Political Advertising in 2012
Wesleyan Media Project
Release Version 1.1 (September 2016)

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-downballot-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 the content of 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.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

The Wesleyan Media Project is providing these data as a courtesy to the academic community, and not as a polished commercial product. The nominal fee you pay is for administrative expenses. We've worked hard to clean the data that we've coded, but as with all datasets this large, there may be some errors that remain. For CMAG variables marked with an asterisk below, WMP corrects errors as we find them, but we don't *systematically* review/clean these variables. All other CMAG variables are not cleaned at all by WMP. We do not have information on how CMAG variables are collected/coded.

We have included an extensive list of coding variables with this public release, even those that have extremely low frequency in the data. Depending on resource availability, we do occasionally update the data files to correct errors and issues brought to our attention by users. If you notice issues with the data, feel free to share the information with us at mediaproject@wesleyan.edu.

VARIABLES

Provided by CMAG
For CMAG variables marked with an asterisk, WMP corrects errors as we find them, but we don't systematically review/clean them. All other CMAG variables are not cleaned at all by WMP.

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, identified by CMAG
election:
>Primary
>General
>N/A

issue: key issues discussed: identified by CMAG
level*: level of race
tonecmag: tone of ad (different from WMP's AD_TONE variable)
>Positive
>Negative

race*: type of race
adtypecmag*:
>Candidate
>Candidate & Party
>Issue-Election
>Issue-Policy
>Party
>Private Citizen

sponsorcmag: ad sponsor
district*: congressional district (for House races)
party*: party of favored candidate
est_cost: estimated cost of ad airing

WMP Variables

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

sponsor_name: name of group or party 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
mention17: 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

cantcode: Was the ad able to be coded? (video/audio issues)
      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 the state the race in question is based in

vidfile: Expected filename of corresponding .wmv video (if a file exists). Filename generated by WMP based on creative name. Actual filenames may vary (they were generated by CMAG).