 17**: Big Government
Issue mentions: Are any of the following issues are mentioned in this ad?
  0 No
  1 Yes

*Economic Policy*

*issue10*: Taxes
*issue11*: Deficit/Budget/Debt
*issue12*: Government Spending
*issue13*: Recession/Economic Stimulus
*issue14*: Minimum Wage
*issue15*: Farming
*issue16*: Business
*issue17*: Union
*issue18*: Employment/Jobs
*issue19*: Poverty
*issue20*: Trade/Globalization
*issue21*: Housing/Sub-prime Mortgages
*issue22*: Economy (generic reference)
*issue23*: Economic disparity/income inequality

*Social Issues*

*issue30*: Abortion
*issue31*: Homosexuality/Gay & Lesbian Rights
*issue32*: Moral/Family/Religious Values
*issue33*: Tobacco
*issue34*: Affirmative Action
*issue35*: Gambling
*issue36*: Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia
*issue37*: Gun Control
*issue38*: Civil Liberties/Privacy
*issue39*: Race Relations/Civil Rights

*Law and Order*

*issue40*: Crime
*issue41*: Narcotics/Illegal Drugs
*issue42*: Capital Punishment
*issue43*: Supreme Court/Judiciary

*Social Welfare Issues*

*issue50*: Education/Schools
*issue51*: Lottery for Education
*issue52*: Child Care
*issue53*: Health Care (not prescription drugs)
*issue54*: Prescription Drugs
*issue55*: Medicare
*issue56*: Social Security
*issue57*: Welfare
*issue58*: Women’s Health
Foreign/Defense Policy
issue60: Military (generic reference)
issue61: Foreign Policy (generic reference)
issue62: Veterans
issue63: Foreign Aid
issue64: Nuclear Proliferation
issue65: China
issue66: Middle East
issue67: Afghanistan/War in Afghanistan
issue68: September, 11th
issue69: Terror/Terrorism/Terrorist
issue70: Iraq/War in Iraq
issue71: Israel
issue72: Iran

Environment/Energy
issue80: Environment (generic reference)
issue82: Global Warming
issue83: Energy Policy
issue84: BP Oil Spill

Other
issue90: Campaign Finance Reform
issue91: Government Ethics/Scandal
issue92: Corporate Fraud
issue93: Term Limits
issue94: Pledge of Allegiance (restrictions on)
issue95: Immigration
issue96: Local Issues
issue97: Other
issue97_txt: Description of other issue mentioned
issue98: Government Regulations
**cancode**: Was the ad able to be coded?
- 0  Ad coded
- 1  Ad unable to be coded

**gov**: Ad aired in gubernatorial race
- 0  No
- 1  Yes

**house**: Ad aired in House race
- 0  No
- 1  Yes

**senate**: Ad aired in Senate race
- 0  No
- 1  Yes

**spanish**: Spanish-language ad
- 0  No
- 1  Yes

**state**: postal service abbreviation indicating state in which ad aired