

YOUR FULL NAME

Aim for the heart? A study of New Zealand voters' responses to emotional appeals in televised political advertising

Political commentators and scholars have long maligned political parties' use of emotionally evocative imagery and music in televised election advertising. Two emotions in particular have attracted the attention of international scholars: enthusiasm and fear. Despite concerns about the impact of these emotional appeals, systematic investigation into how voters responded to this content remains under-researched, particularly in New Zealand.

Drawing on experiment and focus group data, this research suggested that enthusiasm- and fear-based advertisements could potentially polarise voters, with the latter often resulting in an unintended backlash against the party sponsoring the advertisement. There was also evidence that New Zealand voters had little appetite for negative advertising in general and were highly critical of advertisements that failed to articulate policy detail.

This thesis was formally recognised by the Division of Humanities as being of exceptional quality.