Ethics and Political advertising
Objective

By the end of this session, we must be able to:

Define political advertising

Explain the different types of political ads

Explain the role of the media when it comes to political advertising
What is communication?

What is political communication?

What is political advertising?

Give an example of a political ad
I WANT YOU TO VOTE
Political communication is the process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, or citizens, exert intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes, or behaviors of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state, or community.
Political communications is an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. The process operates down-wards from governing institutions towards citizens, horizontally in linkages among political actors, and also upwards from public opinion towards authorities.

It is strategic communication by political parties and interest groups.

Advertising is commonly used for political communication.
Political advertising

- Seen as one of the most important genres of advertisements
- Described as ‘messages that support or oppose a candidate for nomination either to a public office or political party’
- It conveys impressions about a candidate’s character as well as information about their issues of interest
The aim is to influence or persuade people to select one option over another

Persuades citizens to vote in favor or against

Through advertisements, political messages can reach beyond the politically active citizens to reach uninterested and unmotivated citizens (apolitical)
Where do they appear?

- in pamphlets, circulars, fliers, billboards or other signs, bumper stickers, or similar forms of written communication.
- published in newspapers, magazines, or other periodicals.
- broadcast by radio or television in return for consideration.
- on an Internet website.
Nature of Political adverts

- Different Political advertisements are used in the different stages of a campaign

- Name identification spots or advert
  - Basically provides the name (identity) of the candidate
  - Purpose is to create awareness

- Argument spots/ adverts
  - They present the candidates ideology (what is the position of the candidate on particular issues)
Attack spots

- Focus is on attacking the opponent
- It could be an attack on image or on policies

Positive visionary

- Focus on giving the publics a reason to vote for the candidate
- Focus is on the image of the candidate
Dominance of attack/ negative advertisements

- These are advertisements that focus on an opponent
- negatively positions the opponent and his /her views
- attack policies, character and behavior
- Seeks to weaken the opponent and strengthen individual position
- Negative attacks generate counterattacks
Some attack ads focus on the ‘image’ of the opponent and some focus on the ‘issues’ the opponent stands for.

One advantage of attack ads:

you not only hear what a candidate stands for but also the consequences of that stance.
Where do we draw the line between attack on ‘image’ and attack on ‘policies’?

Consider government regulations:
- Enforce regulations that disallow the use of a certain type of negative advertisements

Establishing a code of conduct: establish a code of conduct to ensure honesty and respect for others
- Use Code of conduct to ensure adhere to standards of accuracy and dignity

Use public opinion as a motivator and enforcer for ethical behavior in political advertising.
Disclosure statement

- Political advertising that contains express advocacy is required to include a disclosure statement.

- **Express advocacy** refers to political advertisements that expressly and clearly support or oppose a particular electoral outcome.

- Examples “vote for,” “election,” "support," "vote against," “defeat” and "reject." (clear statements of support or opposition)

- Advertisements avoiding express advocacy are considered as **issue advocacy**.
The person who causes the political advertising to be published, distributed, or broadcast is responsible for including the disclosure statement.

Language used will determine if the advertising contains express advocacy and is required to include a disclosure statement.
Disclosure statement must include the following:

- the words “political advertising” or “pol. adv.”; and
- the full name of: (a) the person who paid for the political advertising; (b) the political committee authorizing the political advertising; or (c) the candidate or specific-purpose committee supporting the candidate.

The disclosure statement must appear on the face of the political advertising or be clearly spoken if the political advertising does not include written text.
Relationship between media and political advertising

- Remember: communication influences opinion and decisions
- What role should media play in ensuring that publics are not exposed to deceptive information
Question the legitimacy of claims in political campaigns (especially those that point to false inferences)

Deal with misleading statements

Focus on truth/falsity of a campaign and not who is winning the campaign

Disassociate the institution from the advert (stating the responsible persons for the advert)

Advertising is not only used to sell politicians to the citizens but can only be used to shape public policy or turn around public opinion
References

