

# OXFORD COMMUTERS AND THE EFFICACY OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING

SEEN WHEN TRAVELING TO AND FROM WORK

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# ABSTRACT

Studies on media messages affect people's impressions on political campaigns that have been conducted. Results showed some media, such as television (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, 176), may set the agenda of the political campaign for the audiences. Political campaign signs on the road are designed to persuade commuters to making a voting decision. The current research aim to understand what Oxford commuters' impressions are toward to political advertising seen when traveling to and from work. Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted to learn the pattern of those political campaign signs and their impact on Oxford commuters.

Findings included commuters seem to be aware of the political signage when traveling to and from work but claim that those signs do not have impact on their impressions about campaigns like other media, such as television and Internet, which were their primary campaign information sources. On the other hand, the participants showed some degree emotion toward signs. Methodology limitations and implications are also discuss in this study.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1950s, the first political advertising used in campaigns. Since then, political advertising became a primary communication form between candidates and voters in the United States. Research on political advertising has become one of the important area in political communication discipline (Kaid, 2004, 155).

In the United States, research on political advertising mainly focused on television advertising (Kaid, 2004, 156). Two different categories of political advertising research included research about the content of the political advertising and research on the effect of the political advertising. The first category focused on the content and styles of the political advertising whereas the second category examined the effects that were measured by researchers (Kaid, 2004, 160).

Political advertising research on television and newspaper has been conduct (Kaid, 2004, 161). Results showed that political advertising had identifiable cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects (Kaid, 2004, 166). Perloff (1998) concluded "clearly, political spots can affect voters' evaluations of candidates and their interpretations of political events (347)." Most of the political advertising research used survey or experimental research methods to examine the political advertising effects (Kaid, 2004, 166). There is a lack of the research on political advertising on signage on the roads, especially utilizing ethnographic research methods. Through a series of appeals, symbols and statements, political signage is designed to influence the voters' impressions toward to candidates as other political advertising does on other media. The ethnography does not imply any

single method or type of data analysis. It will use any method that will answer research questions (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, 16). The current study aims to learn what determines the success on those and what the impression of the commuters, specially through this year's polemic election season by using an ethnographic research approach.

The assigned research question for this project is "What are Oxford commuters' impressions of the efficacy of political advertising seen when traveling to and from work?" in order to narrow our data and get a more specific approach and results. This research come up with an idea of how in reality signs advertising can help, be damage or be indifferent for the candidates.

# RESEARCHERS

Yi-Fan Chen's research interests aim to understand how users utilize mobile media to fulfill information and networking needs in everyday life. She is in training to be an Experience Design Researcher to make more user-friendly mobile media to access information at a location with their social network co-present at the same time. In current research project, she reviewed literature, design research methods, conducted observations and interviews, analyzed the data, and wrote the research report with her research teammate, Ms. Andrea Mateus Forero.

Andrea Mateus' research aims to understand how people experience different design outcomes, her background is Graphic Design therefore she looks to combine her knowledge in graphics and aesthetics with the research methods she is currently learning. Andrea is also in training to be an Experience Design Researcher. In this project, she was in charge of applying methods such as observations and Interviews along with Yi-Fan Chen. Each of them interviewed different people and coded the outcomes separately, after all the data was collected, studied and put together the process and outcomes can be found in this research report.

# METHODOLOGY

Two naturalistic observations and two semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand if political advertising seen when traveling to and from work has made any impressions on Oxford commuters. A naturalistic observation method was used because the method observes human behaviors in their natural settings without any manipulation by the observers/ researchers. Naturalistic observations make the behaviors exhibited more credible because they are occurring in a real world scenario (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, 6-9) compared to lab observations that are designed to observe subjects' behaviors in environments that are controlled by the researchers. A semi-structured interview provides opportunities for an extended response from participants. On the other hand, it is also limited by its format and scope (Muratovski, 2016, 61).

This study sought to observe commuters' behaviors in natural settings and allowed interview participants to extend their responses. Therefore, the following two methods were chosen.

## OBSERVATIONS

Two observations were conducted by two researchers, each observation took about an hour. Field note taking and photographing tools were used. The first observation focused on observing commuters' behaviors near a political sign on a major road in Oxford, Ohio whereas the second observation aimed to discover the amount of the political signs at people's yards at two major roads in Oxford, Ohio in order to make sure there were enough politic signs to actually run a research on their influence.

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand commuters' impressions toward political advertising when traveling to and from work. The participants were chosen because they are commuters to Oxford. Both of them are commuting from Dayton in average 3-4 days per week, both male and female participants are graduate students at Miami University. Interviews were taking places where the participants feel comfortable to talk.

Before the interviews, consent forms (please see Appendix A) were given to the participants to read. The participants signed the consent forms and kept the first page whereas the researchers kept second pages with the participants' signatures on them. After getting permissions from the participants, audio recording tools were used to collect data. In the interview, the first questions asked if participants paid attention to the political signs when traveling to and from work. Sub-questions included when, where, how and what they saw the signs. A sample question is "where did you see them (the political signs)?" Other questions included the emotion toward the signs and if there are impacts from the signs to participants. Find below the complete list of the interview questions, you can also find them on Appendix B.

### ***SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW***

*On the way to and from Miami University, have you seen any political advertisements? If so, please describe*

*Where did you see them?*

*When did you see them?*

*How often did you see them?*

*What were them, and which candidate(s)?*

*Please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on the way to and from Miami University.*

*Do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University would suggest you to vote for a particularly candidate? Why?*

*Do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University where from a particular candidate you do not agree with would have change the impact? Why?*

# METHODOLOGY: RAW DATA

## OBSERVATIONS

**Observation ONE:** Wednesday Oct 5 between 5:00pm and 6:00pm near Level 27 student apartments . The first observation took place near an intersection with a medium size political sign at the location. We observed drivers on the cars to see if they pay attention to the political sign (if they slow the car speed, or look at the sign)

Outcomes:

-It is hard to observe if drivers look at the sign or not. A video recording device/ or an eye tracking device on each car might be useful for similar research project in the future.

-Because the sign is located at the intersection, drivers seem to concentrate on the traffic lights. Moreover, there were no pedestrians at the location. Two researchers who are taking field notes seem to be abnormal at the site. Drivers might look at the researchers instead of the sign because it is unusual to have people stand on the site. Selecting a different observation location might be ideal for next field observation site.

-The assigned research question is "What are Oxford commuters' impressions of the efficacy of political advertising seen when traveling to and from work?" Because the research question is asking commuters' impressions, observation methodology to look at drivers in moving cars might not be an effectual research methodology for the research question. Moreover, it is hard to observe if the drivers also commuters.

*Sign on route 127 North entering Oxford, OH*





*Sign on route 73 North entering Oxford,OH.*

**Observation TWO:** Friday Oct 7 between 2:00pm and 3:00pm at Route 27 South and Route 73 North | about 5 miles from Oxford.

We collected quantitative data by counted all political signs on the roads toward and away from Oxford. We collected these numbers to make sure there were a decent number of signs on the roads before we could conduct interviews and talk about how signs affect commuters.

Outcomes:

-There are many more signs down this route, all of them (As far as we could go) for only the Republican Party or One of the third parties.

-There was rarely only one sign per house, they would put more than 3 and different size (possibly to call the attention of the drivers)

-In total we found different size of signs: Small, Medium and Big.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTED

### Route 127 South:

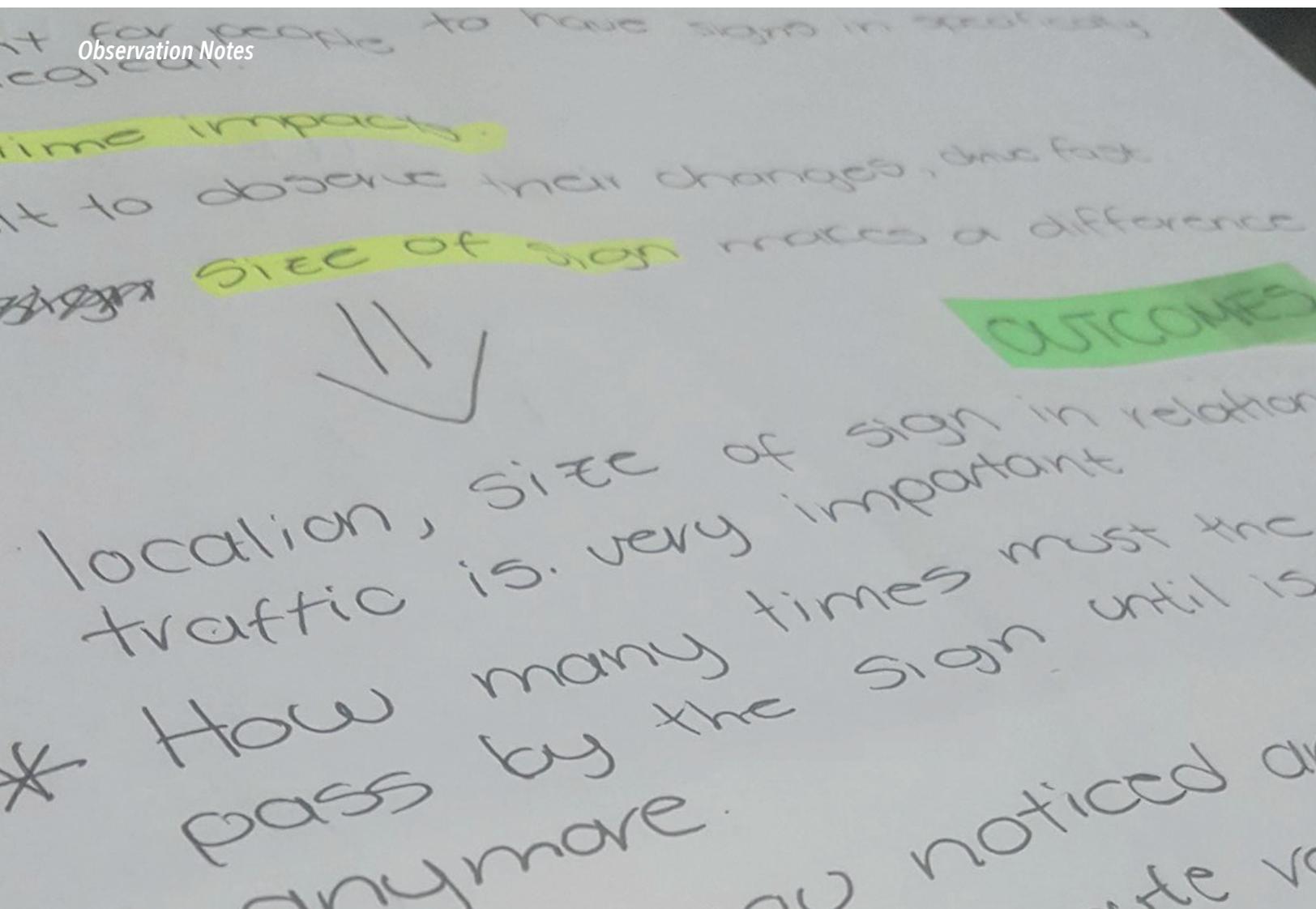
- Small Size: 29 signs
- Medium Size: 2
- Big Size: 4

### Route 73 East:

- Small Size: 30 signs
- Medium Size: 0
- Big Size: 3

Results showed both routes have a similar average of signs per 5 miles from Oxford. As a matter of fact there are more signs entering Oxford than leaving Oxford.

### Observation Notes



## INTERVIEWS

### **Interview One:** In-depth interview Transcription

By Andrea Mateus

Research Question: What are Oxford commuters' impressions of the efficacy of political advertising seen when traveling to and from work?

Subject: a male Miami University commuter who lives in Dayton, Ohio

The interview took 6 minutes and 20 seconds

Voice recording

The interview place was at a classroom where the subject felt comfortable.

The interview was on October 9, 2016 at 2:45pm.

Field notes were unable to take because there was only one researcher at the location.

The researcher conducted the interview alone. For future interviews, it will be nice to have more than two researchers to conduct them together. Therefore, when one researcher is conducting the research, other researchers could take notes.

Summary: The subject feels like the signage all over his commute route gives him a sense of who the location stands for as a community, therefore he notices different signs for different candidates after important political events, such as the debate. He does not feel that the signs have any influences on him, it just give him general knowledge. He also doesn't know if he is biased toward certain signs because he dislikes all the candidates he has witnessed signs of.

A: Hi, thanks for helping me, I'm gonna go through some questions so please give me your honest opinion on that so first, On your way to and from Miami University, have you seen any political advertisements in your commute?

M: Yes

A: So, please describe

M: Um, there's a lot of, there's more of a mixture of the signs towards Dayton, it used to be that there were just a lot of Trumps signs from Dayton to Miami but after the first debate oddly enough just after the first debate there was an increase in, actually there's a presence of Hillary's signs when there was not before, specially towards the area where I live there was always a lot of Trumps signs now there's a lot of Hillary's signs so leaving to come here there's a mixture of boths as you get more into the road areas coming through here there's a lot of Trumps signage both purchased and you know

purchased signage and homemade signs that people have done like big homemade signs like 4 by 8 inches of flat wood um so yeah there's and as you come here there's still a lot of Trump but you see a little bit of Hillary.

A: So where did you see them specifically on the road like billboards or they were more like in the houses

M: Um outside the people's backyards

A: Ok, you know what time, around what time of the day you normally saw them

Subject: Generally on Mondays and wednesdays my commute is 10:30 until 1:30 probably um and I see those and then Tuesdays-Thursdays is 1:00 to about 2:30

A: Ok, um how often do you look at them, meaning how often do you realize there is a political sign until it feels like is just the background of the road and you're used to it

Subject: Is probably a few days i still notice the amount of Trumps signage but I began to pay less attention to it I'm actually paying more attention to the hillary signage because it was so rare for such a long period of time

A: Would you say by now Hillary's signs are part of the background or it still impacts you?

Subject: Yes, since it occurs recently it stills impacts me

A: Since the first debate?

M: Yeah the first debate was when, it was almost overnight people had signage the next day um whereas before they didn't have any, i don't know if that was a supply issue or people just felt comfortable or after that point, i don't know the reasons but yeah it was pretty quick

A: interesting, ok please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on your way.

Subject: Um, I think I, is interesting I like living in a place where people are free to express their political views and i would hope that they would be able to do that without some type of fear of retribution you know from either side I'm kind of proud of it really that we can still have that discussion to a certain extend

A: Do you think those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University would suggest you to vote for someone specifically?

Subject: I don't think that they would influence my decision, I think that it gives me more

of an indication of the opinion of the area, at least as far as people who were involved political enough that they would post signage rather than just have an opinion that they choose to not publicly voice

A: Do you think that it is more because of your personality that you are not pushed over does not matter what other people do you have your opinion but if you were someone else who is more...

Subject: Yeah, possibly. I think there are people that would look at what the popular opinion was and will go that direction

A: Do you think if those political advertisements on the way where from a particular candidate that you do not agree with you would pay more attention to them, meaning hypothetically speaking if you support Trump but then you see a sign of Hillary do you

*Subject During Interview*



think it would impact you more because it is from the candidate you do not support?

Subject: Um, I personally dislike both of them so I still, I notice their signage um I don't know, that is a good question I don't know how to answer that question since I really dislike both of them for me is like heart attack or stroke

A: What about signs from a third party?

Subject: Is so from a while in Dayton there was all just Trump and Gary Johnson that's all you saw until that first debate, I think is more surprise that anybody has a third party candidate material out and about, I would notice that more because is a rarity

A: Right, other than because you think it is a candidate that you don't agree...

Subject: ...Right.

A: Ok, well thanks a lot.

Subject: Thanks.

## **Interview Two**

By Yi-Fan Chen

Research Question: What are Oxford commuters' impressions of the efficacy of political advertising seen when traveling to and from work?

Subject: a female Miami University commuter who lives in Dayton, Ohio

The interview took 8 minutes and 40 seconds

Voice recording

The interview place was at a classroom where the subject felt comfortable.

The interview was on October 9, 2016 at 3:00pm.

Field notes were unable to take because there was only one researcher at the location.

The researcher conducted the interview alone. For future interviews, it will be nice to have more than two researchers to conduct them together. Therefore, when one researcher is conducting the research, other researchers could take notes.

Summary:

The female commuter sees many political signs when traveling to and from Oxford. She gets more attentions on a group of small political signs together than a large sign. She sees those signs every times. She claims that the signs do not have impacts on her voting decision. However, some signs make her to feel "disgusting" because of

the candidate says something inappropriate. She argues that it is not the sign disgusts her. It is about that she has negative emotions toward to the candidate. She also believes some other commuters might be influenced by those political signs because of their party loyalty. She received her political information from other media, such as Internet searching and watching debates on television. And, she will make her voting decision based on her own research. She will vote for candidates who have good policies. "It is about the issues and policies that they (i.e., candidates) want to create."

--Transcription begins----

First at all, thank you for spending your valuable time to help my project.

Subject: mm

And then, I am going to ask you some questions, you know. You are a commuter, right?

Subject: Yes, I am a commuter.

How far from your place to here (i.e., Miami University)?

Subject: I live in Dayton, Ohio. So, it is about 57 minutes to get here. So, it is about 57 miles.

And, which route you come in and go?

Subject: Let's see. Normally, I take 75 South to come down and I come in... and I take 73? I am not sure what are the specific roads are.

So, you take 75 to here and go back on 73 home, right.

Subject: Yes

But, on the way to coming here, it likes 73, right?

Subject: Yes.

So, have you seen any political signs on the way here and going back home?

Subject: Yes.

Wonderful. And, please describe...you know. where did you see them, are you only see one?

Subject: No, I see quite a few on the commuting. They are all over the places. Many of them are on the yards. Of course, for support Trump and [...]. Those types banners and signs...but it is quite a few on 73 ... I think. The other road is 103.

So when did you see them,

Subject: I see them coming in and going. So you can see them on both ways. Every time I

come to school and leave, I see Trump and [...].

So, you kind of answer my next question because I will ask how often did you see them, it is almost every time.

Subject: yes, every time. Every time. Maybe like 15 or 20 (signs) coming and going

OK. So, you also answered my next question, too what were them, and which candidate(s)?

Subject: I have not seen any for the Democracy Party. It is for the Republican Party of Trump and [...] and some other state represent. They try to get elective. Hillary.

Can you describe what the sign looks like?

Subject: Well. Let's see. It is blue, red and white. And, Trump is the [...] up and [...] is down below him. In red. I am pretty sure it is what it looks like. I have seen them least 6 weeks.

Wow, is that long?

Subject: Yes

Is it because of the project or?

Subject: No, it is because of the election why I am seeing them. You know... everyday. On a consistent base for so long.

Do you think the bigger signs will attract you more than small ones? Or if it really doesn't matter.

Subject: mm. I think for some reasons the small ones get my attentions quicker.

Why?

Subject: Because they are normally sit on a row for 4 or 5 them together. So, you know it is grouping of them instead of just a huge sign. It is kind of like "yah..." I am just kind to dismiss it but when I see 3 or 4 signs together. And, I get a little bit worry about.

So, it is quantity instead of quality.

Subject: For me, it is quantity of seeing the signs.

Wonderful. I was thinking some places have a lot of signs and some places only have a little bit sign. I am not sure which way is more effective to people. And then, the next question is... Please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on the way to and from Miami University.

Subject: I kind of get disgust. Just to think someone would support his (Trump) idea. Just for party loyalty. Not because what the candidate saying... just party loyalty and I get disgust when I see it because I think that he should not be top of the ticket.

Do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University would suggest you to vote for a particularly candidate? Why? Do you think those advertisements would suggest you to vote for a...

Subject: the sign itself... NO. Simply because I have been doing my own research about the candidates. So, the sign is... you know... just icy on the cake. It is the cake that I don't want to eat. So for me, it is more so research and watching the debates. I actually see what their policies are than the yard signs and say "oh, I want to vote for Trump, I want to vote for Hillary." It is more about the issues,

So, it is not necessary because they are Trump's advertising.

Subject: No. It is not necessary. Or it is not because the Republican's advertising. For me, it (i.e., the political sign) does not make any differences. For me, it is about the issues and policies that they want to create.

So, you don't think the signs have impact on your decision to vote.

Subject: for me, no. But, for other commuters, it could.

Can you tell me why (you think this way)?

Subject: They maybe loyal to the party. Or they may say "I am going to support the sign so I am going to vote." It may not... get... just for me. No.

So, can I say... you will do your homework before you make the decision?

Subject: Yes.

So the media impact is very little on you.

Subject: the signs impact is very less on me. You know. Just like I say. I read.

Actually, you said the signs disgusted you. So, it has some kind of the impact on you.

Subject: I think it is about the candidate. He gives me about the emotion not necessary about the signs.

So, from the discussion, I feel like that it is not necessary which party that you support. It is which candidate... what kind of the "beef" they are going to bring to you.

Subject: Yes.

It is very possible you will vote for any parties as long as they have good candidates.

Subject: Yes.

It makes senses. It really makes senses. And then, do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University where from a particular candidate you do not agree with would have change the impact? Why?

Subject: No. Those signs have no impacts on me.

They just let you feel disgust.

Subject: Yes.

Don' you think those signs catch your attentions every time when you drive by.

Subject: Because he (Trump) is affecting me.

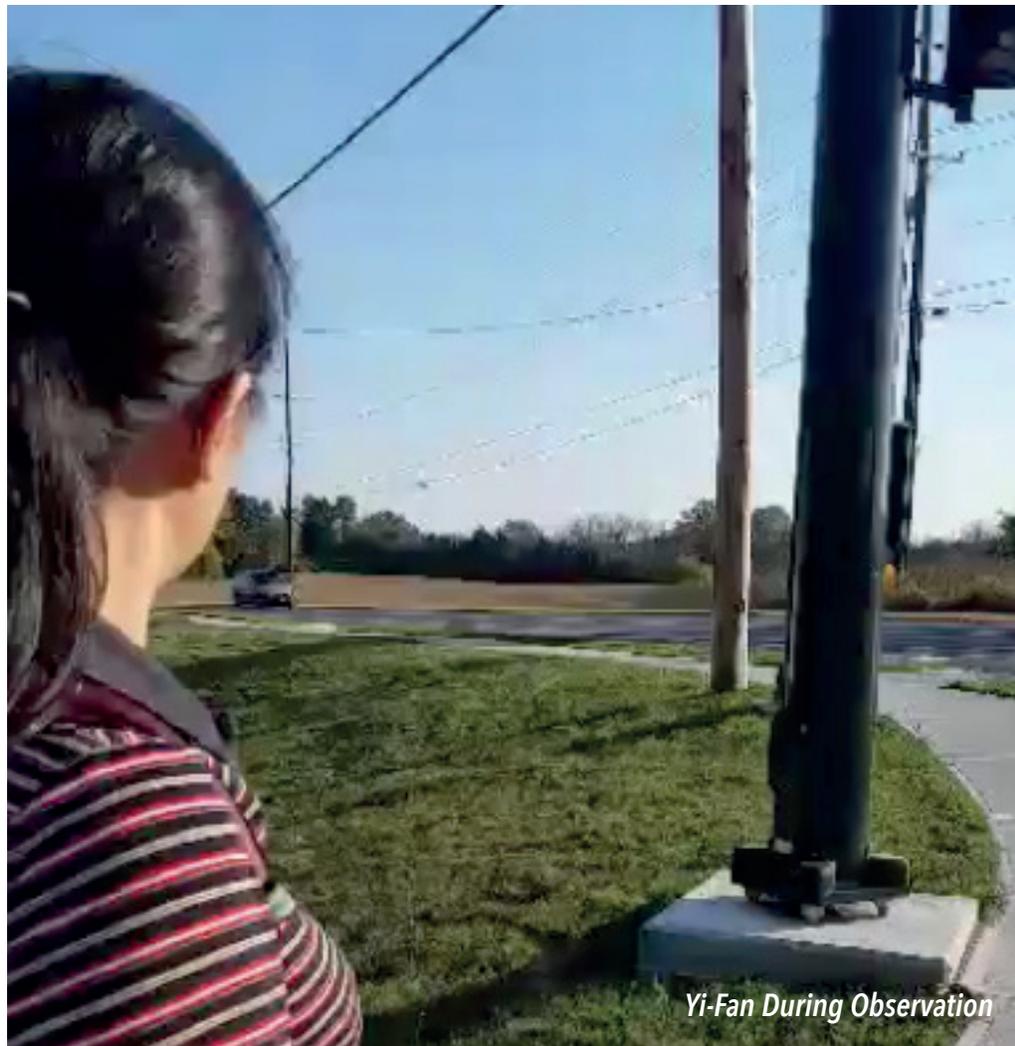
Is it because what he says on different media? Not on the signs.

Subject: Yes. It is different channels.

I think I got very good ideas about how the political advertising impact on commuters.

And, your feedback is very valuable for our study. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate. Thank you so much.

---Transcription ends---



*Yi-Fan During Observation*

*Cars during Observation*



# METHODOLOGY: THEMES

The researchers utilized the Grounded Theory to find out trends, themes, and patterns from both observation and interview data. Grounded Theory, pioneered by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, is identified to be one of the most powerful model to code qualitative data. Two key points in Grounded Theory are (1) "Theory is grounded in the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded; and (2) Codes and categories are mutable until late in the project (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, 218). Because of the research question aims to understand if the political signs on the way to Oxford have impacts on commuters, megathemes included political signs to compare with other media whereas themes included signs for candidates, signs influences, and signs positions.

CODE	MEGATHEME	THEME
Can-Presence	Signs	Candidates
Can-Presence	Signs	Candidates
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Emotion
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Emotion
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Time
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Time / By Other Media
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Self
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Others
Sign-Influence	Signs	Influence-Others
Sign-Influence	Signs	Position-Place
Sign-Influence	Signs	Size
Othersmedia	Other media (TV,Internet) Impact	Uses
Othersmedia	Other media (TV,Internet) Impact	Uses

SUBTHEME	EVENTS
Presence in the State	7
Location	3
Biased toward candidate	2
Biased toward candidate	3
How long it works	1
When were they put	3
No	3
Maybe	1
Maybe	2
Level of importance	2
How it is seen	3
Research	2
Persuasion	3

**EVIDENCE EXAMPLE**

Mentions presence of Hilary's and Trump's signs  
 Highlights how location and signs changed based on location  
 Feel disgusting for a candidate's signages / Disagree with his supporters  
 I don't know how to answer that question since I really dislike both of them for me is like heart attack or stroke  
 Probably a few days getting less attention each commute to Trump's signange  
 The first debate was when, it was almost overnight people had signage the next day um whereas beore they didn't have any  
 Research by one's self from other media  
 Public opinions  
 Party loyalty  
 Towards Dayton and inside Dayton  
 Road signs are more visible, more attention on a small political signage in a row  
 Candidates who have good policies and address issues  
 After TV debates, more signanges were out in the yards. TV debates seems to have impact on people's opinion

# METHODOLOGY: SAMPLE CODING

Each researcher had different coding that were after merged. Find below the coding for Yi-Fan and Andrea Mateus.

## CODING SAMPLES FROM YI-FAN CHEN.

### Final Outcome

code	megatheme	themes		subthemes	events	evidence	example
sign	Signages	for	mostly Trump	at location	6	near Oxford area	
sign		for	mostly Trump	at location	1	near Dayton before	
sign		for	little Hillary	at location	4	near Oxford area	
sign		for	Hillary	at location	1	a little bit more near Dayton area	
sign		for	both	at location	1	more both in Dayton area	
sign		for	both	at location	5	outside the people's yards	
sign		attentions		physical attentio	3	more attentions on a group of small political sign	
sign		attentions		physical attentio	2	rare signages catch more attentio	Hillary's signag
sign		attentions		physical attentio	3	notice increas	signages after TV debates
sign		attentions		physical attentio	1	getting less attentions each commute to Trumps'	
sign		attentions		physical attentio	1	purchased signage and homemade signs	
sign		attentions		physical attentio	1	colors in red, blue, and white	
sign		attentions		emotional attent	2	feel disgusting for a candidate's s	the candidate
sign		attentions		emotional attent	2	dislike the signs	
sign		attentions		emotional attent	1	feel heart attack or stroke for both candidates' si	
others	other media	uses		research	2	candidates who have good policies and address i	
others	media	uses		persuasion	2	after TV debates, more signages were out in the	
impress	voting decisio	for self		NO	3	research by one's self from other media	
impressions		for others		maybe	1	public opinions	
					2	party loyalty	

Process and notes

Subject: Because they are normally sit on a row for 3 or 4 items together. So, you know it is grouping of them instead of just a huge sign. It is kind of like "yah..." I am just kind to dismiss it but when I see 3 or 4 signs together. And, I get a little bit worry about.

So, it is quantity instead of quality.

Subject: For me, it is quantity of seeing the signs.

Wonderful. I was thinking some places have a lot of signs and some places only have a little bit sign. I am not sure which way is more effective to people. And then, the next question is...Please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on the way to and from Miami University.

Subject: I kind of get disgusted. Just to think someone has this (Trump) idea. Just for party loyalty. Not a candidate saying... just party loyalty and I get disgusted because I think that he should not be top of...

Do you think if those political advertisements from Miami University would suggest you to vote for a candidate? Why? Do you think those advertisements suggest you to vote for a...

Subject: the sign itself... NO. Simply because of my own research about the candidates. So,



So, you don't think the signs have impact on your decision to vote.

Subject: for me no. But, for other commuters, it could.

Can you tell me why (you think this way)?

Subject: They maybe loyal to the party. Or they are not. "I saw the sign so I am going to vote." It may not... get...

So, can I say... you will do your homework before...

Subject: Yes

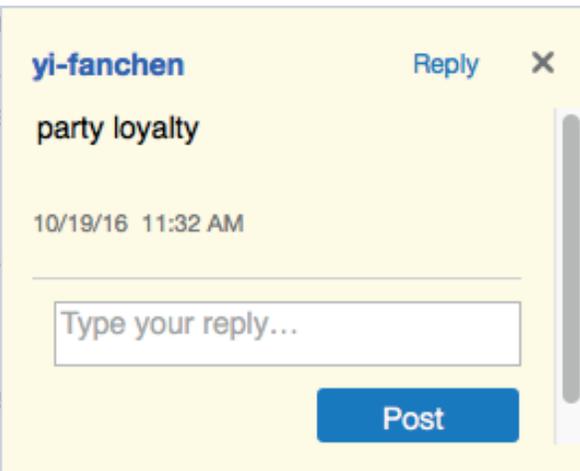
So the media impact is very little on you.

Subject: the signs impact is very less on me. You said...

Actually, you said the signs disgusted you. So, it is not...

Subject: I think it is about the candidate. He gives necessary information about the signs.

So, from the discussion, I feel like that it is not necessary which party that you support. It is which candidate... what kind of the "beef" they are going to bring to you.



**CODING SAMPLES FROM ANDREA MATEUS.**

*Final Outcome*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Megatheme</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>
Can-Presence	Signs	Candidates	Presence in the state
	Signs	Candidates	Location
	Signs	Candidates	Biased toward one candidate
Sign-Influence	Influence	Time	How long it works
		Time	When were they put
Sign-Position	Position	Place	Level of importance
		Size	How it is seen

<b>Events</b>	<b>Evidence Example</b>
7	Mentions presence of Hilary's and Trump's signs
3	Highlights how location and signs changed based on location
3	I don't know how to answer that question since I really dislike both of them for me is like heart attack or stroke
1	Probably a few days
3	the first debate was when, it was almost overnight people had signage the next day um whereas before they didn't have any
2	Towards Dayton and Inside Dayton
1	Road signs are more visible

Process and notes

A: Hi, thanks for helping me, I'm gonna go through some questions so please give me your honest opinion on that so first, On your way to and from Miami University, have you seen any political advertisements in your commute?

M: Yes

A: So, please describe

M: Um, there's a lot of, there's more of a mixture of the **signs towards Dayton**, it used to be that there were just a lot of Trumps signs from Dayton to Miami but **after the first debate** oddly enough just after the first debate there was an increase in, actually there's was a presence of Hilary's signs when there was not before, specially **towards the area where I live** there was always a lot of Trumps signs now there's a lot of Hilary's signs so leaving to come here there's a mixture of boths as you get more into the road areas coming through here there's a lot of Trumps signage both purchased and you know purchased signage and homemade signs that people have done like big homemade signs like 4 by 8 inches of flat wood um so yeah there's and as you come here there's still a lot of Trump but you see a little bit of Hilary.

A: So where did you see them specifically on the road like billboards or they were more like in the houses

M: Um **outside the people's backyards**

A: Ok, you know what time, around what time of the day you normally saw them

Subject: Generally on Mondays and wednesdays my commute is **10:30 until 1:30** probably um and I see those and then Tuesdays-Thursdays is **1:00 to about 2:30**

A: Ok, um how often do you look at them, meaning how often do you realize there is a political sign until it feels like is just the background of the road and you're used to it

Subject: Is probably a **few days i still notice** the amount of Trumps signage but I began to pay less attention to it I'm actually **paying more attention to the hillary signage because it was so rare** for such a long period of time

A: Would you say by now Hilary's signs are part of the background or it still impacts you?

Subject: Yes, **since it occurs recently it stills impacts me**

A: Since the first debate?

M: Yeah the first debate was when, **it was almost overnight people had signage the next day** um  
 whereas before they didn't have any, i don't know if that was a supply issue or people just felt  
 comfortable or after that point, i don't know the reasons but yeah it was pretty quick

Location

Time

A: interesting, ok please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on your way.

Subject: Um, I think I, is interesting **I like living in a place where** people are free to express their  
 political views and i would hope that they would be able to do that without some type of fear of  
 retribution you know from either side I'm kind of proud of it really that we can still have that discussion  
 to a certain extend

Location

A: Do you think those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University would suggest you to vote for someone specifically?

Subject: **I don't think that they would influence my decision**, I think that it gives me more

Influence

of an **indication of the opinion of the area**, at least as far as people who were involved political enough  
 that they would post signage rather than just have an opinion that they choose to not publicly voice

Influence

A: Do you think that it is more because of your personality that you are not a pushed over does not matter what other people do you have your opinion but if you were someone else who is more...

Subject: Yeah, possibly. I think **there are people that would look at what the popular opinion** was and will go that direction

Influence

A: Do you think if those political advertisements on the way where from a particular candidate that you do not agree with you would pay more attention to them, meaning hypothetically speaking if you support Trump but then you see a sign of Hillary do you think it would impact you more because it is from the candidate you do not support?

Subject: Um, I personally dislike both of them so I still, I notice their signage um I don't know, that is a good question **I don't know how to answer that question since I really dislike both of them for me** is like heart attack or stroke

Influence

Location

A: What about signs from a third party?

Subject: It's so, from a while **in Dayton there was all just Trump and Gary Johnson** that's all you saw until that first debate, I think is more surprise that anybody has a third party candidate material out and about, **I would notice that more because is a rarity**

Location

Time

Influence

# RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Two observations found that there were many factors that challenged the commuters to pay attention to the signs, also they raised questions such as Would the candidate on the sign affects the attention level? Does the position or size of the sign matter? How often does a sign impact a commuters until it becomes part of the background? Based on those questions, a follow up interview research was designed to explore those questions in details.

Results from interviews found that Oxford commuters seem to aware the political advertising when traveling to and from work. They see those political signs outside people's yards every time when they travel to and from work. There comment that there are more signs for a particular candidate in Oxford area whereas there are a mixture signs near Dayton area. A group of smaller size of the signage seem to catch more attentions to a female commuter than big or middle size of the signage. Moreover, rare signs, such as signs for Hillary and third party, near Oxford area catch more attentions to those participants. The participants' attentions on those political signs are decreasing each commute. An interesting finding is a male commuter report that he finds the amount of political signs increases after the first presidential television debate.

"the first debate was when, it was almost overnight people had signage the next day um whereas before they didn't have any"  
( a male interview participant ).

When asking if the participants might be influenced by those political signs on people's backyards, those participants seem to disagree. They argue that those political signs have no impacts on their voting decisions because the participants seek for other information resources, such as political information from television and Internet, to make their voting decisions. On the other hand, the participants agree that those political signs on the roads might have impacts on other commuters because of their personal party loyalty or public opinions' influences. The "Third-Person Effect" hypothesis seems to occur in this study. The "Third-Person Effect" hypothesis by W. Phillips Davison predicts that people tend to believe that mass media messages have greater impacts on other people than himself or herself. Because of the perceptions, people often take actions to counteract the mass media messages' influence. The "Third-Person Effect" hypothesis may be applied to explain various aspects of social behavior (Davison, 1983, 1). Davison (1983) states.

"people will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others. More specifically, individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to a persuasive communication (whether or not this communication is intended to be persuasive) will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on themselves. And whether or not these individuals are among the ostensible audience for the message, the impact that they expect this communication to have on other may lead them to take some action. Any effect that the communication achieves may thus be due not to the reaction of the ostensible audience but rather to the behavior of those who anticipate, or think they perceive, some reaction on the part of others." (3)

Follow-up interview questions ask participants to explain their personal attitudes and perceptions toward to those political signs, those participants mention discomfort to seeing some signs. A female participant comments that she feels disgusting when she sees a candidate's signage and she disagrees with the candidate's supporters. Moreover, another male participant also show a similar reaction when he sees some political signs when traveling to and from work.

"I personally dislike both of them so I still, I notice their signage um I don't know, that is a good question I don't know how to answer that question since I really dislike both of them for me is like heart attack or stroke"  
(a male participant).

Finally, the interview results show that other media, such as television and Internet, have impacts to persuade people's behavior. The male participant sees more political signs after the first presidential television debate whereas the female mentions that her voting decisions based on her own research on television and Internet. The female participant argues that "NO, it is not about the signage. . . . It is about the issues and policies that they (i.e., candidates) want to create."

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The observation study concluded that even though observation helped, it might not be the best research method to use for this type of research questions because of the difficulties in the view of the drivers, they are either going to fast or researchers can not see their reaction after they see the sign because then they will be paying attention to us instead of the sign, which means it would not be a genuine reaction to the signs. The researchers in this study recommend a survey method might work for better answer the research question because surveys and interviews can be used in a two-stage design: surveys provide public normative opinions about the topic whereas interviews' data show actual practices and process (as cited in Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, 119). Based on the prior studies on political television advertising impact, the researchers proposed a survey questionnaire that combines Political Media Gratifications Scales and Television Avoidances Scale (as cited in Rubin, Palmgreen and Sypher, 1994, 299-300) for future research to consider to test the impressions of political advertising (please see Appendix C).

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# APPENDIXES A, B AND C

## APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for participation in an indepth interview study on Oxford commuters' impressions of the political advertising.

You are invited to participate in an indepth interview study that is designed by Andrea Mateus Forero and YiFan Chen, Master of Fine Arts in Experience Design graduate students at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. The purpose of this indepth interview study is to understand the Oxford commuters' impressions of the political advertising.

Andrea Mateus Forero and YiFan Chen, the Principal Investigators of this study, are interested in studying the commuters' impressions of the political advertising. This indepth interview study is completely confidential and your participation is entirely voluntary. The indepth interview will take less than 20 minutes of your valuable time. Indepth interview data will be collected by audio recording and note taking. You understand that no compensation will be offered. You will be asked to questions regarding your experience on your impressions of the political advertising. The recording and notes from all participants will be strictly stored in a secured location and only the principal investigators have the access to it.

No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to this study. The data will be analyzed for all subjects and presented in aggregate summary format. Though no discomfort is anticipated while participating in this study, you can withdraw your participation at any time during the indepth interview study without penalty. You



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

On the way to and from Miami University, have you seen any political advertisements? If so, please describe

Where did you see them,

When did you see them,

How often did you see them,

What were they, and which candidate(s)?

Please describe how you feel when you saw those political advertisement on the way to and from Miami University.

Do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University would suggest you to vote for a particularly candidate? Why?

Do you think if those political advertisements on the way to and from Miami University were from a particular candidate would have change their impact on you? If so, Why?

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Are you a commuter? (No, Thanks for your participation. Please go to the demographic questions.)

2. How far you travel to work per day?

3. What is your transportation?

4. On the way to and from Miami University, have you seen any political advertisements? (No, Thanks for your participation. Please go to the demographic questions.)

### (Political Media Gratifications Scales)

*Instructions: Here is a list of statements that different people have made when asked why they watch media that feature political candidates. For each statement on the list, please tell me whether it applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all.*

1. To judge what political leaders are like
2. To see what a candidate would do if elected
3. To keep up with the main issues of the day

4. To help make up my mind how to vote in an election
5. To use as ammunition in arguments with others
6. To judge who is likely to win an election
7. To enjoy the excitement of an election race
8. To remind me of my candidate's strong points

**(Television avoidances scale)**

*Instructions: Here is a list of statements that different people have given for avoiding media that feature political candidates. For each statement on the list, please tell whatever it applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all*

1. Because I am not much interested in politics
2. Because my mind is already made up
3. Because I prefer to relax when I watch media
4. Because you can't always trust what politicians tell you on media
5. Because some candidates talk down to the audience
6. Because some candidates talk over one's head
7. Because they hardly ever have anything to say

**(Demographic)**

Gender

M | F | I don't want to answer

Age range

18-22 | 23-27 | 28-32 | 33-37 | 38 and above

Education range

High school | college | graduate

Political affiliation

Republican | Democratic | N/A | I don't want to answer