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Emotional political advertising: a South African case study

ABSTRACT

The real possibility exists that the overemphasis of a party's image in advertisements could lead to the neglect of important political information for voters. Emotional and negative advertisements could therefore be detrimental to any young democracy. Against this background this article investigates the use of emotional persuasive appeals and negative messages in political newspaper advertisements in the North-West Province during South Africa's general elections in 1999.

The results indicate that although all the parties in the study used emotional appeals, they mostly connected them to a policy issue. However, these policy issues were not elaborated on. The opposition parties mostly used appeals of uncertainty, fear and rage. The ruling party in the province (the ANC) concentrated on appeals of hope and achievement.

The ANC virtually abstained from using negative messages, while the DP, the NNP and the FF "attacked" one another in order to emphasise their differences. They did not harm the sustainability of the South African democracy as such, but they also did very little to promote it actively through their media advertisements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political advertisements in the media are used extensively in developed democracies such as the USA, Britain and Germany, but far less so in developing countries. In South Africa this is due to the ban on television advertisements, but radio and press advertisements were used to some extent during the 1999 general elections.

Apart from the free time allotted to all the parties on the radio, some parties, notably the African National Congress (ANC), the Freedom Front (FF), the Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP), used their own funds for radio and press advertisements.

The possibility existed that the parties could have overemphasised their image and used emotional and even negative appeals to attract votes, instead of supplying important political information required by voters in order to make informed decisions. This could have had a demobilising effect on the voters.

Against this background the general research question addressed in this article is: How were political advertisements utilised during South Africa's general elections in 1999? In particular, the following questions are addressed:

- How were persuasive appeals used?
- How were negative messages used?
- How were cognition and emotion integrated in the messages?

The role that political parties play in the creation and maintenance of a sustainable democracy is addressed simultaneously.

2. POLITICAL ADVERTISING

2.1 The application of a marketing model on political campaigns

In the American context, political advertising on television in particular, is criticised for the emphasis on image instead of issue (cf. Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997:417; Kaid & Sanders, 1978: Sabato, 1981:130-131; Sher, 1997:92). This focus on image is the result of the increasing use of a marketing model in political campaigns.

The key assumption of the marketing approach to political campaigns is that the needs and expectations of the electorate should be used as the starting point of the campaign. This cannot be faulted as such, but the way in which the needs are utilised could be questioned. When these needs have been identified, all marketing strategies are focused

on them in order to canvas votes (Newman, 1994:3; Scammell, 1995:5-6; Kotler & Kotler, 1999:3-4). In essence this implies greater emphasis on the candidate and his/her personal characteristics in the campaign, the use of communication professionals to run the campaign, the diminishing role of the party in the campaign and an important role by media in contextualising and defining the campaign (Trent & Friedenburg, 1995:5-8; Kavanagh, 1995:219-220; Esser, Reinmann & Fan, 2000). In practice, this could lead to the manipulation and deception of voters.

Criticism against a marketing approach is thus not against using needs as a starting point, but the manner in which these needs are utilised. The political party should aim at meeting voters' real needs and not merely at projecting an image of a candidate in order to canvas votes on superficial grounds. Real debate about important issues should form the basis of democratic electioneering discourse. Unfortunately, this is often not the case in the American and British contexts. When keeping in mind that an election campaign is also an opportunity for civil education (or at the very least the provision of legitimate information in order to make informed decisions), the applicability of a one-dimensional marketing approach to political communication could be questioned seriously – particularly in a developing democracy.

In the South African context voters vote for a party and not a candidate, reducing the importance of the image of the candidates. But this does not mean that the problem can be ignored. The image of political parties (and their leaders) could still be given more prominence than policy issues in campaign communication. Given the fact that South Africa is to a large extent a developing democracy, one should not merely ask whether political advertising is harming democracy, but also whether it is actively furthering a sustainable democracy.

3. EMOTION AND POLITICAL ADVERTISING

According to the model of Way and Masters (1996), emotion and cognition are interdependent when a voter decides for whom to vote. Emotion is the process that activates a stimulus, while cognition is the processing, interpretation and storing of information. This implies that a voter could see a candidate on television and react emotionally; at the same time there is a cognitive reaction through which the voter associates specific policy issues with the candidate. This cognitive response could impact on the emotional response by reinforcing or adjusting it.

In this article it is assumed that emotion and cognition are interrelated. Therefore, both emotion and cognition contribute to the image of the party and the voters' decisions for whom to vote. Thus, emotional messages do play an important role in campaign communication. The critique against a marketing model does not imply that all emotional

messages are bad for democracy. On the contrary, emotion could well be used to further a young democracy.

A vast amount of research (cf. Popkin, 1991:24; Page & Shapiro, 1992:6; Buckingham, 1997) indicates that the general voter is not interested in political information and it is therefore very difficult to educate these voters politically. On the other hand, people are generally interested in an emotional message or information regarding other people. It is therefore understandable and not necessarily unacceptable to emphasise the personal characteristics of candidates or party leaders. This could generate interest among the voting public. But these personal characteristics or images must be linked to policy issues. The same applies to the use of emotional appeals: the appeal could be used to grab the attention of the voter, but must then be substantiated by issue appeals.

Emotion in political campaigns should thus be used responsibly, especially in a young democracy such as South Africa. While it could be used to manipulate the voter, it could also be used to get the voter more interested and involved in politics.

4. METHODOLOGY

This article focuses on party political advertisements that appeared in newspapers in the North-West Province. The study was limited to the North-West Province to increase its feasibility. With the exception of the UCDP, which is a strong regional party in the province, the election results in the North West Province were comparable to the results in the rest of the country. Furthermore, the North-West Province has characteristics typical of a developing region, for example: a high percentage (22,7%) of people with no schooling; 65% of the population live in non-urban areas; a young population (36% younger than 15 years); and about one third of the population is unemployed (Census, 1996).

All the parties (ANC, DP, NNP, UCDP, UDM, FF) that received more than 1% of the vote in the province during the 1999 elections were included in the study. The advertisements reflected here were collected from newspapers published between 15 March 1999 and 9 June 1999 – from the date of announcement of the elections until a week after the elections. The following papers were included: Rapport, Sunday Times, Sunday World, The Sunday Independent, City Press, Beeld, The Star, Mail & Guardian, Potchefstroom Herald, North West Record, North West Gazette, and The Mail (Mnabatho). This represents a mix of national The term national newspaper is used as a collective name for daily, weekly and weekend papers. It is however recognised that not all of these papers are national in the true sense of the word. and community papers available in the North-West. Community newspapers are more widely read than daily papers, but Sunday papers also have good readership (cf. ABC, 2002). The selection of newspapers

could thus be regarded as valid.

The following political advertisements were identified in the above-mentioned papers:

- ANC: 18 advertisements (1 of which appeared only in a community paper);
- DP: 14 advertisements (7 in community newspapers);
- NNP: 28 advertisements (11 in community newspapers);
- UDCP: 1 advertisement (which appeared in *The Mail*);
- UDM: 2 advertisements (both in daily and Sunday papers); and
- FF: 25 advertisements (16 in community papers).

These advertisements were analysed according to the guidelines of qualitative content analysis as provided by Berelson (1952). A qualitative approach was used in order to conduct a more in-depth and descriptive analysis of a relatively small but comprehensive data set. As the link between the emotional and cognitive content of the message was of importance, "absent content" (if there was no link) also had to be analysed. To ensure reliability, the advertisements were analysed systematically according to the following categories: character appeals, emotional appeals (including appeals of sympathy, hope, reinforcement, achievement, empathy, uncertainty, anger and fear), positive identification and policy messages, negative messages (harsh reality techniques and political blunders) and comparative messages. As is customary with qualitative analysis, the categories were revised during the analysis to reflect all the relevant aspects of the data. The definitions of the categories (which are not mutually exclusive) are presented as part of the analysis of the advertisements to facilitate easy reference.

5. APPEALS IN POLITICAL ADVERTISING

5.1 Issue appeals

An issue appeal refers to facts or evidence presented by a party or candidate, private or public figures or other organisations. An issue appeal could be prospective, referring to future promises; or retrospective, indicating what the parties have already achieved (cf. Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:87; Benoit & Pier, 1997:6).

For the purposes of this article, an issue appeal is seen as a statement explaining policy. It must be more than just a reference to policy; it also has to contextualise the policy or indicate where the voter could acquire more information on the particular policy issue. The following table indicates the main policy issues addressed by the different parties in their newspaper advertising campaigns.

Table 1: Main policy issues in newspaper advertisements

ANC	DP	NNP	UCDP	UDM	FF
Right to vote Manifesto Women's rights Basic needs Corruption Crime Unemployment	Crime Job creation Education Health care	Crime Education Job creation	Upliftment of the community	Crime Unemployment Income tax	Law and order Christian values Protection of minorities Health care Education

The above-mentioned table indicates that crime and economic issues were the most important issues placed on the election agenda by the parties through their newspaper advertisements.

A closer look indicates that in most instances, the referrals to issues of policy were nothing more than agendasetting. When evaluated against the criteria set for issue appeals, most statements fell short as no further explanation of the policy was given. The DP, UDM and FF did not explain their proposed policies. The DP and the UDM in fact only focused on the failure of government policy regarding crime, corruption, and unemployment, but did not really suggest any alternatives. The UCDP made no reference to any policy issues.

The NNP elaborated to some extent on their policies. Although not detailing their policy regarding crime, the voters were referred to the blueprint on crime and the web site for further information. Given the nature of the advertisements, detailed policy discussions could not be expected. The NNP overcame this shortcoming by referring voters to their blueprint on crime.

The ANC mostly used full-page advertisements and utilised the space to clarify some of the policy issues. They did indicate how their policy on crime and job creation would be implemented. However, the ANC was especially successful at explaining what they had already achieved. They were thus stronger on retrospective policy appeals than on prospective policy appeals.

Although various issues were addressed, the party did not really elaborate on its policies regarding these issues.

5.2 Character appeals

Character appeals are statements referring to the personality traits of the candidate, for example, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, intelligence and charisma. (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:87).

The DP, NNP and FF referred directly to the leadership abilities of their leaders. Tony Leon, the leader of the DP, was portrayed as a tough and effective opposition leader. It was specifically suggested that Leon and the DP had the “guts” to fight back and that it was not just the DP fighting back.

The Freedom Front succeeded the best in linking the leadership qualities of Constand Viljoen to their policy on crime. Viljoen was portrayed as the only leader, given his experience with the security forces, to address the problem of crime in the country: Daar is egter geen politieke leier in Suid-Afrika wat beter toegerus is om die toename in misdaad en geweld en moontlike anargie die hoof te bied nie as genl. Constand Viljoen; Genl. Viljoen, as oud-Weermaghoof, is die enigste van die huidige leiers met voldoende ervaring om moontlike krisisse in die toekoms doeltreffend te hanteer.

Marthinus van Schalkwyk had a very high profile in NNP newspaper advertisements and appeared in 12 of the 17 placed in national newspapers. Coinciding with this, there were direct references to his leadership abilities, e.g.

We have a dynamic leader who is setting the political agenda and calling the ANC to account.

The NNP also used FW de Klerk to endorse the leadership of Van Schalkwyk. This was probably done due to questions about Van Schalkwyk's leadership abilities. However, the NNP did not link these abilities to their policies.

The ANC, UDM and UCDP did not refer to leadership qualities directly, but their leaders did appear in some of the advertisements. It was therefore only the DP and the FF that connected their leaders' personality traits with their policies.

5.3 Emotional appeals

Emotional appeals aim to provoke some emotional response from the electorate. This emotional response could be used to manipulate the voter or to enhance policy issues. Emotional appeals could have a negative or positive tone.

Positive emotional appeals include sympathy appeals aimed at touching the hearts of the voters by referring to the elderly, children, etc. (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:99).

The NNP and the ANC were the only parties to use sympathy appeals in their newspaper advertising campaigns during the 1999 general elections. Both parties' appeals were directed at children, young people and women. Examples of NNP sympathy appeals were:

Onderwys gaan oor kinders en nooit oor burokrate of politici nie;

Dubbelyd vir misdadigers wat vroue, kinders, bejaardes en gestremdes teiken;

Vandag se kinders, môre se slagoffers;

Beskerm die toekoms van ons kinders deur hierdie poskaart in te vul en aan te stuur;

Gee ons kinders 'n kans en maak jou kruisie vir die Nuwe NP;

...127 vroue word elke dag verkrag. Dikwels is vigs en moord die gevolg van hierdie verwoestende geweldsmisdaad;

My kinders is vir my belangrik en daarom is dit vir my van die grootste belang dat hulle, en al die kinders in Suid-Afrika, se onderwys van die heel hoogste gehalte is.

Examples of ANC appeals were:

... vandag is daar meer geleenthede vir jongmense – van gesondheid tot sport;

Pregnant woman and children under six have access to free health care. Delivery of water and electricity is saving millions of women from backbreaking chores;

... all South Africa's children have access to quality education;

... woman have been in the forefront of the liberation struggle.

Appeals of hope usually use children or young people to indicate that they have a prosperous future ahead of them. Sometimes different generations of a family appear together in an advertisement to indicate continuity and hope (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:100-101; Sherr, 1997:57).

All the parties, except the DP, used appeals of hope, indicating that despite problems there is a future in South Africa. The ANC emphasised the better future theme in terms of improvement in the provision of basic needs:

Massive government programmes, including youth brigades, will build roads, houses and extend water supply and sanitation;

The ANC is determined to speed up change in partnership with all the people of South Africa;

... The people's vote directs the ANC to move forward faster to achieve the goal of a better life for all South Africans.

The UCDP also portrayed hope in terms of the upliftment of the community. The NNP focused on their proposals for combating crime and improving education:

Ons glo dat ons misdaadplan geweldsmisdade in SA gedurende die volgende jaar met 25 persent kan laat daal en oor die volgende vyf jaar met 70 persent;

If our approach is implemented without compromising it can create more than 1,25

million job opportunities;

Die Nuwe NP weet presies wat om te doen: realistiese begrotings, ouerbetrokkenheid, dissipline en gehalte onderwys vir almal.

It was noticeable that even the FF used appeals of hope to indicate that the Afrikaner does have a future in South Africa:

Daar is hoop;

Jou droom is ons plan.

The FF also used visuals to portray hope; Viljoen appeared in a photograph with his family. Reinforcing appeals focused on the "home" or local heritage. The familiar surroundings of the voter are emphasised (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:102).

The different parties used appeals of reinforcement in different contexts. The ANC concentrated on the freedom struggle:

... by promoting peace, democracy and respect for human rights across the African continent;

... we've won our freedom and dignity;

Together, women and men, as equals, can build a society of dignity and respect for all;

... and helped make South Africa a free country, for everyone;

Together, we must make elections '99 free and fair;

The ANC thanks those who contributed to free and fair elections in 1999.

The NNP focused on a crime-free environment with a quality education system and Christian values:

In the Western Cape, where the New NP governs, the Matric pass rate is 80%. In the rest of SA, where the ANC governs, it is less than 50%. In the Western Cape, the economic growth rate is 4%. In the rest of SA, there is economic stagnation; Daarenteen word die Nuwe NP se beleid en optrede gerig deur Christelike norme en waardes!

Ek het die vrymoedigheid om u te vra om vir die Nuwe NP te stem – 'n party gegrond op Christelike waardes en norme.

The FF focused on "Afrikaner values":

Die Vryheidsfront is die enigste party wat hoofsaaklik Afrikaans in die parlement praat;

... die Vryheidsfront veg vir Christelike waardes, die doodstraf en groepsregte;

Die Vryheidsfront bied 'n tuiste aan alle Afrikaners op soek na 'n voertuig waarbinne hulle hul ideale entoesiasies kan uitleef;

... weet hy (Viljoen) hoe belangrik die behoud van Christelike waardes en Afrikaans vir die toekoms is;

As jy vir 'n party wil stem wat bereid is om vir jou waardes te veg;
 Guarantee the real protection of the rights of the threatened minorities!

Appeals of achievement are used to indicate the successes of a candidate or party, especially in terms of international standing (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:102; Salmore & Salmore, 1989:146; Pfau & Parrot, 1996:269-271).

As could be expected, the ANC made extensive use of achievement appeals to indicate their success as a governing party. The emphasis was on achievements regarding basic needs, women's rights, human rights, dignity in general and crime. The NNP, as the governing party in the Western Cape, used the same tactics, and focused on their achievements in the Western Cape, especially regarding education:
 Ons weet hoe om te regeer en hoe om die ekonomie te bestuur;
 In the Western Cape where the New NP governs, the matric pass rate is 80%;
 In die Wes-Kaap waar ons regeer, is die matriekslaagsyfer by verre die hoogste in die land.

It is interesting that the FF also used appeals of achievement to indicate what they had done for Afrikaans and Afrikaner values. This could be seen as part of the FF's campaign to portray itself as a party with a feasible policy:

Met sekere partye is ooreenkomste gesluit en met ander is gesprekke aan die gang;
 Na 'n klagte van die Vryheidsfront het die PANSAT-taalraad die Vryheidsfront gelyk gegee. Die Vryheidsfront het sy magsbasis gebruik ten einde kultuurrade as deel van die Wes-Kaapse provinsiale grondwet in die provinsie voor te stel en aanvaar te kry.

Empathic appeals are used to create the illusion that the candidate or party and the voters are very similar (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:102-103).

All the parties used empathic appeals for emotional synchronisation with their voters. Once again the focus of the parties was different. The ANC portrayed itself as the party that cares for ordinary people at grassroots level:
 ... so that we can meet the basic needs of all our South Africa's people;
 And helped make South Africa a free country, for everyone;
 We must work together to make change happen faster,...;
 Too many South Africans are victims of violent crime ... Together we must stem up the fight and launch a national offensive against crime;
 Unemployment is of great concern to all South Africans. Too many of us remain unemployed. Too many cannot find work when they finish school;
 ... vote for the party that protects your interests.

The DP aligned itself mainly with the victims of crime:

132 Vroue verkrag elke dag. 71 Mense vermoor elke dag. Miljoene rande as gevolg

van korrupsie gesteel. Gekwalifiseerde mense kry nie werk nie. Dis tyd om terug te slaan.

The NNP and the UCDP focused on Christian values:

Daarenteen word die Nuwe NP se beleid en optrede gerig deur Christelike norme en waardes!;

Ek het die vrymoedigheid om u te vra om vir die Nuwe NP te stem – 'n party gegrond op Christelike waardes en norme.

The NNP also emphasised education:

Moedertaalonderwys;

In the Western Cape, where the New NP governs, the Matric pass rate is 80%. In the rest of SA, where the ANC governs, it is less than 50%. In the Western Cape, the economic

growth rate is 4%. In the rest of SA, there is economic stagnation.

The UDM stressed the fact that they did not receive any of the taxpayers' money for their campaign. The FF focused on "Afrikaner values", but also directly addressed the voter in their advertisements, thus creating a more personal feeling, for example:

Hoe sou jy gestem het?;

Wil jy vir die DP stem?;

Vir wie gaan jy stem?

The positive emotional appeals were thus mainly used to indicate that the parties care for their respective supporters by acknowledging problems in their communities, and highlighting what they have done in this regard, as well as what they plan to do. The focus was more on what was done than what was envisioned.

Negative emotional appeals include uncertainty appeals that aim to create a feeling of hesitation in the voter regarding the success of the ruling party (Kern, 1989:95 & 106). In practice uncertainty appeals are usually used in conjunction with anger and fear appeals.

The ANC was the main target regarding uncertainty appeals. As could be expected, the parties defining themselves as opposition parties used uncertainty appeals frequently to question the ANC's ability. Both the DP and the NNP implied that the ANC was responsible for a decline in the quality of education and health care, the high crime rate and the unemployment rate.

DP referrals to the above-mentioned included:

South Africa's educational system under the ANC has been plunged into a severe crisis;

Dr. Zuma se administrasie het die gehalte van gesondheidsorg in ons hospitale erg skade aangedoen;

132 Vroue verkrag elke dag. 71 Mense vermoor elke dag. Miljoene rande as gevolg van korrupsie gesteel. Gekwalifiseerde mense kan nie werk kry nie.

Examples of uncertainty appeals of the NNP directed at the ANC were:

Destroyed 1,5 million jobs during the past five years. Lowered the standard of medical and social services;

Stopped the payment of alimony to children older than 7 years... ;

Onlangse ANC-wysigings op Artikel 49 van die Strafproseswet maak dit feitlik onmoontlik vir die polisie om gevaarlike misdadigers te arresteer;

Die helfte van matrieks het verlede jaar gedruip;

Die ANC regering blyk onwillig te wees om misdaad, wat ons lewensgehalte en toekomsvooruitsigte stelselmatig vernietig, doeltreffend te bekamp;

Die Nuwe NP is diep geskok deur die ANC se ongevoelige houding oor dié onrusbarende situasie;

In 'n land waar die helfte van die matrieks verlede jaar gedruip het en 50% van wiskunde-onderwysers nie behoorlik gekwalifiseerd is nie, kan niemand sê dat ons onderwys op hoë peil is nie.

The UDM focused their "attack" on the ANC on crime and economic issues:

The NP and the DP were there when the ANC: lost more than 500 000 jobs, cut the police budget by more than 20%, introduced the highest ever personal income tax in history.

The DP further questioned the trustworthiness of the NNP:

Jy kan nie die NNP vertrou as opposisie nie.

Anger appeals aim to cause doubt about the ability and/or policies of the ruling party. However, it is important that while the appeals anger voters, they do not create a sense of hopelessness (Gunsch, Bronlow & Hayes., 2000:38).

The DP mainly used anger appeals aimed at Nkosasana Zuma and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. In the case of Zuma, it was indicated that the quality of health care had declined under her ministry and that there was a possibility that she could become deputy president. Regarding Madikizela-Mandela, the DP quoted Mbeki as supportive of her nomination as a Parliamentary candidate.

The FF tried to anger potential DP and NNP voters by comparing the DP and the NNP with the ANC and implying that the DP and the NNP supported the ANC on proposed laws regarding education, gambling, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, land restitution and the elderly.

Appeals of fear are used to create fear, anxiety or uncertainty within the electorate. Future appeals of fear indicate what possible mistakes the opponent could make, while retrospective appeals highlight past mistakes by opponents. Fear appeals should be used with caution, as they could lead to mass panic (Johnson & Cartee & Copeland, 1997:104; Gunsch, *et al.*, 2000:3).

The DP used fear appeals to portray the ANC as "dangerous" by insinuating that if they had too much power it could be detrimental to democracy in South Africa:

Wat is jou beste kans om te sorg dat die ANC nie 'n 2/3 meerderheid kry en ons land op 'n outokratiese wyse regeer nie?;
Net die DP het die moontlikheid van koalisie met die ANC uitgesluit.

The NNP elaborated on the theme and enhanced it with referrals to crime and the ANC's inability to combat crime:

As die ANC 'n 2/3 meerderheid kry, kan hulle die Grondwet verander net soos hulle wil;
Vandag se kinders, môre se slagoffers;
Vrouelewens word daagliks bedreig ... 127 vroue word elke dag verkrag. Dikwels is Vigs en moord die tragiese gevolge van hierdie verwoestende geweldsmisdaad;
Met 'n tweederde meerderheid kan die ANC die Grondwet enige tyd tydens hulle termyn verander om hulle te pas;
In 'n land waar die helfte van die matrieks verlede jaar gedruip het ...

A lot of energy during campaigning is often directed at creating a feeling of *us against them*. This is done by portraying the candidate as a hero and the opponent as a fool, or indicating that the opposition is different from the accepted norm in society (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:111-118).

The NNP used a transfer appeal to connect the SACP and Cosatu to the ANC, thereby creating a feeling of *us against them*:

ANC/SAKP/Cosatu-alliansie of Nuwe NP;
Konsentreer jou stemreg in die Nuwe NP – die enigste teenvoeter vir die ANC/SAKP/Cosatu-alliansie;
... en aan die ander kant is daar die regerende ANC/SAKP/Cosatu-alliansie.
Although usually used as a negative appeal, the FF used the concept of creating a

hero positively to portray their leadership:

Die VF se span kandidate is uiters bekwaam, akademies opgelei met jare se politieke ervaring;

... die Vryheidsfront is die enigste party wat nog nie sittende parlamentslede aan ander partye afgestaan het nie.

The negative emotional appeals were mainly directed at the ANC and tried to persuade voters that the ANC was not succeeding as the governing party.

5.4 Humorous appeals

There is no consent on the effectiveness of the use of humour in political advertising. On the one hand, research indicates that humour could draw attention; on the other hand, it could distract the voter from the actual content of the advertisement. Humour is mostly used in negative advertisements and aims at belittling the opposition. Humour could be directed at the opponent (depreciative humour) or at the self (self depreciative humour) (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997:118-119).

There were no clear examples of the use of humour in the newspaper advertisements of the political parties included in this study.

6. NEGATIVE MESSAGES IN POLITICAL ADVERTISING

The use of negative or so-called attack advertising has been widely criticised (cf. Kaid & Johnson, 1991; Benoit & Pier 1997:12-13, Devlin, 1993; Hodess, Tedesco & Kaid, 2000). This criticism could mainly be seen within the context of a marketing model. The competitive nature of the marketing approach to political campaigning implies that it is not enough to sell candidates; it is also necessary to indicate why voters should not support the opposition. The implication is that a campaign could adopt a predominantly negative character, and parties could get caught up in mudslinging and neglect the informational aspect of the campaign message.

This argument is much the same as the one regarding the use of emotion in campaign messages. The assumption in this article is thus also that a negative message could be used to draw the attention of the voter, but it must be followed up by a policy issue. The second main point of criticism is that a negative campaign could lead to a general negative attitude towards politics and therefore have a demobilising effect on the voter. This is of special importance in a developing democracy where a culture of participation still needs to be fostered and maintained. Against this background, the potential demobilising effect of negative messages in the 1999 campaign needs to be examined.

7. DEMOBILISING EFFECT OF NEGATIVE ADVERTISING

There is a strong school of thought in literature that negative campaign messages could demobilise the electorate (cf. Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Abbe & Henson, 2000; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon & Valentino, 1994; Rahn & Hirshorn, 1999; Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995). The most influential of these studies was the one by Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), which indicated that voters exposed to negative messages were less likely to vote, while voters exposed to positive messages were more likely to vote. This study is criticised by Brains and Wattenburg (1996) for being executed in experimental situations. Brains and Wattenburg's own research indicates that the context of the elections could affect the demobilising effect of the negative message. In elections that generated a lot of interest, the demobilising effect was much smaller (see also Finkel & Geer, 1998:591). In fact, there are authors who imply that the emotional nature of negative messages could mobilise the voters (Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton & Cole, 1990:302; Kahn & Kenney, 1999:878). It is also argued that negative and especially comparative advertisements could stimulate the public debate (cf. Kahn & Kenny, 1999:878; Pfau & Parrot, 1996:278; Kolodny, Thurber & Dulio, 2000; Mayer, 1996:437-455).

The authors would, however, suggest that a negative message should be used with caution. It could be used to attract the voters' attention, but then the issue must be presented in a particular context. To counter the demobilising effect, care should be taken not to leave the voters with a feeling of hopelessness or despair. Although negative areas are highlighted, the voter must be presented with a positive alternative (see also Marcus, 1991; Nadeau & Niemi, 1995; Marcus & Mackeun, 1993 on the use of fear in election campaigns). Care should also be taken not to direct the negative message against a person (cf. Roddy & Garramone, 1988; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991) or democratic structures.

Against this background, the use of positive and negative messages in newspaper advertising campaigns during the 1999 general elections is significant.

8. THE USE OF POSITIVE MESSAGES

Positive messages are seen as messages highlighting the positive aspects or characteristics of the party or candidate. This is done by indicating what the party or candidate has done, but more specifically what they were planning on doing (Kaid & Johnston, 1991:53; Kolodny, Thurber & Dulio, 2000; Gunsch et al., 2000:28).

Two main types of positive messages are used in political advertisements, namely identification and policy advertisements. In a policy advertisement, the party outlines its own policy initiatives, while identification advertisements concentrate more on the image of the party.

9. POSITIVE POLICY MESSAGES

Eleven of the ANC's newspaper advertisements analysed had positive policy messages. These referred to their manifesto, the right to vote, basic needs, corruption, crime and job creation.

Two advertisements of the DP had positive policy messages:

Werkskepping deur ekonomiese groei. DP veg terug teen misdaad. What about the education system? Health crisis;
DP word amptelike opposisie.

The positive policy messages of the NNP focused on crime, education, job creation and the improvement of health services:

Crime destroys freedom, help us prevent anarchy vote New NP;
Moedertaalonderwys: stem Nuwe NP;
Geen genade vir misdadigers, ons bloudruk teen misdaad sluit in...;
Do not destroy rather create jobs;
Die Nuwe NP sal die uitklophou plant teen misdaad. Net ons geen-genade beleid kan werk!;
Gee ons kinders 'n kans en maak jou kruisie vir die Nuwe NP.

There were some examples of policy messages among the FF's newspaper advertisements, namely:

U natuurlike politieke tuiste;
Stem ja vir Christelike waardes;
Vote Freedom Front;
'n Misdaadplan, 'n ekonomiese plan, 'n onderwysplan;
Veilig wil wees. Christelike waardes voorstaan. Afrikaans liefhet. Ekonomies wil groei en jou eie toekoms wil skep.

10. POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION MESSAGES

Eleven of the ANC's newspaper advertisements were positive identification advertisements. The ANC mainly identified itself as a party that supported the freedom struggle, but indicated that the right to vote had replaced the freedom struggle and that it cared for women.

All the positive messages in the DP's newspaper advertisements were mainly aimed at identification. Through these advertisements, the DP portrayed itself as an opposition party with "guts", for example:

Pukke: Slaan terug vir demokrasie;

Jy het die mag slaan terug, Stem DP;

Slaan terug met 'n doeltreffende opposisie;

DP word amptelike opposisie;

Die Demokratiese Party het u ondersteuning dringend nodig;

Die moed om op te staan vir u waardes;

Net die DP kan 'n tweederde meerderheid vir die ANC keer. Net die DP het die moontlikheid van koalisie met die ANC uitgesluit.

The NNP's campaign theme, Let's get South Africa working, was strongly emphasised in their identification advertisements. Although this implied that the South African society was not functioning properly and could therefore be seen as a negative outlook, the NNP's message was actually a positive one (if rather ambitious) as they proposed solutions to important problems facing the country.

Most of the FF's advertisements were aimed at identification and likewise they focused on their campaign slogan: Ons het 'n plan! The FF therefore also tried to position itself as a party with a feasible policy.

The UCDP defined itself as a party committed to uplifting of the community. The only positive message in the UDM's newspaper advertisements had an identification purpose: Daar is net een keuse: vennootskap. The UDM portrayed itself as an inclusive party prepared to work together.

The nature of the advertisements implies that they would have a strong identification function. It was therefore not surprising that most of the advertisements were identification advertisements and not policy advertisements. However, the question is whether the parties succeeded in linking the identification and policy messages with one another.

With the exception of the NNP's referrals to their blueprint against crime, the policy messages were not linked to policy messages.

11. THE USE OF NEGATIVE MESSAGES

The aim of negative messages is to indicate why a specific candidate or party should not be voted for. This is usually done by connecting the candidate or party to a threat, for example economic failure and high crime rate. (Kern 1989:102-104; Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995:90; Salmore & Salmore, 1989:147; Gunsch et al., 2002:28; Pfau & Parrot, 1996:274-275).

There are various techniques used in negative messages, including harsh reality, to be your own enemy, the party/candidate's political experience or the lack thereof, the candidate's character, flip-flop messages, promises, support for specific policies or laws, etc.

Two main categories, namely harsh reality and political blunders, were identified. A harsh reality technique was defined as any reality presented in the campaign message to show the inadequacy of the opposition. A political blunder was seen as any "mistake" the opponent made, including its campaign messages, blunders by leaders, references to the experience or the lack thereof of candidates or parties, policies that were supported, etc.

The DP, NNP and FF used harsh reality techniques to indicate that the ANC's policies were not successful. The DP, for example, stated:

132 Vroue verkrag elke dag. 71 Mense vermoor elke dag. Miljoene rande as gevolg van korrupsie gesteel. Gekwalifiseerde mense kan nie werk kry nie.

The NNP stated:

... destroyed 1,5 million jobs during the past five years, lowered the standard of medical and social services ...;

... 127 vroue word elke dag verkrag....;

Die helfte van die matrieks het verlede jaar gedruip. As mens in ag neem dat die ANC se begroting vir handboeke met 42% gesny is, en dat 50,1% van wiskunde onderwysers nie gekwalifiseerd is nie ;

In 'n land waar die helfte van die matrieks verlede jaar gedruip het en 50% van wiskunde-onderwysers nie behoorlik gekwalifiseerd is nie, kan niemand sê dat ons onderwys op hoë peil is nie.

The UDM also used the harsh reality appeal to indicate that the ANC and, by implication, the DP and the NNP, had failed in their political efforts:

Lost more than 500 000 jobs; cut the police budget by more than 20%, introduced the highest ever personal income tax in history?

The ANC was especially the target of advertisements suggesting political blunders. Examples in DP advertisements were:

... die kommissie bevind me. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela polities en moreel toerekenbaar vir die ernstige skending van menseregte ...";

Onder dr. Zuma se administrasie is die gehalte van gesondheidsorg in ons hospitale erg skade aangedoen. Nou is daar sprake dat sy Adjunk-President kan word; " ... 'n situasie kan ontstaan waar die NNP ... in 'n ANC-geleide regering kan dien" – Marthinus van Schalkwyk .

Examples of political blunders quoted by the NNP were:

Die Nuwe NP is diep geskok deur die ANC se ongevoelige houding oor dié onrusbarende situasie;

Die ANC laat SA in die steek deurdat geweldsmisdaad sedert 1994 drasties toegeneem het, 1,5 miljoen werksgeleenthede vernietig is ... Die ANC is nie in staat om hierdie land te regeer nie en moet beslis nie 'n tweede kans gegee word om net leë beloftes te maak nie;

Die ANC regering blyk onwillig te wees om misdaad, wat ons lewensgehalte en toekomsvooruitsigte stelselmatig vernietig, doeltreffend te bekamp.

The FF referred to ANC policy as a form of political blunder:

Aborsie is beplande moord.

As the governing party, the ANC probably anticipated that most of the negative messages would be directed against it. Against this background the ANC had proactive reactions to negative advertisements, claiming that enough had not been done regarding job creation and crime. The ANC also admitted that some of their members were involved in corruption:

Sadly, we have found that even some who fought for freedom have also become corrupt for their own selfish interests.

There was only one example of an ANC advertisement that could probably be seen as a negative message, placed by Cosatu. It claimed that the NP, DP, IFP and others remained opposed to the basic protection of workers.

The NNP also attacked the DP and referred to the policies that the DP used as a political blunder. Furthermore, Tony Leon's quotes regarding religion were used against him:

'My lewe word nie gerig deur godsdienstige wette en rituele nie. ... elke mens behoort 'n geestelike kern te hê. Myne is egter nie goed ontwikkel nie, want ek kry te min tyd daarvoor.

12. COMPARATIVE MESSAGES

In contrast to negative advertisements, it is not necessary to refer to the opponent by name when using comparative messages. Comparisons could be done by implication (Pinkleton, 1989:24; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991:43; Kolodny, Thurber & Dulio, 2000), as was the case in the FF's ad: *Almal wil nou terugslaan, maar toe hulle moes het hulle nie*. The DP is not mentioned by name, but by using their campaign theme, they are implied.

The biggest advantage of comparative advertisements is that they could highlight policy differences and therefore stimulate public debate. Comparative advertisements could

thus have a high informational value, but they obviously have their pitfalls. In the South African general elections of 1999, comparisons were made by the NNP, the DP and the FF. These parties used comparative advertisements to differentiate or distance themselves from the other parties.

The NNP had a series of advertisements that highlighted the differences between them and the DP, by linking the DP with the ANC. Using a transfer appeal, the NNP indicated that the DP and the ANC supported the same policies.

Die DP het saam met die ANC gestem oor die SA skolewet;

Die DP stem saam met die ANC vir abortsie op aanvraag – direk teen Christelike beginsels in;

So het die DP "teruggeslaan" teen dié ANC: "Chairperson, I wish to give the hon. Minister, as well as the hon. Mr Willie Hofmeyer, a thrill by telling you that the DP supports the legislation and will be voting for it ..."

The FF used the same strategy, except that they grouped the NNP with the ANC and the DP, thus distancing themselves from the DP, the NNP and the ANC by highlighting legislation that the DP, NNP and ANC supported. These included legislation regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Act. 16 of 1995), the Land Redistribution Court (Act. 22 of 1995), illegal evictions (Act. 19 of 1996), labour law (Act. 66 of 1995), lottery law (Act. 47 of 1997), gambling law (Act. 33 van 1996) and legislation regarding the elderly (Act. 127 of 1998).

The NNP also had comparative advertisements with a less negative tone, in which they compared their gains in by-elections to those of other parties.

The only reactions to these comparative advertisements came from the DP. They denied NNP allegations regarding the DP's views on religion, abortion and language policy. Although the NNP campaigned negatively against the DP, they did not react directly to any of the DP allegations.

13. NEGATIVE MESSAGES AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Broadly seen, none of the parties had an overbearing negative campaign, and it would therefore seem that South African political parties did not fall into the trap of conducting an election campaign consisting mainly of "attack" advertising. The DP and NNP campaigns came closest to attack advertising. A worrisome aspect is the NNP's lack of reaction to the DP's allegations. They consequently did not enter into a debate about the issues, but merely responded with allegations of their own.

Apart from rare exceptions, the negative messages were directed at policy issues and not at democratic structures or political personalities. The exceptions were two DP

advertisements directed at Zuma and Madikizela-Mandela and an NNP advertisement questioning Leon's religious beliefs. In the case of Zuma, the criticism was directed at her administration of the health portfolio, while the attacks against Madikizela-Mandela and Leon were of a more personal nature.

Within a democratic culture, it is quite acceptable to address policy issues as this is the heart of political discourse. In this regard, the policy issues addressed in negative messages were mostly emotional issues, for example, abortion, religion, taxation and the death penalty. Consequently, these issues would probably have raised public interest, rather than have a demobilising effect on the voter. As parties balanced their negative messages with positive messages, the negative messages should not have left the voters feeling despondent and disinterested in politics. Even the DP, which probably had the most negative newspaper advertisement campaign, portrayed some hope. The central message of the DP's campaign was that by participating in the election, the voter had a chance to address the negative issues. In this regard, they used the negative message to mobilise the voter.

14. THE USE OF EMOTION IN POLITICAL MESSAGES AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

The ANC and the NNP succeeded best in combining cognition and emotion in their messages in newspaper advertisements. The ANC linked the emotional concept of freedom to the right to vote and therefore the necessity to participate in an election:

The mark of freedom;

Wie't ooit gedink die stem kan jou toekoms verbeter? ... sorg dus dat jy jou stem laat hoor.

The latter also refers to emotion on a second level. The patriotic emotion of singing the national anthem is transferred to voting as a patriotic action. Other examples of ANC policy issues linked to emotional issues are statements regarding women's rights, workers' rights and basic needs:

Delivery of water and electricity is saving million of women from backbreaking chores;
The ANC understands that without jobs, we cannot enjoy the freedoms that we have won;

The ANC government has returned the dignity of workers;

The majority of South Africa's children enjoy better access to education.

The NNP directed its emotional messages mainly at crime and education. The NNP used emotional headings to attract attention and then explained the policy in the text of the advertisements, for example:

Moenie jou toekoms begrawe nie;

Crime destroys freedom;

Mbedertaalonderwys.

The NNP also used visuals for emotional impact, for example a picture of children under the heading: *Vandag se kinders*. This was followed by a picture of an automatic weapon with the heading *Môre se slagoffers*.

The DP and the FF both had highly emotional campaigns, but these emotional messages were less related to policy issues. The UDM and the UCDP hardly made use of emotional messages in their advertisements included in the study.

15. CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis indicates that South African political parties extensively used emotional messages in their newspaper campaigns during the elections in 1999. But this does not imply that they should be subjected to the same criticism lodged against their American counterparts. There are a few crucial differences in the way in which South African political parties applied emotional messages in their newspaper advertisements in the 1999 campaign. These include the following:

- There was very little reference to the personal characteristics of party leaders and candidates. Where the characteristics were mentioned, the relevance thereof was indicated.
- With the exception of the DP, the majority of the parties' newspaper advertisements had a positive tone. In the case of the DP, the majority of messages might have been negative, but the underlying message was that by voting the voter could address these negatives.

Within the broader context of persuasive appeals, it is clear that there were many positive appeals. The negative messages should not have demotivated the voter or left the voter feeling despondent. It should also be kept in mind that the negative messages mostly had an emotional tone, which was more likely to mobilise than demobilise the voter.

The strongest point of criticism against the parties' newspaper advertising is not aimed at the use of emotion, but at the manner in which policy issues were addressed. Although emotion was used to attract voters' attention regarding policy issues, these issues were rarely elaborated on. Even while accepting that the prime function of a party political advertisement is not to explain intricate policies, there was little indication where voters could find this information.

It could be concluded that the use of emotional advertising in the 1999 elections did not pose a threat to a sustainable democracy in South Africa. On the other hand, much more could have been done to promote a sustainable democracy through the use of emotional and cognitive messages in political newspaper advertising.

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