

The Super Bowl as a Platform for Political Advertising: An Experimental Investigation of Third-person Perception Among Partisan Viewers

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Abstract

In recent years, the Super Bowl has emerged as a significant platform for political advertisers to engage with millions of voters. For instance, Donald Trump and Michael Bloomberg spent 10 million dollars on their Super Bowl advertisements (ads) in 2020. This study examines how United States audiences perceive the influence of Super Bowl political ads, focusing on the third-person perception of partisan viewers. Participants viewed political ads, which varied in context (Super Bowl vs non-Super Bowl), ad type (Super Bowl negative vs Super Bowl positive) and partisan matching (in-party vs out-party). Participants were recruited through Mechanical Turk for two separate experiments. Results revealed that third-person perception was significantly less pronounced when partisan viewers encountered a negative political ad (vs a positive ad) from the opposing party during the Super Bowl. This suggests that partisan viewers may feel vulnerable to the influence of negative ads directed at their party during the Super Bowl. This has implications for strategically using the Super Bowl as a political advertising platform.

Keywords

Super Bowl advertising, political advertising, third-person perception, first-person perception, party bias, negative advertising