The Image of Presidential Candidates in the United States (2008-2020): An Analysis of Frames in Political Introduction Spots

La imagen de los candidatos pesidenciales en Estados Unidos (2008-2020): un análisis de los marcos en los spots de introducción política

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Abstract

This study analyzes presidential campaign presentation spots from 2008 to 2020 in the United States, focusing on candidates Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, John McCain, Mitt Romney, and Hillary Clinton. It examines how these candidates adapt their messaging strategies in response to socio-economic and political changes. By utilizing Aquiles Chihu's communication frames methodology, the research dissects visual, verbal, and auditory elements within these ads to understand their impact on voter perceptions. Key findings reveal that while all candidates employ visual storytelling and emotional appeals, their effectiveness varies based on alignment with voter values and concerns. The integration of sound framing enhances understanding of emotional engagement, highlighting its role in shaping narratives and mobilizing voters.

Keywords
Political advertising; campaign strategies; communication frames; voter engagement; sound framing.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza los spots de presentación de campañas presidenciales desde 2008 hasta 2020 en Estados Unidos, centrándose en los candidatos Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, John McCain, Mitt Romney y Hillary Clinton. Examina cómo estos candidatos adaptan sus estrategias de mensajería en respuesta a cambios socioeconómicos y políticos. Al utilizar la metodología de marcos de comunicación de Aquiles Chihu, la investigación descompone los elementos visuales, verbales y auditivos dentro de estos anuncios para comprender su impacto en las percepciones de los votantes. Los hallazgos clave revelan que, si bien todos los candidatos emplean narrativas visuales y apelaciones emocionales, su efectividad varía según la alineación con los valores y preocupaciones de los votantes. La integración del marco sonoro mejora la comprensión del compromiso emocional, destacando su papel en la conformación de narrativas y la movilización de votantes.

Palabras clave
Publicidad política; estrategias de campaña; marcos de comunicación; compromiso del votante; marco sonoro.

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1. Introduction

Political campaign advertisements are essential tools for candidates to shape their public personas and influence voter perceptions within a dynamic electoral landscape. This study examines presidential campaign presentation spots from 2008 to 2020 in the United States, focusing on candidates Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, John McCain, Mitt Romney, and Hillary Clinton. This timeframe is significant due to the socio-economic and political changes that have influenced voter concerns and expectations, highlighting how candidates adapt their messaging strategies to resonate with the evolving electoral context.

The selection of presentation spots for analysis is particularly relevant, as these advertisements typically feature non-confrontational messaging that allows candidates to define their personas and share personal narratives without the immediate pressures of direct political competition. For incumbents, these spots also require portraying themselves as competent leaders while demonstrating accountability for their previous terms.

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis of these presentation spots, focusing on how candidates construct their images and emotionally connect with voters. Utilizing Aquiles Chihu's (2020) communication frames methodology, the study dissects the visual, verbal, and auditory elements of these ads, providing insights into the strategic approaches candidates employ to engage their audiences. A novel contribution of this study lies in the exploration of the sound frame, which enhances our understanding of how auditory elements, such as music and sound design, reinforce emotional engagement and influence voter perceptions. The integration of sound framing is crucial, as it helps illuminate how candidates craft compelling narratives that resonate with viewers on a deeper emotional level.

This research draws on theoretical foundations established by prominent scholars in political communication, including Lynda Lee Kaid and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. By examining the advertisements of Obama, McCain, Romney, Clinton, Trump, and Biden, the study highlights the nuanced interplay of commonalities and distinctions in their approaches, emphasizing the effectiveness of visual storytelling, emotional engagement, and sound design.

The findings indicate that while all candidates utilize visual storytelling and emotional appeals, their effectiveness varies based on how well they align their messages with voter values. Candidates who successfully connect their identities and issue frames to the electorate's priorities resonate more profoundly with voters. This work contributes original insights by integrating a marketing perspective with Chihu's communication frames methodology, ultimately providing a comprehensive analysis of how political advertisements function as persuasive tools that mobilize voters in contemporary electoral contexts.

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2. Justification and Delimitation of the Study

This study analyzes U.S. presidential campaign presentation spots from 2008 to 2020, focusing on candidates Obama, Trump, Biden, McCain, Romney, and Clinton. This period is crucial, as it spans significant socio-economic and political changes that shaped voter concerns and candidate strategies. Presentation spots are ideal for this analysis, as they allow candidates to define their image and share personal narratives without the immediate pressures of direct competition. For incumbents, these ads also balance leadership portrayal and accountability. The study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of these spots, using Chihu's (2020) communication frames methodology to examine visual, verbal, and auditory elements. By focusing on these spots, the research seeks to uncover how candidates construct their public personas, connect emotionally with voters, and the overall impact of these ads on public perception. This analysis provides insights into the candidates' branding efforts and their influence on electoral outcomes.

3. Theory: Political Campaign Ads

Political campaign ads play a critical role in influencing political communication and elections, as demonstrated by several distinguished researchers. Lynda Lee Kaid (1978, 1997) has extensively studied the impact of political ads on electoral campaigns, focusing on their role in shaping voter perception. Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1992) has explored how these ads affect public perception of candidates and campaign issues. Stephen Ansolabehere (1994, 1997) has contributed insights into the effectiveness of television ads in electoral contexts, while John G. Geer (2006) has analyzed attitudes towards candidates through political advertising. William L. Benoit (2014) has examined the rhetoric and discourse strategies employed in political ads, and Travis N. Ridout (2014) has researched their influence on campaigns and public opinion dynamics. Richard M. Perloff (1998, 2017) has explored the persuasive tactics embedded within political advertising, and Aquiles Chihu (2010, 2020) has adapted Erving Goffman's frame concept to analyze the discourse and imagery in political ads comprehensively. Erika Franklin Fowler (2021) has dedicated her research to dissecting the content of political advertising, while Doris A. Graber (2022) has studied media coverage and its impact on candidate perception. Bruce W. Hardy (2021, 2022) has focused on understanding how political advertising shapes voter perceptions.

In the realm of political communication strategy, understanding the evolution of visual storytelling within political ads is crucial. Since the 1990s, advancements in video formats have driven significant developments in narrative techniques used in campaign messaging (Walter and Gioglio, 2014). These narratives blend visual and emotional elements, typically following a structured format of introduction, development, and resolution and are designed to align with the candidate's brand identity. Key elements such as photographs, graphics, videos, and music are strategically deployed to craft compelling stories that resonate with viewers.

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Visual storytelling is recognized in marketing as essential for successful advertising campaigns (Walter and Gioglio, 2014; Butler, 2020; Henry, 1991; Kompella, 2014; Martínez, 2016). It humanizes brands, imbuing them with traits that resonate with societal values, thereby enhancing their appeal to consumers. In the context of political marketing, leveraging various media platforms —from traditional press to social networks— is pivotal for effective campaign positioning (BestRelations, 2017). Central to this strategy are appeals —messages embedded in political ads aimed at shaping voter perceptions by resonating with specific demographic groups (West, 2014).

Modern political ads are adept at eliciting specific moods and emotions among viewers, leveraging the pervasive influence of social media and online content consumption habits (limelight.com, 2019). These ads distill complex political messages into emotionally resonant narratives that aim to persuade a broad audience, particularly those less engaged in politics (Ansolabehere, 1996). Glenn Richardson underscores the significance of political ads as visual narratives that create shared cultural meanings, akin to cinematic genres that evoke emotions (Richardson, 2008).

Political ads play a vital role in campaigns, introducing candidates, connecting emotionally with voters, and influencing beliefs (Sonner, 2005). Chihu's typology categorizes ads by framing strategies, such as presentations, proposals, closings, or attacks (Chihu, 2010). Effective ads use visual storytelling, emotional appeal, and strategic framing to shape public opinion. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analyzing modern electoral processes and the evolving landscape of political communication.

4. Methodology: The communication frames

Chihu's (2020) communication frames methodology analyzes political ads from the 2008–2020 presidential elections using four frames: identity, problem, time, and language. The identity frame defines a politician's identity, highlighting visual elements and values. The problem frame focuses on issues like the economy and social welfare. The time frame examines how ads shape narratives over time, influencing voter perceptions. The language frame analyzes verbal and visual components like metaphors and imagery. Chihu's methodology also involves identifying the scenario, actors, messages, and interpreting these elements to understand their impact on voters and society.

This methodology emphasizes the vital role of visual and aural components in political communication. Visual elements transmit emotions and feelings that can significantly influence voter perception, while the sound frame is equally crucial. Music, voices, and sounds play a pivotal role in shaping emotions and attitudes toward candidates. The choice of music and sound in political ads can create an emotional connection with the audience, affecting how voters perceive candidates and their messages. The sound frame contributes to political communication by influencing how messages are processed and remembered. Music can reinforce a candidate's identity and guide the audience's interpretation of visuals and spoken content. For in-

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stance, uplifting and patriotic music can enhance the perception of a candidate as a hopeful leader, while somber tones can underscore the seriousness of the challenges being addressed (Perloff, 2022; Grabe, 2009; Cook, 1998). Music also establishes narrative coherence and rhythm, allowing audiences to connect emotionally with the story being told.

This work enhances the sound frame by introducing categories and interpretations not previously developed in Chihu (2020). The music featured in ads is classified as Commercial Advertising Background Music, typically consisting of compositions that last 1 to 3 minutes. This music is characterized by its simplicity, usually devoid of lyrics or vocals, and its adaptability to blend with other sounds.[1] While theoretical sources on the typology of this genre of commercial music in political ads are scarce, common classifications exist among various commercial sites specializing in the production and sale of such music. These sites categorize music by genre and mood, highlighting genres such as upbeat, electronic, corporate, acoustic, and ambient, corresponding to moods like happiness, calmness, energy, motivation, relaxation, hopefulness, and patriotism.

The upbeat genre is identified as the most prevalent in candidate introduction ads due to its emotional quality and ability to convey a positive mood to the audience. Background music plays a crucial role in advertising, enhancing brand recognition and emotional resonance, making the ad more impactful. By creating an atmosphere aligned with the ad's message, music heightens audience attention and fosters emotional connections, allowing for greater identification with the candidate. Therefore, background music is essential in advertising, enriching message effectiveness and emphasizing the importance of careful music selection.

This analysis examines presidential candidates' introduction spots from 2008 to 2020, focusing on both winners and challengers. Using Chihu's methodology, it highlights how visual, auditory, and verbal elements create compelling political narratives and influence voter perceptions. The study breaks down each framework into specific components:

a) Visual Framework: Analyzes scenes, actors, and written text, such as slogans or key phrases, to reinforce the message.

b) Verbal Framework: Focuses on spoken and written content, including the candidate's speech and written phrases that support the narrative.

c) Auditory Framework: Examines music, sound effects, and audio atmosphere, considering how these elements create a mood and support the tone of the ad.

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1. The classification was obtained from data collected from specialized websites in the production and sale of background music for commercial advertising. It is important to note that the classification of this music by genre and mood includes more than 30 options in each category, as classifications are specific to each site. However, the most requested typologies by users on the cited sites have been considered. Scott Holmes Music (2025); Pixabay (2025); Chosic (2025); Fesliyan Studios (2025); Epidemic Sound (2025); Youtube (2025); Bensound (2025).

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By analyzing these frameworks, the study offers a detailed understanding of the strategies used by candidates to engage with voters. This methodology provides insights into how political ads are constructed and communicated, focusing on how each element works together to convey a persuasive message. This comprehensive approach is applied to analyze specific political spots, offering a deeper insights into their impact of their impact on voter behavior.

Table I. Communication Frames.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
Screenshots	Transcription of the written text	Transcription of speech and oral Narrative	Description of music, sound, and sound ambiance

Source: Based on Chihu (2020).

Next, we will apply the methodology to the political ads of presidential candidates in the United States.

5. Presidential Candidate Introduction Ads in the United States

Throughout the presidential elections in the United States from 2008 to 2020, significant changes occurred in the socioeconomic and political context that influenced political campaigns and the perception of candidates. Below is a brief description of the socioeconomic and political context of the aforementioned elections, along with the analysis of the candiates' introductory ads.

(1) In 2008, the U.S. faced a financial crisis, rising unemployment, and the ongoing Iraq War. Amid this uncertainty, voters sought leadership to address these challenges. Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate, offered a message of change and hope for economic recovery. His opponent, John McCain, represented the continuation of President Bush's interventionist policies. This context heavily influenced the candidates' introductory ad strategies.

6. Analysis of the 2008 Ads

Barack Obama Ad

«Country I Love» uses an autobiographical narrative to highlight Obama's family values and deep love for the U.S. The ad creates an emotional connection, portraying him as an empathetic leader dedicated to ordinary Amer-

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icans. It blends visuals and sound to reinforce his image as a hardworking family man committed to public service.

Visual and Verbal Framing: The ad portrays Obama traveling, engaging with citizens, and riding a train, symbolizing his bond with everyday Americans. Family photos highlight his middle-class roots, enhancing relatability. His authenticity is emphasized, positioning him as a leader who understands ordinary struggles. It also underscores his experience as a U.S. senator, reinforcing his political credentials.

Sound Framing: The ad's uplifting guitar and piano music creates a calm yet inspiring tone, reinforcing Obama's commitment to social causes. The soothing sound builds intensity, ending on a positive note. Without sound effects, the focus stays on Obama's message, deepening the emotional connection with the audience and enhancing trust.

Table II. Barack Obama Introduction Spot («Country I Love») June 30, 2008.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	**Verbal Framework**		**Music Sound**
	Written Text	**Oral Narrative**	
	Barack Obama. Incorporated people from welfare into work. Reduced taxes for working families.	Barack Obama: I'm Barack Obama. America is a country of strong families and solid values. (...) Reducing taxes for working families. Expanding healthcare for neglected injured troops.	Upbeat, emotive music with guitar and piano.

Source: Chihu's Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual material: The Living Room Candidate (2025). www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008/country-i-love.

The ad portrays Obama as the ideal leader in crisis, emphasizing his relatable background and empathy. It presents him as a candidate who understands American values and is ready to lead. By combining visuals, sound, and narrative, the spot persuades voters to trust and support his campaign, highlighting his capability and compassion.

John McCain Ad

In his «Service» spot, McCain portrayed himself as a public servant, conservative, and war hero, highlighting his patriotism and reform-driven agenda. However, design choices like darkened screen edges weakened its impact. Despite emphasizing his dedication to service and peace, the ad struggled to create an emotional connection due to subdued audio and lack of dynamic visuals.

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Visual and Verbal Framing: In the 2008 «Service» spot, McCain is portrayed as a patriotic military leader, emphasizing American values with visuals of speeches, the U.S. flag, and sunrises. However, darkened screen edges weakened the message. The verbal narrative highlights his reformer identity, appealing to conservative voters seeking stability and peace.

Sound Framing: The spot used motivational piano music to create a calm atmosphere, but its low volume and lack of dynamics reduced emotional impact. McCain's steady voice lacked assertiveness, and the absence of sound effects or crescendos made the ad feel flat, weakening its effectiveness in supporting the visual and verbal messages.

Table III. John McCain Introduction Spot («Service») January 15, 2008.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Senator John McCain For president. Service to a cause greater than self-interest. Peace. Reform.	I've served our country all my adult life. I've never lived a day, in good times or bad, when I wasn't grateful for the privilege. Now, I ask to serve as your president.	I've served our country all my adult life. I've never lived a day, in good times or bad, when I wasn't grateful for the privilege. Now, I ask to serve as your president.

Source: Chihu's Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual material: YouTube John McCain (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD-3KmP738Xs

The analysis of John McCain's «Service» spot reveals a mixed strategy. While it framed him as a patriot and reformer, the darkened edges and subdued music hindered emotional connection. These design choices, along with a lack of dynamic elements, limited the ad's ability to effectively convey McCain's leadership qualities, reducing its persuasive appeal to the electorate.

(2) In 2012, the economy showed signs of recovery after the financial crisis. Barack Obama sought re-election, emphasizing achievements like the Affordable Care Act, while Mitt Romney criticized him on economic issues. Obama's campaign focused on reinforcing the country's positive direction under his leadership during this slow recovery.

7. Analysis of the 2012 Ads

Barack Obama Ad

The «Go» spot highlighted progress and economic recovery, contrasting the 2008 crisis with advancements made under Obama. Upbeat electronic music reinforced the message of movement and success, portraying Obama as a

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competent leader. The ad emphasized the need for continuity in his administration to ensure a prosperous future.

Visual and Verbal Framing: In the «Go» spot, Obama emphasized his leadership and economic successes, contrasting them with Republican policies. The ad highlighted achievements in employment and the economy, blaming the opposition for stagnation. It ended with Obama walking through the White House gardens, symbolizing progress, accompanied by the slogan «Forward».

Sound Framing: The upbeat electronic music creates an energetic, optimistic atmosphere, aligning with the message of progress and recovery. It intensifies with images of Obama's work, reinforcing success and continuity. The music emphasizes forward movement and policy success during his first term, portraying a modern, efficient government and highlighting the importance of Obama's leadership continuity.

Table IV. Presentation Spot (Go) May 7, 2012.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Visual Frame 2008. Mortgage lender. Job loss 2008. Foreclosures.	Narrator: 2008, an economic crisis. The worst financial collapse since the Great Depression. (…) All before this president took the oath. (…) Some said better days were behind us. But not him.	Upbeat electronic music.

Source: Political Spot Model by Chihu 2020. Audiovisual material: YouTube Barack Obama (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FOOVngTHkNg&t=1s.

The 2012 Go spot combines visual, sound, and verbal elements to shape voters' views on Obama's leadership. His 2008 and 2012 campaigns emphasized race, modernity, and experience. Charisma, oratory, and a message of hope secured his historic 2008 election and 2012 re-election, reinforcing stability and continuity.

Mitt Romney Ad

In his «Character» spot, Romney was portrayed by his wife, Anne, as a dedicated family man and public servant with strong values. The ad aimed to humanize him, highlighting his roles as a husband, father, and professional. However, its emotional impact was limited by the subdued tone of the narration and music, which failed to enhance the central message.

Visual and Verbal Framing: In the 2011 «Character» spot, Romney was portrayed through static black-and-white images emphasizing his professionalism and family values. While these visuals highlighted his virtues,

Anne Romney's calm narrative lacked passion, failing to fully engage viewers or convey the admiration expected in a significant introduction.

Sound Framing: The ad's tranquil piano music lacked emotional impact, failing to create an engaging atmosphere. It did not enhance the message or deepen the narrative, leaving viewers detached. Anne Romney's clear but unemotional voice made the spot feel more like a gentle introduction than a persuasive call to action.

Table V. Mitt Romney Introduction Spot («Character») December 21, 2011.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Anne Romney	You can never predict what kind of tough decisions will come across a president's desk. (...) I think that's why it's so important to understand the character of a person.	Motivational music with piano.

Source: Chihu's Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual material: Youtube Alicia Glz (2025). https://youtu.be/K6CQd-xw_Jw.

The analysis of Mitt Romney's «Character» spot shows an attempt to portray him as a family-oriented, hardworking leader. However, the black-and-white images and subdued narration lacked energy, creating a restrained tone. While sincere, it failed to captivate or inspire the audience, leaving a weak impression. As a result, the ad did not effectively strengthen Romney's candidacy.

(3) In 2016, U.S. politics saw rising polarization and institutional distrust despite economic recovery. Donald Trump, a businessman and media figure, ran as a populist outsider, contrasting with Hillary Clinton's message of progress and continuity. His direct, controversial style defined the election's sharp divide.

8. Analysis of the 2016 Spot

Donald Trump Ad

«We're Gonna Win Again» portrayed Trump as a strong leader and successful businessman. Using monochromatic images and national symbols, it framed him as a politician promising radical change. Upbeat instrumental music reinforced patriotism and urgency, emphasizing his commitment to swiftly «straighten out» the country.

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Visual and Verbal Framing: In «We're Gonna Win Again,» Trump appears as a strong leader ready to fix political failures. Critiquing Obama's policies, the ad uses monochrome images and patriotic visuals to reinforce his role as a national rescuer, creating an emotional connection with voters and emphasizing the need for change.

Sound Framing: The spot's upbeat instrumental music reinforces Trump's patriotism and determination, creating an energetic atmosphere. Paired with images of Trump and national symbols, it highlights strength and change. His direct speech style enhances the message, making the ad persuasive and emotionally compelling for viewers.

Table VI. Presentation Spot («We're Gonna Win Again») April 24, 2016.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Trump Support Trump Support Trump Trump: Make America Great Again! Support Trump www.donaldtrump.com	Donald Trump: Politicians are making too many mistakes. Too many mistakes are made by people who really don't know what they're doing. We're going to do it better than ever!	Upbeat instrumental.

Source: Chihu Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual Material: YouTube Joe Marranca (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ-3PLed9_YI&t=4s.

The 2016 ad We're Gonna Win Again uses visuals, sound, and speech to shape Trump's leadership image. Featuring nationalist symbols like the flag and White House, it presents him as a responsible, modern politician. Echoing Obama's Forward message, it reinforces Trump's vision for change and national strength within the 2016 political context.

Hillary Clinton Ad

Clinton's ad The Story of Her blends personal and political narratives, emphasizing her mother's influence and commitment to social causes. It effectively conveys her dedication to equity and inclusion but weakens her leadership image through certain visuals. The spot highlights her humanitarian focus while aiming to connect with voters on a personal level.

Visual and Verbal Framing: Clinton's ad presents her as hardworking and empathetic, showcasing family photos and her political career. While highlighting her advocacy, visuals with Obama appearing subordinate, weakening her leadership image. This limits the spot's effectiveness in portraying her as a strong, independent leader, especially for women and marginalized communities.

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Sound Framing: The spot's uplifting orchestral music highlights Clinton's achievements and commitment to social justice, enhancing its emotional tone. While the score adds energy and optimism, it fails to fully counteract the ad's visual shortcomings, making the overall message less impactful than intended.

Table VII. Hillary Clinton Introduction Spot («The Story of her») January 12, 2016.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Why I'm not in mainstream school. I keep Alabama white. HillaryClinton.com Hillary. Women Together. Love Trumps hate. Hillary Respects Me. Hillary 2016.	I've been your first lady, served 8 years as a senator. Don't let anybody forget what happened here. Then, as Secretary of State, but my job titles only tell you what I've done. They don't tell you why.	Upbeat instrumental.

Source: Chihu's Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual material: Youtube Hillary Clinton (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzCW30RnwuY.

Clinton's ad humanizes her through personal history and political dedication, emphasizing equity and social causes. While resonating with women and vulnerable groups, its visual framing weakens her leadership image. Despite its emotional appeal, the ad's lack of cohesion in visual, verbal, and sound elements weakens its effectiveness in portraying her as a strong, authoritative candidate.

(4) In the 2020 elections, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the political landscape, causing recession and testing leadership. Joe Biden, emphasizing experience and empathy, pledged to tackle the crisis and restore unity. Meanwhile, President Trump faced declining polls due to his controversial pandemic response and frequent media confrontations.

9. Analysis of the 2020 Spot

Joe Biden Ad

In the spot Character, Biden contrasts his leadership with Trump's, emphasizing experience and empathy through monochrome family images and his vice-presidential role. Upbeat piano music reinforces themes of continuity and progress, portraying him as a stable leader ready to guide the country through crisis.

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Visual and Verbal Framing: Biden's «Character» spot contrasts his stable, experienced leadership with Trump's attitude. Using monochromatic images of the White House, it emphasizes family and national values, portraying Biden as a relatable leader. The final sequence shows an empty presidential office and an image of Biden with the caption «President Biden» reinforcing continuity and progress.

Sound Framing: The upbeat piano music in the spot enhances Biden's message of experience and commitment, echoing Obama's «Forward» slogan. It reinforces his image as a modern, capable leader, complemented by visuals of the presidential office and flag. Together, the sound, visuals, and narrative create an emotional connection, promoting Biden's readiness to assume the presidency.

Table VIII. Presentation Spot (Character) January 29, 2020.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Freedom to Marry Cancer Moonshot Biden President.	Narrator: They say here is where your character is revealed. We saw it with President Obama. We are seeing it with President Trump. (...)	Upbeat piano music.

Source: Chihu Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual Material: Youtube Joe Biden (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ip-OL-BhaP00.

The Character spot highlights Biden's leadership by linking him to Obama while distinguishing his identity. Visual and verbal narratives emphasize continuity and contrast with Trump, focusing on family and national values. Emotive music reinforces Biden as an experienced, progressive leader prepared to guide the U.S. into the future.

Donald Trump Ad

In the «Stronger, Safer, More Prosperous» spot, Trump is framed as a results-driven president who strengthened the U.S. through military and economic achievements. The ad combines narration, news clips, and impactful imagery to highlight his leadership. Dynamic sound design and visuals energize viewers, positioning Trump as a decisive and successful leader, ready to deliver even greater results.

Visual and Verbal Framing: In «Stronger, Safer, More Prosperous», Trump is portrayed as a results-driven leader, highlighted through visuals of authority, military involvement, and economic success. News clips show a 49% unemployment decrease. The ad ends with Trump's confident statement, «The

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best is yet to come». However, his emergence from the shadows may weaken the empowering tone.

Sound Framing: The spot uses upbeat orchestral music, natural sounds like applause and aircraft, and a mix of narration, news clips, and Trump's voice to create a motivational atmosphere. The dynamic sound design sustains viewer interest and reinforces the ad's central messages. Trump's closing statement adds a personal touch, while the sound consistently strengthens his image as a strong leader, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

Table IX. Donald Trump Introduction Spot («Stronger, safer, more prosperous») January 20, 2020.

Visual Framework			Sound Framework
Scenarios/Actors	Verbal Framework		Music Sound
	Written Text	Oral Narrative	
	Change. Trump Pence. Stronger. Safer. More prosperous. Best wage growth in a decade. Unemployment at 49 year low.	America demanded change. Donald Trump wins the presidency, and change is what we got. (...) Unemployment for Hispanics hit an all-time record low. And ladies and gentlemen, the best is yet to come.	Upbeat instrumental music with natural sounds of applause and ovations, helicopters, airplanes, a narrator alternating with voices of different news anchors, and Donald Trump's voice to close the spot.

Source: Chihu's Political Spot Model 2020. Audiovisual material: Youtube Donald J Trump (2025). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4sVnOsXlAA.

The analysis of Trump's «Stronger, Safer, More Prosperous» spot shows a strategy highlighting his accomplishments and future vision. Dynamic visuals, compelling sound design, and confident messaging portray him as a decisive leader with tangible results. While visuals like emerging from the shadows may weaken the tone, the ad's energetic atmosphere and motivational appeal make it a persuasive introduction to his campaign.

From 2008 to 2020, U.S. presidential campaigns were shaped by socio-economic and political shifts. Obama's 2008 ads focused on hope and change, while McCain highlighted his leadership experience. In 2012, Obama contrasted his accomplishments with Romney's economic recovery message. Trump's 2016 ads emphasized his outsider status, and Biden's 2020 campaign stressed unity and recovery. Each candidate tailored their ads with visuals, sound, and narrative to resonate with voter concerns and foster connection.

10. Results

Political campaign ads are crucial for shaping voter perceptions and influencing elections. They condense complex messages into emotionally resonant visual narratives. Analyzing the ads of Barack Obama, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden reveals both similarities and differences in their strategies. This analysis draws on theoretical

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frameworks from scholars like Lynda Lee Kaid, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Aquiles Chihu, highlighting the connection between political communication and voter perception.

The comparative analysis (see Table X) highlights key themes underscoring the effectiveness of visual storytelling and emotional engagement across the candidates' ads. Each candidate leverages strong identity framing to construct a distinct persona that resonates with their target demographics. For instance, McCain emphasizes patriotism and experience through military imagery, while Clinton focuses on her role as a trailblazer for women, utilizing visuals that convey strength. Romney adopts a business-centric identity, presenting himself as a problem solver, whereas Trump's bold graphics and assertive rhetoric emphasize his populist identity as an outsider challenging the *statu quo*.

Table X. Comparative Analysis of the Ads 2008-2020.

Candidate	Theme	Visual Framing	Sound Framing	Emotional Connection	Leadership Portrayal	Symbolic Elements	Strengths and Weaknesses
Obama 2008	Hope and change	Warm, diverse imagery	Uplifting, hopeful music	Strong connection through personal stories	Charismatic, relatable	American flag, family, community	Strong emotional appeal, but less focus on experience
McCain 2008	Experience and leadership	Patriotic visuals, military imagery	Serious, authoritative tone	Appeals to trust and patriotism	Seasoned, reliable	Military symbols, American values	Strong background, but perceived as traditional
Obama 2012	Leadership and accountability	Warm imagery of families and success	Motivational, uplifting music	Builds connection through shared success	Accomplished, hopeful	American flag, community achievements	Strong emotional engagement, but relies on past accomplishments
Romney 2012	Economic recovery	Professional, business-focused visuals	Serious, business-like tone	Appeals to economic optimism	Competent, experienced	Corporate symbols, economic success	Focus on economy, but perceived as disconnected from common voters
Trump 2016	Outsider status	Bold, strong imagery	Brash, assertive music	Energizing connection with base	Assertive, unconventional	American flag, working-class imagery	Strong appeal to base, but polarizing for others
Hillary 2016	Stability and experience	Soft, relatable visuals	Calming, reassuring music	Appeals to reliability and experience	Experienced, stable	American flag, women's empowerment	Strong experience, but struggles with trust
Biden 2020	Unity and recovery	Inclusive, diverse imagery	Hopeful, inspiring music	Strong connection through empathy	Compassionate, experienced	American flag, unity symbols	Relatable message, but seen as lacking energy
Trump 2020	National strength and prosperity	Strong military and law enforcement visuals	Bold, patriotic music	Appeals to security and patriotism	Decisive, strong	Military symbols, American pride	Strong security focus, but divisive messaging

Source: Elaboration based on the data analyzed in this text.

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While these strategies share common elements, differences emerge in how candidates frame key issues. McCain focuses on national security, leveraging his military background to portray reliability. Clinton emphasizes social issues like healthcare and women's rights, reflecting her progressive values. Romney addresses economic challenges, positioning himself as a pragmatic leader. Trump's ads center on immigration and law enforcement, appealing to safety and national identity concerns. These variations in problem framing are crucial in shaping candidates' narratives and positioning them on key electoral issues. The timing of these ads also plays a critical role, with candidates strategically selecting moments within their campaigns to deploy messaging. For example, McCain establishes his identity early, while Clinton focuses on her vision closer to election day. Romney shifts toward economic messaging as the election nears, tapping into voters' immediate concerns. Trump maintains a consistent thematic focus throughout, reinforcing his identity as a decisive leader. This temporal aspect underscores the candidates' efforts to align their messages with voter sentiment and adapt to the evolving electoral landscape.

Furthermore, the language frame is critical in political advertising. The deliberate choice of linguistic and visual elements enhances the candidates' messages. McCain employs military imagery and authoritative language to evoke trust, while Clinton uses inclusive language and empowering visuals to connect with female voters. Romney leverages data to present rational arguments for change, whereas Trump's straightforward, often confrontational language appeals to urgency. This linguistic framing shapes narrative perception, influencing how voters interpret candidates' messages.

Integrating Chihu's communication frames methodology enriches our understanding of these strategies. The identity frame illuminates how candidates craft their public personas, the problem frame underscores prioritized issues, the time frame contextualizes messaging within the campaign timeline, and the language frame elucidates rhetorical choices shaping voter perception. This multi-faceted approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how political ads function to persuade and mobilize voters.The findings reveal that while all candidates employ visual storytelling and emotional appeals, their effectiveness varies based on message alignment with voter values. Candidates connecting their identities and problem frames to the electorate's priorities resonate more deeply. Additionally, strategic timing in messaging significantly impacts voter perceptions, highlighting the importance of responsiveness to the political climate. Lastly, nuanced language deployment not only shapes narrative coherence but also reinforces candidates' identities, underscoring the intricate relationship between message framing and voter engagement.

11. Conclusions

The analysis of political advertisements from Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Mitt Romney, Hillary Clinton, and Joe Biden offers key insights into their communication strategies and brand positioning. These ads highlight how candidates cultivate personal images emphasizing leadership, values, and

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accomplishments, fostering emotional connections with voters and aligning with public sentiment.

A central theme in these ads is the focus on candidates' biographies, patriotism, and leadership. Visual elements such as flags, national symbols, and military imagery reinforce authority and trustworthiness. Candidates maximize outreach through social media, proprietary platforms, and traditional TV, adapting strategies to political contexts and voter concerns. Key issues like economic recession, unemployment, and military intervention are addressed using imagery that resonates emotionally. Obama's 2008 ad emphasized family and identity, his 2012 «Go» spot highlighted accomplishments and nationalism, while Trump's 2016 ad showcased his entrepreneurial credentials. Biden's 2020 ad emphasized leadership experience and national values.

The 2012 and 2020 elections illustrate the dynamic nature of political messaging. Obama's 2012 re-election success reflected effective messaging and voter resonance, while Trump's 2020 loss suggests shifting sentiments and campaign strategy challenges. This highlights the critical role of political ads in shaping public perception and electoral outcomes.

A marketing perspective enriches this analysis, demonstrating how visual and auditory elements enhance ad effectiveness. Upbeat music, often used in candidate introductions, fosters emotional connections and bolsters brand recognition. The study extends Chihu's (2020) sound frame methodology, introducing new categories of auditory elements in political messaging.

Situated within the broader context of political advertising research, the findings align with scholars like Lynda Lee Kaid, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Richard M. Perloff, emphasizing the impact of visual storytelling and emotional engagement on voter behavior. While focusing on high-profile candidates provides valuable insights, the study may overlook strategies used by lesser-known figures.

As the 2024 elections approach, early observations of ads from Donald Trump and Kamala Harris suggest recurring themes and new messaging elements. Future research should expand to include more candidates and adapt to emerging media trends, offering a comprehensive understanding of political advertising in contemporary electoral contexts. This analysis underscores the importance of strategic communication in shaping narratives that resonate with voters.

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