

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter Ten

Outline

10 The Media and the Electoral Process

I. The Media in the Contemporary Context

II. Free Media: Journalists' Presentations of Candidates and Campaigns

A. The Varieties of Free Media

B. The Role of the Free Media

1. Informed Consent of the Governed

2. Window on the Candidates

3. Referee between Candidates

C. The Actual Role That the Media Play

1. The Great Mentioner

2. Image Creator

3. Expectation Setter

4. Issue Identifier

5. Field Narrower

6. Campaign Critic

7. Documentor of Elections

8. Purveyor of Results

D. An Assessment of the Role of Free Media

1. Why Do the Media Play the Roles They Do?

2. How Should We Evaluate That Role?

III. Paid Media: The Candidate Provides the Message

A. Types of Paid Media

B. Controversies Caused by the Use of Paid Media

1. Negative Advertising

2. Issue Advocacy Advertisements

C. Impact of Paid Media on Election Campaigns

1. Intended Consequences of Paid Media Campaigns

2. Unintended Consequences of Paid Media Campaigns

IV. Politicians View the Media

Key Concepts

ADWATCH CAMPAIGNS

Efforts by newspapers and some television stations to monitor political advertising for accuracy

ATTACK ADS

Political advertisements that attack the sponsoring candidate's opponent, often on personal and not political grounds; viewed by many as contributing to citizen cynicism

CONTRAST ADS

Campaign advertisements that offer both an attack and a defense of a candidate's position; more than 30% but less than 70% attack

EXPECTATION GAME

The strategy of setting expectations of performance low so that results will be viewed in a favorable light

FIELD WINNOWER

Playing the role of eliminating some candidates from a multicandidate competition

FREE MEDIA

Media exposure that a candidate receives without having to pay for it, for example, coverage in newspapers or on television news shows

INFORMED CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

A minimal requirement for an effectively functioning representative democracy

NEGATIVE ADS

Political advertising that points to perceived flaws in the record of the sponsoring candidate's opponent

PACK JOURNALISM

The phenomenon of all journalists covering an event following the lead of one of their colleagues instead of pursuing their own angles on the story

PAID MEDIA

Media exposure that a candidate's campaign pays for and thus controls

PENNY PRESS

Newspapers and leaflets in the early years of the republic, so named because they sold for a penny

POSITIVE ADS

Political advertising that stresses the record of the sponsoring candidate, not that of his or her opponent

SPOT ADVERTISEMENTS

Short paid political advertisements that must simplify a message to conform to a ten-, twenty-, or thirty-second time frame

TALK SHOWS

Radio (and occasionally television) broadcasts in which the format consists of a host, often with guests, interacting with the audience either in person or via telephone and expressing views on the issues of the day

Questions for Discussion

1. One of the most difficult problems facing news providers is to balance news broadcasts with wide audience appeal against those that provide more information but might not be attractive to viewers. How do you evaluate the balance struck by the electronic media in your local area? On the national scene? Is your evaluation of print media the same or different from your evaluation of electronic media?
2. What is the difference between negative advertising and attack advertising? Is it possible to portray the negative aspects of a candidate's career without resorting to attack advertising?

3. When President Eisenhower's campaign used the first television ads, many feared that we would be selling candidates for office like soap products. Nearly fifty years and millions and millions of dollars of televised campaign advertising later, this means of communicating with the public is an accepted form of campaigning. Should it be? Would we be better off if no television advertising were permitted? What might replace it?

4. What do you see as the future of the Internet as a campaign tool? How extensively will it be used? For what purposes? With what kind of impact?