

The Impact of Perceived Political Advertising: The 2005 Lebanese Parliamentary Election

George N. Farha and Bassam C. Hamdar

Keywords: *Advertising, Political Advertising, Lebanon, Lebanese Politics, Political Process, Voting and Elections, Public Opinion.*

Political advertising has recently evolved as an integral part of today's political campaigns in the Arab world. However, the effectiveness of paid political advertising seems to be questionable. An interview survey aimed at determining the relationship between the variables of political advertising exposure, knowledge of candidates and issues, people's interest in the campaign, and candidates' appeal was conducted to reflect the effectiveness of political advertising in the Lebanese electoral process. Although the survey indicated a positive relationship between political advertising and all the variables considered in this study, political advertising, nevertheless, seems to be most effective for those who know the least about the candidates and their issues.

Dr. George N. Farha is a Professor of Mass Communication, Department of Communication Arts, School of Arts and Science, American University of Science and Technology. He is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at the American University of Science and Technology. Dr. Bassam C. Hamdar is a Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, American University of Science and Technology. He is the Chairperson of the Department of Economics at the American University of Science and Technology. Correspondence to: gfarha@yahoo.com

In the pre-television era of politics, campaign research indicated that the mass media had minimal effects on voters (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954 and Tedsco, 2000). Today in the era of television, mass media are recognized components of politics, and modern political campaigns have depended heavily on both electronic and print media channels where many critics have complained that candidates don't run for office on issues; instead, professional media consultants package them and sell them like any product (Biocca, 1991; Allam, 1993; Nassif and Bou Monsif, 1996; West, 2000, Butler, David and Kavanagh, 2001, Moussalim, 2003, and Atkin & Heald, 1976). The apparent use of political advertising during the 2005 Lebanese parliamentary election, was widely argued that a major cause of some candidates' wins was the impact of political ads. Although, none of the communication researchers has considered the relationship between the Lebanese people's perception and beliefs about political advertising and their attitudes toward specific political commercials, the present study examines such relationship.

Current media research have suggested that electronic media, such as broadcasting systems, have unique and powerful campaign impact because radio and television instantly and vividly reach the most persuadable audience who ignore or fail to be exposed to information presented in other media or face-to-face communication (Christ, 1985b; Colford, 1988; Cundy, 1986; Roberts, 1992; Kern, 1989; Shyles, 1986; Thorson et al., 1991b, and Butler et al., 2001).

On the other hand, contemporary supporters of the more traditional view of media effectiveness such as Moussalim, 2003; Campbell et al., 1964; Baily (1971); Genova and Greenberg (1979); Larsen and Hill (1954); Moore (1987); Kaid, Lee, and Jhonson, (2001) have found such speculation unconvincing. They maintain media's uniqueness is exaggerated and their impact mitigated by the same intervening factors that blunt the direct effects of other forms of communication. What the researchers found was that personal contacts appear to have been both more frequent and more effective than the mass media in the process of political communication to influence the voting decisions of the people. Most of these researches, however, seem to be done without regard to the large-scale of the political advertising budget of political campaigns and the use of media advertising--electronic and print-- which have prevailed in recent political elections.

Allam (1993), Marouni (1998) and Nassif and Bou Monssif (1999) Khazin and Salim (1993) have pointed out that Lebanese candidates in recent parliamentary elections have spent huge amount of dollars in their mass communications campaigns designed to change attitudes and effects behaviors of voters. During the 1996 Lebanese parliamentary election, expenditures for political media advertising (billboard, radio and television appearances, pamphlets, and newspapers and magazines) approached 6.3 million dollars, nearly twenty times double the 1972 parliamentary campaign (MECC Report, 1996). Such figures attest to the confidence that the Lebanese politicians have greatly recognized the role of mass media political ads as effective campaigning instruments.

Paid political advertisements which extol the virtues of prospective office-holders are a common occurrence in today's political campaigns. Money spent by candidates, in democratic societies, on radio, newspaper, and television advertising continues to increase each year, and the increase in spending has resulted in an increase in the numbers of

messages filling the media (Lang, 1991; Lau, 1986; Kern, 1989; Weigold, 1992; White, 1990; Pipkin, 2001; and Joslyn, 1984). However, the effectiveness of paid political advertisement seems to remain in questions, primarily because spending a lot of money to saturate the media with a candidate's message is no guarantee of success (Likewise, Pinkleton, and Garramone, 1992; Thorson et al., 1991a and 1992). For example, some citizens have said that in all the Lebanese parliamentary or/and presidential elections before the 1980s, communications media were not necessary in order to get information about the candidates as personal entities. Moreover, during the 1992 and 1996 Lebanese parliamentary elections, candidates have made large expenditures for political advertising. However, their campaigns were no more successful than campaigns that spent less money on media (MECC Report, 1996). Relatively, little is known about how people in Lebanon perceive and respond to paid political ads-- a condition which is somewhat ironic in view of the millions of dollars spent and the assumed effectiveness of media ads.

Parliamentary candidates in Lebanon, like most political candidates in democratic societies, have relied and do rely increasingly on the media advertising to inform and influence the electorate. However, there are two questions which need to be answered here:

1. What does an ad say to the audience who views it?
2. Who are the audiences that pay attention to this kind of advertising?

It could be useful to explore the relationship of media advertising exposure to a variety of cognitive and affective variables in a typical political campaign, in order to ascertain whether and to what extent exposure to political media commercials may have influenced the vote choices of significant numbers of Lebanese voters in the 1996 parliamentary election more than the traditional role of the opinion leaders. It is important to discuss two quite independent sets of antecedents to such influence. One relates directly to media exposure as a necessary condition for influence to occur, the selective exposure hypothesis, and the other relates to the overall campaign orientation components of influence, the two-step flow model of communication.

Three areas of concern will be assessed in this study in order to explore how exposure variables relate to knowledge of the candidates and their issues, positive attraction toward candidates, and people's interest in the campaign in general.

A. Political Knowledge

The impact of general mass media campaign communications on gains in knowledge has been inferred in numerous voting studies, based on recurrent findings of a moderate association ($r = 0.41$) between media exposure and campaign-related knowledge (Atkin et al., 1973; Moore, 1987). Political knowledge is defined in terms of an individual's ability to recall candidates' personal characteristics and qualifications to identify election issues, and to recognize connection between candidates and issues positions.

Research evidence indicates that media advertising contributes to voters' knowledge levels. McClure and Patterson (1976) reported that about three-fourths of the voters who recalled seeing a political advertisement in the 1972 American presidential election could

correctly identify the ad's message. a study conducted for the American Association of Advertising Agencies in the 1960's discovered that television viewers, for example, judge product commercials more on how they communicate their message than on what they say about a product. On the other hand, people judge political advertisements primarily on what they say, not how they say it (Caywood, 1990). Voters seem to be concerned mainly with whether the advertising message is truthful and worth knowing. People heavily exposed to media seem more likely to show increased accuracy of perception of candidates' positions on issues presented frequently in campaign advertising. Patterson and McClure (1974); Caywood (1990); Christ (1985b); Faber and Storey (1984); West (2001; Lau and Pomper (2002) discovered that political advertising had its strongest impact on issues awareness for voters with low exposure to newspapers and broadcasting news. Moore (1987) found that voters in the 1984 American congressional and presidential elections felt they learned substantive information about candidates' qualifications and issue positions from media advertisements and especially television and radio's ads. Learning from political commercials seems to occur when the voters' information needs are the greatest, including situations involving the difficulty in deciding on candidates. Unlike product ads and nightly news, political advertising supporting candidates are not everyday occurrences. This exposure resulted in the highest information gains among low knowledge about candidates and where they stand on issues (McClure and Patterson, 1976; Moore, 1987; Joslyn, 1984; Pinkleton and Garramone, 1992; Norris, Pippa and Sanders, 2003).

According to Joslyn (1984), political advertising educates voters because of the powerful way it transmits its issue content. Joslyn (1984) pointed out that there are three combined strategies that make political campaign advertisement effective; simplicity, repetition, and sight-sound coordination. The value of this combined strategy should not be dismissed, because when a political commercial takes a half page of one of the three first pages of a newspaper or 60 second radio or television ad to state clearly and directly how a candidate feels about a major campaign issue, the electorate is being helped to make a more informed choice on election day (Patterson, 1980; Garramone et al., 1991). Since the advertisements are completely controlled by the candidates, they can be exposed as frequently as the candidate's budget permits to reinforce specific limited themes.

Some observers agree that to some extent media shape what people think about in arriving at a decision (Faber and Storey, 1984; Berke, 1992). If a candidate can elevate the importance of issues with simplicity, repetition and sight-sound coordination, the campaign may favorably influence voters without actually persuading them to change issue positions. The actual goal of such a campaign may be to focus voter attention on which factors to think about, rather than to convince voters about what to think.

Cohen (1976) pointed out that the mass media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but the media are very successful in telling their audience what to think about. However, research that investigates the effects of the mass media on political behavior, found that people who expose themselves more to the media message are the opinion leaders. The researches proposed that messages from the media first reach opinion leaders who then pass on what they read or hear or see to associates or followers who look to them as influential. This process was called the two-step flow of communication (Katz, 1957; Joslyn, 1984; Chew and Palmer, 1994; Berke, 1992).

Because the political media must appeal to varied cross sections of people, it is reasonable to believe that there are also a variety of factors involved that affect how each person perceives and responds to them. On balance, however, exposure to media political advertising seems directly related to knowledge about the campaign and the candidates. Media political advertising, even in its current advanced states, cannot ensure the victory of political candidates because the candidates' credibility and issue salience interact to affect the subjects' perception and their tendency to understand or misunderstand its content. Since a major tenet of the limited effects perspective in political communication was the belief that viewer predisposition mediated the effects of political message considerable attention has been focused on the selective processes which might operate in political advertising. One of the variables that may operate in the selective process is candidate attractiveness.

B. Candidate's Appeal

Being attractive to the public is a function of interpersonal attraction rather than an ideological-based evaluation. Fowles (1992) noted that mere exposure theory suggests that repeated symbolic experience with a novel and simple stimulus will lead to greater positive affect for the object portrayed. As this applies to broadcast political advertising for any candidate there should thus be a positive correlation between the number of message exposures and degree of liking for the candidate.

Liking for candidates is defined as a positive affective orientation toward the candidate as a person and the issues upon which he/she stands. In 1969 McGuire, the author of "The Selling of the President," characterized the American political quest for the ideal president: They want him to be larger than life, a living legend, and yet quintessentially human; someone to be held up to their children as a model; and someone to be cherished by themselves as a revered member of the family.

To meet this criterion, it has been assumed and well-documented that most candidates (presidential, congressional, mayoral, or unions) rely to some extent upon accentuating the positive attributes associated with their personal qualities and downplaying the negative.

Among the conclusion of the 1940 voting study was the following: Those who decided late in the campaign or changed their minds during the campaign were more likely than others to cite personal influence as having figured in their decisions (Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948). However, the polarizing nature of repeated exposure and its effect on candidate's appeal was revealed by Raid and Sanders (1978) and Shyles (1986) who reported that about three-fifths of late-deciding voters were positively influenced by their chosen candidates' advertisements. Kaid and Sanders (1978); MORI (2001) provided evidence that image commercials were better remembered than issue commercials. Therefore, exposure to a candidate's political advertisement may not only influence liking for a candidate, it may also stimulate the public's interest in the campaign either positively or adversely.

C. People's Interest in Campaign

Some people are more motivated than others to follow certain election campaigns. Differences in motivation depend on a host of social, psychological, and political contingencies. Important from a communication standpoint, are the strength and nature of the motives and the ways in which they may affect communication behaviors on their possible

consequence (Shyles, 1986; Tedesco, 2000; Thurder, 2000, MORI, 2001).

While public interest in a campaign can be expected to grow as election's day approaches regardless of media attention, the media seem to play an important role in shaping the peaks and valleys of interest, as well as in helping to determine its onset (Mendelson and O'Keefe, 1976). Patterson (1980) found that people interest in the election race augments early by exposing themselves to political advertisement and media news.

The role of the mass media in stimulating political interest in the electorate could be important because interested persons are more likely to vote in an election. Neuman (1976) defined interest in political campaign as the degree of concern or psychological involvement in a particular election campaign. This variable has been shown to correlate moderately with exposure to campaign content in many studies (Joslyn, 1984; Mendelson and O'Keefe, 1976; Chew and Palmer, 1994) . The more interested people are in the election, the more opinions they have on candidate and political issues, they more actively participate in a campaign, and the more they expose themselves to campaign propaganda (Patterson, 1980). One must then ask, "Who are the interested people in a campaign and what is the role of political advertising in affecting their voting behavior?"

Katz (1957) found that these people who can be interested the most in a campaign are called "Opinion Leaders." Opinion Leaders can be found at every social level and they reach first the messages from the media then pass on what they read or hear or see to associates or followers who look to them as influential. Opinion leaders were found to be more exposed to the mass media than those who were not designated opinion leaders.

Since this segment of people "opinion leaders" still play a major role in the Lebanese political life, the researchers in this study try also to explore their role in the Lebanese political campaigns.

D. Exposure and Campaign Orientation Flow Approaches

In ascertaining the role of both the political commercials and the opinion leaders in the political campaign and how each influence the voting choices of significant numbers of voters, it is important to discuss two quite independent sets of antecedents to such influence. One relates directly to exposure as a necessary condition for influence to occur; the other relates to the overall campaign orientation components of influence, the two-step flow model.

Most of the concern has centered on partisanship or candidate preference as a reason for selective exposure or perception. It was recognized by Campbell (1963) that a certain percentage of the population is politically biased prior to viewing any advertisements. Through this psychological mechanism of selective perception, a group of people may tend to tune out messages that are not in harmony with the choices they have already made. Instead, they choose to concentrate on messages that support their choice. Chaffee and Miyo (1983) pointed out that people who were comparatively new to politics, responded more to the campaign and were considerably less likely than other people to pay attention to the political advertising of a candidate in opposition to the one they favored. Chaffee and Miyo (1983) define selective exposure and its operation in political advertising as follows:

- a) Selective exposure occurs mainly among people who are less experienced and informed about candidates and issues.
- b) Selective exposure consists mainly of low attention to the opposition candidate, not heightened attention to one's favored candidate.
- c) While there is a general positive effect associated with exposure to either candidate, the greatest change in affect during the campaign is found for the person's favored candidate, not the opponent.
- d) Among adolescents, the predisposition that appears to generate an indirect effect of reinforcement via selective exposure is identification with some political background, not specific liking of candidate.

For these reasons, exposure was considered to be an important variable in this study.

On the other hand, interpersonal communication may play a salient role in voter information-gathering processes during a campaign. In the course of their analysis of the 1940 elections, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948) discovered that personal contacts appear to have been more effective than the mass media in influencing voting decision. It was discovered that there were many people whose firsthand exposure to the media was quite limited. These people obtained most of their information about the election campaign from other people who had gotten it firsthand (Joslyn, 1984; Katz, 1957; Lau et al, 2002; Norris et al, 2003, and Pipkin, 2001). Thus, the research began to suggest a movement of information from the media to relatively well informed individuals who frequently attended to mass communication. Second, it moved from those persons through interpersonal channels to individuals who had less direct exposure to the media and who depend upon others for their information.

Kimsey (1979) pointed out that many late-deciding voters may see information first through interpersonal channels, probably quite informally, which then leads to information-seeking from media channels, perhaps for authentication of basic facts. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) suggested the possibility that ideas often flow from the media to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population. Opinion leaders or the individuals who are more in contact with the media play an important role in helping to shape the voting intentions of those to whom they are passing on information (Katz, 1957; Colford, 1988; Faber and Storey, 1984).

Opinion leadership seems to be not a trait which some people have and others do not. According to Katz (1957), opinion leaders and the people whom they influence are very much alike and typically belong to the same primary groups of family, friends and co-workers. Opinion leadership or the two-step flow of communication is an integral part of the give and take of everyday personal relationships. Research has been focused on the processes by which people get their information and come to decisions regarding public issues. Chaffee and Choe (1980) suggested that voters who decide early appear to discuss the campaign more, and are more likely to be opinion leaders than are late deciders. However, their communication during the campaign may be aimed more at surveillance, reinforcement and/or contest excitement than at voter guidance--seeking. Patterson (1980) found most

political discussions early in the campaign to be about the race itself, while talks closer to election's day centered more on issues.

Research Expectations

Because political advertisements are not everyday occurrences, their uniqueness generates a level of attentiveness that makes more efficient message transmitters than the commonplace news stories. At the campaign's outset, voters might appear to be particularly attentive to these intruders on their daily fare. Political advertisements are completely controlled by the candidates. They can be used as frequently as the budget permits to hammer away at certain specific and limited themes. Findings of some political advertising and mass communication research have made it clear that repetition plays a key role in learning and causes substantial changes in voter beliefs because it stresses again and again the same message. Several researches have stressed a positive relationship between advertising exposure and the levels of political information and knowledge about campaign. Overall, it appears that advertising, whether it lies in the field of business or politics, will carry success by the continuity and uniformity of application.

Exposure to political advertisements may increase the public's knowledge about candidates and issues in a variety of ways. However, exposure could be complicated by both the selective exposure hypothesis and the operation of the two-step flow model. When these two factors are considered what may be more important than simple exposure is remembered or perceived exposure to political advertising. Taking note of the possible confounding effect of both opinion leaders and selective exposure, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. The greater the exposure to political advertising, the greater the voter's knowledge will be.
2. The greater the exposure to political advertising, the greater the voter's interest in the campaign will be.
3. The greater the exposure to political advertising, the greater the voter's liking of specific candidate and choice of candidates will be.

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the political advertising effects on the voting process in Lebanon, and to determine the relationship between the variables-- political advertising exposure, knowledge about candidates and issues, people interest in the campaign, and candidates' attractiveness, an interview survey was conducted. Registered Lebanese voters were asked questions to determine their knowledge, interest, and liking from exposing to political advertising. Questions were asked in an effort to obtain well-rounded responses.

Survey and Procedures

The province of Beirut was the sample community for the study. Several conditions prompted this selection. First, residents of this community relied primarily upon several media channel such as print media (newspapers and magazines), out-of-home Advertising,

broadcast media (radio and television) and Interactive media. Thus, political information about the campaign is easily available to the population. Second, the precinct selected contained all of the elements that are considered important for survey research. The province of Beirut represents a heterogeneous population in terms of religion, sex and ethnic background. A sample will be representative of the population from which is selected if the aggregate characteristics of the sample closely approximate those same aggregate characteristics in the population (Babbie, 2004).

According to Nielsen (2002), a sample will be representative of the population from which it is selected if all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected in the sample. The decision to use a single area sample, rather than a national sample, is consistent with most academic surveys designed to test efforts of the mass communication.

Interviews were conducted with 350 voters using a basic questionnaire format of multiple-choice and rating scale questions. These two question formats allow the respondent to have both free recall of ideas and more limited responses to choose from (Babbie, 2004; Anderson, 1995). Interviews were conducted by fifteen communication major students at the Lebanese University. The interviewers had background knowledge in the area of questions and understood the subject matter. Prior to the actual interviewing, the interviewers were trained in how best to present the research questions. They were also supplied with explicitly worded instructions as to how they should act during the interview. Interviewers were coached in methods of drawing information from the subject, and giving help without providing an answer.

The interviews took place during the two weeks immediately preceding the 2005 parliamentary election's day in the province of Beirut.

RESULTS

Pearson's product-moment correlation was performed between exposure to political advertising and knowledge about candidates, interest in the campaign, and liking the candidates. Correlations between these variables were also conducted for those who had extensive conversations with others to assess the role of opinion leaders or the two-step flow process. Similarly, correlations were conducted to assess the effect of selective exposure. As a means of secondary analysis t-tests and ANOVA were performed.

Overall the results supports the three hypotheses of a positive association between exposure to political advertising and knowledge about candidates and issues, interest in campaign, and attractiveness of candidates. Table 1 displays the correlations among all variables.

As predicted, a positive relationship among variables was found. The voters' knowledge of the candidates and their issues, interest in campaign, and liking the candidates are moderately correlated with exposure to political advertising. A positive association of ($r = .34$) was found between advertising exposure and knowledge. Almost the same association was found in the Cundy (1986) and Christ, Thorson, and Caywood (1994) studies. Also, positive associations were found between political ads and voters' interest in campaign ($r = .31$). These variables have been shown to correlate moderately with exposure to campaign

content in many previous studies (Lazarsfeld et. al, 1948; Joslyn, 1984; Davis, 1990).

Advertising exposure measures are consistently related to positive effect toward the candidates in general, and toward the one whom the voters intended to vote for. Table 1 shows the correlation of ($r = .30$) between ads exposure and general liking of choice of candidate, and ($r = .33$) between political advertising and specific liking to the candidate for whom they intended to vote.

Examination of the correlation matrix also provides features of interest for comparative purposes; Table 1 shows a correlation of ($r = .25$) between political advertising exposure and interpersonal discussion about the campaign. As mentioned previously, personal contacts appear to have been more effective than the mass media in influencing voting decision (Carter, 1985). According to Davis (1990), people also obtain information about the election campaign from others who have gotten it firsthand.

Table 1

Political Advertising Correlations of Knowledge, Attractiveness (Liking), Interest, and Conversation

	Number of ads seen	Knowledge of candidates & issues	GL of choice of candidates	SL for Specific candidates	Interest in campaign	Conversation with others
Total number of ads seen	—	—	—	—	—	—
Knowledge of Candidates and Issues	.34	—	—	—	—	—
General Liking of Choice of Candidates	.30	.19	—	—	—	—
Specific Liking for Specific Candidate	.33	.20	.75	—	—	—
Interest in Campaign	.31	.45	.45	.55	—	—
Conversation with Others	.25	.33	.37	.43	.53	—

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .00$

Table 2 shows that the relationship is stronger among respondents who reported seeing more than the average number of ads recalled (4). For those who said they watched less than four ads, knowledge about the campaign and the candidates was correspondingly lower. Furthermore, voters who were heavily exposed to the candidates' advertisements were more likely to show increased accuracy of perception of candidates' positions on five issues presented frequently in the campaign advertising. The knowledge of group one--group two difference in exposure to political advertising is highly significant ($t = 7.83, p < .001$). Table 2 also shows that voters who were heavily exposed to the candidates' advertising were more likely to show positive attraction toward the candidates of choice and the candidate whom respondents intended to vote for. The difference due to exposure was again significant for liking candidates in general ($t = 5.11, p < .001$) and was significant for liking specific candidates ($t = 5.84, p < .001$).

Table 2

T-test for Difference in exposure on knowledge, General Liking, Specific Liking and Interest

Variable	No.ofCases	X	t	df	Prob. (t=td)
<u>Knowledge</u>					
4 or more*	118	7.45	7.83	343	.001
Less than 4	227	5.71			
<u>General Liking</u>					
4 or more	118	4.87	5.11	343	.001
Less than 4	227	3.98			
<u>Specific Liking</u>					
4 or more	118	5.65	5.84	343	.001
Less than 4	227	4.70			
<u>Interest</u>					
4 or more	118	6.13	6.62	343	.001
Less than 4	227	5.04			

* (4 or more) represents group one who saw four ads or more. (Less than 4) represents group two who saw less than four ads.

The difference in interest in the campaign attributable to exposure was highly significant ($t = 7.37$, $p < .001$). Exposure to political advertising seems to make differences but another variable makes differences too, that variable is having conversation with others or interpersonal communication.

As it seems, the relationship of conversation with others to knowledge about the campaign, interest in the campaign, and liking the candidates correlates at about the same magnitude with knowledge, interest and liking as does number of ads seen or read, t-tests were conducted to see if the campaign contributed to different levels of extensiveness of conversation. The mean on the seven-point scale was 4; extremely extensive was above 4, not extensive was below 4. Table 3 shows that the knowledge of group one--group two difference in exposure to conversation with others is highly significant ($t = 5.77$, $p < .001$).

Table 3

T-test for Difference in Level of Conversation

Variable	No. of Cases	X	t	df	Prob. (t=td)
<u>Knowledge</u>					
Conve X > 4*	194	6.86	5.77	343	.001
Conve X < 4	151	5.59			
<u>General Liking</u>					
Conve X > 4	194	4.55	3.60	343	.001
Conve X < 4	151	3.94			
<u>Specific Liking</u>					
Conve X > 4	194	5.35	4.61	343	.001
Conve X < 4	151	4.61			
<u>Interest</u>					
Conve X > 4*	194	5.91	7.36	343	.001
Conve X < 4	151	4.80			

* (Conve.> 4) represents Group one who had conversation with others equal to or greater than 4 on 7-point scale. (Conve X < 4) represents Group two who had conversation with others less than 4 on 7-point scale.

Table 3 also shows that the voters who had extremely extensive conversation with others were more likely to show positive attraction toward the candidates in general ($t = 3.60, p < .001$) and ($t = 4.61, p < .001$) liking for specific candidate. Also, people with high interest in the campaign showed more involvement in participating in conversations with others. The difference due to conversation was also highly significant ($t = 7.37, p < .001$).

Thus the two factors exposure to political advertising and interpersonal communication seem to be positively related to voter knowledge, interest, and candidates' attractiveness in the Lebanese political campaigns. For this reason an ANOVA was conducted in order to conform the result of t-test and to assess a possible interaction between extensiveness of interpersonal communication about the campaign and exposure to political advertisements.

Table 4 shows that there were no interaction between the two factors--exposure to political advertisements and interpersonal communications--. The findings show that exposure to political advertising is positively related to all three variables--knowledge, interest, and candidates attractiveness.

Table 4

F-Test for Interactions between Extensiveness of Conversation and Exposure to Political Ads

Dependent Variable	Interaction	F	(Prob)
Knowledge	Ads x Conversation	.54	.46
General Liking	Ads x Conversation	1.35	.25
Specific Liking	Ads x Conversation	.24	.62
Interest	Ads x Conversation	.08	.78

The evidence indicates that political advertising in Lebanon is functionally related to knowledge, interest, and liking or attractiveness. However, the predicted relationships were of comparatively low magnitude. It seemed that voters' conversations with each others have the same impact if it is not more on voters as did the political advertisements especially with those who have no political background and are not partisans. Thus, further explanations for the effectiveness of political advertisements might be found in the examination of the contents of the message themselves.

Conclusion

As revealed in the literature review of the study, voters' knowledge about the candidates and their issues, liking for candidates, and interest in the campaign should have increased after exposure to political advertisements. For this reason, a positive relationship was predicted between exposure to political advertising and knowledge, candidates' attractiveness, and interest in the campaign.

This study, however, showed that exposure to political ads was only moderately correlated with voters' awareness, interest and their personal liking for the candidates. This would indicate that spending thousands of dollars on political advertising in Lebanon may not yet be the best investment. The findings provided an additional reason to think that the media still had a fairly weak impact on the Lebanese public opinion during political campaigns. It appears that political advertising contributes to learning about the campaign and its elements only in certain circumstances. That is, political advertisements seem to be most effective for those who know the least about the candidates and their issues and for those who hardly have any interpersonal campaign communication.

This study showed very little evidence concerning the impact of political advertisements on the Lebanese voters' perceptions. Although some evidence indicated that the public did learn some about candidate issue positions from political ads, it seemed most likely to occur when the voters' information needs were the greatest.

Since the correlation between the independent and dependent variables was moderate, contrary to prediction, it might be said that this was due to the subjective report by the respondent of the number of political ads viewed and read. This measure may ignore the intensity of the attention level to political advertisements. This intensity is likely to vary considerably and there may be an effect among those who pay particularly close attention to the ads.

Political advertising may play an important role in reinforcing opinions already held and minimize potential defection of supporters to the opposing candidate. The fact is that if campaigns have little direct effect on individuals, they may affect their voting decision indirectly, through conversations with others who are attentive to the media. People who are designated to be opinion leaders are often attentive to the media (Joslyn, 1984). The fact that opinion leaders are more politically informed than average suggests that their conversations generally might magnify the net impact of political communication from generally informed opinion leaders to followers, the influence of the informed public on the flow of public opinion may be greater than their number would indicate. Therefore, research is needed to highlight the situation where a voter views are known along with unknown candidate commercials.

References

- Alam, A. (2000). *The Guide of the Lebanese Deputy*. Lebanon: The Future Press.
- Atkin, C., Bowne, L., Nayman, O., & Sheinkopf, K. (1973). Quality versus Quantity in Televised Political Ads. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37, 209-224.
- Atkin, C. & Heald, G. (1976). The Effects of political advertising. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 40, 216-228.
- Babbie, E. (2004). *The Practice of Social Research*. 6th Ed. California: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- Baily, G. (1971). The Public, the Media, and the Knowledge Gap. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 2 (4), 3-8.
- Berelson, B., Lazarsfeld, P., & McPhee, W. (1954). *Voting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berke, R. (1992). What is scarier than Halloween? Tune into candidates' ads and see. *New York Times*, p. 7.
- Biocca, F. (1991). Viewers' mental models of political messages: Toward a theory of the semantic processing of television. In F. Biocca (Ed.), *Television and Political Advertising: Vol. 1. Psychological processes* (pp. 27-89). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Butler, David and Dennis Kavanagh, (2001). *The British General Election of 2001*. London: Palgrave.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., & Stokes, D. (1964) *The American Voters*. New York: John Wiley.

- Caywood, C. (1990). Political advertising probe has broad appeal. *Marketing News*. p. 12.
- Chew, F., & Palmer, S. (1994). Interest, the Knowledge Gap, and Television Programming. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. Vol. 38, 271-287.
- Chafee, H. & Niyo, Y. (1983). Selective Exposure and the Reinforcement Hypothesis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 44, 53.
- Christ, W. (1985b). Voter Preference and Emotion: Using Emotional Response to Classify Decided and Undecided Voters. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 15, 237-254.
- Cohen, A. (1976) . The Effect of the Medium. *Journal of Communication*. 26. 29-35.
- Colford, S. (1988). Campaign Flak Flies: Polls' Ads have negative charge. *Advertising Age*, pp. 4.
- Cundy, D. (1986). Political Commercials and Candidates Images: The effect can be substantial. In L.L.
- Davis, D. (1990). News and politics. In D. Swanson & D. Nimmo (Eds.). *New Directions in Political Communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Election Commission. 2001. Party Political Broadcasting Review 2001-2: Discussion Paper. London: The Election Commission.
- Faber, R., & Storey, M. (1984). Recall of information from political advertising. *Journal of Advertising*. 13, 39-44.
- Fowles, J (1992). *Why Viewers Watch: A reappraisal of Television's Effects*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Garamone, G. Steele, M., & Pinkleton, B. (1991). The role of cognitiveschemata in determining candidate characteristic effects. In F. Biocca (Ed.), *Television and Political Advertising: Vol. 1. Psychological processes*. 311-328. Hillslade, NJ.
- Genova, B. and Greenberg, B. (1979). Interests in News and the knowledge AGap. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 43, 79-91.
- Harrison, Martin, 2001. "Politics on the air." In *The British General Election of 2001*, David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh. 2001. London: Palgrave.
- ITC. 2001. *Election 2001: Viewers' Response to the Television Coverage*. London: Independent Television Commission.
- Joslyn, R. (1984). *Mass Media and Elections*. Addison Publishing Company. London.
- Raid, L. & Sanders, K. (1978). Political Television Commercials. *Communication Research*. 5, 57-70.

- Kaid, Lynda Lee and Anne Jhonson. 2001. Videostyle in Presidential Campaigns: Style and Content of Televised Political Advertising. Westport, CT: Praeger/Greenwood.
- Katz, E. (1957). The Two-Step Flow of Communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 21 (1), 61-78.
- Kazin, F. & Salim, P. (1993) . The First Lebanese Election After The War. The Lebanese Center for Research and Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.
- Kern, M. (1989). 30-second Politics: Political Advertising in the Eighties. New York: Praeger.
- Kimsey, W. (1979). A Path Analysis of Attitudes and Cognitions in the 19767 presidential Campaign. Ill: Southern Illinois University press.
- Lang, A. (1991). Emtion, formal features, and memory for televised political advertisements. In F. Biocca (Ed.), *Television and Political Advertising: Vol. 1. Psychological processes* (pp. 221-243). Hillsdale, NJ.
- Larsen, O. & Hill, R. (1954). Mass media and interpersonal communication in the diffusion of a news event. *Americam Sociological Review*. 19, 426-433.
- Lau, R. (1986). Political Schemata, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting Behavior. In R, Lau and D. Sears (Eds.), *Political Cognition*, (pp. 95-126). Hillsdale, NJ.
- Lau, Richard R. and Gerald Pomper. 2002. "Effectiveness of negative campaigning in US senate elections." *American Journal of Political Science*, 46 (1): 47-66.
- Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, h. (1948). *The People's Choice*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- McClure, R. & Patterson, T. (1976) *Television News and Voter Behavior*. New York, NY.
- MECC (1996). *Political Advertising Expenses Report*. MAC, Beirut, Lebanon.
- Mandelson, H., & O'Keefe, G. (1976). *The People Choose a President*. NY: Praeger.
- Marouni, N. (1998). *The 1992's Deputies*. The Editor publishing Corp., Beirut, Lebanon.
- Moore, D. (1987). Political Campaigns and the Knowledge-gap Hypothesis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 51, 186-200.
- MORI (2001) *Attitudes to Voting and the Political Process (Phase 1, May 2001 and Phase 2, June 2001)*. London: Election Commission.
- Moussalim, A. (2003). *Media Channels*. L.C.C.D. Lebanon.
- Nassif, N. & Bou Mounsif, R. (1999) *The Theater And Behind The Curtain:The Election of 1996 and its stages*. Dar-El Nahar, Beirut, Lebanon.

- Nielsesen, A. (2002). Nielsen Television Index. Dunedin, FL: Author.
- Norris, Pippa and David Sanders. (2003). Message or Medium? Campaign Learning During the 2001 British General Election. *Political Communication*. 20: 233-262.
- Patterson, T. (1980). *The Mass Media Election*. NY: Praeger.
- Pinkleton, B. & Garramone, G. (1992). Voter cognition, affect and behavior. In L. N. Reid (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 1992 Conference of the American Academy of Advertising*. 127-133, Athens, GA,
- Pipkin, Robert. (2001). "The Party Election Broadcasts: A sleeping giant or an old pair of shoes?" Paper for the Annual Meeting of the PSA Elections, Public Opinion and Parties specialist group. Sussex.
- Raid, D. Nimmo, & K. Sanders (Eds.), *New Perspective on Political Advertising* (pp. 210-234) . Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Roberts, M. (1992) *The Fluidity of Attitudes toward Political Advertising*. In L.N. Reid (Ed.), *Proceeding of the 1992 Conference of the American Academy of Advertising* (pp.134-143). Athens, GA: University of Georgia.
- Shyles, L. (1986). *The Televised Political Spot Advertisement: Its Structure, Content, and Role in the Political System*. In L. Raid, D. Nimmo, & K. Sanders (Eds.), *New Perspectives on Political Advertising* (pp. 107-138). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Tedesco, John. (2000). "The Party Election Broadcast in Britain." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 5 (4).
- Thorson, E., Christ, W., & Caywood, C. (1991b). *Selling Candidates like tubes of toothpaste: Is the Comparison Apt? Psychological Process* (pp. 145-172). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Thurder, James. (Ed). (2000). *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*. Washington DC: Brookings Institute.
- Weigold, M. (1992). *Negative-political Advertising: Individual differences in responses to issues vs. images ads*. In L. Reid (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 1992 Conference of the AAA*. (pp. 144-149). Athens, GA.
- West, Darrell M. (2001). *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952- 2000*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- White, A. (1990). *Issues and Image Distinctions and their Relationships to Structure and Content of political Advertisements for 1988 Presidential Candidates Bush and Dukakis*. Paper presented to the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, MN.