



An HCD Research and Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion Report

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Table of Contents

I.	Background and Objectives	3
II.	Methodology	4
III.	Research Findings	5

I. Background and Objectives

- HCD Research, in conjunction with the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion (MCIPO), will be conducting studies of voter perceptions of the major candidates on-line promotional communications. The results of a portion of these comprehensive viewer surveys will be available for review on a web site located at <http://www.readmylipz.com>.
- The website provides a national forum for users to:
 - View and review political advertisements distributed via the internet
 - Watch reviews of those same advertisements made by other users
 - Answer polling questions on important election-year issues
 - Engage other users in discussions critical to the 2004 Presidential Election
- The 2004 Presidential campaign is making unprecedented use of the internet to disseminate messages to potential voters, as well as supporters of both major parties. Internet-specific advertisements are being sent to potential voters, who can view them on their home or office computers. The speed with which information and messages can be disseminated via the internet, as well as the types of messages that can be sent, makes this forum groundbreaking in its scope, and likely a model for future campaigns.
- **readmylipz.com** was developed by HCD and MCIPO staff in the first quarter of 2004, and officially launched at Muhlenberg College on May 5, 2004. The launch event included an explanation of the site and show by HCD and MCIPO executives and faculty, and trials of the website and software by interested attendees.
- In support of its launch of **readmylipz.com** on May 5, 2004, HCD conducted a primary marketing research study with 340 consumers. The sample was recruited nationally, and was randomized 50/50 to view either a Bush or Kerry campaign advertisement.

II. Methodology

- A total of 340 voters participated in the survey. After recruitment, participants visited a password-protected site on the internet and completed a 30 minute survey. Participants were randomized to view one of two internet advertisements from the major Presidential candidates, President George W. Bush and Sen. John Kerry.

- Each participant in the representative sample is shown the political commercial two times. He or she is asked to use a sliding 'button' on screen beneath the commercial to provide a response to the advertising as it is seen. The first time, the moving button is used to measure **interest** in what is said and shown. During the second exposure, the button is used to measure **believability**. The ratings can move from the initial neutral starting point to either positive and/or negative evaluations. Each participant is then asked for his or her political affiliation, age, and other demographic information.
- The individual responses are then combined to give a moving record of both interest and believability as the commercial progresses. Curves can also be shown separately for Republicans, Democrats, independents, men or women, and so on.
- Although the idea of this technique is not new, this methodology offers two unique features: This is the first time a quantitative analysis of this sort has been performed for political advertising. The double ratings (interest and believability) provide a much more complete evaluation of people's responses than the single ratings done in research for package goods.
- In addition, because politics means emotions as well as rationality, HCD administered the Ayer Emotional Battery after each commercial exposure. This battery was developed by the former advertising agency, N. W. AYER. It offers a simple and reliable way for participants to express how advertising makes them feel.

In the future, additional questions will be asked. Some of these are: self-ratings on a conservative-liberal continuum, likelihood of voting in November, the candidate for whom the participant will most likely to vote. In addition, for those who are neither Republicans nor Democrats, HCD and MCIPO plan to determine what political grouping (if any) he or she belongs.

- The rating of the advertisements begins at a neutral point of zero, with a low range of –50, and a high range of up to +50, displayed on the Y axis. The time elapsed in the commercial is displayed on the X axis of each ad's graph.
- Note: For each advertisement:
 - **Interest** is Rated in **RED**
 - **Believability** is Rated in **BLUE**

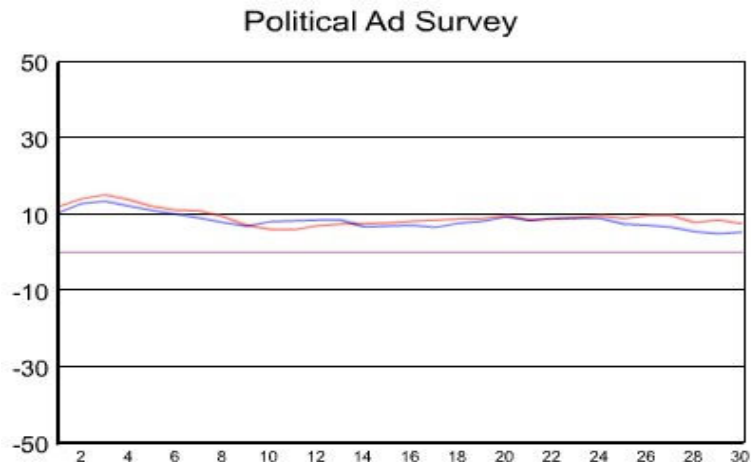
III. Research Findings

A. Review of George W. Bush Advertisement entitled: *“Troubling”*

Synopsis: In this advertisement, John Kerry's record on the economy is reviewed critically. Kerry's voting record is reviewed within the context of tax increases and other spending issues.

- When viewed overall (**Fig. 1 below**), the interest and believability curves do not show much difference in opinion. However, when viewed by party affiliation, vast differences are apparent.

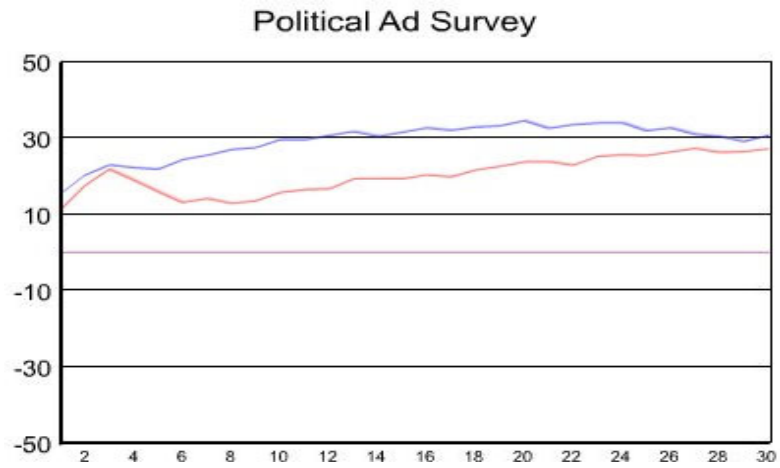
Figure 1: Bush “Troubling” Ad Reviewed by All Respondents



Republicans Viewing Bush Ad

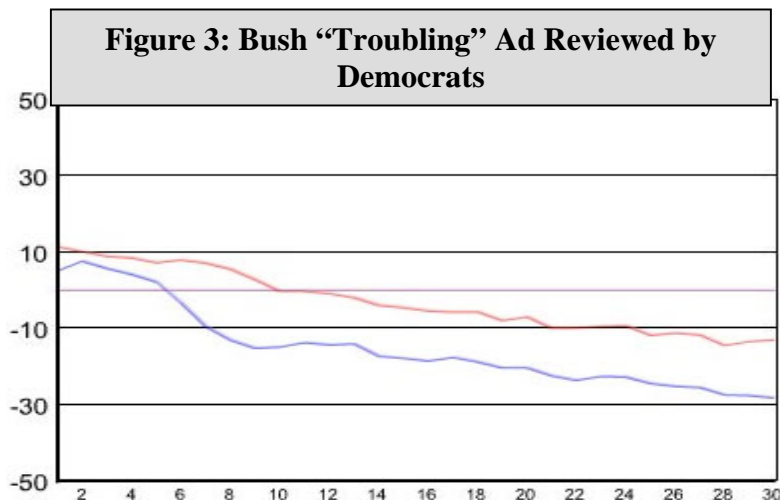
- As noted, advertisement review scores differ greatly by major party affiliation. However, while each advertisement does score better among its core party affiliation, the underlying interpretation of these scores suggests greatly varying levels of effectiveness of those ads.
- The Bush advertisement “*Troubling*” is presented below (**Fig. 2**), rated for both Interest and Believability, among Republicans.
- Not surprisingly, Believability of the advertisement among Republicans starts out moderately high and increases as the commercial progresses and the attacks on Kerry continue. However, Interest in the advertisement is much slower to build, although it does end at almost the same level as Believability. This finding suggests that Bush is speaking to the “converted” i.e., Republican voters who have already made up their mind to vote for Bush regardless of how compelling or note compelling his message is.

Figure 2: Bush “Troubling” Ad Reviewed by Republicans



Democrats Viewing Bush Ad

- The exact opposite curve is apparent when the Bush ad is viewed by Democrats (**Fig. 3**). Both Interest and Believability start out relatively neutral and, interestingly, do not initially drop by much. However, after the opening display of the advertisement shifts from Bush to the attacks on Kerry, believability takes a large dip (about six to eight seconds into the commercial), and both Interest and Believability continue to fall from there.
- As it is currently constituted, this advertisement does not likely have any potential to convert Democrats to vote for Bush – rather it appears to strongly alienate Democrats away from Bush.



Emotions Evoked by Bush Ad

- Emotional response falls along party lines generally.
- The Bush ad is more likely to evoke positive emotions among Republicans than Democrats. Republicans are significantly more likely than Democrats to feel **Benefited, enlightened** (49.1% vs 11.8%); **Competent, confident, in control, proud** (32.7% vs 5.9%); and **Virtuous, reverent, moral** (14.5% vs 0%).
- Conversely, the Bush ad is more likely to evoke negative emotions among Democrats than Republicans. Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to feel **Suspicious, Skeptical** (80.4% vs 21.8%); and **Disgusted, Irritated, Enraged, Contemptuous** (62.7% vs 38.2%).
- Context is important when analyzed alongside the Interest and Believability scores. Interestingly, these emotional responses are likely the result of viewing within each party's frame of reference and/or context. For instance, while 38.2% of Republicans feel Disgusted, etc...by the Bush ad, they may be just as likely to feel this way due to the content of the Kerry references themselves as the overall negative tone of the advertisement. Taken in combination with their overall high Interest and Believability scores of this advertisement among Republicans, it is likely these scores reflect more upon the record of Kerry, while Democrat scores on this emotion are more tied to the negative tone of the ad.

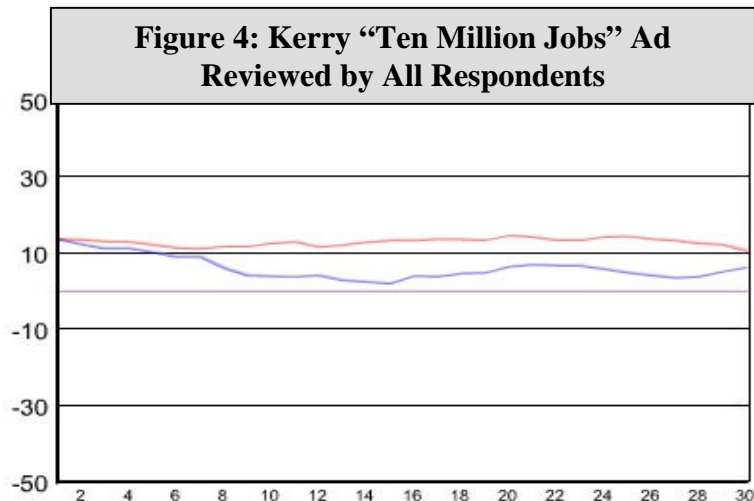
Emotional Statements (check all that apply)	Democrat (D) (n=51)	Republican (R) (n=55)
<i>Not bored, attentive</i>	5.9%	10.9%
<i>Active, aroused, playful, entertained, excited</i>	5.9%	16.4% d
<i>Wishful, desirous, hopeful</i>	5.9%	9.1%
<i>Benefited, enlightened</i>	11.8%	49.1% D
<i>Affectionate, loving, innocent, pure</i>	2.0%	1.8%
<i>Competent, confident, in control, proud</i>	5.9%	32.7% D
<i>Virtuous, reverent, moral</i>	0%	14.5% D
<i>Serene, restful, pure, soothed</i>	0%	3.6%
<i>Sorrowful, thankful, afraid, regretful</i>	13.7%	10.9%
<i>Worshipful, reverent</i>	0%	0%
<i>Sad, angry, powerless, helpless, distressed</i>	33.3%	27.3%
<i>Amazed, astonished</i>	25.5%	30.9%
<i>Spiritual</i>	0%	0%
<i>Tense, conflictful, anxious</i>	31.4%	20.0%
<i>Ashamed, embarrassed, mad, guilty</i>	29.4%	20.0%
<i>Suspicious, skeptical</i>	80.4% R	21.8%
<i>Confused, uniformed</i>	21.6%	10.9%
<i>Disgusted, irritated, enraged, contemptuous</i>	62.7% R	38.2%

* Significance at 90% confidence noted in lowercase letters as follows: Democrat (d) and Republican (r).
* Significance at 95% confidence noted in uppercase letters as follows: Democrat (D) and Republican (R).

B. Review of John Kerry Advertisement entitled: “Ten Million Jobs”

Synopsis: In this advertisement, Bush is criticized for allegedly endorsing the outsourcing of American jobs overseas, and Kerry’s plan to keep jobs in the U.S. and create 10 million new jobs, is briefly presented.

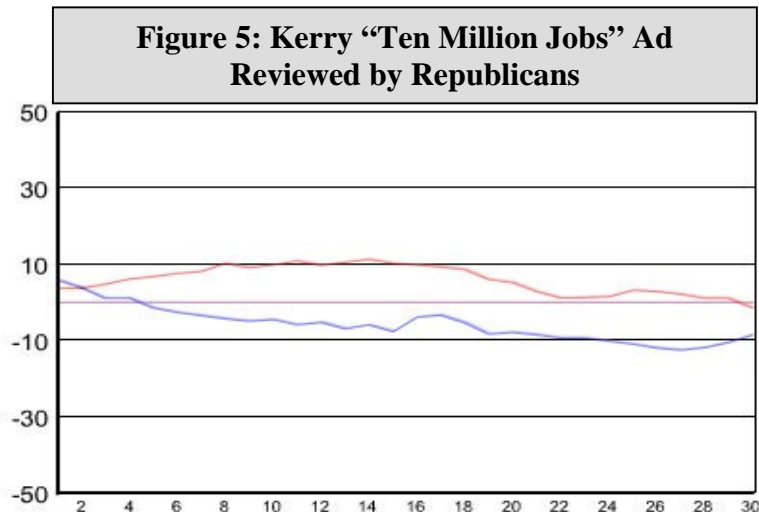
- As with the Bush ad, when viewed overall (**Fig. 4 below**), the Kerry ad scores interest and believability curves that do not appear to vary greatly through the course of the ad.



Republicans Viewing Kerry Ad

- The Kerry advertisement “Ten Million Jobs” is presented below (**Fig. 5**), rated for both Interest and Believability, among Republicans.
- Notably, neither the Interest nor the Believability scores for this advertisement, among Republicans, is sharply low, nor are they descending over time. Rather, they remain relatively stable throughout the course of the ad, which suggests steady attention.

- This suggests that, although Interest is only somewhat above neutral, some Republicans appear interested in this issue, and may be receptive to what Kerry has to say about it.

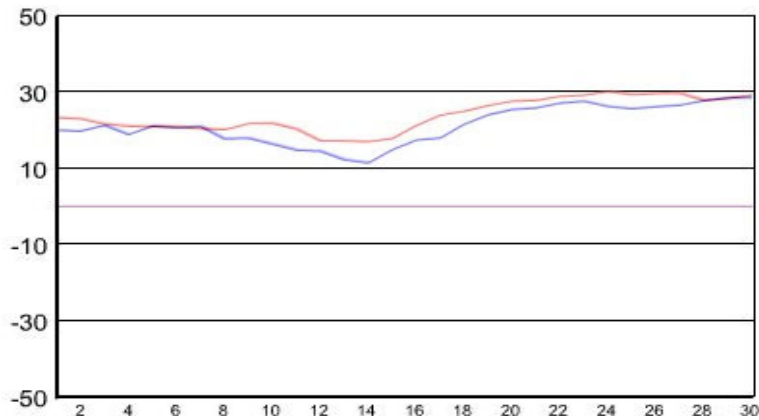


Democrats Viewing Kerry Ad

- The Kerry advertisement “*Ten Million Jobs*” is presented below (**Fig. 6**), rated for both Interest and Believability, among Democrats.
- Interest and Believability scores for this advertisement, among Democrats, start out relatively high and remain high throughout for the most part.
- There is a dip in both Interest and Believability when Pres. Bush and his administration are presented in the ad, which would be expected.
- Given these curves, Kerry appears to have touched on a major issue with which his party (and, it appears, even some Republicans) can relate and that they find important.

Figure 6: Kerry “Ten Million Jobs” Ad Reviewed by Democrats

Political Ad Survey



Emotions Evoked by Kerry Ad

- As with the Bush ad, emotional response falls along party lines generally – with one significant exception that underscores the importance of the issue of jobs in this campaign.
- As would be expected, the Kerry ad is more likely to evoke positive emotions among Democrats than Republicans. Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to feel **Not bored, attentive** (44.4% vs 23.2%); and **Wishful, desirous, hopeful** (44.4% vs 19.6%).
- In addition, Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to feel **Sad, angry, powerless, helpless, distressed** (38.9% vs 16.1%) after viewing this ad. This response would be expected, given that Pres. Bush is a Republican and is likely seen as being more in control of this issue than Democrats.
- Underscoring the significance and importance of this issue to the campaign is the strong response by both Democrats (46.3%) and Republicans (69.6%) that this advertisement makes each group feel **Suspicious, Skeptical**. Jobs is clearly an issue to which both sides are paying attention and upon which some votes could hinge.

Emotional Statements (check all that apply)	Democrat (D) (n=54)	Republican (R) (n=56)
<i>Not bored, attentive</i>	44.4% R	23.2%
<i>Active, aroused, playful, entertained, excited</i>	3.7%	5.4%
<i>Wishful, desirous, hopeful</i>	44.4% R	19.6%
<i>Benefited, enlightened</i>	25.9%	16.1%
<i>Affectionate, loving, innocent, pure</i>	5.6%	3.6%

<i>Competent, confident, in control, proud</i>	22.2%	10.7%
<i>Virtuous, reverent, moral</i>	7.4%	7.1%
<i>Serene, restful, pure, soothed</i>	13.0% r	3.6%
<i>Sorrowful, thankful, afraid, regretful</i>	16.7%	8.9%
<i>Worshipful, reverent</i>	1.9%	1.8%
<i>Sad, angry, powerless, helpless, distressed</i>	38.9% R	16.1%
<i>Amazed, astonished</i>	16.7%	17.9%
<i>Spiritual</i>	7.4%	5.4%
<i>Tense, conflictful, anxious</i>	20.4%	23.2%
<i>Ashamed, embarrassed, mad, guilty</i>	16.7%	17.9%
<i>Suspicious, skeptical</i>	46.3%	69.6% D
<i>Confused, uniformed</i>	18.5%	30.4%
<i>Disgusted, irritated, enraged, contemptuous</i>	33.3%	37.5%

* Significance at 90% confidence noted in lowercase letters as follows: Democrat (d) and Republican (r).

* Significance at 95% confidence noted in uppercase letters as follows: Democrat (D) and Republican (R)