

Nasty or nice? Explaining positive and negative campaign behaviour in Taiwan

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This is a pre-pub draft (complete with typos etc.) of an article forthcoming in *The China*

Journal, 67 (Jan), 2012. Comments to Jonlsullivan@gmail.com

Elections have constituted important symbolic events throughout the course of democratization and continue to be one of the most extensively analysed features of Taiwan's political landscape.¹ Contemporary elections are fiercely contested and often dramatic events, with high levels of citizen engagement.² Analyses of party and candidate behaviour during campaigns have also suggested that "Taiwan's campaign culture thrives on negativity."³ Indeed, seldom does a campaign pass without allegations of dirty tricks, petty squabbling, and the peddling of hearsay and worse.⁴ Such observations have been invoked by researchers concerned by the implications of bitter political competition and unseemly behaviour on popular attitudes towards the democratic process, and on the quality of Taiwan's of democracy.⁵ Observers of Taiwanese elections have interpreted negativity as an indication of deficits in Taiwan's political culture and the quality of Taiwanese politicians. Popular commentators, frequently looking through partisan lenses, propagate unhelpful stereotypes about the major parties to explain the behaviour of their candidates. In short, academic and popular observers are concerned that campaign behaviour reflects particular shortcomings in Taiwanese political culture and exacerbates weaknesses in the democratic system. These are

¹ Taiwan is used throughout as shorthand for the Republic of China or the Taiwan area.

² Gary Rawnsley, "An institutional approach to election campaigning in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 12, No. 37 (2003a), pp. 765-79.

³ Gary Rawnsley, "A severe case of athlete's foot: Democratisation and election campaigning in Taiwan," *University of Nottingham Working Paper*, (2003b), p.5

⁴ Christian Schafferer, *Election Campaigning in East and South-East Asia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

⁵ Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's year of stress," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2005), pp. 43-58; John F. Copper, "Taiwan: Democracy's gone awry?" *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 12, No. 34 (2003), pp. 145-62.

important concerns given the newness of Taiwan's democracy and ambiguous attitudes towards democracy at the mass level.⁶

In this article we examine the campaign behaviour of Taiwanese election candidates with a view to what it reveals about the health of Taiwan's democracy. One thing that the commentaries summarized above have in common is the idea that campaigns matter. Indeed, campaigns are important democratic institutions and the messages that parties and their candidates transmit to voters form part of the dynamics of political representation and accountability. Campaigns are also becoming more influential in Taiwanese elections as party allegiances weaken, particularly among younger cohorts who are more volatile in their vote choice and are more likely to be influenced by the messages they are exposed to during the campaign.⁷ But what type of messages are voters being exposed to? The objective of this article is to answer this question and to explain the strategies behind candidates' decision-making. Why (and under what conditions) do candidates attack their opponents⁸ instead of promoting themselves? Why do candidates choose ideological themes as the focus of their campaign, or decide to go after their opponents' personality? Using general theoretical propositions about campaign behaviour, we test our explanatory models empirically on a sample of over 400 unique TV and newspaper advertisements from four Presidential and three Taipei mayoral elections. Contrary to impressions that negative and unseemly campaign behaviour is inherent in the political culture, or a symbol of the immaturity of Taiwan's democracy, our findings demonstrate that Taiwanese election candidates act in ways that are strongly consistent with their counterparts in other democracies.

⁶ Eric Chang and Yun-han Chu, "Quality of political choice and popular orientation toward democracy," in Philip Paolino and James Meernik (eds.) *Democratization in Taiwan: Challenges in Transformation* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 110.

⁷ Dafydd Fell, "Was 2005 a critical election? Locating the start of a new political era," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50 No. 5, pp. 927-45.

⁸ In line with much recent literature, we understand negativity to indicate any criticism of an opponent, and do not differentiate between 'civil' and 'uncivil' types of criticism.

Studying election campaign behaviour in Taiwan

Like their counterparts in other democracies, parties and candidates compete fiercely for votes in Taiwan. They do so by engaging in numerous types of campaign activity. They hold boisterous rallies and jolly meet-and-greets in local neighbourhoods, endorse TV and newspaper ads and engage in increasingly sophisticated web campaigning efforts. Many of these activities harmlessly stoke the enthusiasm of supporters and add to the vibrancy that students of Taiwanese politics speak of so fondly.⁹ Yet, during the heat of battle, parties and candidates can also make claims and accusations that are at best questionable, and at worst, potentially incendiary.¹⁰ Consider, for example, how Taiwanese candidates “have been accused [...] of heinous crimes, ranging from rape and association with gangsters to belonging to the Communist Party and betraying Taiwan.”¹¹ Given the proliferation of this type of negative behaviour during many election campaigns, it is not surprising that Taiwan scholars have asked why campaigns can be so negative.

Some researchers focus on political institutions, and point to parties’ “instrumental use of almost any means deemed beneficial to electoral success.”¹² Others hypothesize that the rise in negativity is a result of the short electoral cycle, i.e. the “excessive frequency of elections.”¹³ Similarly, Chu suggests that the temptation to score cheap political points is overwhelming, leading “politicians [to] posture and jockey for short-term electoral

⁹ Rawnsley, “An institutional approach to election campaigning in Taiwan.”

¹⁰ Nien-hsuan Fang and Chien-san Feng, “Press coverage of post-presidential election turmoil: Not yet hate speech, but reinforcing resentments,” *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 40, Nos. 3-4 (2004), pp. 354-61.

¹¹ Gary Rawnsley, “Democratization and election campaigning in Taiwan: Professionalizing the professionals,” in Katrin Voltmer (ed.) *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 145.

¹² Mikkael Mattlin, “Referendum as a form of *Zaoshi*,” *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2004), p. 155; Mily Kao, “The referendum phenomenon in Taiwan,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2004), pp. 591-613.

¹³ Jacques DeLisle, “Taiwan’s democracy and lessons from yet another election,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, Dec 16th 2005.

advantage” while serious socio-economic problems remain neglected and unresolved.¹⁴ One manifestation is the penetration of ideological cleavages, which have nothing to do with governance, into local elections. Some studies find a culprit in the political culture in Taiwan. Rawnsley posits the idea of a “culture of electoralism” in which citizens and elites believe that democracy is equivalent solely to the right to vote.¹⁵ This pervasive attitude says that as long as the right to vote is not violated, a “vicious brand of negative campaigning is tolerated as a characteristic of democracy.”¹⁶ Corcuff argues that deep-seated “belief conflict,” ignited by a growing “Taiwan consciousness” movement, is to blame.¹⁷ Copper, on the hand, argues that the reason lies in “Taiwan’s style of democracy [being] copied from America’s.”¹⁸ Finally, some studies situate campaigning within the broader media context, and point the finger at the sensational and conflict-ridden framing of political competition.¹⁹

These arguments have merits, and we do not dispute that campaign behaviour is moderated to a greater or lesser extent by prevailing political and cultural norms. However, seeking to explain negativity by invoking context-dependent factors raises two issues. First, these explanations are unable to account for variation in negativity across campaigns, at different points within the same campaign and between different actors. This is because they are generally rooted in long term processes that are relatively stable in the short term. For instance, “belief conflict” and “electoralism” are not transient phenomena that are likely to change from one election to another. Second, negative campaign behaviour is not unique to Taiwan. Scholars have even argued that negative campaigning is a “global phenomenon”

¹⁴ Chu, “Taiwan’s year of stress,” p. 44.

¹⁵ Rawnsley “A severe case of athlete’s foot.”

¹⁶ Rawnsley “A severe case of athlete’s foot,” p. 5

¹⁷ Stephane Corcuff, “The supporters of unification and the Taiwanisation movement,” *China Perspectives*, No. 53 (2004), pp. 49-66. Similar arguments appear in Chu, “Taiwan’s year of stress,” and Fang and Feng, “Press coverage of post-presidential election turmoil.”

¹⁸ Copper, “Taiwan: Democracy’s gone awry?” p. 145.

¹⁹ Gary Rawnsley, “Treading a fine line: Democratization and the media in Taiwan,” *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (2004), p. 212; Patricia Batto, “Democracy’s impact on dailies,” *China Perspectives* No. 51(2004), pp. 64-79; Fang and Feng, “Press coverage of post-presidential election turmoil.”

characteristic of most democracies where free and fair competitive elections are held.²⁰ If negative campaigning is a general condition, applying general theoretical propositions may enable us to develop more accurate and robust explanations of campaign behaviour in Taiwan. However, developing and testing such explanations empirically, requires us to go further than existing research on Taiwanese campaigns, which predominantly focuses on single elections and is restricted to descriptive analyses. To date, no study on Taiwan has explicitly tested theoretical propositions about positive and negative campaign behaviour.

General propositions about campaign behaviour

Election campaigns are typically understood as “dynamic struggles between candidates to define the informational context for voters.”²¹ In the course of a campaign, parties, candidates and their advisors are faced with a raft of choices about what they say and whom they say it about (i.e. themselves or their opponents). These decisions are frequently conceived in the literature as tactical choices in which candidates calculate the pros and cons based on the information available to them.²² We accept Abrajano and Morton’s admonition that campaign messages (including both the tone and the substance) represent “a strategic choice by candidates and should be considered so in future models.”²³ Empirical examples of strategic decision-making abound in Taiwanese campaigns. For instance, Li Denghui’s decision to promote himself during the presidential campaign in 1996 as an experienced statesman sought to neutralize claims by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the New Party

²⁰ Lee Sigelman and Erica Shiraev, “The rational attacker in Russia? Negative campaigning in Russian presidential elections,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2002), pp. 518-31.

²¹ Thomas Carsey, Robert Jackson, Melissa Neal, and James Nelson, “Strategic candidates, campaign dynamics and campaign advertising in Gubernatorial races in 2002,” *American Political Science Association*, Philadelphia, Aug 31st- Sept 3rd 2006, p. 3.

²² Richard Lau and Gerald Pomper, “Effects of negative campaigning on turnout in U.S. Senate elections, 1988-1998,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2001), pp. 804-19; Lee Sigelman and Emmett Buell, “You take the high road and I’ll take the low road? The interplay of attack strategies and tactics in presidential elections,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2003), pp. 518-31.

²³ Marisa Abrajano and Rebecca Morton, “All style and no substance? The strategic calculus of campaign advertising,” Working paper: New York University (2004), p. 31.

that Taiwan would gain neither respect (尊嚴) nor peace (和平) without radically changing its relationship with the mainland one way or another. Capitalizing on anxieties resulting from the contemporaneous missile crisis, Li's carefully constructed image of personal determination combined with savvy level-headedness made his major competitors' messages appear extreme and out of touch with the median voter position. Other tactical choices may appear misguided, such as Lian Zhan's decision to emphasize personality in 2000 when facing more obviously charismatic opponents in Song Chuyu and Chen Shuibian.²⁴ However, there is no reason to suspect that such decisions are made arbitrarily and tactical missteps are insufficient cause for rejecting the assumption the candidates do what they think will gain them more votes.

There are several advantages to positive (promoting oneself) and negative campaigning (targeting an opponent),²⁵ and it is generally assumed that each tactic is employed in order to increase a candidate's own level of support or reduce support for an opponent. Clearly though, there is substantial variation in the extent to which different candidates employ each tactic, across elections and during the same campaign. A common response to this observed variation is that candidates' tactical decision-making is conditioned by different factors.²⁶ We review the most salient factors here, which in turn will inform the variables we use to model Taiwanese election candidates' campaign behaviour.

Numerous studies have found that one of the strongest predictors of the tone of campaign messages is the level of competitiveness, often measured by the candidates' relative levels of support indicated by opinion polls. In the best known model, candidates are

²⁴ Rawnsley, "An institutional approach to election campaigning in Taiwan."

²⁵ Following the majority of recent disciplinary research, we employ this directional definition of tone. This decision is discussed further below.

²⁶ Emmett Buell and Lee Sigelman, *Attack Politics: Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960* (Lawrence KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008)

conceived as competing for support from a pool of undecided voters.²⁷ Candidates can gain support using positive messages and induce an opponent's supporters to join the undecided pool by using negative messages. As more people make up their minds, a trailing candidate cannot win simply by splitting the pool of undecided voters. This leads to the widely accepted notion that trailing candidates go on the attack to convince voters to leave the opponent's camp for the undecided pool. Leading candidates meanwhile, remain above the fray and are expected to run positive campaigns, because they do not need to attack and fear a backlash from voters if they attack unnecessarily.²⁸ Prior research on Taiwanese campaigns is consistent with these arguments. For instance, the campaign run by Li Deng-hui, who enjoyed a large and consistent lead in the polls from the outset of the 1996 presidential campaign, was by far the most positive of any subsequent presidential candidate.²⁹ In highly competitive races, where both candidates have a chance of winning, the overall level of negative tactics employed by both candidates has been observed to increase.³⁰ That hotly contested races should witness more negativity is intuitively appealing, and is consistent with accounts of the tight presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2004 in Taiwan. However, the effect of competitiveness on positive campaigning is untested, and we suggest that it should also have an effect on the type of positive claims that candidates make. For example, there is a suggestion that in tight races in Taiwan, candidates may revert to emphasizing their own ideological positions, especially those from the DPP.³¹

Some scholars argue that the proximity to Election Day has an effect on the tone of campaign messages. Consistent with the "diminishing returns" model cited above, it is

²⁷ Stergios Skaperdas and Bernard Grofman, "Modelling negative campaigning," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (1995), pp. 49-61.

²⁸ Skaperdas and Grofman, "Modelling negative campaigning."

²⁹ Sullivan, "Campaign advertising and democracy in Taiwan," pp. 900-11.

³⁰ Buell and Sigelman, *Attack Politics*; Sigelman and Shiraev, "The rational attacker in Russia?"

³¹ Chiung-chu Lin, "Party image and Taiwan's electorate 1992-2000," *European Association of Taiwan Studies*, (Bochum, April 1st - 2nd 2005).

suggested that candidates may run more negative ads closer to the election.³² Another argument invokes the level of credibility that a candidate has generated among voters. Damore suggests that at the beginning of a campaign candidates need to define their own positions with positive messages, both to familiarize voters with their own stands and to set out their own agendas. Furthermore, he argues that candidates gain credibility by showing that they have something to offer, other than simply attacking the other side, which may also lead to a reputation as a dirty candidate. Approaching the end of a campaign however, when a candidate has already established credibility in voters' minds, they have greater latitude to go on the attack.³³ This is a strong argument for why we should control for the proximity to the election, but we suggest that the effect is complicated by other factors, particularly the competitive dynamics between incumbents and challengers for office. There may be incentives for the latter, for instance, to set out the reasons for changing the status quo at the outset, by attacking the incumbent, before offering their alternatives. On the other hand, incumbents, who want to propagate the status quo, focus their energies on promoting their own achievements first, and only attack later on in the campaign when their challengers have shown their hand.

Empirical studies of campaign advertising for different electoral offices in the US suggest little variation in candidates' propensity to go negative.³⁴ However, there do appear to be differences in the strength and accuracy of the variables used to explain the tone of ads in different election types.³⁵ This suggests that it is useful to control for the type or level of election, particularly in our investigation where we utilize ads from both national and

³² Skaperdas and Grofman, "Modelling negative campaigning;" David Damore, "Issue convergence in Presidential campaigns," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2005), pp. 71-97.

³³ Damore, "Issue convergence in Presidential campaigns."

³⁴ Travis Ridout and Michael Franz, "Evaluating measures of campaign tone," *Political Communication*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2008), pp. 158-179.

³⁵ Lau and Pomper, "Effects of negative campaigning;" Jamie Druckman, Martin Kifer and Michael Parkin, "Timeless strategy meets new medium: Going negative on Congressional campaign web Sites, 2002-2006." *Political Communication*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2010), pp. 88-103.

subnational electoral arenas. We also suspect that ads run in different elections will contain different types of content. For example, in subnational elections, like for Taipei mayor, the range of responsibilities and policy actions available is limited compared to that of the president. As an indication of the variation in messages that can result from the distinction between the level of electoral office, we note that in our sample, ads in Taipei mayoral campaigns contained significantly fewer positive ideological appeals and more self-promotional personality appeals than ads in presidential campaigns.

A strong finding in the literature, as intimated above, is that there are significant differences in the campaign behaviour of incumbents and challengers. It is an inherent characteristic of elections that challengers have to establish a case for changing the current configuration of power, and an effective way to do so is to attack an incumbent's performance and record.³⁶ Furthermore, if challengers lack the agenda setting privileges of incumbents (name recognition, financial resources, media access etc.), negative tactics are also a way of gaining extra visibility.³⁷ By contrast, incumbents have been shown to run more positive campaigns in various contests, since their major task is to convince voters that they are doing a good job and should be allowed to continue.³⁸ Reinforcing this argument, incumbents enjoy several natural advantages of holding office (particularly their influence over media agendas), which allow them to follow their own agenda of promoting the status quo more effectively. Some studies have also found that incumbency status can have an effect on the substantive content of candidates' ads, with incumbent officials appearing to

³⁶ Geer, *In Defense of Negativity*.

³⁷ Kim Kahn and Patrick Kenney, "Do negative campaigns mobilize or suppress turnout? Clarifying the relationship between negativity and participation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (1999), pp. 877-89.

³⁸ David Peterson and Paul Djupe, "When primary campaigns go negative: The determinants of campaign negativity," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (2005), pp. 45-54.

focus more on policy issues.³⁹ In our analysis we control for incumbency, but also control for another element of the proximity to power by distinguishing between ads endorsed by the party in power (“in-party”) and the opposition. In some cases (notably the presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2008 in Taiwan), the candidate standing for election was not the incumbent official, but was nominated by the party in power. Buell and Sigelman describe these contests as “open races” and report higher levels of negativity in such campaigns for the US presidency.⁴⁰

Party identity has been controlled for in several studies in the US, but the propensity for Democrat and Republican candidates to run positive or negative ads appears to vary randomly across elections.⁴¹ However, substantial differences between the Kuomintang (KMT) and DPP in terms of their institutional organization, historical legacies and support groups, suggest that there may be greater differences in the two parties’ campaign behaviour than that witnessed between parties in the US. Prior research on party competition in Taiwan suggests, for instance, that the DPP emphasizes ideology more frequently and more strongly than the KMT.⁴²

We also suggest that the identity of the actor who endorsed an ad may have an effect on its tone and content. Specifically, we differentiate between ads endorsed by the party and those endorsed by the candidate. Our argument is that, since voters are likely to be more familiar with the fundamental orientations (“the brand”) of major parties than they are with an individual candidate, parties can afford to focus their energies on attacking the other side because they do not need to familiarize voters with their ideology and policies through running positive ads. Another argument is that if we accept that candidates are wary about

³⁹ Lynn Vavreck, “The reasoning voter meets the strategic candidate: Signals and specificity in campaign advertising, 1998,” *American Politics Research*, No. 29, (2001), pp. 507-29.

⁴⁰ Buell and Sigelman, *Attack Politics*.

⁴¹ Buell and Sigelman, *Attack Politics*.

⁴² Lin, “Party image and Taiwan’s electorate 1992-2000.”

over-using negative campaigning lest it provoke a backlash from voters,⁴³ it makes sense for them to delegate the task of attacking to the party allowing them some latitude if voters react badly. Sigelman and Buell report supportive findings for the analogous argument that presidential candidates in the US tend to favour making positive claims while delegating the task of attacking to their running mates.⁴⁴

Finally, in our models we control for media type by distinguishing between ads aired on TV and those published in newspapers. Due to various advantages in terms of cost, reach, and the type and quantity of material that can be presented in different media, parties and candidates appear to conceive their TV and newspaper ads as having separate functions within their own campaign.⁴⁵ TV is generally recognized as being a more personalized medium, lending itself more easily to image creation and personality.⁴⁶ Due to the differential ways in which people process the cues they receive from various media, TV ads appear more effective at creating affective or emotional responses in viewers, while newspaper ads appeal less to readers' emotions and more to their cognitive faculties.⁴⁷ This suggests that candidates may modify the tone and content of their ads accordingly. Recent research reports significant differences in ad content across media types in Europe, where, like Taiwan, TV is not the dominant venue for campaign advertising that it is in the US.⁴⁸

Data and methods

Using campaign advertising as a measure of campaign behaviour

⁴³ Skaperdas and Grofman, "Modelling negative campaigning."

⁴⁴ Lee Sigelman and Emmett Buell, "You take the high road and I'll take the low road? The interplay of attack strategies and tactics in presidential elections," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2003), pp. 518-31.

⁴⁵ Christian Elemlund-Praeksater, "Beyond American negativity: Toward a general understanding of the determinants of negative campaigning," *European Political Science Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2010), pp.137-56.

⁴⁶ Danny Hayes, "Candidate qualities through a partisan lens: A theory of trait ownership," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2005), pp. 908-23;

⁴⁷ Martin Wattenburg and Craig Brians, "Negative campaign advertising: Demobilizer or mobilizer?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (1999), pp. 891-99.

⁴⁸ Annemarie Walter and Rens Vliegthart, "Negative campaigning across different channels: Different ball games?" *International Journal of Press Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2010), pp. 441-61.

Election campaigning efforts involve many forms of communication, from rallies and postal communications to chat show appearances, stump speeches and more. The sum of these campaign activities constitutes an overwhelming corpus of data, presenting researchers with the problem of what to analyse. In the US, political scientists have frequently used campaign advertising as a proxy for campaigning more broadly defined.⁴⁹ This choice appears particularly justifiable in the US, where televised campaign advertising has long been the pre-eminent form of communication between candidates and voters. Campaign advertising is also a major campaign tool in Taiwan, with parties investing increasingly large sums of money in the production and dissemination of campaign ads.⁵⁰ A further similarity between the two cases is the apparent prevalence of negative advertising. Although commentators in the US have claimed that negative ads are “as American as Mississippi mud,”⁵¹ a concern for Taiwan specialists is that “an advertising war with negative advertising taking the lead” has also become a major component of candidates’ campaign activities in Taiwan.⁵² If negative ads are as American as Mississippi mud, they are also as Taiwanese as Zhonghua *ba-wan* (彰化肉圓) or Shengkeng *chou doufu* (深坑臭豆腐). We do not claim that all campaign activities are the same, but we argue that if we must choose among competing campaign activities as the focus of our research, campaign advertising is an appropriate choice. Furthermore, since we are interested in explaining campaign behaviour, advertising is particularly useful, since parties and candidates control the tone and content of advertising to a greater extent than other forms of communication, which are often mediated by other institutions and actors.

Data sample

⁴⁹ Travis Ridout and Michael Franz, “Evaluating measures of campaign tone,” *Political Communication*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2008), pp. 158-179.

⁵⁰ Schafferer, *Election Campaigning in East and South-East Asia*.

⁵¹ Goodman cited in Sigelman and Shiraev, “The rational attacker in Russia?” p. 45.

⁵² Christian Schafferer, *The Power of the Ballot Box: Political Development and Election Campaigning in Taiwan* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 132

We collected ads for all four presidential elections held to date (1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008) and three elections for Taipei City Mayor (1998, 2002 and 2006). Presidential campaigns generate the highest levels of media coverage, campaign spending, voter turnout and volume of campaign advertising. Taipei City is the most prestigious of the five special municipalities and the mayorship has served as a springboard for the last two presidents. Electoral formulae, campaign regulations and the media environments are essentially the same in both elections and the DPP and KMT are the dominant players in both arenas. In both cases winners are elected by a simple plurality with no run-off.

The data sample includes 406 unique ads: 172 TV spots and 234 newspaper ads. This sample represents a much larger number of elections and ads than has been analysed in prior research. Since our objective is to explain the tone and content of the ads, we require a sample rather than a record of every ad each time it was published or aired. The sample represents, to the best of our knowledge, *every unique ad* that ran during the seven campaigns we analyse. TV ads were provided by Rainmaker-XKM International Corporation, a commercial media agency in Taiwan,⁵³ and the newspaper ads were collected from the National Central Library archive in Taipei. Following Fell,⁵⁴ we collected newspaper ads from Liberty Times (*Ziyou Shibao*), China Times (*Zhongguo Shibao*) and United Daily News (*Lianhebao*). These publications combined for a majority market share throughout the period under analysis and approximate the span of the political spectrum in Taiwan.⁵⁵

We restricted our data collection to candidates from the KMT and DPP, since these two parties have dominated virtually every election held since democratization, and only their

⁵³ www.xkm.com.tw

⁵⁴ Dafydd Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁵⁵ Batto, "Democracy's impact on dailies."

candidates have held the presidency and the position of Taipei City Mayor.⁵⁶ The data collection was also limited to official advertisements endorsed by the party or the candidates. Unofficial ads such as those paid for by support and interest groups, which according to our supplementary data collection accounted for 7% of all campaign ads, were excluded from the analysis. This decision was informed by our objective to examine the campaign behaviour of candidates; not their supporters over whom they do not exercise direct control. The timeframe for the data collection was the official campaign period stipulated by the Central Election Commission.⁵⁷

Content analysis

To generate data on our dependent variables we conducted a manual content analysis using a codebook based on existing content dictionaries, literature review and a pilot study of a sample of ads. Following the majority of recent research, we treat claims or appeals as the unit of coding, which means any phrases, clauses or sentences that carry a discrete, self-contained message.⁵⁸ Any ad can contain multiple claims. All claims were classified into one of four possible types of message: 1) 'issues' records claims related to substantive policy positions, proposals or performance claims; 2) 'values' records both narrow ideological appeals, such as those related to Taiwan identity and more general values such as prosperity, harmony and progress; 3) 'traits' records references to leadership qualities, competence, integrity, compassion etc.; and 4) 'strategy' captures practical information about the campaign and the election, including appeals to turn out and vote, advocacy of strategic voting and commentary on the business of the campaign, such as the state of the polls and the

⁵⁶ The one contest where a candidate from outside of these two parties was competitive, was in the presidential election in 2000. Song Chuyu, formerly of the KMT but running as an independent, came second in a three horse race.

⁵⁷ 30 and 14 days for presidential and mayoral campaigns respectively

⁵⁸ Walter and Vliegenthart, "Negative campaigning across different channels."

other side's dirty tricks. These four categories captured the vast majority of claims contained in the ads, as shown in prior descriptive work by one of the authors employing a smaller dataset.⁵⁹ Examples of our coding can be found in Appendix 1 below.

Dependent variables

After classifying discrete claims into one of the four categories, we recorded whether each claim focused on promoting the candidate or his party (a positive appeal), or targeted his opponent or their party (a negative appeal). Our directional definitions of positive and negative appeals draw on a well-established body of disciplinary research that distinguishes between self-promotion (positive) and criticism of opponents (negative).⁶⁰ Although this definition obscures potential differences between different types of negative messages (e.g. in terms of the type of language used),⁶¹ the majority of recent research has used it in order to avoid having to make evaluative, and thus potentially non-replicable, judgements about the veracity, fairness or legitimacy of candidate messages. This recoding resulted in a raw number of appeals in each category separated by positive and negative tone. The next step was to determine the net tone for each of the four appeal types, which resulted in the creation of eight binary variables (i.e. four types of appeal that were either positive or negative). The negative dichotomous variables (negative issue appeals, negative trait appeals, etc.) differentiated ads containing a greater net number of references to the opponent (coded 1), and ads where the number of self-promotional claims was equal or greater to claims about an opponent (coded 0). The same method was replicated, to create positive dichotomous measures (positive issue appeals, positive trait appeals etc.). This procedure was necessary to

⁵⁹ Sullivan, "Campaign advertising and democracy in Taiwan." Although we borrow the coding framework from this earlier work, the current and prior studies differ in several crucial ways. First, the earlier piece focused on the informational content of ads in Taiwan, operationalized as specificity, degree of issue-focus and provision of supporting evidence for claims. Unlike the current article which attempts to explain why candidates promote themselves or target their opponents (and the content of their ads when they do so), the earlier piece argued that negative advertising is comparatively information rich and provided descriptive evidence to support this claim.

⁶⁰ See Walter and Vliegenthart, "Negative campaigning across different channels" pp. 442-445 for a review.

⁶¹ Glen Richardson, "Looking for meaning in all the wrong places: Why negative advertising is a suspect category," *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2001), p. 776.

obtain a measure of negative tone isolated from positive one, and vice versa, for each ad. These are not equally distributed, as shown in Table 1. Furthermore, this calculation gives a more precise estimate of ad tone than measures of proportion of positive and negative appeals at the aggregate level.⁶²

Table 1: Frequency distributions of study variables

<u>Dependent variables</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Negative Appeals	Issues	36.0
	Traits	21.4
	Values	7.6
	Strategy	10.1
Positive Appeals	Issues	31.5
	Traits	25.6
	Values	60.8
	Strategy	47.5
<u>Independent variables</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Competitiveness	0 - High	50.0
	1 - Low	50.0
Time to election	0 - less than 10 days	39.9
	1 - 10 days or over	60.1
Incumbent Party	0 - Challenger	49.5
	1 - Incumbent	50.5
Incumbent Official	0 - Challenger	79.1
	1 - Incumbent	20.9
Ad sponsor	0 - Party	48.8
	1 - Candidate	51.2
Party	0 - DPP	38.7
	1 - KMT	61.3
Media type	0 - Newspaper	57.6
	1 - TV	42.4
Election type	0 - Mayoral	16.5
	1 - Presidential	83.5

Note: cell entries for the dependent variables represent the share of ads containing each message type.

Explanatory variables

We employed eight categorical variables as predictors of our dependent variables. All of these variables reflect characteristics of the ads we analysed and discriminate between

⁶² Reporting the proportion of appeals in the aggregate (e.g. Sullivan, Campaign advertising and democracy in Taiwan) can obscure the variance across ads, which is crucial for us to be able to explain differences in behaviour.

characteristics that are either present or absent. In lieu of reliable polling data and the brevity of campaigns in Taiwan, which mitigate against using relative levels of support as an explanatory variable, we used the election outcome as a proxy for the level of competitiveness. We calculated the difference in vote share each candidate received, based on results reported by the Central Election Commission.⁶³ Three elections were coded as highly competitive (the presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2004, and the Taipei mayoral election in 1998), where the difference in vote share was lower than 5 points. Differences between winners and losers in the four remaining less competitive elections were 13 to 31 points.

Our measure of proximity to the election is the number of days left between the day that an ad was first published or aired and Election Day. We classified this into the earlier (10 or more days to Election Day) and later parts of the campaign (less than ten days left). To assess the effects of the proximity to power, we employed two incumbency indicators, at the party (the in-party or opposition) and individual level (the incumbent president or mayor and the challengers for these offices). These incumbency variables provide a measure of the constellation of power, but do not tell us anything directly about which party ran the ad, i.e. the DPP or KMT. The vastly different institutional organization, history and trajectories of these parties, and observations in the Taiwan literature lead us to think that the two parties might behave differently in their campaigns and therefore the party identity of the ad endorser should be controlled for.⁶⁴ An extension of this proposition is the need to identify and control for the sponsor of the ad, since in Taiwan ads can be endorsed by party institutions or the candidates. Our final control variables differentiate between ads that were published in newspapers and those that were broadcast on TV, and those that ran in either presidential or

⁶³ This indirect proxy measure results in data which is consistent with descriptive scholarly accounts of each campaign, e.g. Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan*; Shelley Rigger, *From Opposition to Power: Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

⁶⁴ Lin, "Party image and Taiwan's electorate 1992-2000;" Rigger, *From Opposition to Power*.

mayoral elections.⁶⁵ Two additional factors noted in the literature are excluded from our analysis, i.e. the gender and race of the candidates, because there is no variation in these factors in the elections we cover.⁶⁶

Results

The analysis in this paper proceeds in two stages. First, we report the bivariate associations between each of the independent variables and all of the outcome variables. Next, we employ multivariate logistic-regression models to assess the overall relations between each of the predictors and the outcome variables, while simultaneously controlling for all other independent variables. The purpose of the bivariate analysis is to establish whether our explanatory variables are associated with positive and negative appeals in ways that are consistent with theory. If there are statistically significant associations we can proceed with confidence to the multivariate analysis. We estimate the bivariate associations between the model predictors and dependent variables by means of Pearson's Chi-Square (χ^2). In Table 2 we report our bivariate results by means of the distribution of each of the predictors' values across the four appeal types for positive and negative appeals, resulting in eight outcomes.

In terms of the bivariate associations between the independent variables and the four types of *negative* appeals, five predictors returned significant results in at least one type of appeals. Ad sponsorship and official incumbency were significantly associated with negative issue and trait appeals, while the level of competitiveness was associated with negative trait and negative value appeals. Time to election and party identity were only associated with

⁶⁵ To rule-out potential problems resulting from multi-collinearity, we modelled the predictor variables in OLS models first, and calculated their degrees of tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores. We found adequate scores, with tolerances ranged between 0.70 and 0.90 and VIFs between 1.04 and 1.47, indicating that these variables are not multi-collinear.

⁶⁶ Kim Kahn, "Gender differences in campaign messages: The political advertisements of men and women candidates for U. S. Senate," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (1993), pp. 481-502; Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

negative strategy appeals. The two remaining party-related variables were close to reaching statistical significance in the case of negative traits. Competitiveness was the only variable that was associated with negative values. Proximity to Election Day and the identity of the party were the only two variables to be associated significantly with negative strategy appeals.

Turning to the bivariate analysis of positive appeals, a different picture emerges of the correlates of these variables with positive appeals. All but one of the eight independent variables was significantly associated with at least one type of positive appeal. One of them, ad sponsor, was robustly associated with all four types of positive appeal. Three variables, competitiveness, official incumbency and election type, were significantly associated with three types of appeals. The remaining three variables, namely time to election, party identity and media type, were only associated with one type of positive appeal (issues, values and strategy respectively).

Table 2: Bivariate analysis of negative and positive appeals in the four categories

Outcome: <u>Negative appeals</u>		<u>Issue</u>		<u>Trait</u>		<u>Value</u>		<u>Strategy</u>	
		%	χ^2	%	χ^2	%	χ^2	%	χ^2
Competitiveness	High	38.4	1.07	29.1	14.06***	11.3	7.86**	9.4	0.24
	Low	33.5		13.8		3.9		10.8	
Time to election	<10	37.0	0.14	23.5	0.66	6.2	0.82	5.6	6.13*
	10+	35.2		20.1		8.6		13.1	
Incumbent Party	Opposition	36.3	0.02	25.4	3.68+	6.0	1.56	9.0	0.57
	In-party	35.6		17.6		9.3		11.2	
Incumbent Official	Challenger	40.8	15.66***	25.5	15.43***	8.4	1.31	9.3	0.96
	Incumbent	17.6		5.9		4.7		12.9	
Ad sponsor	Party	44.9	13.56***	30.8	20.19***	9.6	2.11	8.1	1.73
	Candidate	27.4		12.5		5.8		12.0	
Party	DPP	34.4	0.27	16.6	3.60†	4.5	3.66†	5.7	5.37*
	KMT	36.9		24.5		9.6		12.9	
Media type	Newspaper	35.5	0.06	23.5	1.41	9.0	1.40	12.0	2.12
	TV	36.6		18.6		5.8		7.6	
Election type	Mayoral	31.3	0.74	20.9	0.01	7.5	0.00	13.4	0.98
	Presidential	36.9		21.5		7.7		9.4	
Outcome: <u>Positive appeals</u>									
Competitiveness	High	25.1	7.71**	31.0	6.26*	61.6	0.09	50.2	1.19
	Low	37.9		20.2		60.1		44.8	
Time to election	<10	38.9	6.77**	25.9	0.01	65.4	2.39	44.4	1.03
	10+	26.6		25.4		57.8		49.6	
Incumbent Party	Opposition	36.8	5.16*	23.4	1.04	65.7	3.90*	51.2	2.19
	In-party	26.3		27.8		56.1		43.9	

Incumbent	Challenger	30.5	0.71	24.3	1.39	58.9	2.47	44.9	4.41*
Official	Incumbent	35.3		30.6		68.2		57.6	
Ad sponsor	Party	23.7	10.86**	18.7	9.74**	50.5	17.32***	38.4	12.98***
	Candidate	38.9		32.2		70.7		56.3	
Party	DPP	33.1	0.30	26.8	0.17	71.3	11.85**	49.7	0.47
	KMT	30.5		24.9		54.2		46.2	
Media type	Newspaper	32.1	0.07	27.4	0.87	62.0	0.29	59.4	31.18***
	TV	30.8		23.3		59.3		31.4	
Election	Mayoral	34.3	0.29	37.3	5.76*	41.8	12.22***	52.2	0.71
type	Presidential	31.0		23.3		64.6		46.6	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $0.05 < p < 0.10$

The bivariate analysis shows that all eight independent variables are associated with at least one of the four appeal types, be it negative or positive. This is a useful indication of the associations between variables, but to estimate their net association with each of the positive and negative types of appeals we move on to the multivariate analyses, shown in Tables 3 and 4 below. Looking at the associations between the predictors and the four types of *negative* appeals, we note that four variables predict traits, three predict issues, and two predict values and strategy. The highest Pseudo- R^2 was obtained in the traits model, which means that the variables which are discussed in the literature as predictors of negativity perform best when it comes to predicting appeals about opponents' personalities.

Both types of incumbency and ad sponsorship were significant predictors of negative issue appeals. Consistent with general theory, incumbent officials were significantly less likely to go negative, but the sharper resolution of our analysis shows that this only holds for negative issue and trait appeals. Incumbents were over 4.5 times less likely to use issue attacks than challengers and over 8 times less likely to make personal attacks. In highly competitive races, ads were almost four times more likely to contain negative trait appeals. But, competitiveness did not have significant predictive power for negative issues. This finding indicates that when the competition heats up, candidates' negative tactics become more personal. This interpretation is consistent with accounts of the highly personal attacks

made during the fiercely contested presidential campaign in 2004, which the DPP won by the narrowest of margins.⁶⁷ Ads in highly competitive elections were also over 3 times more likely to include negative value appeals than less competitive elections. Thus, in tight races of the kind witnessed in 2000 and 2004, we should expect to see an increase in both ideological and personal attacks.

Table 3: Models of negative issue-, trait-, value-, and strategy-appeals in campaign ads

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Issues</u>		<u>Traits</u>		<u>Values</u>		<u>Strategy</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>
Intercept	-1.34**	0.26	-3.09***	0.05	-4.11***	0.02	-1.77**	0.17
Competitiveness	0.32	1.37	1.37***	3.92	1.24**	3.44	-0.14	0.87
Time to election	0.22	1.25	0.50†	1.65	-0.16	0.85	-0.85*	0.43
Incumbent Party	0.55*	1.73	0.15	1.16	0.91*	2.49	0.17	1.18
Incumbent Official	-1.50***	0.22	-2.10***	0.12	-0.87	0.42	0.33	1.39
Election type	-0.16	0.85	-0.73†	0.48	-0.33	0.72	-0.10	0.91
Party	0.04	1.04	0.13	1.14	-0.60	0.55	-0.94*	0.39
Ad sponsor	0.82**	2.27	1.59***	4.88	0.78†	2.18	-0.21	0.81
Media type	0.34	1.41	1.13***	3.10	0.96*	2.61	0.33	1.40
Nagelkerke R sq.	0.12		0.25		0.13		0.08	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $0.05 < p < 0.10$. The reference categories for each predictor are less-competitive elections, 10 or more days to Election Day, the opposition party, challengers for office, Taipei Mayoral campaigns, the KMT, candidate-sponsored ads, and TV.

The difference between ads run in mayoral and presidential elections was almost significant, with mayoral campaign ads more than twice as likely to include trait attacks. This is the first of several indications that elections for different offices result in variations in campaign tactics. Incumbency and ad sponsorship were not significantly associated with negative value appeals, although they were found to be significant predictors of other types of negative appeals. Only the proximity to Election Day and the identity of the party were significantly associated with negative strategic appeals. Counter-intuitively, the latter part of the campaign was associated with fewer negative strategic appeals. Ads sponsored by the KMT were more likely to include negative strategic appeals, especially those emphasizing the consequences of

⁶⁷ Schafferer, *Election Campaigning in East and South-East Asia*.

making the “wrong vote choice.” Allegations of dirty tricks by their opponents were also common, for instance, in the final days of the presidential campaign in 2000, Lien Zhan was endorsed an ad detailing the tricks that his opponents might try on (請小心！選舉最後關頭的十大花招).

We now turn to our model of positive appeals, presented in Table 4. Five of the predictors are associated with positive issues, while five predict positive values and three variables predict positive traits and positive strategy. The highest Pseudo- R^2 is for values, meaning that this battery of explanatory variables have more predictive power when it comes to self-promotional ideological appeals.

Both of the incumbency variables were significant predictors of positive issue appeals. Opposition parties were two and a half times more likely than in-parties to include positive issue appeals in their ads and challengers for office were over twice as likely as incumbents in office to make positive issue appeals. Looking at the two models together, challengers’ ads are thus more likely to have both positive and negative issue appeals. This makes sense if we consider that outsiders have to convince voters that something in the current administration is not working (by attacking the incumbent on the issues) *and* to give voters an alternative (by making known their own policy positions and proposals).

Ad sponsorship was also significant, with candidate-sponsored ads over twice more likely than ads financed by the party to include positive issue appeals. By contrast, party endorsed ads were more than three times more likely to include positive value appeals. This suggests that candidates emphasize putting forward their policies and leave promotion of ideology to the party. This tactical division is particularly acute in the case of the DPP, whose ads were more than twice as likely as the KMT to contain ideological messages. Similar differences between agents on the same campaign team have been found in American and

European contexts,⁶⁸ and suggest that investigating the behaviour of running mates, surrogates and other party members is a worthwhile avenue for future research on Taiwan. The strongest predictor of positive value appeals was election type, with ads run in presidential campaigns over four times more likely than those run in Mayoral campaigns to include this type of promotional appeal. Although Taipei Mayor is a nationally relevant position, candidates for election to city mayor should not have to deliver their ideological point of view as much as candidates for the presidency.

Table 4: Models of positive issue-, trait-, value-, and strategy-appeals in campaign ads

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Issues</u>		<u>Traits</u>		<u>Values</u>		<u>Strategy</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>OR</u>
Intercept	0.00	1.00	-0.81*	0.44	-0.14	0.87	-0.60	0.55
Competitiveness	-0.64**	0.53	0.77**	2.15	0.13	1.14	0.36†	1.43
Time to election	0.48*	1.61	0.12	1.12	0.13	1.14	-0.17	0.85
Incumbent Party	-0.92**	0.40	0.28	1.32	-1.02***	0.36	-0.70**	0.50
Incumbent Official	0.74*	2.11	-0.09	0.91	0.99**	2.69	0.90**	2.45
Election type	0.13	1.14	-0.70*	0.50	1.47***	4.35	0.03	1.04
Party	0.13	1.14	0.13	1.13	0.93***	2.53	0.17	1.19
Ad sponsor	-0.83**	0.44	-0.73**	0.48	-1.21***	0.30	-0.34	0.72
Media type	-0.32	0.73	0.00	1.00	-0.28	0.76	1.06***	2.88
Nagelkerke Rsq	0.12		0.08		0.21		0.15	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, † $0.05 < p < 0.10$ The reference categories for each predictor are less-competitive elections, 10 or more days to Election Day, the opposition party, challengers for office, Taipei Mayoral campaigns, the KMT, candidate-sponsored ads, and TV.

Discussion

The preceding models are powerful tools for helping us interpret the way in which election candidates in Taiwan behave and the factors that influence the tone and content of their campaign ads. Comparing the effects of our model predictors on different types of positive and negative appeals helps build a robust picture of candidates' tactics. In some cases we see distinct tactical divisions between self-promotion and going negative. In others, positive and negative tactics are mirror images inverted by tone. Rather than behaving indiscriminately

⁶⁸ Buell and Sigelman, *Attack Politics*; Sigelman and Buell, "You take the high road and I'll take the low road?"

(e.g. by going negative, emphasizing ideology or attacking personal traits all the time) candidates in Taiwan are clearly behaving strategically in choosing the tone and content of their campaign messages. Thus when personal or ideological attacks raise their head in a campaign, we should interpret this as a tactical response to a range of agent-based and contextual factors rather than indicating an inherent weakness in Taiwan's democracy.

Similar to research in the US, incumbency has systematic effects on candidate behavior. Structural advantages (particularly access to the media) mean that incumbents have greater leverage to promote their own agendas and relatively seldom criticize their opponents. Our analysis shows that incumbent presidents or Taipei mayors employ an indiscriminate approach to what they promote about themselves. They talk about their policies, indicate ideological positions and values and make strategic appeals, such as asking supporters to turn out and vote. However, on the rarer occasions when the same incumbents choose to employ negative tactics, they prefer a sharper instrument, primarily attacking their opponent's personality. Incumbents exploit their greater visibility and agenda-setting power to promote their own positions on a range of different topics and do not help their challengers' policies and ideology gain visibility or salience by criticizing (and thus bringing attention to) these dimensions. When incumbents do attack, they reinforce the marginalization of their opponents' substantive concerns by targeting their personality rather than their policies.

A textbook case of a sitting official exploiting the privileges of incumbency is Chen Shui-bian's re-election campaign in 2004. Chen's strategy of emphasizing Taiwan identity, and tying it to the promotion of "direct democracy" through the defensive referenda, allowed him to dominate the campaign agenda. Despite strong attacks on his handling of the economy, government and his leadership credentials, Chen refused to engage his opponents,' forcing them to become ever more desperate in their attacks on his personality and to adopt the risky tactic of mobilizing a boycott against Taiwan's first experience of referenda. The focus of

Chen's re-election campaign is symptomatic of a general feature of DPP candidates' positive tactics: self-promotion is frequently underpinned by ideological positions. This finding will not surprise Taiwan specialists, who have long commented on this emphasis,⁶⁹ but, all else being equal, DPP candidates are no more likely than the KMT to make ideological attacks. Contrary to the impression that national identity and other ideological contests are the most bitterly fought, we find that when candidates talk ideology, they tend to talk past one another (i.e. promote their own positions but avoid engaging their opponents'). Chen's re-election campaign was a good example, with Chen and the Lian/Song joint ticket both heavily promoting their own positions on Taiwan identity but avoiding criticising the other side. Lian-Song's heavy criticism of Chen was instead almost entirely directed at his personal traits and issue performance. Fell's explanation for this is that positions on Taiwan's status and identity have become a valence issue on which there are limited viable stances.⁷⁰

This being the case, we should therefore expect negative ads to increasingly feature attacks on opponents' issue performance and personal characteristics. This does appear to be the case, and since Sullivan has shown issue and trait attacks are relatively information rich, with greater levels of specificity and supporting evidence, this is not necessarily a bad development.⁷¹ However, one tactic that remains more problematic is the use of what we call strategic appeals. Our proximity to power variables indicate that opposition parties are predisposed to making positive strategic claims, reflecting challengers' need to ask people to vote for them, and this type of appeal is not usually troubling. On the other hand, use of negative strategic appeals often contain unsubstantiated claims that voting for an opponent will lead to dire consequences (multiple variations of the 'fear card'), contributing little to the information environment and potentially propagating political mistrust. One of our strongest

⁶⁹ E.g. Copper, "Taiwan: Democracy's gone awry?" pp. 154/5.

⁷⁰ Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan*, p. 142.

⁷¹ Sullivan, "Campaign advertising and democracy in Taiwan."

findings for the KMT is that their candidates' negative tactics rely heavily on strategic appeals. In many cases (indeed in most of the campaigns analysed in this article) KMT candidates attempted to harness longstanding stereotypes about the DPP by associating vote choice and turnout levels with the purported risks of the DPP coming into positions of power. In addition, KMT candidates frequently associated their DPP opponents with campaign tricks and misleading voters. In our view, this type of claim contributes more to the atmosphere of political mistrust than attacks on the issues or even personal traits, both of which often contain legitimate information about the candidates. We suggest further that legislation is needed to improve this situation, in the same way that Article 48 of the President and Vice President Recall Act forced parties and candidates to 'stand by their ads.'⁷² Requiring ad sponsors to disclose their identity on the ad itself, the number of unaccountable, unattributed ads has fallen dramatically over time.

Conclusion

In recent years scholarly attention has turned from democratization to the dynamics of consolidation and the quality of Taiwan's democracy. One of the drivers of this interest is the argument that "the key to democratic consolidation in Taiwan is the extent to which Taiwanese support democracy," combined with observations of deteriorating support for democracy at the mass level.⁷³ As yet, we do not know how elite political behaviour is connected with attitudinal change at the voter level, but Taiwan specialists have suggested a connection between the two exists.⁷⁴ Systematic attempts to explain why elites behave in the ways that they do are thus important, but have lagged behind research on public attitudes. In this article we have analysed a high profile type of elite behaviour, comparing the

⁷² Law available in English at <http://www.cec.gov.tw/English/laws.html>

⁷³ Philip Paolino and James Meernik (eds), *Democratization in Taiwan: Challenges in Transformation*. (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 183.

⁷⁴ See for instance Corcuff, "The supporters of unification and the Taiwanisation movement."

determinants of positive and negative campaign tactics and providing a systematic analysis of campaigning in presidential and Taipei mayoral campaigns. This analysis provides numerous robust insights into the behaviour of candidates in Taiwan, which has become more influential as campaigns have an increasingly significant effect on the outcome of elections.

We have demonstrated in this article that a model based on general theoretical propositions has the same predictive power in Taiwan as it has in other, highly dissimilar, democracies. There are three main implications of this finding. First, we hope that other Taiwan specialists will be encouraged by this result to draw on and apply general theories to political competition in Taiwan. While accepting that context is important, we argue that our understanding of elite behaviour in Taiwan may benefit from greater exploitation of existing theory. Second, the analysis in this article shows that there is added value in using the Taiwan case for comparative social science research. Specifically, the special characteristics of Taiwan's polity provide us with unusual variance across model predictors, allowing us, in this article, to sharpen our theoretical understanding of campaign behaviour in general. Third, candidates and parties in Taiwan clearly behave strategically during campaigns, i.e. they choose the course of action they believe best suited to gaining electoral advantages. Of course, this might conflict with normative expectations about how democratic candidates should behave, and if strategic considerations behave candidates to act in ways that are inconsistent with voters' expectations, this could lead to damaging consequences for public attitudes towards democracy.⁷⁵ However, Taiwan scholars concerned that negativity is something inherent in Taiwan's political culture, or a symbol of the immaturity of Taiwan's democracy, can take heart. Targeting an opponent is part of democratic competition the world over, and

⁷⁵ Evidence from the US suggests that voters are 'resilient' in the face of negativity, whether the newness or other features of Taiwan's democracy make a difference remain to be tested. See Deborah Brooks, 'The resilient voter: Moving toward closure in the debate over negative campaigning and turnout,' *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (2006), pp. 684-96.

when candidates in Taiwan go negative, the analysis in this article demonstrates that their decision making is driven by calculations similar to their counterparts in other polities. On occasion, in any given campaign, a combination of agent-based and contextual conditions will make attacking an opponent (or ‘going personal’, or emphasizing ideology etc.) an attractive strategic choice. Since this is a feature of democratic political competition worldwide it should not suggest that there is a problem with Taiwan’s political culture or democratic consolidation.

Appendix 1

Issues

The issue category is divided into eight policy domains, which are further disaggregated into specific policy sectors. For instance, the domain “cross-Straits relations” includes management of relations with China, security and defence issues related to China, transportation and other links, efforts at diplomacy, positions on the issue of independence and unification, references to negotiations and relations with the US relevant to Taiwan/China relations (e.g. weapons sales or the Taiwan Relations Act) etc. Issue claims are further separated into general valence statements, specific policy proposals and policy performance.

An example of the type of claim recorded in the issue category comes from Lien Zhan in 2000, which combines an attack on Chen Shuibian’s performance as Mayor of Taipei with negative claims about Chen’s leadership (i.e. trait claims). Lian observes that as Taipei Mayor, Chen’s policies were highly changeable and resulted in a string of errors (政策充滿善變反覆, 造成連串錯誤). Lian cites specific examples of how Chen’s wavering (一日三變) led to delays and complaints about public infrastructure projects and the loss of taxpayer money. Lian reprised his attacks on Chen’s performance, then sitting President, in 2004.

Again policy performance and personal attacks were intertwined. One striking newspaper ad, entitled “the curse of Chen Shui-bian” (阿扁的魔咒), featured a devilish gargoyle. Chen’s curse was said to be his incompetence (他的無能), which was explicated primarily in terms of poor policy performance (e.g. 他的魔咒讓經濟出現五十年來第一次負成長). Issue claims about negative economic growth, an increase in the suicide rate, rising unemployment and income disparity and the reduction of social welfare benefits, were juxtaposed with comments on the extravagant behaviour of Chen’s family.

Taiwanese election candidates publish some remarkably detailed issue ads, both on policy performance and setting out policy proposals. In 2000 Lian set out “eight big pledges” (連戰的八大承諾). Each of the eight pledges contained several mini-pledges, resulting in over 30 election promises covering virtually every aspect of public policy. In an ad from the same campaign, Chen Shuibian combined negative performance claims about the sitting KMT government with Chen’s own policy proposals. Chen notes how the “three big events in life” (人生三大事) have become a burden due to the KMT’s lack of a comprehensive welfare programme (缺乏健全的福利制度). Chen’s “333 welfare plan” (333 安家福利專案) proposes to alleviate these difficulties by raising pensions (to NT\$3000 a month), making health care free for the under-3s and freezing mortgage rates for first time house buyers at 3% (thus ‘333’).

Traits

The traits category records mentions of the personal characteristics of the candidates, separated by references to leadership qualities, competence, integrity and compassion. References to a candidate’s lineage and associations, for instance connections to *Dangwai* activists, respected former leaders or the ‘old regime’ or criminals are also recorded.

Lian Zhan's newspaper ads in 2000 provide a good example of contrastive trait claims. One ad features the image of three fruits to make the point that Chen was not ready for the job of President (青澀未熟的), Song was too corrupt (么`梨仔假蘋果) and that only Lian was mature and stable (成熟穩健香脆可口). Lian claims that he is the candidate with the necessary leadership qualities (領袖氣質), international experience (國際經驗) and the most complete national leadership team around him (擁有完整國家團隊) to maintain peaceful relations with China.

Attacks by Lian and Song in 2004, show how trait appeals are often combined with performance claims. One ad asks voters to "change the President to put an end to Chen's arrogance" (換總統: 終結陳水扁的傲慢) and uses a common rhetorical strategy of exemplifying each trait under attack with a claim on policy performance. So for instance, Chen's alleged prejudice against the poor (他歧視窮人) is exemplified with a claim about Chen's policy on overseas brides (娶外籍新娘要準備五百萬). A claim about Chen's lack of respect for teachers (他辱罵所有的老師是王八蛋) is backed up with a claim about how Chen cancelled preferential savings rates for retired educators (他要取消老師退休的十八%利息).

Values/ideology

The operational distinction between issues and value/ideology appeals is that the latter contain no reference to specific policy actions. To illustrate the distinction, 'democracy is freedom for the people,' would be coded as a value appeal, whereas, 'constitutional reform is necessary to improve the working of our democratic institutions,' would be coded as a general statement on the issue of democratic reform. Similarly, 'resuming dialogue with

China increases the chance of peace in the Strait,' would be coded as a general issue statement on cross-Straits relations. Conversely, 'we love peace,' would be coded as a value, although it may implicitly refer to improving relations with China.

Peng Mingmin's campaign in 1996, which was dominated by Taiwan identity appeals, provides some example ideological claims. We operationalize Taiwan identity as signifiers of a distinct collective identity based on common points of identification, references to a distinctive and predominantly hostile 'other' and endorsements of or duties to the identifying collectivity. These features are exemplified by ads such as Peng's 'Our land, our dream' (咱的江山, 咱的夢). Peng asks people to remember the February 28th Incident (省思 228) and to reflect on Japanese and KMT "outside" rule. He pledges to return an idyllic Taiwan of wild deer roaming in camphor forests (樟樹成林, 水鹿成群) to the Taiwanese people who have suffered so much.

Other Peng ads aver that the realization of a Taiwan safe from fear of attack by China, demands Taiwanese to come together and "help herself" (台灣, 站起來! 展開我們的自救運動!) Peng argues that the way to achieve this is to "unite and get rid of the shackles of Greater China, otherwise our children and grandchildren will never forgive us" (現在我們不團結自救, 掙脫大中國的枷鎖, 我們的後代子孫將永遠不會原諒我們!). Notwithstanding the questionable logic of Peng's arguments, the exhortations for Taiwanese to unite and stand up in the name of "our land," juxtaposed with a hostile China and a complicit KMT are classic Taiwan identity themes of the DPP. Indeed, many of the themes in Peng's ads resurfaced in Chen Shuibian's re-election campaign (台灣第一, 牽手護台灣, 相信台灣 etc.), albeit without Peng's explicit references to an independent Taiwanese state.

The strategy category records an array of claims related to the business of the election and the campaign itself. Strategic appeals include mobilizing for rallies, encouraging supporters to mobilize friends and family, publicizing campaign events, appealing for votes, encouraging voter turnout, advocating strategic voting, emphasizing the importance of the election, commenting on the state of the race and estimating the chances of winning or losing. Mentions of bad campaign practices are also recorded in this category.

In the example of strategic appealing below, Lian Zhan and Song Chuyu emphasize to their supporters in 2004 the closeness of the race (輸贏關鍵只有 1%) and that the final run up to the election is crucial (rightly as it turned out). They note how effective the DPP is at mobilizing supporters (綠軍投票率 90%,高過藍軍的 70%. 綠軍已經用各種方式到處搶票!) and ask for their own supporters to appeal for votes whenever and wherever they are (隨時隨地拉票). These actions, they are told portentously, “will decide Taiwan’s future” (你的行動決定台灣的未來!).