

# The Impact of Political Advertisements Through Print Media: A Case Study Conducted During the Haryana Legislative Assembly Elections '09

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to determine the effectiveness of political advertisements done through print media in the developing countries like India. Also, it examines the location wise difference in the perception of the voters about political advertisements. Using the Descriptive research methodology, a structured questionnaire was prepared and furnished by 545 respondents from 10 districts of Haryana, a state in India during the Haryana General Assembly Election '09, which aims to study the impact and effectiveness of political advertisements and the extent to which print media was used during these elections.*

**Key Words:** Political Advertisement, Print Media, Developing countries, India, Legislative Assembly, Elections.

### Introduction

Haryana is a beautiful state in Northern part of India with lush green landscapes and 21 districts. It has a rich and prosperous history of Vedic civilization. Haryana has been the biggest contributor in the Green Revolution making India independent in food production. Agriculture being the main industry, it is one of the biggest producers of grains and milk products. Most of the population is living in rural areas and is involved in farming. The state recorded the 2nd highest per capita income of Rs. 67,891 in 2008-09 which is almost double the national average of Rs. 37,490 strengthening the belief of prosperous and growing rural India<sup>[1]</sup>. The technologically advanced city of Gurgaon is in Haryana along with the industrial hubs :Panipat and Faridabad. Haryana has Chandigarh, a union territory, as its capital.

The State of Haryana was formed on 1st November, 1966 with 54 legislative seats. The largest political parties in Haryana are the Indian National Congress (INC), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Haryana Janhit Congress, BL (HJCBL) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) apart from many other small parties. For the legislative

assembly polls of 2009, Haryana had a count of 90 constituencies out of which 17 were reserved constituencies. The 2009 assembly elections in Haryana were held on 13th October'09. On the counting day (22<sup>nd</sup> Oct'09), initially trends showed a sweeping victory for the Congress Haryana Assembly Polls, but the party fell short of a majority. Nevertheless, INC won from a maximum of 40 constituencies, followed by Indian National Lokdal with 32 seats, HJCBL with 6 seats and BJP winning from 4 constituencies. Remaining 8 seats were won by other small parties and independent candidates<sup>[2]</sup>

The elections in Haryana have seen an increasing trend in the use of political advertising in an organized manner. Print media like newspapers, banners, hoardings and pamphlets had been extensively used for the same. There is no definitive answer to the question of what makes a print advertisement successful. Certain perceptions are significantly affected by specific lexical, syntactical, and layout combinations, which indicates that creating effective advertisement text requires tailoring the copy to the target audience and thinking of the text as a synergy of both language and text layout elements

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(Motes et al, 1992).

Political advertising in India began as a laid-back attempt in the early 1980s and came a long way to become an organized and professional way of approaching voters. The erstwhile practice of sloganeering and propaganda are being replaced by branding and positioning strategies<sup>[3]</sup>. Use of a professional agency for political campaigning in India can be dated back to the 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi used this medium of advertising the party. However, it seems only now that political parties are recognizing the value of scientific planning and marketing techniques as they go into elections. In the past, politicians have used various methods, such as whistle-stop speeches, political advertising and political rallies, to achieve their primary goal i.e. the winning of votes. However, over the years, politicians have found that it is most advantageous to use political advertising to persuade voters (*Chang et al, 1998*).

#### Review of Literature

Political advertising is inimitable concept. It is, first and foremost, a critically important source of information for voters in election campaigns. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, political advertising surpassed news and other traditional political sources as the most important source of voting information (Drew and Weaver 1998; Media Studies Center 2000)<sup>[4]</sup>. As advertising has become more and more dominant in campaigns and as new media technologies have provided campaigns with new ways to manipulate media messages, journalists have recognized the importance of providing voters with independent information about such advertising messages (Kaid et al, 1999). Because political advertising, unlike product advertising, must get results in a short period of time, political practitioners use several kinds of political advertising: image, issue and negative advertising (Chang et al, 1998).

The proportion of campaign-related expenditures by candidates and interest groups dedicated to this form of political communication has risen dramatically (Valentino et al, 2004; West, 1997). Citizens are now exposed to huge amount of political advertising in every election cycle, but exposure to

news has declined over the same period (Bartels & Rahn, 2000; Kern, 1989). The evidence suggests that most advertisements focus on substantive issues (Hofstetter & Zukin, 1979; Joslyn, 1980), enhancing general campaign interest and engagement (Pfau, Park, Holbert, & Cho, 2001), and evoking powerful emotions about sponsors and target candidates (Kaid, Leland, & Whitney, 1992; Kern & Just, 1995). Zaller's, (1992) approach to attitude change suggests that political awareness moderates the impact of advertising exposure on candidate preferences. People with a broad awareness of politics will be more likely to comprehend and retain the information in a given message, but will be simultaneously unlikely to change their minds as a result (also see Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). The least politically aware, as indicated by infrequent newspaper readership, seemed to learn more than the most aware, from exposure to political advertisements (Patterson and McClure's (1974). Because information seeking in the political domain requires effort, time, and energy, citizens will seek out and think about politics only enough to bring them to a satisfactory decision (Downs, 1957). In fact, many may prefer the simplest of shortcuts, such as cues embedded in a message that focus on candidate personality traits or appeals to social groups (Popkin, 1991).

Political marketing in India is a numbers game. As many of the constituencies are in rural areas, the traditional practices of door-to-door canvassing, public meetings and wall posters are the only means of getting the party message across and persuading people to show up and vote (Barsur, 2004). To end for the "offensive and slanderous" political and surrogate advertisements during elections, the Supreme Court of India framed a comprehensive guideline under which no advertisement could be inserted by any political party, candidate or person without prior clearance from the commission or the chief electoral officers in the states (BBC Monitoring International Reports, 2004).

Some journalists and political pundits have long distrusted political advertising as a public information resource. Joe McGinnis (1969) was one of the first to bemoan the power of ads to reshape the public image of a candidate without delivering much in the way of

substantive information. Other observers followed suit, arguing that ads offer little substance upon which to base reasoned judgments, while delivering subtle emotional cues that can change people's feelings about the candidates (Jamieson, 1992). There was little effect on minority voter cynicism after exposure to ads, suggesting that young minorities find candidates believable, credible, and trustworthy. Peers are identified as the most significant source of information in these groups, making interpersonal communication a major change agent for young minority voters (Jasperson and Yun, 2007).

The world of political advertising is very different from the world of commercial advertising. There really are no "rules" when it comes to the content and form of political advertising. Political advertisers are not accountable to any regulatory body, voluntary or otherwise, for the accuracy of their claims. They readily engage in so-called "comparative" advertising (Iyenger and Prior, 1999). A substantial body of research also suggests that "negativity" in political communication, including political advertising, breeds cynicism and may discourage voters about the value of participating in politics, leading to demobilization (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1994). In effect, negative campaigns create an "avoidance" set within the electorate (Houston et al., 1998, 1999). Most research studies in the past have looked at negative political advertising just as a post-facto phenomenon. The results have been inconsistent (Gupta, 2000). The current state of political advertising has aroused considerable concern within the world of commercial advertising. Major advertising firms and professional associations have widely deplored the lack of accountability of political advertisers and their unwillingness to adhere to a code of ethics (Advertising Age, April 29, 1996; New York Times, April 29, 1996; Washington Post, July 30, 1996).

#### Research Methodology

This study used the Descriptive research methodology for determining the Impact of Political Advertisements in Print Media and drawing a comparison between the opinion of the people living

on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior Regions of Haryana about the extensive use of Print Media for political advertisements during the Haryana Legislative Assembly Elections'09. The districts of G.T. Road belt include Kurukshetra, Ambala, Karnal, Panipat and Sonapat and that of interior regions of Haryana include Rohtak, Bhiwani, Sirsa, Hissar and Jind.

Confined to print advertising during 8-9 weeks prior to the date of polling, the study is restricted to the respondents in the ten constituencies of Haryana (five from G.T.Road Belt and five from Interior regions of Haryana).

For the purpose of this study, a well structured questionnaire was administered to 300 voters on the G.T. Road Belt and 300 voters in the Interior of Haryana. Of the returned surveys, 263 surveys from G.T.Road Belt and 282 from Interior regions were found fit for analysis in this study. This implies that the population for this study is the people with voting rights in Haryana, India. The data collected was interpreted by means of Chi-square statistical analysis to determine the difference in the perception of voters living on the G.T. Road belt (which is more industrially advanced) and in the Interior regions (which is comparatively agriculture oriented) of Haryana about the political advertisements through print media. People living in the districts on G. T. Road Belt are more prone to influence by political advertisements as compared to their counterparts in the Interior regions of Haryana. This may be attributed to the fact that politically more aware people tend to be less influenced. People trust print media more in comparison to broadcast media as far as political advertisement is concerned.

This study looks at the political advertising, some negative, others not too much, used by the different political parties in their run up to the Vidhan Sabha Elections'09. Using a survey of voters it also attempts to classify people in terms of their dispositions towards political advertising in print media.

#### Objectives of the Study

- To determine the effectiveness of Political Advertisements in Print Media.

- To compare the opinion of the people living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior of Haryana about the extensive use of Print Media for political advertisements.
- To determine the influence of various political parties on general public in Haryana.
- To classify people in terms of their dispositions towards political advertising.

**Hypothesis of the Study**

1.  $H_1$ : There is no significant difference between the perception of people living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior regions of Haryana about the impact of political advertisements in print media in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha Election'09.

$H_0$ : There is significant difference between the perception of people living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior regions of Haryana about the impact of political advertisements in print

media in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha Election'09.

2.  $H_2$ : Voters living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior of Haryana show similar attitude when print media is compared with broadcast media.

$H_0$ : Voters living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior of Haryana do not show similar attitude when print media is compared with broadcast media.

**Analysis**

From the Table 1 it can be inferred that of the total respondents on the G.T. Road Belt (263), 54% are males and 46% are females and from the interior regions of Haryana (282), 58% are males and 42% are females. As far as location wise segregation is concerned, 58% of the respondents belong to urban area and 42% belong to the rural area on the G.T. Road Belt whereas in the interior regions 43% belong

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

S.No.	Variables	G. T. Road Belt		Interior of Haryana		
		N(263)	% (100)	N(282)	% (100)	
1	Gender	Male	141	54	164	58
		Female	122	46	118	42
2	Location	Urban	152	58	121	43
		Rural	111	42	161	57
3	Education	Upto+2	61	23	121	43
		Grad.	150	57	116	41
		Post Grad.	52	20	45	16
4	Profession	Businessman	42	16	54	19
		Salaried	45	17	42	15
		Professional	47	18	39	14
		Housewife	42	16	39	14
		Agriculturist	42	16	62	22
		Student	45	17	45	16
5	Age	18-30	114	43	116	41
		30-40	74	28	48	17
		40-50	64	24	90	32
		50 Above	11	4	28	10

to the urban areas and 57% to the rural areas. It can also be analyzed that majority of respondents were Graduates (57%) on the G.T. Road Belt and have

completed +2 or lesser education (43%) in Interior regions. The respondents were also segregated on the basis of profession with majority being professional

(18%) on the G.T. Road Belt and agriculturists (22%) in the interior regions of Haryana.

It can be analyzed from Table 2 that frequency of reading the newspapers daily is more in the interiors of Haryana (65%) as compared to the people living on

Table 2. Frequency of Reading and Mostly Read Sections

S. no.			G. T. Road Belt		Interior of Haryana	
			N(263)	% (100)	N(282)	% (100)
1	Frequency of Reading	Daily	142	54	192	65
		Once a week	20	8	17	6
		Twice a week	29	11	20	7
		Whenever I get time	72	27	54	19
2	Sections read the most	Current	93	35	71	25
		Business	40	15	45	16
		Political	52	20	90	32
		Entertainment	46	17	34	12
		Sports	32	12	42	15

the G.T. Road Belt (54%). The section which was most read is the Current news section (35%) followed by Political (20%) and entertainment (17%) amongst the people living on the G.T. Road belt whereas Political section(32%) of the newspaper was most read in the interior regions of Haryana during the '09

elections.

Table 3 draws a comparison between the attitudes of people living in the districts on the G.T. Road Belt with those living in the Interior regions of Haryana towards the effectiveness of print media used

Table 3. Attitude Indicators about Political Advertisements in Print Media

S. No.	Attitude Indicators	G.T. Road Belt (263)				Interior of Haryana (282)			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Political advertisement are genuine	123	47	140	53	99	35	183	65
2	Affects perception	139	53	124	47	130	46	152	54
3	Influence voting patterns	178	68	85	32	93	33	189	67
4	Trust print media more than Broadcast media	185	70	78	30	217	77	65	23
5	Whether print media is effective	165	63	98	37	212	75	71	25
6	Print media provides more information	126	48	137	52	147	52	135	48
7	Influence winning & losing elections	165	63	98	37	102	36	180	64
8	Overall positive impact of political advertisement in print media	193	73	70	27	127	45	155	55

during elections. Majority of respondents do not trust the genuineness of Political advertisements (53% on G.T. Road belt and 65% in the Interior regions). Respondents on G.T. Road belt feel that political advertisements affect the perception of the people (53%) and influence the voting patterns (68%) whereas the residents of Interior regions feel that it does not have an effect on the perception of the people (54%) and influence on the voting patterns (67%). Both the respondents on the G.T. Road belt and Interior regions trust print media more than the broadcast media (70% on G.T. Road belt and 77% in the Interior regions) and that they feel that print media is more effective than broadcast media (63% on G.T. Road belt and 75% in the Interior regions). People on

the G.T. Road belt have given a favorable response towards the influence of political advertisements on winning & losing of elections (63%) and they feel that overall impact is positive (73%). People living in the Interior regions do not have a favorable response towards the influence of political advertisements on winning & losing of elections (64%) and they feel that overall impact is not positive (55%).

From Table 4, it would be noted that according to majority of respondents, both on the G.T. Road belt (62%) and Interior regions (54%), Congress does maximum political advertisements in Haryana and it also has the most influential advertisements out of all the political parties. It is followed by INLD and BJP

Table 4. Ranking of Political Parties in Haryana in Terms of Political Advertisements

Political Party	Max. Political Advertisement				Most Influential Advertisement			
	G. T. Road Belt		Interior of Haryana		G. T. Road Belt		Interior of Haryana	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cong.	162	62	151	54	147	56	156	55
INLD	33	13	71	25	29	11	77	28
BJP	49	19	35	12	40	15	29	10
HJNCA	6	2	10	4	16	6	7	2
BSP	5	2	9	3	24	9	10	4
Others	8	3	6	2	7	3	3	1
Total	263	100	282	100	263	100	282	100

for doing maximum and most influential advertisements.

#### Testing of Hypothesis

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the perception of people living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior regions of Haryana about the impact of political advertisements in print media in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha Election '09.

#### Interpretation :

From Table 3 and the statistical analysis in Table 5, it may be adjudged that :

- There is a significant difference in the perception of people living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interior regions of Haryana about the genuineness of political advertisements, its effect on the perception of voters and the influence on the voting patterns. Thus H<sub>1</sub> is not accepted.
- Whereas the people living in the interior regions feel that the influence of political advertisements is less on voting patterns, the G.T. Road Belt people feel otherwise.

Table 5. Chi-Square Analysis 1

S. No.	Attitude Indicators	Value of Chi-Square	DoF	Hypothesis
1	Pol. Adv. Are genuine	7.71	1	Rejected
2	Affects perception	6.71	1	Rejected
3	Influence voting patterns	64.91	1	Rejected
4	Influence winning & losing elections	38.11	1	Rejected
5	Overall positive impact of political advertisement on print media	46.09	1	Rejected
	Total of 5 statements			Rejected

- The voting population in the two regions shows a remarkable difference in their perception about the influence of political advertisements in print media. The people on the G. T. Road belt again feel that the influence of political advertisements is more on the result of elections as compared to interior regions of Haryana.

Thus, it can be safely concluded from the above analysis that the voting population living in the Interior regions is less influenced by the political advertisements than their G. T. Road Belt counterparts. This can be attributed to the fact that the politically less informed tend to be more influenced by whatever exposure they get to any kind of information. The districts on the G. T. Road belt are more industrially advanced and most of the people living here belong to the business and professional class. In the interior regions of Haryana, agriculture is the profession which engages a majority of people. These people are more politically active and hence more aware.

$H_2$  = Voters living on the G.T. Road Belt and Interiors

of Haryana show similar attitude when print media is compared with broadcast media.

**Interpretation :**

- As per Table 6, when print media is compared to the broadcast media, there is no significant difference in the opinion of the voters living on the G. T. Road Belt and Interior regions of Haryana. Both the groups feel that print media is a more effective source than Broadcast media and it is more trust worthy.

Thus, it may be inferred from the above analysis that the general public trusts print media more than broadcast media. This is true for the people living in the districts on the G. T. Road Belt as well as in the Interior regions of Haryana. Thus  $H_2$  has been proved.

**Conclusion**

Effectiveness of Advertisements is a concept studied often. But, in terms of study of effectiveness of political advertisements, the paper aims to present certain significant insights into the use and its impact

Table 6. Chi-Square Analysis 2

S. No.	ATTITUDE INDICATORS	Value of Chi-Square	DoF	Hypothesis
1	Trust print media more than Broadcast media	3.06	1	Accepted
2	Whether print media is effective	9.9	1	Rejected
3	Print media provides more information	1.08	1	Accepted
	Total of 3 statements			Accepted

over the target audience in the State of Haryana, India. The advertisement budgets are increasing with each election, the paper aims to understand if it is really worthwhile. After the analysis, it may safely be concluded that the impact of political advertisements on the voting population is high on the industrially advanced districts of the State of Haryana as compared to the interior. It may be inferred that this is due to less interest and awareness in political affairs shown by the professionally oriented voting population of the state. On the contrary the agriculturally oriented voting population is more inclined and up-to-date of the State's political affairs and thus, does not rely on advertisements during elections, for information. The analysis also shows that the print media is a more effective source than broadcast media and it is more trust worthy when it comes to political information dissemination amongst voting population, at large, in the State.

Political advertisements are very different from commercial advertisements. Therefore, in the future, researchers may try to develop a model more specific to political advertisements on the basis of media/vehicle used and the economic environment of the country. There is a shortage of literature related to political advertisements in the developing countries. Of late, developing countries like India have seen a rise in the amount of expenditure for political advertisements. Thus, it is imperative to determine the worth/output of such efforts.

**Footnotes :**

- [1] <http://www.webhush.com/2009/04/11/general-elections-2009-haryana/> (Accessed 20 November'09)
- [2] <http://www.thisismyindia.com/election/haryana-elections.html#2009> (Accessed 20 November'09)
- [3] [http://www.ibscdc.org/Case\\_Studies/Marketing/Brand%20Marketing%20Communication%20Strategies/MCS0007.htm](http://www.ibscdc.org/Case_Studies/Marketing/Brand%20Marketing%20Communication%20Strategies/MCS0007.htm) (Accessed 7 March'10)
- [4] <http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-86472872/guest-editors-special-issue.html> (Accessed 15 February'10)

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