



Edwards, McCain Positively Impact Newest Presidential Ads

An HCD Research and Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion Report

For Immediate Release. Contact: Glenn R. Kessler, 908-788-9393.

Flemington, New Jersey – July 9, 2004 – The latest survey reinforces past results and demonstrates some new trends, notably with the introduction of John Edwards and John McCain into the advertisements. The following are some key findings supported by the data.

KEY FINDINGS

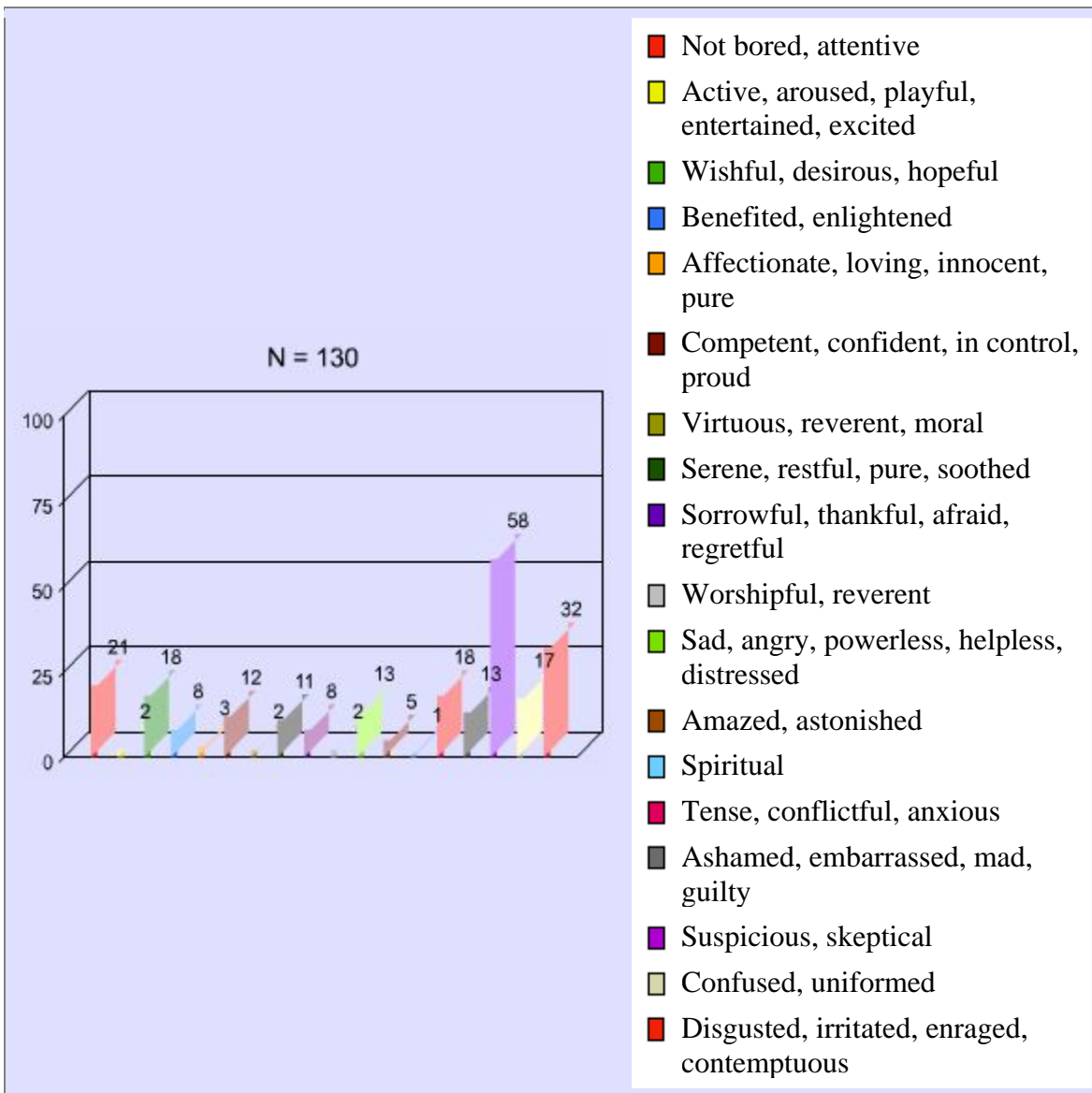
1. The ads show high degrees of political polarization based on party affiliation.

Study participants tended to support their party's ads and find the opposing party's ads to be negative. These trends held even in categories that are not dependent upon candidate's policies or the message the advertisement is trying to convey. This seems to counter a fundamental purpose of advertising: to persuade the unconvinced.

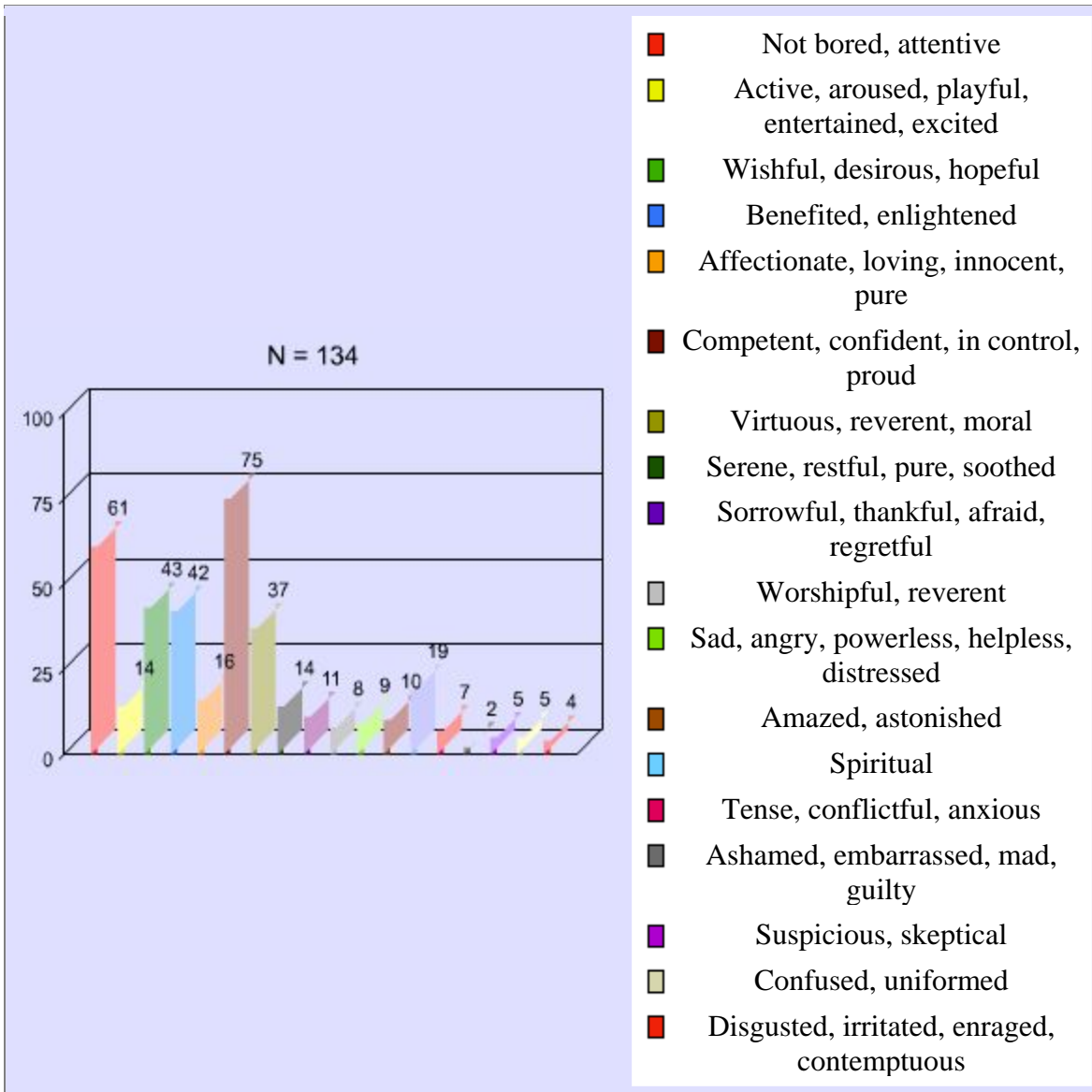
One clear example is found on the question of whether the ads are "attention-getting." Bush's ad got the attention, at some level, of 89.55% of Republicans, while Kerry's ad could only get the attention of 29.23%. Meanwhile, 53.50% of Democrats responded that Bush's ad got their attention at some level, while 81.20% thought that Kerry's ad was attention-getting.

This trend of political polarization was maintained during emotional testing. The dominant emotional reactions of Republicans to Kerry's ad were *suspicious, skeptical* and *disgusted, irritated, enraged, contemptuous*, which were felt, respectively, by 57.69% and 32.31% of Republican respondents (**Graph 1.1**). Meantime, strong positive reactions were elicited by the Bush ad, such as *competent, confident, in control, proud* in an astonishing 74.63%, *wishful, desirous, hopeful* in 43.28%, and *benefited, enlightened* in 41.79% (**Graph 1.2**).

Graph 1.1 – Republicans – Kerry Ad – Prompt: Below, you will find a list of words describing many different emotions. Please select all the emotions that you felt while viewing the advertisement. Please check all that apply.

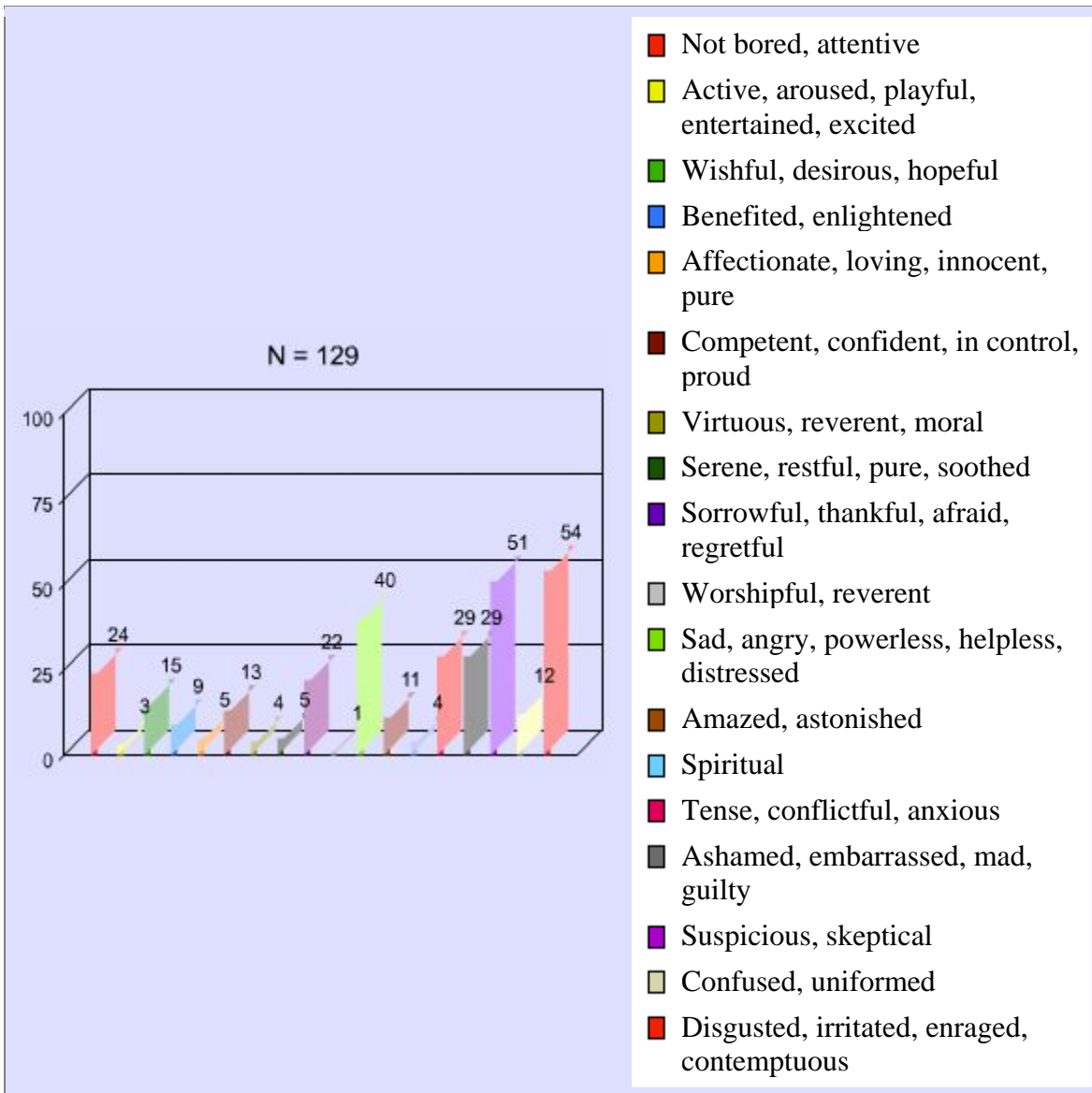


Graph 1.2 – Republicans – Bush Ad – Prompt: Below, you will find a list of words describing many different emotions. Please select all the emotions that you felt while viewing the advertisement. Please check all that apply.

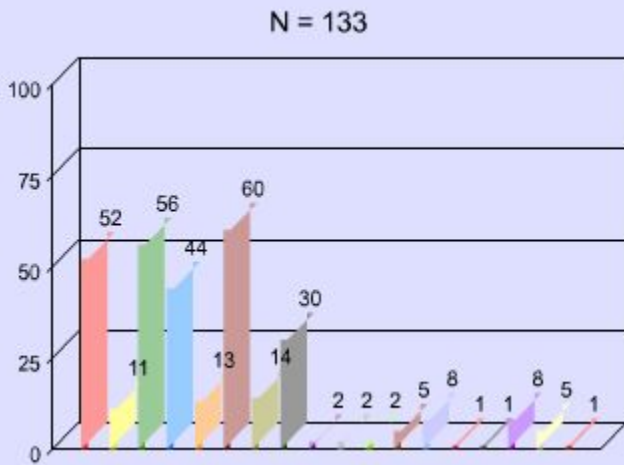


Democrats felt similar emotions for opposite ads. The strongest emotion evoked by the Bush Ad among Democrats was *disgusted, irritated, enraged, contemptuous*, which was felt by 54.26% (**Graph 1.3**). This was followed closely by *suspicious, skeptical* at 51.16%. Also registering strongly was *sad, angry, powerless, helpless, distressed* at 39.53%. Meanwhile, the Kerry ad evoked strong positive reactions among Democratic respondents, with 60.15% feeling *competent, confident, in control, proud*, 56.39% feeling *wishful, desirous, hopeful*, and 43.61% feeling *benefited, enlightened* while watching the ad (**Graph 1.4**).

Graph 1.3 – Democrats – Bush Ad – Prompt: Below, you will find a list of words describing many different emotions. Please select all the emotions that you felt while viewing the advertisement. Please check all that apply.



Graph 1.4 – Democrats – Kerry Ad – Prompt: Below, you will find a list of words describing many different emotions. Please select all the emotions that you felt while viewing the advertisement. Please check all that apply.

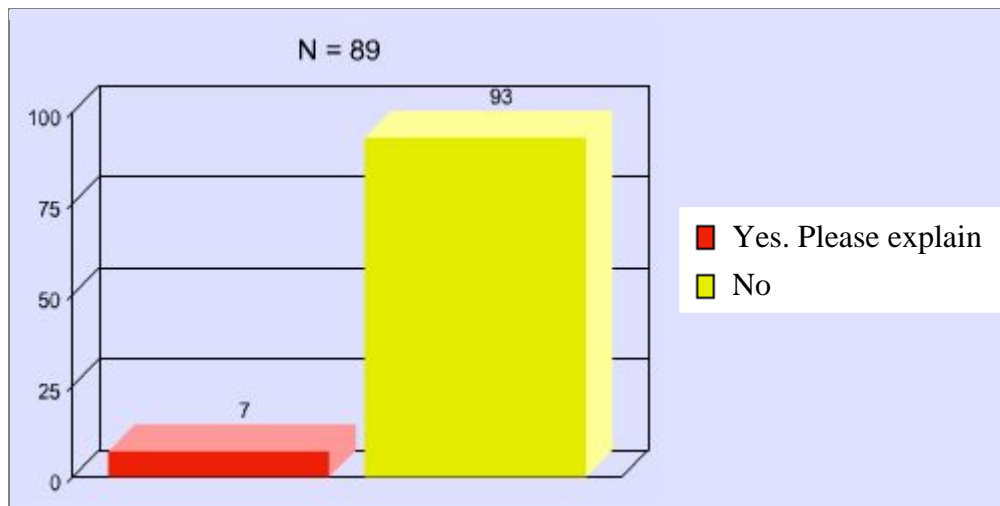


- Not bored, attentive
- Active, aroused, playful, entertained, excited
- Wishful, desirous, hopeful
- Benefited, enlightened
- Affectionate, loving, innocent, pure
- Competent, confident, in control, proud
- Virtuous, reverent, moral
- Serene, restful, pure, soothed
- Sorrowful, thankful, afraid, regretful
- Worshipful, reverent
- Sad, angry, powerless, helpless, distressed
- Amazed, astonished
- Spiritual
- Tense, conflictful, anxious
- Ashamed, embarrassed, mad, guilty
- Suspicious, skeptical
- Confused, uniformed
- Disgusted, irritated, enraged, contemptuous

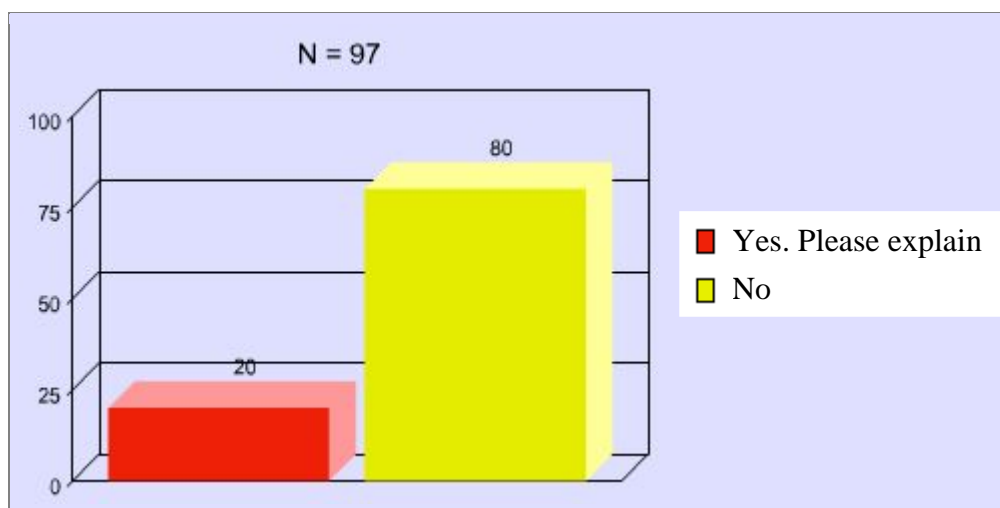
2. Independent voters found Kerry's ad to be more positive than Bush's, though not necessarily more persuasive.

Bush's ad evoked slightly more negative reactions from independent voters than the Kerry ad evoked. While 6.74% of independents found something in the Kerry ad to be negative or troublesome (**Graph 2.1**), 19.59% found something negative or troublesome in the Bush ad (**Graph 2.2**).

Graph 2.1 – Independents – Kerry Ad – Prompt: Is there anything in this advertisement that you find negative or troublesome?

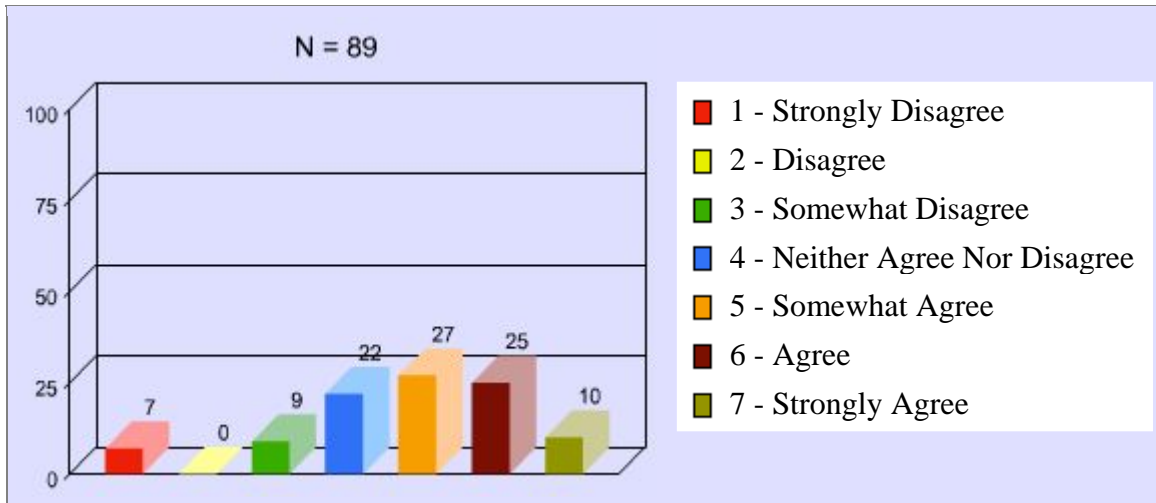


Graph 2.2 – Independents – Bush Ad – Prompt: Is there anything in this advertisement that you find negative or troublesome?

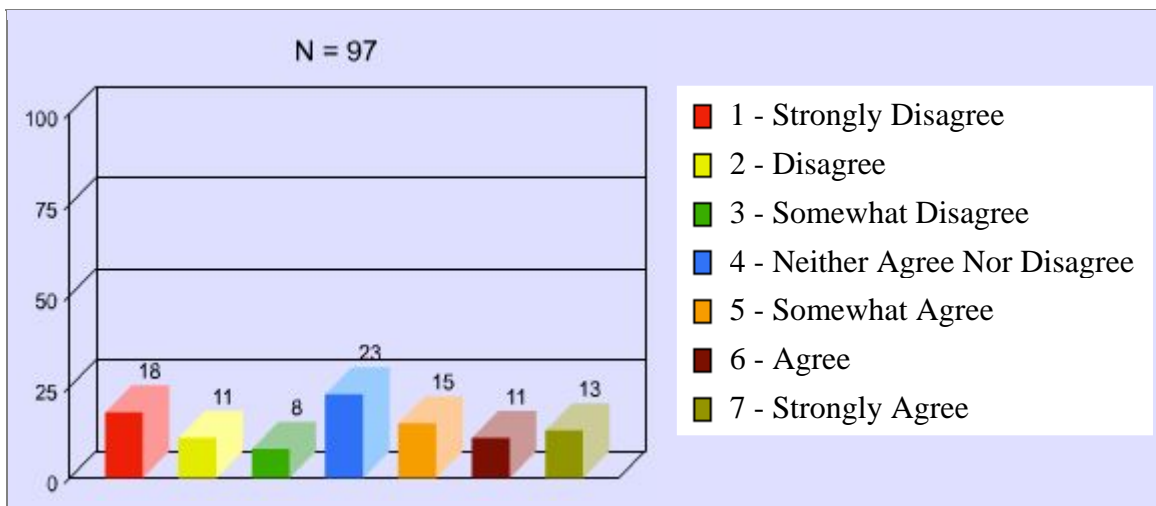


Furthermore, these feelings applied similarly to the campaign. While 15.73% of independents did not feel that the Kerry ad gave them a positive feeling about the campaign (**Graph 2.3**), 37.12% felt that way about the Bush ad (**Graph 2.4**).

Graph 2.3 – Independents – Kerry Ad – Prompt: Please rate the following statements: This advertisement gives me a positive feeling about the campaign.



Graph 2.4 – Independents – Bush Ad – Prompt: Please rate the following statements: This advertisement gives me a positive feeling about the campaign.



Nevertheless, independent voters did not feel that the Bush ad was necessarily less persuasive. 50.51% of independents viewing the Bush ad felt that it was at least somewhat persuasive, while 48.32% felt similarly about the Kerry ad. Moreover, 48.45% of independents felt that the message conveyed by the Bush ad was relevant to them, while 53.93% felt that way about the Kerry ad.

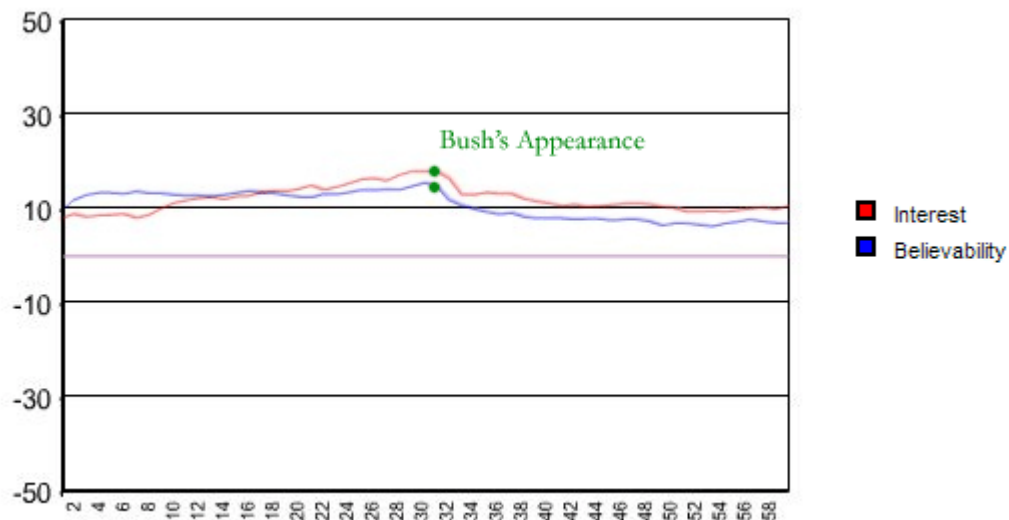
But there is a contradistinction. Among independents, the ads were almost equally effective in making viewers feel more likely to vote for the candidate being promoted: 34.02% responded thusly for Bush, 35.96% for Kerry. But the Bush ad performed significantly worse when one compares how many independents were less likely to vote for a candidate based upon the latest ad. 27.84% of independents who viewed the Bush ad felt less likely to vote for him, while only 10.11% felt similarly about the Kerry ad.

3. Participants felt greater interest and believability while watching John McCain than while watching Bush.

McCain's presence caused a strong increase in overall positive reaction numbers. Take emotional reaction for instance. Research on the last Bush ad released showed that only 10.19% felt *competent, confident, in control, proud* while watching the ad. Meanwhile, 39.45% of viewers felt that way while watching the current ad. Whereas only 9.36% of survey participants felt *wishful, desirous, hopeful* while watching the last Bush ad, 25.88% of viewers felt those emotions while watching the current ad.

Attributing these vigorous increases to McCain's presence seems logical when one considers that participants felt greater interest and believability while watching McCain than while watching Bush. The advertisement, even though its title card notes that McCain is speaking about Bush, carefully avoids showing the President until McCain is halfway through his introduction. The exact point before Bush is shown, the 32nd second mark in the one minute ad, is the high point in interest and believability ratings (**Graph 3.1**). Once Bush appears, the numbers decline sharply. Believability falls approximately ten points in the first six seconds after Bush appears; interest falls about five points in the first two.

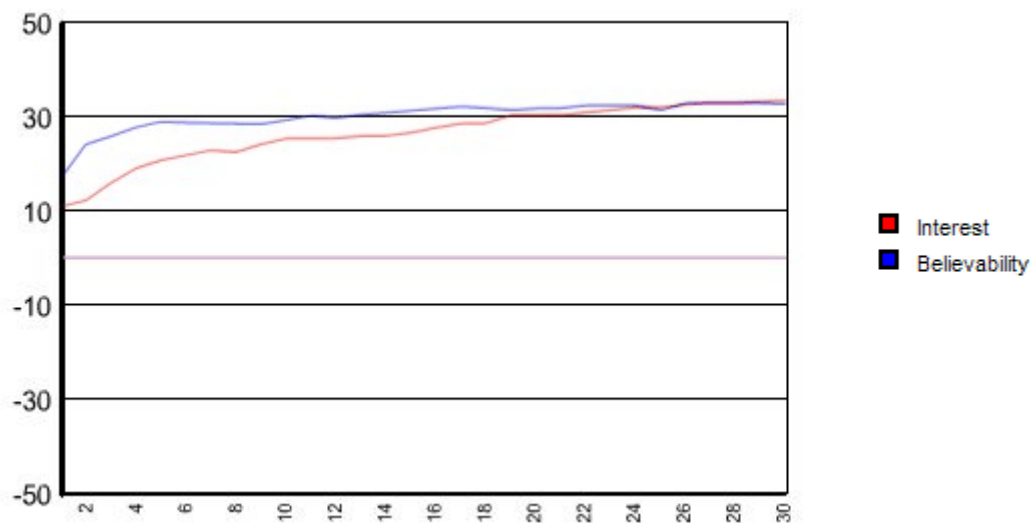
Graph 3.1 – All Parties – Bush Ad



4. Democratic and independent voters received John Edwards well, with interest and believability rising after his appearance in the Kerry ad.

Both interest and believability in the latest Kerry ad were very strong among independents and Democrats. There is a strong, continual rise in both categories among Democrats watching the ads. By the end of the ad, Democrats showed more interest and believability than they had at any point in any other Kerry ad (**Graph 4.1**). Clearly this shows the positive impact Edwards has had upon Kerry's advertising.

Graph 4.1 – Democrats – Kerry Ad



Independents also showed high levels of interest and belief in the new Kerry ad (**Graph 4.2**). The levels are fairly stable throughout, which is in marked contrast to prior Kerry ads. This indicates a positive effect upon independent voters with the introduction of John Edwards into the Democratic Presidential campaign.

Graph 4.2 – Independents – Kerry Ad

