

Political Advertising in 2012
Wesleyan Media Project
Release Version 1.0 (June 2015)

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:

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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

prsmnt: 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?

densen: 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