Image building in Taiwan’s Political Advertising- Exploring How Audiences Evaluate Celebrity Endorsement and Emotional Appeal Advertisements

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ABSTRACT
Political advertising research can gain important insights from audience’s perception studies by looking at their decoding and interpretation. This paper looks at two genres of political advertisements- celebrity endorsement and emotional appeal through six focus groups formed by either Democratic Progressive Party or Kuomintang’s identifiers. This paper will focus on three key themes for comparison: their involvement, interpretations on the key messages and general opinions. This study wishes to further the understanding of how political advertisement is interpreted through comparing audience’s perspectives.

Key words: Taiwan, election, political advertising
TAIWAN’S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2000

Since Taiwan deregulated its restrictions on political spot at 91, politicians and advertising agencies aggressively tried to embrace this instrument by learning from countries like America and Britain (Zheng, 1995; 2004, Rawnsley, 2003). During this period, many memorable advertisements were created, especially press and television ads. At the other hand, regardless of the amount of studies on political communication in Taiwan, few political advertising studies are focus on reception study through qualitative method.

This study tries to looks at two of the television spots during 2000’s presidential election from audience’s perspective. This election has an important role in Taiwan’s political history because it is the first time KMT steps down from the office since it retreated to Taiwan after losing the civil war to the Chinese Communists Party at 1949 (Roy, 2003).

The outcome of the election was stunning to many because although opposition party- Democratic Progressive Party’s candidate Chen Shui-bian is popular and overall competent throughout his political career prior to 2000’s presidential election, but DPP was not only associated with some negative images such as violence and radical political agenda, but they yet to establish a credible reputation in running national-level politics. Engaging cross-strait relationship was one of the issues concerned many voters and KMT was considered to be more competent at that area (Rigger, 2001; Roy, 2003).

Despite these concerns, Chen won 39% of the popular votes and gained relatively majority partly because KMT too suffered from negative images including kickback and blackgold (Roy, 2003; Zheng, 2004). Perhaps more importantly, KMT was split in to two fractions after the nomination. One fraction was led by former Vice-President Lian Chen while the other led by Lian’s
comrade Soong Chu-yu who was more popular but did not gain KMT’s nomination. They gained 23% and 36% of the popular vote accordingly (Central Election Commission, 2005). Additionally, well-respected Nobel Prize winner Li Yuan-zhe’s endorsement at the late stage of the campaign also contributed a crucial boost to Chen’s share of vote (Rigger, 2001; Roy, 2003).

In terms of the use of political advertising during this election, although KMT outspends DPP with a ratio close to four to one, but Democratic Progressive Party’s advertisements received much higher appraisal under limited resources. DPP not only defended itself from KMT’s attack on its ability to managing cross-strait relationship and lack of experience, but too successfully attacked KMT on its corruption issues to legitimise its ‘time for change’ appeal (Zheng, 2004; Peng and Hackley, 2005).

The aim of this study is to explore the positive appeals within this campaign through two different genres of appeal. On the one hand, ‘Safety’ capitalised emotional appeal through documentary-style of presentation. At the other hand, ‘Hope’ engages with audiences through straightforward celebrity endorsement lead by Li Yuan-zhe and other social elites.

From audience’s perspectives gained during focus groups formed by DPP or KMT identifiers, several themes seemed to emerge. Their position of readings based on different levels of involvement, interpretations of the key messages and feedbacks on the presentations will be further explored in this paper.

LITERATURE ON THE RESEARCH OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING AND CULTURAL STUDIES

On the definition of political advertising, Maarek (1995, p.28) wrote:
‘political advertising’ is a paid type of unidirectional ‘political information.’

Literature from America and Britain both covered political advertising extensively. Just to name a few, Kaid (1997) and Pattie and Johnston (2002) studies election spots in the US and Party Election Broadcast at the UK through quantitative approach whereas Kavanagh (1995) and Jamieson (1996) have a rather descriptive method by reviewing important events during elections and their impact on the outcomes of the elections. At Taiwan, there are also similar kinds of political advertising studies, for example Chang (2003) has an empirical approach and Zheng (2004) has a descriptive one.

Despite the amount of western studies, either empirical or descriptive, few had adopted a qualitative approach to explore the mindset of how and why audience and voter in general interpret political advertisements the way they did instead of what they did. In other words, through Rothschild (1978)’s model of high and low involvement hierarchy of effect, most existing empirical studies are focusing on the behaviour effect of political advertising rather than the awareness and attitude aspect.

The research on political advertising is dominated by American’s behaviourist’s approach (Lees-Marshment). Therefore, this study will adopt frameworks from Hall and Morley’s Nationwide studies to carry out the fieldwork and analysis. Hall, Morley and other academics from the University of Birmingham’s Centre of Contemporary Culture Studies categorised three ways on how audiences can respond and reflect on the media message they receive (Morley, 2002). One is the dominant-hegemonic or preferred-reading as some researchers used. In this scenario, audience accepts producer’s point of view such as ideology whereas in negotiated-reading the audiences only partially accept the view. In oppositional-reading, the audience rejects or disregard the
intended meanings attached by the producers (Moores, 1993; Morley, 2002). Morley (2002) added another possibility after the *Nationwide Studies*. He proposed that some audiences may ignore the message completely through selective exposure under normal circumstances and only choose oppositional-reading when they were exposed to it during experiment. It is rather different than those who saw the text under normal social setting and then have an opposition-reading.

With the literature on the approach of this study covered, the next section will be on the how scholars previously have categorised different genres of political advertisements and the characteristics of each.

**Genres of Political Advertisements**

Content analysis is one of the approaches toward the studying of media text including commercial and political advertising studies (Stoke, 2003). Through this process, academia systematically organised political advertising into several large categorises. This section will first provide one of the many categorisations and then focus only on the endorsement and documentary-style since they have a direct relevance to this study.

Devlin (1995) divided political advertisements into: talking head, person-in-the street, documentary, testimonial, and negative ad. Talking head shows the candidate directly speaking to the audience. This is an old technique, but most of the presidential candidates in the America from 1952 to 1992 still use because of its ability to build an image of competence and discuss complex issues. Person-in-the street sometimes uses an interview technique on ordinary citizens and then selects the responses that in favour of the sponsor. Documentary ad is biographical shows the candidate’s
accomplishment in the hope of creating an image of competence. Documentary ad also is suitable for aiming at creating an emotional response by visual or musical techniques which is used in one of the spot this study examined. Testimonial ads use celebrities from politics, entertainment, or other areas to speak in favour of the candidate. In addition, testimonial ads can have a positive as well as negative appeal based on its tone and style. Devlin (1995) further suggested that testimonial ads are out of style because not many candidates used this production style in recent American elections.

McNair (1999) too has opinions on endorsement and documentary-style spot. On the one hand, testimonial ad shows celebrities endorsing the candidate or party. At the other hand, cinéma-vérité style uses techniques to make the politicians appear to be caring and attached to the public, for example by showing politicians speaking with ordinary citizens on the street or interact with family members (McNair, 1999). In this study, it asides cinéma-vérité to documentary-style since the latter sometimes uses similar presentation techniques. Finally, Powell and Corwart (2003) added that bibliography ad focuses on candidate's background in private and public life.

As shown, researchers have categorised political advertisements but few have explore its implication to the audiences. It is possible because the larger context is important to the outcome of the election, but still political advertisements can contributed to voter’s overall perceptions and therefore there is the need to bridge the two. With these two types of appeal covered, the last part in this literature review section will focus on some of the contexts that were related to these two spots.

LITERATURE ON CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONSHIP AND LI YUAN-ZHE'S
ENDORSEMENT

Soong Chu-yu’s struggle during the late stage of the campaign, cross-strait relationship and Li Yuan-zhe’s endorsement were considered as the three topics that made a significant influence to the outcome of the election (Roy, 2003). The first incident does not link to DPP and its candidate Chen Shui-bian directly while the latter two are. Moreover, the two spots this study examined used these two issues as their content; therefore, it will review the relevant literature.

DPP and Chen’s position on national identity is their most controversial ideologies (Rigger, 2001; Roy, 2003). By advocating the further and formal independence of Taiwan, anti-nuclear power and social welfares, DPP grow rapidly since its establishment, but soon some of its ideologies became its liabilities instead of their assets (Guo, 1998). Because the large portion of the population still prefers the status quo at least in the short-term due to different reasons, for example the fear of war with the People’s Republic of China, the economic attachment with the geographic mainland China and some are just satisfied with the status quo (Shyu, 1996; You, 1996; Peng, 1997; Corcuff, 2004).

According to Zheng (1995; 2004), on the cross-strait relationship KMT had used the fear appeal for their advantages several times in the elections during early and mid 90s with good results. Counter attack was proven difficult for DPP until May, 1999 when it passed a ‘Resolutions on the Future of Taiwan’ with the promise that DPP will engage cross-strait policies with caution, accepting Taiwan is independent already and that there is no need for further formalisation (Roy, 2003, p.228). The spot ‘Safety’ was made to reassure DPP and Chen’s promise through emotional and rational appeal by suggesting
there is no reason Chen will endanger his family and the people who he cared for by provoking conflicts with People’s Republic of China since they all reside in Taiwan. Zheng (2004) mentioned this series of advertisement was crucially important to many voters who had doubt on Chen’s sincerity to maintain stability on the cross-strait relationship.

Another focus of context is on the use of celebrities’ endorsement. The recommendations from social elites were considered one of the highlight in Chen’s victory (Rigger, 2001; Zheng, 2004). Among them, Li Yuan-zhe (also known as Lee Yuan-tseh)’s endorsement was particularly important. ‘Perhaps the most important endorsement came less than a week before the voting, when Lee Yuan-tseh, a Nobel Laureate who heads Taiwan’s top research institute, announced his support for Chen’ (Rigger, 2001, p.193). ‘Shortly before the poll Chen got a boost when Lee Yuan-tseh, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize for chemistry and perhaps Taiwan’s most respected scholar, endorsed his candidacy’ (Roy, 2003, p. 228). ‘Hope’ focuses on Li Yuan-zhe and other social celebrities’ support toward Chen and urges voters to vote for him.

After covering these two significant events during this election, the next section will layout the research method and explains how the fieldwork was carried out.

**RESEARCH APPROACH**

The focus groups consisted of five to seven individuals from 24 to 33 years of age. There were 37 participants in total with 14 male and 23 female. The members were selected mainly through personal connection, advertisement and referral. It is divided based on their party identification.
Many of the participants are from urban background with undergraduate degree; therefore, it is not a representation of the general population.

The focus groups were mostly conducted in local café to create a friendly and open atmosphere. They range between 25 to 50 minutes in length. The researcher first outlined the purpose of the study and the relevant information before showing ‘Safety’ and then follow by ‘Hope’. The image caption for ‘Safety’ and ‘Hope’ can be found at appendix 1 and 2, but the scripts are not included due to its length. Following the spots were some leadoff questions to start the discussion. The role of the researcher was to observe and make sure each individual had an equal opportunity to express their opinion and exchange their ideas. The researcher acted as facilitator, giving gentle direction to the discussion while allowing the discussion to flow naturally. Occasionally, the researcher will join the conversation if necessary. The following is some of the details gathered from the focus groups. All focus groups were recorded with their permission and partially transcribed right after, but this paper will not include all the transcripts.
Table 1- focus group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DPP group (date dd/mm/yy)</th>
<th># of group Member</th>
<th>KMT group (date dd/mm/yy)</th>
<th># of group member</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 (24/07/05)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 (25/07/05)</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 (24/07/05)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (31/07/05)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (14/08/05)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 (14/08/05)</td>
<td>5</td>
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Table 2- Focus group background summary

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Participant</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP/KMT</td>
<td>19/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/F ratio</td>
<td>14:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level ratio (U:P:O:N/A)*</td>
<td>24:10:1:2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* U= Undergraduate, P= Postgraduate, O=Other

Focus groups, according to Malhotra and Birks (2003) can often result in unexpected and insightful results. In the present instance the aim of the research was exploratory so convenience sampling was appropriate. Due to the interpretive approach and the transcript was translated from Mandarin to English, there are some ‘culturally shared knowledge, beliefs, ideals and taken-for-granted assumptions’ (Thompson et al (1994, p. 433, cited in Hackley, 2003, p. 12) of the group and the researcher. This study has to consider the wider political context; hence, the aim is to seek a rich, fair and insightful interpretation of participant’s opinions. With the research method presented, the next section will be analysis and interpretation from the data and result collected from the field.

DPP PARTICIPANT’S FEEDBACK ON ‘SAFETY’

Democratic Progressive Party’s participants have quite a strong favourable reaction toward ‘Safety’ in general as well as in specific details such
as the use of imagery and music. That is why this study categorise them as sharing a strong dominate-readings with the spot. The following are some of the transcripts.

On the presentation style, they were more than keen to its overall format and have strong favourable attitude toward it:

F: For me, I am a southerner from Kaohsiung. When I see the first ad, it is like somewhere near my home…
E: And I think the first one is a lot like a documentary. It allows the audiences to go in to a time tunnel.
F: it is like watching a story… about a person who was born in Taiwan and grow up, his surrounding… it is not like… like Lian Chen, the impression we have is his father was an official. Don’t know how ordinary people live their life. In the first ad, you feel he is the person around you. Today he is here, his thinking will do something for us. The first one didn’t speak so much, plus they use actual person’s voice-over… it feels more compelling. Plus the music they use is very beautiful, like a symphony… (Respondent F)

On the key messages, participants too have a rather unified position among themselves and with what the literature has suggested:

… from the background to the music, he [Chen Shui-bian] wants to build a local awareness and link it to his image. (Respondent A)

May be one of the concerns that people have about him is whether the society and politics will be in chaos if he wins the election. Will he start a war start with China? That's why he wants to emphasise and focus on his friends and relatives are like everyone else. That's why he doesn’t want to have war… (Respondent A)

In terms of effect, it did generate some positive emotional affiliations for
some but not all members. Some thought they already have a strong affiliation with the DPP; therefore, this spot is not going to change their stance:

He is coming from an ordinary background, he knows our pain. If we vote him, then maybe we will have more hope in the future… Taiwan was occupied by people from blue camp for so long. We must give them a chance. You don’t know if the result will be good or bad, but you have to give them a chance first, then see how they can do it. (Respondent O)

Putting emotion in to it… for me, I am touched. But of course, I don’t have much choice to choose from. If we say blue and green, there is no choice. I will vote green. (Respondent S)

Ironically, despite their favourable attitude, participants did not feel this spot was targeted at them:

I think the appeal [of ‘Safety’] is targeted at the fundamentalists, or should I say deep green fundamentalists. (Respondent B)

Like mentioned earlier, they [the target audience of ‘Safety’] may be the lower education group… (Respondent H)

On the other hand, KMT participants had quite an opposite position while watching this spot.

KMT PARTICIPANT’S FEEDBACK ON ‘SAFETY’

KMT’s focus group participants also decoded the content of ‘Safety’ and its key messages similar to DPP members’. They divided in terms of their attitudes toward whether they like the spot or not, but again united in terms of its affect on them in terms of voting decision and have some negative
comments toward its potential target audiences. Some of them do not share its content due to its use of language and the overall value embedded in to this spot. At times, they expressed their oppositional-reading through sceptical attitude and even cruel cynicism.

On the use of imagery, even KMT participants had to admit it is a good spot despite their overall negative attitudes. The emphasis on Chen Shui-bian’s ordinariness and the good old days received some high remark:

… I think he used many childhood memories, our childhood memory as well. Once you saw the first image, you are walking in to an era of innocence in contrast with today’s chaos. You walk along with these memories and grow from these memories. Everyone lived in a time when resource is scarce. You will forget the real world which we live in now. You will think we are in a time everything is simple. And the feeling that there is a good man. It didn’t show A-bian in the beginning, but once his image was shown, then you will think the images before with his image. Linking him with our childhood memories and an age of innocence… (Respondent AJ)

It looks like a documentary… and everyone is familiar with him… (Respondent AK)

On the key messages this spot wants to send, KMT audiences have a similar interpretation with DPP members:

The Taiwanese identity. Focus on he is Taiwanese. (Respondent U)

During the first ad, he uses his relatives are all in Taiwan to make the point that if he is elected, he will maintain stability because his relatives are all in Taiwan. He will let Taiwan to move forward. In other words, there is logic behind the emotional appeal (Respondent AA)

When it comes to this spot’s effect on them, some members started to
divide themselves on their attitudes toward the spot apart from their attitude toward Chen:

May be it is because of we, or because of I don’t like Chen Shui-bian, I think he can be lack of self-respect at times. Something what he said will make people wonder if he doesn’t want his face [shameless]. So when I look at the first ad, I will think this is a good ad, but it will not change my attitude toward him. This is certainly a good ad, very warmth, such a good old day. (Respondent AG)

The way he shoots this, it is quite touching. You may dislike this person, but you won’t dislike this ad. (Respondent AI)

At last, their cynicism reached the highest when trying to figure out the target audiences for ‘Safety’:

T: I still think it is for lower class
W and some other participants: Anyway, it is not for educated voters. Yes, it can never be

The first one ['Safety'] is for lower class for sure. (Respondent U)

Compared with the amount of discussion generated from watching ‘Safety’, both DPP and KMT audiences were reserved on the celebrity endorsement spot ‘Hope’.

DPP PARTICIPANT’S FEEDBACK ON ‘HOPE’

This section lays out Democratic Progressive Party identifier’s view on this spot and then to propose that they in general have a dominate-reading, but also with a rather apathetic attitude.

First of all, a number of participants had watched this spot during election, and it is largely because of Li Yuan-zhe.
All I can remember is the starting part about what Li had said. After that I forget it all… (Respondent F)

The interpretation on the effect of Li Yuan-zhe is quite obvious from audience’s point of view:

… those entrepreneurs and Li, he is the head of Academia Sinica, quite an authoritative government establishment… (Respondent D)

…[Li Yuan-zhe] represents a clean social stream, Li Yuan-zhe represents academic, Lin Huai-min represents art field, Xu Wen-long represents the business. It represents people from all fields… These people themselves represent a different group of people from those individuals who aside with the KMT through bribery and kickback… (Respondent B)

On its impact, interestingly even some audiences expressed their boredom through out this part of the discussion, but they do think it is influential to them as well as the general public.

From the 2000’s context, it was successful to me. Many people were influenced by Li… (Respondent A)

When Li and those people stand out, people how lack the confidence because DPP never have the background [of being incumbent] will start to think… and people will be influenced. (Respondent D)

Participants find this spot is targeted at a rather different group of audiences than ‘Safety’:

It is targeted at middle or slightly green voters… (Respondent B)

Not necessarily try to appeal to green supporters, but just neutral
voters… (Respondent K)

The second one ['Hope'] is more at the middle class or high education people. (Respondent K)

Lastly, this study will look at how KMT participants evaluated this spot before bringing their perspectives together.

**KMT PARTICIPANT’S FEEDBACK ON ‘HOPE’**

From the observation, focus groups formed by KMT identifiers generally had a negotiated-reading ‘Hope’. To be more precise, their attitude was rather indifferent about this spot. Compared to DPP identifiers who also spent more time on ‘Safety’ than ‘Hope, KMT identifiers during discussion almost ignored this spot completely after admitting these celebrities had a positive and important impact on Chen Shui-bian’s electoral victory. What’s even more interesting is that compared to DPP identifier, Li Yuan-zhe’s name was only mentioned very few times by KMT participant while they still have high recall.

Mediator: You were saying that you saw these ['Safety' and 'Hope'] before?
Collectively: Yes we saw them.
W: I think as long as you have a TV set at home, you must have seen it before
V: I live outside and I don’t have a TV in my flat but I still saw it.

Some mentioned its presentation style is not ideal for various reasons, but generally they did agree it is influential to the general public. One respondent used her own experience while working with one of the celebrities as an example to demonstrate the ‘spiritual’ influence of these people:
…the second one [‘Hope’] can seem awkward because it is jumping too fast, from the earlier part [referring to the lost of Mayor Election] to the celebrity’s supports. (Respondent U)

I totally agree; especially when famous people endorse him [Chen]. The impact on neutral voters may be bigger since they don’t know who to vote for. When they see these people [celebrities], they may feel ‘oh! So they are supporting him, so may be I should too.’ Because they don’t have a firm stance yet. If they [celebrities] support Chen, may be there is a good reason for it…(Respondent AI)

I do have a strong feeling toward the second ad [‘Hope’], because I used to work in Yun-men. When I see teacher Lin Huai-min, it makes me wonder about these people who had strong spiritual influence. Those people who like them [referring to the celebrities in this spot] will wonder if they should also vote Chen. Inside Yun-men, the atmosphere is clear. It is all green [referring to DPP]. That’s why I wonder the influence of the second ad. But it is not an enjoyable ad. In terms of the favourability, second one [‘Hope’] is not as strong as the first one [‘Safety’]. If you don’t know these people, you will wonder what are they doing there, but if you know these people, then I think this ad will have a strong influence on them. (Respondent AJ)

On this spot, KMT participants did not spent much time on its possible target audiences, but the observation is that they did have a comparatively neutral attitude on the characteristics of these possible target audiences. With the transcripts presented, it will try to bring their opinions together then to discuss how their evaluations can contributed to the understanding of celebrity endorsement and emotional appeal spots.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FROM BRIEDGING AUDINCE’S RESPONSES WITH THE ELECTORAL CONTEXT**

Zheng (1998) studies Taiwan’s election advertising appeals and suggests
emotional appeal and celebrity endorsement both have had some successful examples from the past partly because of Taiwan’s election culture. This section wishes to explore further into the detail and provide some managerial implications.

Solely focusing on the spots by adopting the AIDA (attention, interest, desire and action) model, ‘Safety’ could be seen as a better advertisement than ‘Hope’ in the eyes of the audiences since it generated not only awareness and interest, but reaches audiences at the deeper level. ‘Hope’ at the other hand, had only caught them at a comparatively superficial level. But by bringing audience’s evaluation and the larger context together, ‘Hope’ might have accomplished something equally important.

The timing of these spots is crucial. Western and Taiwan election communication strategy studies proposes that introducing the candidate such as background is the priority during the early campaign, getting to know the candidate at a deeper level is important during the next stage while urging voters to support the candidate is crucial at the later stage (Trent and Friedenberg, 1995; Zheng, 1998).

Combine literature with audience’s perspectives, ‘Safety’ should be aired earlier than ‘Hope’ since it is mostly focusing on getting to know Chen Shui-bian through people close to him whereas ‘Hope’ is urging voters to support Chen through celebrities. This concurred with some DPP identifier’s words that they will support Chen regardless of ‘Safety’. Additionally, although ‘Safety’ created many positive feelings, but it too aroused some very negative comments from KMT identifiers. Hence, as the election date gets closer and more intense, the actual contribution of ‘Safety’ could be reduced since voter’s overall involvements are already high at that point. Toward the later or even the
last stage of the campaign, ‘Hope’ might be the kind of appeal that can remind
and reinforce existing support while not alarming opponent’s supporters.

The second concern is on public’s familiarity with Chen Shui-bian. In
Britain’s 97 General Election, Labour Party had a series of PEB on introducing
Tony Blair, they were consider to be successful because the public is less
familiar with Tony Blair due to John Smith’s sudden death prior to the election
(Powell, 1998; Wring, 2005). Chen Shui-bian had a relatively longer career in
politics and received quite some media attention during his time as a legislator
and Mayor of Taipei (Guo, 1998; Rigger, 2001). Voters could have stronger
existing attitudes toward him prior to the 2000 election. There was smaller
need to reintroduce him. ‘Safety’ did let audiences to know a different side of
him which can be considered as successful, but the effect can be relatively
minor if they already have a strong existing attitude and the election is within
three months of time. In terms of bringing in a new element to the election,
‘Hope’ might be able to arouse some curiosity to the audiences since they may
want to know why these social elites want to endorse Chen.

‘Hope’ and celebrity endorsement appeal certain has its problems as well.
‘Hope’ in particular is rather weak in reaching audience at in-depth level and
received criticism on its presentation, but perhaps the more important concern
is its future application on election. Zheng (1998) says celebrity endorsement
has to rely on endorser’s visibility, credibility, attractiveness and power. On the
one hand, how many celebrities with Li Yuan-zhe’s achievement will want to be
involved in politics? At the other hand, even there are these individuals, will it
have a diminishing effect on the audiences once audiences are familiar to this
appeal? With emotional appeal, it could also have a diminishing effect on
audiences, but the magnitude does seem to be different because DPP
supporters who already knew Chen Shui-bian prior to 2000’s election were still touched by ‘Safety’. Moreover, in terms of its content, it is may be comparatively easier to arouse an emotion than to find a powerful celebrity to be used in a political spot.

**SUMMARY**

To summarise this paper, it recruited 37 audiences through six focus groups formed by either KMT or DPP identifiers. From their perspective, it examined how they interpreted two of Democratic Progressive Party’s political advertisements from 2000 Taiwan’s Presidential Election. One of the spot ‘Hope’ uses celebrity endorsement from a group of social elites including Nobel Prize winner Li Yuan-zhe and the other spot ‘Safety’ uses emotional appeal with documentary-style presentation to introduce DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian’s stance on maintain stability and attachment with ordinary people.

From cultural studies’ framework on different positions of readings, it categorises DPP identifier’s responses on ‘Hope’ and ‘Safety’ as sharing a dominate-reading while KMT had a negotiated reading on ‘Hope’ and an oppositional-reading on ‘Safety’. Furthermore, it suggested although documentary-style can be emotionally powerful for DPP identifiers, but it too created equal amount of negative emotions for the KMT groups. At the other hand, celebrity endorsement through influential people perhaps can be more practical at the short-campaign period despite it lacks the element that can stimulate strong emotional responses.

While our findings are speculative, they offer interesting insight into the use of political advertising of Taiwan. What cannot be doubted is that there is still much to learn about the use of other political advertising appeals, specially
the use of negative advertising in Taiwan’s election context.

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