

Critical Reflections on the Intersection of Political Management and Political Communications in Global Era

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Abstract

Both applied political communications and political communication as an academic field have long been associated with political management. The classic writings of Aristotle, Plato, Quintillian, and Cicero are the origins of political communication from both an applied and theoretical standpoint. In more recent times, interdisciplinary work in communication, political sciences, psychology, sociology, and marketing has been combined to form the theoretical and academic field of political communication. In the 1950s, political communication emerged as a separate, interdisciplinary subject of study. Political communication is at the center of political campaigning and the interaction between citizens and their leaders in the political process, whether it is concentrating on controlled media like speeches, debates, advertisements, or new technologies or uncontrolled media like news in print or on television. This paper focuses on the contributions made by the field of political communication to political management and the dissemination of a candidate's message to voters through suitable channels. Political speech, political debates, political advertising, new technologies, and political news are the five primary topic areas in which the paper examines these contributions.

Keywords: Political, Communication, Political Management, Political Communication, Political Campaigning

Introduction

The study of political management is becoming more popular in American colleges and universities as well as other higher education establishments across the globe (Babbie, 2021; Arnold, 2024). Political management is sometimes called "applied politics" or

"applied political science," "applied political communications" in the communications sector, and "political marketing" in the marketing and commerce fields. Regardless of the academic term, researchers and students are becoming more interested in learning about how sophisticated modern elections are conducted, how activists are utilising the newest electronic advocacy tools, how businesses and nonprofits are utilising the expertise of political campaigners, and how election campaigns are becoming more professionalised globally (Zamora-Roldan, 2024, p. 83).

Both applied political communications and political communication as an academic field have long been associated with political management. Political communication can be traced back to the ancient works of Aristotle, Plato, Quintillian, and Cicero from both a practical and theoretical standpoint (Aristotle, 1961; Cappella & Hall, 2022). In contemporary times, interdisciplinary research in communication, political sciences, psychology, sociology, and marketing is combined to form the theoretical and academic field of political communication studies (Austin & Maja, 2020). Robert Negrine's clear-cut definition of political communication—the "role of communication in the political process" (Negrine, 2022)—is arguably the best of the various formulations.

According to John Armstrong and Michael Markos' groundbreaking book *Crashing the Gate: Framing Research, Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics* (2022), political communication as an academic topic evolved into its own cross-disciplinary field in the 1950s. The integration of political consultants and communication in the political process was first introduced by James Maarek in his seminal work *Political Marketing and Communication* (2010). The International Communication Association established a political communication division in 1973, which served as the primary scholarly venue for political communication for almost 20 years. Other significant developments included the emergence of bibliographic resources, journals, and classes focused on the subject. Subsequently, analogous divisions devoted to political communication were established by the Speech Communication Association (now the National Communication Association) and the American Political Science Association.

More than forty years ago, Joseph Napolitan, the founder of the American Association of Political Consultants, declared that a "political consultant is a specialist in political communication" (David, 2023). Therefore, Napolitan contended, a political consultant's role is to determine the message that must be conveyed, choose the communication channels, and carry out the communication process. This paper focuses on the contributions made by the field of political communication to political management and the dissemination of a candidate's message to voters through suitable channels. Political

speech, political debates, political advertising, new technologies, and political news are the five primary topic areas in which the paper examines these contributions.

Political Communication as Public Speech and Rhetoric

Political speaking and debate were the focus of early research on communication in political circumstances. The impact of public speaking in non-campaign contexts, such as Lincoln's famous 1863 Gettysburg Address (Canovan, 2019), Martin Luther King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, the speeches of "great communicator" Ronald Reagan, and presidential inaugural and state of the union speeches (Cappella & Hall, 2022), was also studied by academics. The five canons of rhetoric—invention (ideas), arrangement (organization), elocution (style), memory, and delivery—are the foundation of classical rhetorical theory, which is the source of the principles used when a political consultant coaches a candidate or public figure on how to deliver an effective speech, whether they are aware of it or not (Cappella & Hall, 2023).

Analysis of political messages is the main focus of the study of political communication as political speeches and rhetoric. These days, political speaking as it appears in speech genres is frequently the focus of such research. For example, researchers examine presidents' and state governors' inauguration and state of the union speeches (Baines, 2023, p. 143). As demonstrated by Richard M. Nixon's well-known "Checkers" speech from the 1952 presidential campaign, Edward Kennedy's speech expressing regret for the 1969 Chappaquiddick incident, and Bill Clinton's admission of his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky in 1998, analyses have also concentrated on the specialised genre of apologia (Carothers, 2018). For example, researchers have determined that four key tactics—denial, boosting, differentiation, and transcendence—are helpful in effectively repairing an image (Edwards, 2019).

Discussions of speech writing principles and the use of dramatisitic analysis in political campaigns can also be beneficial for political consultants and managers (Davidson & Francis, 2018). In addition to incorporating the study of group interactions, the latter work advances our knowledge of how political communications may "chain out" and gain different meanings in political audiences (Davies & Bruce, 2024).

Political Communication as Political Debates

Despite the fact that the aforementioned Lincoln-Douglas debates are among the most well-known instances of the debate mode of political communication, debates became the standard modern democratic forum when television was added to the debate equation. Political candidates, political consultants, the news media, and the general public have all been captivated by televised debates since the first one between Kennedy and Nixon in

1960. Political communication experts from a variety of academic fields studied the 1960 "Great Debates" in great detail, and these analyses led to numerous interpretations of Kennedy's success in the interactions (Ellis, 2025).

Televised presidential debates didn't happen again until 1976 for a number of reasons. Televised political debates became popular when the Federal Communication Commission reinterpreted the Equal Time Provision in 1975. Since 1976, there has been a discussion between presidential candidates in every election. The tradition of live and mediated (on radio and television) candidate interactions expanded to contests below the presidential level in the 1980s, when presidential debates became a mainstay of presidential primaries. Debates are the most watched event on television during presidential campaigns (Hallin & Paolo, 2023). Campaigns for state governor, the US Senate, the US Congress, and many other contested electoral positions now frequently include debates, both in primary and general elections.

Many classic books about political campaigning had little to say about the strategic significance of political debates and gave candidates and their managers little to no guidance about the role debates could play in campaign communication due to the lengthy break between 1960 and 1976 (Elizur, 2021). Nonetheless, political managers can learn a lot about effective tactics for political debate from political communication research in recent years.

Naturally, a candidate must first choose whether or not to take part in a debate. Voters find debates helpful in the following situations, according to Mark Farrell: (1) when at least one of the candidates is relatively unknown; (2) when many voters are unsure; (3) when the race seems close; and (4) when party allegiances are weak (2023). The circumstances in which political candidates gain or lose from taking part in debates have been described by George Hagen and Joel Richard (2023). They propose that the decision to debate is based on a number of factors, including how close the election is, the benefits of debating, the candidate's skill level as a debater, the number of candidates who will participate in the debate, and the degree to which the candidate has control over the debate's elements (timing, location, format, topics, etc.). Additionally, Haggens and Richards offer insightful evaluations of the potential persuasive impacts of debates on voters' opinions of candidates and how they might affect voters' knowledge of campaign issues (2023, p. 162). May Zamora-Roldan has also provided specific debate advice regarding the physical context of a debate encounter (e.g., sitting versus standing, eye contact strategies, candidate dress and movement tactics), strategies for addressing arguments, denials, handling apologies, humour, opening and closing speeches, and strategies for selecting formats and panelists (2024).

There is compelling evidence that debates help voters establish their opinions of candidates and learn about political topics. Ultimately, nevertheless, political managers should be aware that research indicates that general discussions are unlikely to produce significantly different voting intentions (Elizur, 2021; Cappella & Hall, 2023). Debates typically serve to confirm people's preconceived notions, but they can occasionally influence the votes of a tiny portion of the audience. Debate impacts may be crucial to election results because some elections are decided by narrow percentage margins. A voter's perception of political efficacy may rise and their level of cynicism may decrease as a result of debate exposure (Ubert, 2022; Walden, 2023; Wilson, 2023).

Lastly, the presidential level is the subject of the majority of political communication studies on political disputes. The methods and outcomes of debates below the presidential level are mostly unknown to us. Nonetheless, managers can find the Debate Advisory Standards Project's national voter survey report helpful in comprehending "best practices" for state and local debates (Luntz, 2016).

Political Communication as Political Advertising

The strongest connections between political management and political communication study have been found in the field of political advertising. Political communication research has produced results that are directly applicable to political campaign scenarios because political advertising is the primary means of communication between candidates/parties and voters in contemporary campaigns. Televised political advertising defied the general conclusions of the limited effects model of communication, according to the first empirical studies on the subject (Luntz, 2018; Ito & Misa, 2022). For example, political communication researchers found that televised political advertising could overcome partisan selectivity and guarantee that the candidate's message was seen by a wide range of voters because it aired during commercial breaks as interstitial programming (Geer, 2024; Ito & Misa, 2025; Kaaidic & Christinal, 2025).

Researchers studying political communication have studied political advertising in great detail, dissecting the "video style" of advertisements into the verbal, nonverbal, and video production methods that convey an advertisement's structure and content (Farrell, 2023, 2024; Geer, 2026). Additionally, researchers quickly discovered additional evidence to support political consultants' faith in the effectiveness of political advertising messages, confirming that political advertising may directly impact voters' perceptions of political candidates, their knowledge of issues, and occasionally their voting decisions (Young, 2024; Farnsworth & Robert, 2025). Voters with minimal levels of interest or awareness of the political campaigns or topics at stake, as well as those who are uncertain, seem to be most affected (McAlpine, 2024).

Research on political advertising has also shown that advertisements that emphasise a candidate's stance on issues are more effective than those that primarily feature the candidate's image or personality (Nelsonel, 2025). When the topics in question are ones that the candidate's political party asserts "ownership" over, the superiority of issue advertising seems to be especially evident. In the past, this has meant that Republicans have seemed to "own" foreign policy, while Democrats have been given greater credit for accomplishing outcomes pertaining to social and economic matters (Scroggs, 2024).

The impact of political advertising on viewers is also correlated with the degree to which it elicits emotional reactions in them. For example, an advertisement's emotional content may influence consumers' recollection of its content (David, 2023; Searls & Weinberger, 2020). Viewers' reactions to and assessments of a candidate may be influenced by the emotional reactions brought on by exposure to advertisements (David, 2023). This is particularly true for fear-based emotional reactions (David, 2023; Nelsonel, 2025).

Negative Advertising Effects

In the study of political communication, the impacts of negative advertising offer a unique situation, and the increasing use of such advertising in political campaigns at all levels has sparked significant scholarly, professional, and public interest in the topic. Political action committees (PACs) and independent organisations have been using negative advertising more frequently since the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) was passed by Congress in 2002. Both the 2022 U.S. midterm elections and the 2024 presidential campaign included unprecedented amounts of negative political advertising (Ellis, 2025; Geer, 2026).

Independent organisations' use of negative advertising has long been regarded as a successful political campaign tactic. Early studies on negative advertising showed that independent organisations were better at winning over voters with their disparaging remarks about a political candidate (Maarek, 2010; Canovan, 2019). Although some recent study indicates that the growing frequency of such advertising may be reducing the dependability of this finding, using independent groups as sources of negative advertising has been a mainstay of advertising strategy for some decades (Armstrong & Markos, 2022). Naturally, "going negative" always carries some risk of backlash, but it can be mitigated and the effectiveness of negative advertisements increased by employing comparative advertisements, humour, or focusing criticism of opponents on their issue positions rather than on image or character traits (Carothers, 2018; Babbie, 2021; Arnold, 2024).

However, a large amount of data supports the efficacy of negative advertising. The outcome is favourable for the attacking candidate because exposure to negative advertising is very

effective in ingraining negative information about the opponent in the voter's mind, even though such advertising may occasionally lessen the evaluation of the sponsoring candidate (Davies & Bruce, 2024; Farnsworth & Robert, 2025). The process of rebuttal is an important campaign dynamic since research indicates that a candidate who is attacked should not wait to respond to the accusations (Negrine, 2022). Early in the campaign, a politician who anticipates being attacked by an opponent can engage in inoculation in addition to direct rebuttals to lessen the impact of an attack (Ellis, 2025). When attacks do occur, candidates who can effectively use political advertising to spread their own message and take a pro-vulnerability stance will have a better chance of surviving them. Some of these effects are minimal, according to meta-analyses, but research that compare the direct advertising effects of negative advertisements (Davidson & Francis, 2018; Edwards, 2019; Baines, 2023).

Lastly, there is no evidence to support the claims made by journalists and even some researchers that political advertising on television undermines democracy and discourages voters from participating in politics. In elections where voters were exposed to negative advertising, a few studies have shown slight declines in voter turnout (Austin & Maja, 2020; McAlpine, 2024). According to Luntz (2016), Searls & Weinberger (2020), and Scroggs (2024), other research have revealed no such impacts or even positive effects on voter interest and involvement as a result of exposure to negative advertising.

Political Communication and New Technologies

The environment of political communication is quickly changing due to new technology advancements. Voters, parties, candidates, and interest groups are depending more and more on the Internet to spread political information and try to convince others of their positions. Political campaigns and government agencies soon started using the Web as a means of disseminating information, in addition to using email for communication and coordination. The combination of practically limitless area at nearly no cost was and still is appealing. The first presidential campaign to use the Internet to disseminate content was Bill Clinton's in 1992. Following the 1996 election year researchers at Rutgers University outlined the structural capabilities of the Web to enhancing democratic activity:

- (a) inherent interactivity; (b) potential for lateral and horizontal communication; (c) point-to-point and non-hierarchical modes of communication; (d) low costs to users (once a user is set up); (e) rapidity as a communication medium; (f) lack of national or other boundaries; and (g) freedom from the intrusion and monitoring of government (Nelson, 2025).

It is now virtually unthinkable for any political candidate, political leader, political or government organization to forgo a Web presence. Campaign websites are the center of contemporary campaigning, offering countless ways to communicate with the public and news media as well as chances for citizen feedback, donations, and interaction. The Internet has created new opportunities for candidate, citizen, and news media interaction through blogs, Vlogs like YouTube, and social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, even though it hasn't yet produced the kind of democratic "public sphere" that some researchers have idealised (Hallin & Paolo, 2023; Kaaidic & Christinal, 2025). Other emerging technologies, such as cell phones, podcasts, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, and even campaigning on virtual platforms like Second Life, are also evolving into significant political management tools. Although study on these new political communication channels and forms is still in its early stages, there are plenty of opportunities for future growth, and political communication scholars will surely keep expanding our knowledge of the political contributions of these new technologies.

Political Communication and News Media

The majority of new technology, debates, political speeches and rhetoric, and advertising are all essentially regulated forms of communication that are produced by a source (typically a candidate, a political leader, a political group, a government agency, or even a person). The study of unregulated communication is also included in political communication. The news media, of course, represents the most prevalent unchecked communication in the political system.

The most obvious ways that political consultants and managers try to sway political news are by creating print and video news releases and organising campaign events, sometimes known as pseudo-events. By examining the content of news media coverage of political campaigns and other political problems and events, political communication researchers have gained a great lot of insight into how political players interact with the media. Such studies have confirmed the widely noted news media practice of restricting quotes and coverage of political personalities' genuine messages to "sound bites." When discussing a campaign subject or event, candidates in contemporary presidential elections should anticipate receiving an average sound bite of seven to eight seconds (Walden, 2023; Young, 2024).

The news media not only cuts down on the amount of time candidates have to speak, but they also spend more time discussing campaign strategy and viewing the campaign as a "horserace" than covering actual or significant public issues (Zamora-Roldan, 2024). Modern campaigns have challenging obstacles in breaking past the wall of journalistic

narcissism that prioritises journalists' opinions over politicians' statements and consistently portrays campaign news in a negative light (Wilson, 2023; McAlpine, 2024).

Two more features of news media coverage of political campaigns have also been persuasively argued by political communication specialists. The tradition of agenda-setting research represents the first area. Over many years, Max McCombs and his associates have produced compelling proof that the public's agenda is set by the media (1972). To put it another way, the topics that the public deems significant are those that the media chooses to cover and their relative importance (agenda lists in order of priority). This agenda-setting relationship was first empirically tested with indecisive voters in North Carolina during the 1968 presidential campaign. Since that first study, a vast body of research has developed, showing that voters who consume a lot of media and have a high demand for orientation are most affected by agenda-setting (Canovan, 2019; Babbie, 2021; Arnold, 2024).

Framing research is the second compelling field of study on the influence of news media. The study of how the public is presented with problems or candidates by the news media is known as framing. According to Edwards (2019) and Elizur (2021), some agenda-setting scholars view framing as conceptually related to agenda-setting and contend that framing is the presentation of particular characteristics associated with an issue. Others, like Joel Richards and George Haggens, make a strong case that framing has its own conceptual foundation and results from the media's focus on certain aspects of a problem over others: "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (2023). According to John Armstrong and Michael Markos (2022), framing is "the central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events." Other scholars emphasise the necessity of considering audience frames in addition to media frames and viewing framing as a distinct notion (Ito & Misa, 2025; Nelson, 2025). All of these methods offer a means of examining how political events are covered by the media and aid academics and professionals in comprehending the methods and practices that influence journalistic choices about the coverage of political candidates, issues, and events.

Conclusion

Political communication is at the center of political campaigns and the interaction between citizens and their leaders in the political process, whether it is concentrated on controlled media like speeches, debates, advertisements, or new technology or uncontrolled media like news in print or on television. As technology advances and creates new avenues for citizens to engage with their governments and leaders, as well as to keep an eye on and hold them responsible for the success or failure of public policies, those governments and leaders must also adopt new technologies in order to effectively listen to citizens and meet

their needs. Managers and political strategists will be crucial to the success of these upcoming exchanges. That success will be necessary to sustain democratic life at all levels and everywhere in the world.

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