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ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON THE CHANGE OF VOTER BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS (VOTERS) IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Abstract: *In this day and age, where we are constantly exposed to advertising messages and information, it is not surprising that advertising also plays a significant role in the political sphere. The impact of advertising on changing voter behavior in the Slovak Republic is a matter that deserves attention as political campaigns increasingly use advertising techniques and media to achieve their objectives. Advertising in elections is nothing new, but its form and scope have changed significantly with the advent of the digital era. Candidates and political parties are investing heavily in advertising campaigns, which range from traditional media such as television, radio and print to new online platforms and social media. The aim of the paper is to summarize the issue of advertising, as well as to analyse the impact of advertising i on the change in voting behaviour and decision-making of Slovak consumers (voters). The primary information was obtained by actual collection. The sample consisted of 362 respondents. The subjects of the research were consumers living in the region of eastern Slovakia. The obtained primary data were then processed in the statistical program, and Pearson's chi-squared test and Cramer's V were used to confirm or reject the established hypotheses. The second hypothesis examined has also been confirmed and shows us that there is a significant relationship between the means of advertising and the gender of respondents. The results of our research can be of benefit to various stakeholders. Political actors and parties will gain valuable information on how to use advertising effectively during campaigns. The media will have a better understanding of the impact of political advertisements and how to improve their services. The public will have a better understanding of the impact of political ads on voter decisions, and the academic community will have new insights to study and research. Overall, these results contribute to the transparency, information and quality of the political process in the Slovak Republic.*

Key words: advertising, marketing communication, political marketing, voter behavior, political marketing.

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1. Introduction. Advertising currently has an irreversible impact on various aspects of our lives, including politics. The influence of advertising on the voting behavior of voters in the Slovak Republic is no exception. Advertising campaigns that are conducted during election periods can have an important influence on how voters perceive candidates and political parties and how they decide to cast their vote. This issue is important not only for politicians and their campaigns but also for voters and the overall quality of the democratic process. One of the main ways in which advertising influences voting behavior is by shaping public opinion. Advertising can present candidates in a positive or negative light and highlight their key issues and positions. This can influence what voters consider important in an election and how they choose to vote. For example, positive ads can increase the popularity of candidates and convince voters that they are capable and reliable leaders. Conversely, negative ads can discredit candidates and create a negative impression that will influence voters' decisions.

In addition, advertising can lead to political polarization. Candidates and parties often create advertising campaigns that appeal to specific voter bases and reinforce their beliefs. This can further divide society and lead to greater political polarization as voters increasingly identify with one camp or the other. Today, it is important to recognize that advertising is not always true. Candidates often use manipulative tactics such as lies, distortion of facts and emotional manipulation to influence voters. This can cause misinformation and misdirection, which is dangerous for democracy. The Slovak Republic is no exception in this area. Here, too, political parties and candidates use advertising to win the support of the electorate. Advertising campaigns are increasingly sophisticated and involve a variety of media, from television and radio to social networks and online advertising.

To deal with the impact of advertising on voting behavior, it is important that voters are critical and informed. They need to verify information and be influenced only by facts and careful consideration. Political leaders should also adopt an ethical approach to advertising and refrain from manipulative tactics. Overall, it can be argued that the impact of advertising on changing voter behavior in the Slovak Republic is a complex issue that has important implications for the political process and society as a whole. It is important that we are aware of this influence and that we seek to protect the integrity of the democratic process from manipulation and misinformation.

2. Literature Review. Can advertising be a mysterious seducer who can make us, despite our will, buy things that we do not truly need and want? Does advertising manipulate us, and are we its helpless victims? Advertising was created many years ago and is part of the market and us as well (Vysekalova & Mikes, 2010).

Several authors, including Kim (2021), Mahaputra & Saputra (2021), Lee & Cho (2020), Lina & Setiyanto (2021), Eisend et al. (2023), Ahn et al. (2022), Lina & Ahluwalia (2021), Kerr & Richards (2021), Korenkova et al. (2020), Varnali (2021), and Boerman & Smit (2023), highlight the different aspects and characteristics of advertising that play a key role in relation to its definition. One of the aspects often emphasized is the communicative nature of advertising. Advertising is seen as a means of communication by which organizations, brands or other actors communicate with their target audiences. This communication can be verbal, visual or a combination of both and often uses different media and channels to achieve its objective.

Another important aspect is the persuasive nature of advertising. This means that advertising often has a persuasive intent, which is to persuade people to adopt a certain opinion, attitude or act in a certain way. Persuasive communication is a key element of advertising because it seeks to influence consumer behavior or decisions. Advertising is also often associated with commerciality. It is seen as a tool that helps to promote and sell products, services or opinions. In economics, advertising plays an important role in creating demand and stimulating the market. It helps organizations achieve their business objectives and increase profitability. Brand identification is another important aspect. Advertising is not just about promoting a product but also about building and reinforcing brand identification in the minds of consumers. In this way, organizations create trust and brand loyalty, which has long-term business benefits.

Some authors also emphasize the informative nature of advertising. Advertising can provide consumers with useful information about products, services or events. In this case, advertising is perceived as a source of relevant and useful information that helps consumers in their decision making. In addition, creativity and aesthetics play an important role in advertising. For some authors, advertising is also a form of artistic and creative expression. Visual appeal and creativity are important aspects of advertising campaigns that can attract attention and stick in consumers' minds. These varied perspectives and aspects, which several authors point to when defining advertising, give us a varied and complex picture of this important area of communication and marketing. Advertising is not just a simple process of promotion but a complex phenomenon that takes into account different dimensions and objectives.

The definition of political advertising is often the subject of different views and interpretations by different authors (Edelson et al. (2019), Fowler et al. (2021), Harker (2020), Passyn et al. (2020), Wilson et al. (2020), Campbell et al. (2022), Xu (2020), Kubin & von Sikorski (2021), Yunusova & Odilbekova (2022), Freelon & Wells (2020)) in the literature and debates. These authors point to various aspects that should be taken into account when defining the concept of political advertising, thus contributing to a better understanding of this phenomenon. Political advertising is a form of communication strategy used in political campaigns and other political activities to promote political parties, candidates, political views or agendas. It is a specific type of advertising that aims to influence the public, often with the aim of gaining voter support or shaping public opinion. Political advertising can use a variety of media and channels, including television, radio, print, online media and social networks, to achieve its political objective. It is often characterized by persuasive content that seeks to persuade voters to adopt a particular political position or vote for particular candidates or political parties.

One of the most important aspects in defining political advertising is the political nature and objective. Political advertising mostly concerns political parties, candidates, elections or political issues. Its main objective is to convince the public of the political agenda, attitudes or qualities of a particular candidate or party. Political advertising is thus often linked to the democratic process and public debate. The authors also stress the media nature of political advertising. Currently, political advertising occurs on a variety of media platforms, including television, radio, print, online media and social networks. These platforms allow political actors to reach a wide audience and target specific segments of the electorate. In addition, the authors point to the persuasive nature of political advertising. The main purpose is to persuade voters and to influence their opinions and decisions. Political advertising often uses emotional appeals, rhetoric and imagery to achieve this goal. The persuasive power of advertising can have a significant impact on electoral outcomes and political decisions.

Some authors also stress the transparency and regulation of political advertising. In many countries, there are rules and laws governing how political advertising can be financed and distributed. Transparency in campaign finance is an important aspect to prevent corruption and abuse. As a result of the rapid development of digital media and social networks, an increasing number of authors are also looking into online political advertising. This form of advertising is characterized by the fact that it can be targeted based on the personal data and preferences of online users. This raises questions about privacy and transparency vis-à-vis online political campaigns.

Overall, when defining political advertising, several authors point to its political nature, media presence, persuasive purpose, transparency and regulation. Together, these aspects form a complex picture of this important tool in the political process and public debate. It is important to take these diverse perspectives into account when discussing political advertising to achieve a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the issue.

3. Methodology and research methods. The aim of the research was to analyse the impact of political advertising on the change in voting behavior and decision-making of Slovak consumers (voters). The subjects of the research were consumers living in the region of eastern Slovakia. The primary data were obtained via questionnaire - a perfect tool for quick and mass collection of data. The survey sample was selected by random sampling. The obtained primary data were subsequently processed in the statistical program Statistica. Pearson's chi-squared test and Cramer's V were used to confirm or reject the established hypotheses.

To determine the objective of the research, we set out the following hypotheses:

H1: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of individual tools of marketing communication when choosing a political party depending on the age of respondents.

H2: We assume that there is a significant relationship between the means of advertising and the gender of the respondents.

4. Results. The sample consisted of 362 respondents. Of the sample of 362 respondents, 200 were women and 162 were men. The prevailing age group was respondents aged 18-30 years, with a share of 38.9%. The second largest group of respondents was aged 31-40 years, accounting for 27% of the sample. Respondents aged 41-50 represent 17.1%, followed by respondents aged 51-60 years with a 10% share. The least represented group was the group of respondents aged 61 years and more, with a share of 7.1%. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine which of the tools of marketing communication influence respondents (voters) in the process of choosing a political party in the Slovak Republic (Table 1).

Table 1. Marketing communication tools and their impact on potential voters

	Number	Cumulative number	Relative number	Cumulative relative number
Ads	151	151	41.71%	41.71%
Sales support	10	161	2.76%	44.48%
Personal sale	21	182	5.8%	50.28%
Public relations	180	362	49.72%	100%
In total	362	362	100%	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

The largest group of respondents (with a share of 49.72%) stated that public relations (type of marketing tool) has the greatest influence on their choice of political party. A slightly smaller group of respondents (with a share of 41.71%) stated that advertising influences their choice when choosing a political party the most. A total of 5.8% of respondents believe that personal sales influence their choice of a political party the most. Ten respondents stated that sales promotion, as a marketing communication tool, influences them the most.

Through the following question, we investigated which of the advertising means has the greatest influence on respondents when choosing a political party. In general, political advertising can be defined as a means of presenting a political party/candidate to voters (Ida, 2017). It is a space in the media for which a political party/candidate pays and no one else intervenes: no one else can supply additional information except for a political party or candidate themselves. This allows them to take full control over information shared. There is also a flip side to it, as voters are aware that such content is paid and unedited and the confidence in such a notice/information is low (Chytilek et al., 2012).

Table 2. Evaluation of the means of advertising in the selection of a political party

	Number	Cumulative number	Relative number	Cumulative relative number
Leaflets	31	31	8.56%	8.56%
Billboards	69	100	19.06%	27.62%
Posters	2	102	0.55%	28.17%
Brochures	26	128	7.18%	35.36%
Radio advertising	14	142	3.87%	39.22%
TV commercial	220	362	60.77%	100%
In total	362	362	100%	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

The largest group of respondents thinks that when choosing a political party, they are mostly influenced by television commercials (in terms of a means of advertising). A total of 220 respondents (60.77%) selected this option. Another group of 69 respondents (19%) said they are mostly affected by billboards. Thirty-one respondents chose the leaflet as the most influential means of advertising - an 8.56% share. A total of 7.18% of respondents stated that prospects of political parties have the most influence on them. Only 14 respondents (3.87%) stated that they are the most influenced by the radio advertising of a particular political party. Two respondents chose posters to be the most influential means of advertising when choosing a political party. The aim of another questionnaire item was to determine which type of media was the most convincing and trustworthy when choosing a political party (Table 3).

Table 3. The media's persuasiveness and credibility in choosing a political party

	Number	Cumulative number	Relative number	Cumulative relative number
Television	206	206	56.91%	56.91%
Newspapers	43	249	11.88%	68.78%
Internet	103	352	28.45%	97.24%
Magazines	0	352	0.00%	97.24%
Radio	10	362	2.76%	100%
In total	362	362	100%	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

The largest group of respondents, with a 56.91% share, said that in their opinion, television is the most convincing and trustworthy type of media. A total of 28.45% of respondents stated that the internet is a

medium that influences their choice of political party the most. Forty-three respondents (11.88%) think that newspapers are the most convincing and trustworthy type of media when choosing a political party. The lowest share of 2.76% (10 respondents) was recorded for the radio. No respondents chose magazines to be the most convincing and trustworthy type of media when choosing a political party. With the following item, we wanted to determine whether respondents think that advertisements on television, radio, and the internet are influential enough to change their voter behavior.

Table 4. Influence of advertising on changes in voter behavior

	Number	Cumulative number	Relative number	Cumulative relative number
Strongly disagree	55	55	15.19%	15.19%
Disagree	48	103	13.26%	28.45%
I do not know	72	175	19.89%	48.34%
Agree	141	316	38.95%	87.29%
Strongly agree	46	362	12.71%	100%
In total	362	362	100%	100%

Sources: developed by the authors.

Based on the results in Table 4, we can say that 141 respondents (38.95%) stated that advertising can influence them to change their voting behavior. Seventy-two respondents stated a neutral stance on this issue, which means they do not know exactly whether or not advertising affects them. Respondents who selected the option strongly disagree stated that advertising does not influence them to change their decision/advertising has no effect on their decision. Forty-eight respondents chose the option disagree. The lowest share (12.71%) of respondents chose the option strongly agree – 46 respondents stated that they strongly agree with the fact that advertising can influence them and persuade them to change their voter behavior.

The first aim of the research is to determine whether there are dependencies between marketing communication tools when choosing a political party and the age of respondents. For this problem, we developed the following alternative hypothesis:

H1: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of individual marketing communication tools in the choice of political party depending on the age of respondents.

Table 5. Pivot table – respondents' age vs. marketing communication tools

		Age					In total
		18 – 30	31 – 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	Above 61	
Which of the following marketing communication tools influences you most when choosing a political party	Personal sale	3	9	4	0	5	21
	Sales Support	3	5	0	0	2	10
	Public relations	77	46	33	21	3	180
	Advertising	56	38	26	16	15	151
	In total	139	98	63	37	25	362

Sources: developed by the authors.

H0: There is no significant difference between the variables analysed.

H1: There is a significant difference between the variables analysed.

Table 6. Chi-squared test of differences in marketing communication tools

	Value	df	Sig
Pearson χ^2	34.313614	12	0.001
N		362	

Sources: developed by the authors.

We used the Pearson chi-square test to determine the differences, and the significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Based on the values interpreted in Table 6, we can conclude that there are no statistically significant differences in the perception of individual marketing communication tools in the choice of political party depending on the age of respondents. The value of $p = 0.001$ is lower than the level $\alpha = 0.05$. From the above, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the variables analysed, which recommends that we accept our basic hypothesis H1.

The second aim of the research is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the means of advertising and the gender of the respondents. For this research issue, we have established the following alternative hypothesis:

H2: We assume that there is a significant relationship between the means of advertising and the gender of respondents.

Table 7. Pivot table – respondents' gender vs. advertising tools

	In your opinion, which of the following advertising means has the greatest impact on you when choosing a political party?						In total
	billboards	leaflets	posters	brochures	Radio as	TV commercial	
Gender male	36	21	2	5	4	94	162
female	33	10	0	21	10	126	200
In total	69	31	2	26	14	220	362

Sources: developed by the authors.

H0: There is no significant relationship between the variables analysed.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the variables analysed.

Table 8. Cramer's V – respondent's gender vs. means of advertising

Test association	Value	Sig (χ^2)
Cramer's V	0,231	0,002
N	362	

Sources: developed by the authors.

We used Cramer's V to determine the relationship between the variables; we determined the significance level at $\alpha = 0.05$. Based on the values in Table 8, we can state that there is no significant relationship between the means of advertising and the gender of respondents. The value of $p = 0.002$. Based on the results shown in Table 8, statistical hypothesis H2 is confirmed.

The above result and finding is significant because it is often assumed that gender may be one of the factors that influence how people perceive and respond to advertisements and thus their political attitudes. However, the results of this analysis tell us that in this particular context, gender is not a determinant of what advertising channels or media voters prefer in their political decisions. That is, men and women tend to respond to advertising in similar ways and do not show significant differences in what forms of advertising influence them in their choice of political party or candidate. The above finding could have important implications for political campaigns and strategies. Political actors should be careful not to indulge in gendered advertising that could potentially create polarization between male and female voters. Instead, they should focus their campaigns on universal themes and values that appeal to the general public regardless of gender.

5. Conclusions. In the analysis of the influence of the age of the respondents on their perception of marketing communication tools when choosing a political party, we came to an important conclusion: there are no statistically significant differences in the perception of these tools depending on the age of the respondents. This finding has significant implications for political campaigns and strategies, as it shows that age is not a key factor influencing preferences towards different forms of advertising. In the context of modern elections and political campaigns, which often seek to reach different generations of voters, this finding is important. Political actors may tend to approach different age groups in different ways to better reach and persuade them. For example, young voters may be more inclined towards digital media and social networks, while older generations may prefer traditional media such as television or print.

However, the finding that there are no statistically significant differences in the perception of advertising between age groups might suggest that political campaigns should be as inclusive as possible and try to reach a wide range of voters regardless of their age. This may mean that combining different advertising tools and media can be an effective strategy for reaching diverse groups of voters. Overall, this finding underscores the

importance of considering the age of voters in political campaigns but also highlights the need for a flexible and comprehensive strategy that takes into account the different preferences and demographic characteristics of voters to be successful in garnering their support.

In the process of choosing a political party, it is certainly important what type of political campaign a candidate chooses and how he/she will try to reach his/her prospective voters. Television commercials are the most influential means of political advertising, followed by billboards. We propose that political parties work to improve their work with these means and focus on them more. In our research, we also found that the most compelling and trustworthy type of media for the respondents, voters, is television, followed by the internet. We can say that television commercials and television as such are the most important, convincing and trustworthy means of advertising for potential voters. Our recommendation for political parties would be to focus a great deal of attention on these means, to choose the right technique for presenting their agenda, to be creative and, of course, to reach as wide a number of voters as possible. It should be noted that the internet is also important. Today, people, companies and, of course, political parties present their products, services, and election campaigns in the online space. We therefore suggest that politicians should not omit this type of media because only young people can change the country's future and bring about new changes in the government.

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Аналіз впливу реклами на зміну виборчої поведінки споживачів (виборців) в Словацькій Республіці

У сучасному світі, де споживачі постійно піддаються впливу рекламних повідомлень та інформації, реклама має значущу роль у підвищенні ефективності політичного маркетингу. Вплив реклами на зміну поведінки виборців в Словацькій Республіці є питанням, яке заслуговує на увагу, оскільки політичні кампанії все більше використовують рекламні технології та засоби масової інформації для досягнення своїх цілей. Реклама під час виборів не є чимось новим, але її форма та обсяг істотно змінилися з приходом цифрової ери. Політичні діячі та партії вкладають значні кошти в рекламні кампанії, які охоплюють традиційні медіа, такі як телебачення, радіо та друковані видання, а також нові онлайн платформи та соціальні медіа. Метою статті є аналіз впливу реклами на зміну поведінки виборців та прийняття ними політичних рішень в Словацькій Республіці. Первинну інформацію отримано шляхом анкетування 362 респондентів. Об'єктом дослідження були виборці, які проживають в регіоні східної Словаччини. Отримані первинні дані оброблено статистичним програмним продуктом. Для перевірки висунутих гіпотез дослідження використано статистичний тест Пірсона і коефіцієнт Крамера. Результати дослідження дозволили підтвердити другу гіпотезу, що обґрунтовує наявність статистично значущого взаємозв'язку між засобами реклами та статусом респондентів. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для різних зацікавлених сторін. Політичні діячі та партії можуть використовувати отримані рекомендації щодо ефективного використання реклами під час передвиборчої кампанії. Крім того, менеджери засобів масової інформації можуть використовувати рекомендації при виборі релевантного каналу комунікації з урахуванням впливу політичних рекламних матеріалів на політичні рішення виборців. Отримані результати сприяють прозорості, інформованості та якості політичного процесу в Словацькій Республіці.

Ключові слова: реклама, маркетингова комунікація, політичний маркетинг, виборча поведінка, політичний маркетинг.