

The Super Bowl as a Platform for Political Advertising: An Experimental Investigation of Partisan Viewers' Third-Person Perception

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The Super Bowl has emerged as a notable platform for political advertisers to reach millions of viewers. For instance, Donald Trump spent ten million dollars on his Super Bowl ads in 2020. This study examines how U.S. audiences perceive the influence of Super Bowl political ads, focusing on the third-person perception of partisan viewers. Participants viewed political ads, which varied in ad types (Super Bowl versus general; Super Bowl negative versus Super Bowl positive) and partisan matching (in-party versus out-party). Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk for two separate experiments. Results revealed that third-person perception was significantly less pronounced when partisan viewers encountered a negative political ad (versus a positive ad) from the opposing party during the Super Bowl (i.e., the first-person effect of negative advertising during the Super Bowl). Implications exist regarding the influence of the Super Bowl on political campaigns.

Keywords: Super Bowl advertising; political advertising; third-person perception, partisan motivated reasoning