

From Policy to Irrationality: Negative Campaigning in Hungary 1990-2018

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Submitted to the
Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Political Science

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Budapest, Hungary

(2019)

Abstract

This study aims to capture the changes in negative campaigning in Hungarian parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2018. The theoretical framework is based on a multilayered conceptualization of negative campaigning in contrast to the binary understanding of the notion based on the works of Fowler & Ridout (2012) and Kahn and Kenney (1999). The main hypotheses of the thesis are that candidates or parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning under the following circumstances: i), when they stand behind in an election, ii) when the ‘race’ is close between competitors, iii) when in opposition, iv) when the actor is associated with a right-wing party, v) and when the actor is attacked by criticism from another opponent. By using the results of individual data collection and extant literature, the study confirms the applicability of all five hypotheses in the context of Hungarian party politics. It is however stressed that negative campaigning remains contingent upon structural factors and under certain conditions actors do not increase the negativity of their campaigns due to misperceptions of the power relations. Finally, the proportion negative campaigning has increased in the long term, and advertisements have shifted from policy-oriented themes to emotional messages of post-truth politics.

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List of abbreviations

- Demokratikus Koalíció (DK) – Democratic Coalition
- Együtt, A Korszakváltók Pártja (Együtt) – Together, Party for a New Era
- Fidesz, Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Fidesz) – Fidesz, Hungarian Civic Alliance
- Független Kisgazda, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt (FKgP) – Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party
- Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Jobbik) – Movement for a Better Hungary
- Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP) – Christian Democratic People's Party
- Köztársaság Párt – Republic Party
- Lehet Más a Politika (LMP) – Politics Can Be Different
- Magyar Demokrata Fórum (MDF) – Hungarian Democratic Forum
- Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (MIÉP) – Hungarian Justice and Life Party
- Magyar Liberális Párt (MLP) – Hungarian Liberal Party
- Magyar Munkáspárt – Hungarian Workers' Party
- Magyar Néppárt – Hungarian Peoples' Party
- Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (MSZMP) – Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
- Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP) – Hungarian Socialist Party
- Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt (MSZDP) - Hungarian Social Democratic Party
- Momentum Mozgalom – Momentum Movement
- Párbeszéd Magyarországért (PM) – Dialogue for Hungary
- Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (SZDSZ) – Alliance of Free Democrats
- Szociáldemokrata Párt (SZDP) – Social Democratic Party

Introduction

Election campaigns are of paramount importance in all democracies around the globe. They inform citizens about the proposed policy goals of candidates, select decision-makers, distribute power among future representatives, provide a platform for deliberation and the list could be continued. Beyond the pragmatic benefits, campaigns can also serve symbolic means by providing legitimation to democratic governance. Campaigns can unite politicians and voters by celebrating the civic rituals of the people's rule. Nonetheless, negative campaigning has been on the rise globally, and the alterations that this trend brings need to be understood better, since the way in which democracies organize their campaigns is just as important as the outcome of voting. The whole idea of democracy is based on the view that procedures of choosing representatives needs to be legitimate, so that political decisions would also be seen as rightful. The examination of negative campaigning is fruitful as the topic is still a very contested in academic circles, there are only a few consensual points within the debate. Focusing on Hungary, the research could hopefully provide new insights into negative campaigning, as the topic has not received considerable attention yet in the case of Hungary. Negative campaigning has dominated the current campaign cycle of the Hungarian National Elections in 2018 and reached unforeseen proportions. A long-term assessment of negative campaigning throughout the post-1989 history of Hungarian national elections is proposed to gain an overview about the trends of negative campaigning in Hungary. Negative campaigning is important to evaluate because it might mislead voters, decrease their willingness to participate in politics or according to some scholars it could also produce a generation of cynics (Ansolabehere, & Iyengar 1995, Krupnikov 2014). Accordingly, negative campaigning is crucial to study since political participation and the behavior of voters are essential to the functioning of democratic states all over the globe.

Since the beginning of the 1960s there has been a massive growth in the amount of negative campaigning in the US. While 10% of advertisements in the 1960 campaign were negative, during the 2012 campaign only 14.3% of the political ads were considered to be positive (Krupnikov 2014). The rise of negative campaigning has generated many debates regarding the effects these ads and the potential impact they might have on the political process as a whole. Voters and politicians expected that negative campaigning would have negative implications for politics, however the effect of negative campaigning on the political process is highly debated within academia. Although negativity can have strong effects on political outcomes in certain situations, under different conditions the consequences could be minor. Some researchers suggest that negative campaigning can lead to negative consequences, like Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino who claimed that it reduces turnout in elections (1994), while other research argues that negativity might even be beneficial for politics and it can foster political participation (Goldstein and Freedman 2002). The literature on negative campaigning has actively discussed the relationship between negativity and turnout and also topics like the role of sponsorship. Contemporary campaigns do not give the prospect of becoming more positive and the internet is slowly gaining more importance when planning political campaigns (Nielsen 2011). If the current trends of campaign strategies follow, negativity will become an even more important topic of academic inquiry.

Most studies on negative campaigning rely on data originating in the United States and scholars focus their attention on that environment. Nonetheless, negative campaigning is also present in other parts of the world. Researchers have recently started to study negative campaigning in Europe, Asia and other locations, while a few papers compare the usage of negative campaigning across national contexts. However, negative campaigning in Hungary has not received enough attention and few scholars have written about its amount and characteristics. As of 2019, no comprehensive account has been published about the amount of negative

campaigning that considers all eight Hungarian parliamentary elections which were held after the fall of Communism and the introduction of democratic elections. Although, Tóth (2002) wrote about negative campaigning and its role in the parliamentary elections, she focused on three periods between 1990 and 1998. Kapitány and Kapitány (2003) looked at symbolic signs and negativity in the campaigns before the parliamentary elections in 2002 only. Török (2011) also discussed negative campaigning in his writings, however he only did this when analyzing the results of a given election and he did not focus on negativity in itself as the specific topic of his research.

Therefore, the campaign cycles of all Hungarian national election campaign shall be analyzed starting from 1990 until 2018 in order to get a more comprehensive picture about the intensity and usage of negative campaigning in Hungary. The theoretical framework is based on the multilayered conceptualization of negative campaigning in contrast to the binary understanding of the notion based on the works of Fowler & Ridout (2012) and Kahn and Kenney (1999). In addition, the thesis reflects an understanding that no value judgment should follow based on the tone of an advertisement, rather the information content should form the basis of assessment.

Five hypotheses will be tested in the thesis regarding circumstances when negative campaigning is more likely to be utilized. The following hypotheses were adopted, based on influential expectations of the literature:

H.1: *Candidates (or parties) who are behind in the ‘race’, are more likely to utilize negative campaigning.*

H.2: *Candidates (or parties) in tight races will be more likely to engage in negative advertising.*

H.3: *Candidates (or parties) in opposition are also more willing to take the risks of utilizing negative campaigning.*

H.4: *Right-wing candidates (or parties) are similarly more likely to engage in negative campaigning, in contrast to left-wing actors.*

H.5: *Retaliation is likely to appear in the strategy of candidates (or parties)¹.*

¹ The above-listed hypotheses will be unfolded in chapter I under section 1.2.

The subsequent section will discuss the methodology of the thesis by outlining the main rules of data collection and also reviewing the process of monitoring, coding and organizing the data. Then chapter I will provide a literature review, a discussion of the hypotheses, a description of the codebook for the coding, and a justification of sample selection. Furthermore, chapter II will deal with the temporal assessments of campaigning based on the data from individual collection. Afterwards, chapter III will assess the intrinsic characteristics of campaigning by looking at the size, issue and newspaper of the individual advertisements. Whereas, chapter IV addresses the traits of negative campaigning like tone, target and type of negativity. Chapter V on the other hand focuses on the actors behind campaigning and presents the sponsors of advertisements with a special focus on political parties. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the main findings of the thesis and will provide avenues for future research².

² The appendices contain the results of the data organization in the form of tables, which served as the basis for the figures in the thesis. Please find these after the bibliography.

Methodology

Newspapers were chosen for the observation of negative campaigning because all copies of their publications are readily available for researchers, in contrast to tv-ads, billboard signs or online advertisements. Only newspapers would allow for the monitoring of the 28 year-long period in Hungary since the internet was not available to the majority of the population until the second half of the 2000s and no systematic archive of tv-ads exist. One of the aims of this study is to give a long-term overview on the usage of negative campaigning in Hungary and the lack of additional sources restricted the number of methodological considerations. Although the monitoring of newspapers should provide a reliable picture about negative campaigning since scholars of the field have shown that the level of negative campaigning does not differ greatly across different platforms (Benoit 2007, Walter and Vliegenthart 2010). Qualitative longitudinal research was conducted based on content analysis whereby five newspapers were reviewed to observe political ads during election campaigns between 1990 and 2018. The sample constituted by five different newspapers and advertisements will serve as the units of analysis. The selected newspapers all publish daily issues which allows for more consistency and comparability. Historically, six issues were published in the observed newspapers since typically one joint paper is summarizing the events of the weekend. There has not been missing cases, thanks to the fact that all issues of the newspapers were readily available. Although, some weeks entail less issues since newspapers do not publish on national holidays. Usually Easter falls in the interval of the monitoring, however this has no effect on the results, since none of the papers comes out with a holiday issue. This in turn allows data collection to be done on a complete sample, which is a rarity when observing old newspapers. Two rather left-leaning and two conservative newspapers have been chosen in order to achieve a certain balance when observing political advertisements. Ownership changes went down during the period of observation and these are discussed in the analysis chapter due to their effects on the collection

of political advertisement. In addition, another newspaper has been selected, called *Nemzeti Sport* which is a daily newspaper covering sports events. The motivation for choosing a non-political daily was to discover any discernable differences in the pattern of political advertisements when compared to conventional newspapers.

Three weeks were monitored during each election period. This meant the observation of one week preceding the first and the second round of voting each and a week between the two rounds, while after the change of the electoral system³, three weeks were monitored directly before election day in 2014 and 2018. Those political advertisements were gathered that had the primary aim of disseminating a message to the people, irrespective of the content let it be ideas, attitudes or other concerns. Newspaper articles that discuss the election campaign itself were not part of the study, nor did advertisements of newspapers since these do not constitute part of the investigation, even if these entail political content. Since the advertising aspect primarily promotes a magazine, political content is only secondary. Following the same logic, TV program ads were not included in the observation, even if they were promoting a political debate. These ads predominantly advertised a channel or a program, and the political theme only indicated the expected content. Finally, book ads that touched upon political themes have also not been recorded for similar reasons. Furthermore, interviews with politicians were also not recorded in the framework of the data collection.

This point is important to make, since there was an identifiable trend during the campaign periods whereby the ‘attention’ of a newspaper increasingly turns to a given party, signaled by a high number of articles published about them. It would have been a fascinating endeavor to

³ The electoral law passed in December 2011 decreased the number of voting rounds to one from the previous two, it also decreased the number of MPs to 199 from 386, the number of constituencies similarly decreased to 106 from 176, whereas the borders of the constituencies were also redrawn. See Bozóki (2011) for a more detailed discussion of the changes in the electoral system.

include covert advertisements in the observation, nonetheless it would be a very time-consuming exercise and the lack of an objective typology for coding these articles posed another difficulty. Also, the inclusion of every single article with some political content would have provided a too broad focus in contrast to a specific set of advertisements. Covert political advertisements were not recorded during the monitoring. There were a large number of hidden advertisements in each magazine that praise or scold a party, but they are published like a conventional article. However, it should be noted that, although the number of traditional political advertisements decreased during the period under review, the number of pseudo-advertisements in the form of a newspaper article increased at the same time. The topic of hidden advertisements will be discussed in more detail chapter IV, subsection 4.1 due its prominence.

In the framework of the scholarly literature, negative campaigning typically refers to negative advertising. Even though candidates also rely on negative campaigning during speeches or interviews, the majority of empirical research on negativity concentrated on television advertising. Whereas, the empirical work of this paper will focus on negativity in newspapers for four reasons. First, diversification is desired regarding the objects of observations, knowing the strong focus of the field on television advertising in order to achieve a more comprehensive picture about negative campaigning. Potentially, it would be interesting to compare the findings of newspaper-based research with the conclusions of empirical work that has focused on televised advertising. Second, the availability of original newspaper copies in the case of Hungary makes the execution of the research feasible. Hard copies are registered and are mostly accessible for the period between 1990 and 2018. Third, televised advertisements are not as accessible unlike the case of the United States which would results in many missing observations and accordingly less reliable findings. Fourth, I would expect to find relatively similar campaigns in both broadcast and print media because both channels are utilized to

transmit the same set of ideas. When discussing the relationship of campaigning throughout different media Benoit argued that “the articulation of information might vary, but the overarching structure of the campaign is generally identical (2007)”. Potentially, the emphasis of various platforms can differ, but a party is expected to communicate a coherent message or message independently of the channel.

Chapter I: Defining Negative campaigning

Representative democracy needs a special linkage between the sphere of politics and voters, otherwise there is no effective communication between these groups. Campaigning provides this connection through the media and therefore it is important to get the message to the voters. Campaigning is the unique bridge that connects the aspirations and ideas of a political candidate and the desires of voters. Campaigning constitutes the epistemological foundation of communication by forming a new channel of interconnectedness. Among all types of political communication, election campaigns are the most influential, since in a democratic country, one has to win an election in the first place to rule. To assess the quality of a government, an elected party needs to govern. To identify the opinion of the masses and to select the candidates, a campaign is necessary. In sum, election campaigning is the single most important form of political communication (Benoit 2007). Modern representative democracies would not be able to function without the existence of political campaigns because the lack of dialogue would inhibit the continuation of such a system.

Campaigning, and especially election campaigning⁴ has arguably become the most important dimension of political communication as the advancement of mass participation thanks to the

⁴ Other types of campaigning, namely referendum campaigns, policy-focused campaigns and image campaigns are also regarded as important forms of political communication. Nonetheless, this research is only focusing on election campaigns as these are seen as the most influential thanks to their role in electing representatives and in their scope. In addition, parliamentary election campaigns are held quadrennially in Hungary which makes comparison through time easier, in contrast to other types of campaigning whose occurrence is irregular.

diffusion of mass media has expanded the electorate in representative democracies in the last decades (Farrel & Schmitt-Beck 2002). Walter Lippman already observed in his most influential publication on public opinion in 1922, that “the art of inducing all sorts of people who think differently to vote alike is practiced in every political campaign”. The rapid spread of television, telephone networks, the internet, and other technologies made it possible to extend the reach of campaigns to what he described as “all sorts of people”.

Accordingly, election campaigns inform citizens about the policy goals that potential decision-makers would like to represent, and also provide a platform for deliberation among others. However, campaigns not only possess pragmatic benefits, they can also serve symbolic means which are of crucial importance when thinking about the legitimacy of representative democracy (Ridout and Franz 2008). Campaigns can unite politicians and voters by celebrating the civic rituals of the people’s rule (Swanson and Mancini 1996). Both the pragmatic and the symbolic aspects of election campaigns are crucial when considering the life of democracies. If the pragmatic results go against the symbolic promises, or the contrary would be true, it could lead to alienation or disaffection with governance. Accordingly, campaigns are phenomena that tell a lot about a given country by reflecting on the social, economic and cultural state of a community (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1991). In addition, the operationalization of campaigns is important due to the implications it has on the electorate. It might empower or threaten certain parts of the citizenry, and this has huge consequences for any group that lives in a given community. Various minorities are especially prone to the negative impact of scapegoating, a recurring element in negative campaigning (Grimson 2001).

Negative campaigning is perceived as unique due to the genuine growth in its proportions and reach. But the special character of negative campaigning is attained by the widespread criticism that it receives from various actors in society. Voters, politicians and journalists alike have expressed concerns persistently regarding campaign negativity. The AARP Political Campaign

Process survey was conducted in 2011 on a sample of 1027 adults whereby 76% of respondents said that a decrease in negative advertising would improve the election campaign process. Likewise, political candidates frequently complain about the rise in negative advertisements which they need to face during campaign periods.

The extensive criticism of negative campaigning implies that negative advertising could potentially have detrimental effects on democracy. Due to this assumption, a whole array of scholars focused their attention on studying the relationship between negative campaigning and its political results. Contrary to popular expectations, the academic literature characterizes the effects of negative campaigning as more nuanced and conditional upon multiple factors. Furthermore, a genuine ambivalence exists regarding the place of negative campaigning in the processes of democracy. „Initially, attack ads were thought to depress voter turnout by decreasing feelings of political efficacy and satisfaction with the electoral process, however subsequent research has argued that negative political ads can actually stimulate participation by providing salient and compelling information while motivating people to act against the concerns raised in the ad (Encyclopedia of Political Science p. 17)”. In my view, the tone of an advertisement in itself does not bear any impact on democratic processes. Rather, the actual content of an advertisement plays a more prominent role when thinking about the influence of campaign tone on politics. A critical stance towards candidates and party programs in the form of negative campaigning that focuses on issues could be beneficial for democracy as a whole, whereas personalized mudslinging only incites hatred and misinforms the electorate. A discussion about the conceptualization of negative campaigning will follow now in order to present the ways in which scholars of the field make sense of this phenomenon.

1.1 Negative campaigning in the scholarly literature

The scholarly debate on negative advertising has produced several definitions of the concept. Geer possibly coined the broadest definition and described negativity as “any criticism leveled by one candidate against another during a campaign” and he considered an advertisement positive, if it “states why a candidate is worthy of your vote” (2006). Benoit produced a functional definition of negative advertising which does not consider tone as an important feature, rather concentrates on the functions of the advertisements being attacking, acclaiming, and defending based on his framework (1999). The conceptualization of Benoit is more pragmatic, while the advantage of Geer’s definition is that it provides clear classification, and nothing remains ‘in-between’. In addition, Geer’s definition does not make any distinctions when it comes to the content of various advertisements, thereby his definition is even broader thanks to the lack of this specification. According to this definition, a political ad which criticizes the campaigning strategy is coded negatively, similarly to an ad which bashed the personal life of an opponent. Nonetheless, advertisements are not always ‘black and white’ and categorizing them as either negative or positive is not as simple as one would expect. Therefore, one should remain critical when using a binary classification as it might oversimplify reality in certain cases. Jamieson et al. wished to solve this problem and they theorized a three-fold typology concerning the tone of ads, which are attack, advocacy, and contrast. The authors implied with their concepts that negativity evokes the idea of dishonest politics, whereas an attack can potentially be positive if the criticism is accurate (2000).

Other scholars within the field also argued that a category in the middle does exist between positive and negative advertising. Fowler & Ridout (2012) asserted that political advertisements can take up more than two values. Accordingly, one political advertisement can contain negative and positive elements simultaneously. For instance, a politician could praise his own agenda and critique the opponent’s priorities in the same political advertisement. This

advertisement type is called “contrast” ad within the literature, as these entails both positive and negative aspects. In addition, by making use of middle category one can gain more analytical precision.

The above-described definitions exclusively concentrated on the tone of the advertisement, however other thinkers of the debate also discussed the type of negativity or the actual content of the critique. Freedman, Wood, and Lawton (1999) theorized that the content of negative ads can differ, and also suggested that differences in their substance can alter the consequences of negativity. The three authors theorized that inappropriate negativity which focuses on a candidate’s personality instead of policy issues is damaging for democracy since the discussion of policy issues can narrow the gap between the promises of candidates and the needs of the voters. Whereas, Kahn and Kenney (1999) proposed a distinction between negative ads that focus on certain political issues and negative ads that target an individual’s personal life. In addition, these authors also introduced “mudslinging”, as a special type of negative campaigning that could have unfavorable implications for politics. Kahn and Kenney consider irrelevant or inappropriate information as mudslinging, in contrast to legitimate’ negative information. These classifications are important because they allow for a more precise discussion of negative campaigning and make the placement of empirical findings in a well-established theoretical framework possible.

Brooks and Geer (2007) came up with a category called incivility, that shows similarities with the above-described concept of mudslinging. According to their typology, negative messages that are civil and those that are delivered in a manner the voters may perceive to be uncivil can best be understood as distinct types. Based on this framework the authors claim that voters are more responsive to civil negative ads and disapprove uncivil negative ads which focus on the personal life of a certain politician.

Finally, one thought that the academic debate seems to pay less attention to, is that the conventional binary classification (positive–negative campaigning) might not be a consistently beneficial approach when observing campaign advertisements. Perceiving positive advertisements as inherently “good”, while interpreting negative as inherently “bad” for political processes does not improve our understanding of campaigning. For instance, positive political advertisements might also be manipulative, and a negative advertisement can be informative too (See Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1991, or Geer 2006 for a discussion of the misconceptions about negative campaigning). These authors argued that the tone of an advertisement does not tell us anything about its value, since a positive ad can be deceptive whereas negative advertisements can be more educative thanks to the criticism they bring up (Mattes and Redlawsk 2014). In addition, negative ads are more likely to contain support for their claims according to Geer and are more likely to touch upon policy matters (2006).

For the operationalization of the thesis, I will adopt the conceptualization of Fowler & Ridout (2012) who employed three categories (positive, negative and contrast) to avoid oversimplification when coding the advertisements. Furthermore, the distinction of Kahn and Kenney (1999) between negative ads that focus on issues, character and mudslinging were also selected in order to discover whether the criticism is legitimate or not. In my understanding of negative campaigning, it is essential that no value judgement should follow from the tone of an advertisement, but rather the information content should form the basis of assessment. Accordingly, it is crucial to review the content and target of individual advertisements because criticism that focuses on real political issues can potentially be more beneficial to the functioning of a democracy than positive advertisements without any meaningful content (Geer 2006). Therefore, employing this theoretical framework is key, so that the discussion of advertisements could be executed with more analytical precision.

Based on this theoretical framework, the thesis will test five hypotheses that concern the strategic decisions of candidates and parties in the Hungarian political environment. These hypotheses are derived from influential authors of the field, whose research is based on the politics of the United States. The below hypotheses assume candidates and parties to be rational actors whose main goal is to achieve electoral success and negative campaigning is thought to be used by the actors until it serves their own interests (Lau and Rovner 2009). The following section will introduce the hypotheses based on the expectations of the literature, whereby the usage of negative campaigning is assumed to be relatively higher under the subsequent conditions.

1.2 Hypotheses

1. Candidates (or parties) who are behind in the ‘race’, or those who are expected to lose are more likely to utilize negative campaigning since they can “accept the risk more easily than candidates who are ahead (Skaperdas and Grofman 1995)”. Skaperdas and Grofman created a formal model which shows that candidates or parties under increased pressure are more likely to take the risk of potential backlash from the voters that could arise from the usage of negative campaigning (1995)⁵. Accordingly, actors of the observation, who are not the frontrunners of an election are expected to conduct a more negative campaign.
2. Candidates (or parties) in tight races will be more likely to engage in negative advertising since negative campaigning is generally believed to be an effective, but risky strategy (Hale, Fox and Farmer 1996). The underlying logic of this claim is similar to assumptions made by the first hypothesis, if the election is expected to be close, the

⁵ A backlash is understood as a decrease in liking of a negative advertisement’s sponsor, however there is no consensus about the potential effects of backlash within the scholarly debate and its intensity seems to be contingent upon individual factors (Roese and Sande. 1993).

potential gains from criticizing the opponent are calculated as more probable than the likelihood of backlash from the electorate.

3. Candidates (and parties) in opposition are also more willing to take the risks of utilizing negative campaigning (Kaid and Davidson 1986, Tinkham and Weaver-Lariscy 1995). Incumbents always possess an advantage according to the literature because incumbents running for re-election are better known, and better financed than their challengers, and thus can reasonably expect to win (Jacobson 2004). Accordingly, candidates and parties in opposition are expected to launch a more negative campaign in order to overcome the advantage of the incumbent.
4. Right-wing candidates (and parties) are similarly more likely to engage in negative campaigning, in contrast to left-wing candidates and parties. Perloff and Kinsey reported that politicians associated with right-wing parties are more likely to attack other candidates during campaign periods (1992). Based on previous findings positive ads are more effective with voters of leftist parties whereas negative ads more often resonate with voters supporting right-wing parties (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Therefore, candidates and parties are assumed to adhere to the special characteristics of their electorate and conduct their campaigning accordingly.
5. Retaliation is likely to appear in the strategy of candidates (or parties). Attacks by one actor are measured to engender counterattacks by other participants of a 'race' (Kern 1989). Candidates or parties may prefer to react to attacks from one competitor by attacking another (Dolezal et al. 2016). Therefore, the presence and direction of potential retaliation will be tested.

1.3 Codebook: Potential explanatory variables and their description

A codebook follows now, that provides an evaluation scheme for gathering and coding political advertisements. The codebook will list each variable that is going to be observed in

the study, and also describe each value that a variable could take up. The establishment of readily measurable criteria is essential as only this would allow for systematic research that is minimally judgmental in its nature. In addition, the criteria have to be defined for finding message elements in the observed data and the indicators that signal the presence or absence of a chosen characteristic need to be described carefully⁶. A listing of the observed variables will follow now, with a short description of the criteria and the expected values of each.

ID: The number of advertisements in each unit of analysis. In this research, one issue of a newspaper will act as an observation. Recording the number of advertisements in a newspaper will allow me to make inferences about the valence of political advertisements and their intensity through time. The number of advertisements is expected to increase when the date of the elections is approaching. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reduce the scope of the observation to the main page of a newspaper or to selected articles as some parties and candidates cannot afford to buy advertisement places on the front page, furthermore advertisements are placed separately from articles which would inhibit me from only coding articles.

Newspaper: Refers to the newspaper in which an advertisement was published and serves as a variable important for administrative reasons. It is necessary to have information about the source of the advertisement for calculations and ordering.

Election cycle: Refers to the election period during which an advertisement was placed and therefore allows for a comparison of various temporal periods.

⁶ Although, it has to be noted that even quantitative research has qualitative aspects that cannot be avoided. The decision whether some elements are present or absent in a political ad might involve subjective assessment in certain cases (Kaid 2004).

Date: The exact date of publication was recorded in the case of each advertisement. This variable is needed for administrative reasons, similarly to the above-described variable.

Voting round: This variable refers to the week, during which the advertisement was published. The expected values are 1st, meaning that an advertisement was published preceding the 1st round of the parliamentary vote, whereas 2nd was used in the week preceding the 2nd round of the election. 1,5 refers to a week between the two rounds. While after the change of the electoral system, three weeks were monitored directly before election administered as 0,5, 1st and 2nd.

Size: The size of the advertisement will also be observed. Advertisements that take up a complete page are understandably more expensive and accordingly are less affordable. These types of ads are expected to appear less frequently. In addition, incumbent parties are expected to utilize bigger advertisements than opposition parties. The variable was coded as either small, middle sized, large or full page.

Target: This variable will observe whether the political advertisement is either policy or person oriented. This dimension is still important to observe, as one of the oldest criticisms of political advertisements is that it oversimplifies politics by focusing on the image of the candidate instead of the policy issue. Note that this critique is based on the idea that voting decisions should be made on policy issues and these conceptions originates in the democratic voting model (Berelson 1966). The possible values of this variable for coding were: Party, Politician, Group, Individual, other unit.

Tone: The variable called tone will observe whether the advertisement is largely positive, largely negative or contains both elements simultaneously. This advertisement type is called “contrast” and will constitute the third option within the coding exercise.

Content of Negativity: The variable can take up three values: issue, mudslinging and character. Issue refers to a negative advertisement that brings up a political issue, whereas character is

used in the case of ads that focus on the traits of an individual and finally, mudslinging equals the usage of negativity in ads without any legitimate argumentation or evidence. The coding of this variable is an essential prerequisite, since the thesis wants to go beyond the traditional binary understanding of negative campaigning.

Issue: This variable looks at the actual content of the issue, the specific type of issue which is covered in the advertisement. The possible values for the variable are based on the influential typology of Benoit (2011) and were the following: Economy, Domestic issues, Energy and Environment, National Security and Wellbeing, Democratic processes, Government's past record, Gender issues and Other special issues. This research will also consider the content of the issue in order to find out whether the type of issues has consequences on negativity in the case of Hungary. It also makes it possible to observe whether certain parties have a special focus on issues, and how this changed through time⁷.

Topic: There were no pre-defined categories for this variable, but the specific topic of each advertisement was recorded. After the finalization of the monitoring and coding process, the sum of topics has been ordered, and the following values appeared as the most frequent: Corruption, Incitement of fear, Radicalism, Social benefits, Tax on interest income and Toxic public debates. Please find a more detailed discussion of these topics in section 4.3.

Party: The party affiliation of the advertisement will also be observed. This is necessary for identifying the incumbent in a given period, or to characterize the relationship of campaigning strategies among parties in the political arena. Thereby, I will be able to make conclusions by comparing the advertisements produced by various parties. The coding of the party in each advertisement is crucial for testing the hypotheses of the thesis. Furthermore, this would also

⁷ See Mullen, J.J. (1963) for an extensive discussion of advertisement types based on content.

allow me to gain a better understanding of the relationship between newspapers and partisanship.

Sponsor: The sponsors were included in the observation to acquire a better picture about the agents behind negative campaigning. The potential values of the variable are: candidate, party, both (meaning that both the party and the candidate are represented in a given advertisement), government, civil society, and other. Historically speaking, American political advertising has been candidate-centered and therefore party-affiliation received less attention. It will be interesting to compare the findings of the observations whether they follow the American trends or whether they exhibit a greater reliance on parties or other possible actors.

1.4 Justification of sample selection

When it comes to the actual newspapers, Népszava, Népszabadság, Magyar Nemzet, Magyar Hírlap and Nemzeti Sport were selected because they have the highest number of copies sold in contemporary Hungarian print media (Although Népszabadság was shut down in 2016, it had the highest exposure until its dawn). Please see a table below on the number of copies sold per day. Note that Magyar Nemzet and Magyar Hírlap do not publish information on the number of their copies made anymore, therefore the latest available information was used⁸.

Number of copies	Newspaper	Year
36,800	Népszabadság	2016
32,000	Nemzeti Sport	2018
21,070	Népszava	2018
16,330	Magyar Nemzet	2015
8,700	Magyar Hírlap	2012

1. Table: Number of newspapers sold

⁸ The table was compiled based on the research of Attila Varga (2018.12.13. Index).

The selection reflects a desire to have an approximate balance regarding the political background of the newspapers, which was evenly balanced in the early 1990s, with two leftists being Népszava and Népszabadság and two rightist newspapers being Magyar Nemzet and Magyar Hírlap (Sebők, Mészáros and Kis 2018). This balance in the sample, however, quickly disappeared driven by changes in media ownership. In addition, Nemzeti Sport was selected to test, whether the patterns of political advertisements in a sports magazine would exhibit any material differences vis-à-vis traditional political dailies. Five newspapers were chosen in order to provide a more encompassing picture about campaigning in the print media, and the decision is also expected to decrease potential volatility arising from differences in the advertisement portfolio of individual newspapers. A short introduction of the five newspapers will follow subsequently. A discussion of the newspaper's origins is important since their legacies have an impact on negative campaigning in the contemporary setting.

Népszava

Népszava is a longstanding Hungarian left-wing political daily. Originally, it was under the control of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (MSZDP), and it belonged to the trade unions between 1948 and 1989 (Németh 2003). The newspaper was privatized at the time of the regime change in 1990. Nonetheless, the change of regime and the end of trade unions strongly decreased the readership. The real change, however, occurred mainly after 1994, when the newspaper was liberalized. Contemporary readers are now educated middle class individuals who formerly possessed left-wing stances.

Népszabadság

Népszabadság was Hungary's largest national political and public daily until its closure in October 2016. It was published in Budapest and nationwide on six days of the week, alternating with other regional sites and with colorful, thematic attachments. Its first issue was published

on the 2nd of November 1956 by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) as the successor of the former newspaper called Szabad Nép (Free People). The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), has had a significant influence on the newspaper until 2015, then it was purchased by Mediaworks Hungary Zrt. On the 8th of October 2016, the publisher announced that it would suspend the printing of the newspaper. The closure was driven by political motives and in January 2017, the Municipal Court ruled in a final judgment that Mediaworks Zrt. had acted unlawfully during the suspension (Freedom House 2017).

Magyar Nemzet

There have been two unrelated daily newspapers which existed in Hungary under the name of Magyar Nemzet. The first one operated between 1899 and 1913, and the second functioned between 1938 and 2018 (Kókay, Buzinkay, and Murányi 2001). This study will understandably concentrate on the latter. The paper functioned under the control of the Patriotic Popular Front (Hazafias Népfrent). Magyar Nemzet ceased to exist after the 2018 parliamentary elections on the 11th of April. The newspaper had a conservative, civic attitude and targeted a similar readership. Interestingly however, the newspaper's attitude has always been based on current political opportunities and situations. At the end of the day, Magyar Nemzet embraced basic concepts of the traditional conservative value system as its basic principle and accordingly adapted to the present (Arcanum Digitális Tudománytár 2019).

Magyar Hírlap

It was founded in 1968 as a newspaper of the Hungarian People's Republic's Council of Ministers as a governmental paper, as opposed to the daily papers of MSZMP's Népszabadság, the Patriotic Popular Front's Magyar Nemzet and the National Council of Trade Unions' Népszava (Arcanum Digitális Tudománytár 2019). The new Magyar Hírlap started in November 2006 after getting a new owner, Gábor Széles, who changed the newspaper's liberal

profile and turned it into conservative. Anti-globalism, patriotism and right-wing thinking are the main values represented by the newspaper since its complete overhaul. Most of the former staff members left the editorial office in January 2007 and they were replaced with completely new journalists. The purpose of this newspaper is to keep the current readership and to increase its reach by publishing other content.

Nemzeti Sport

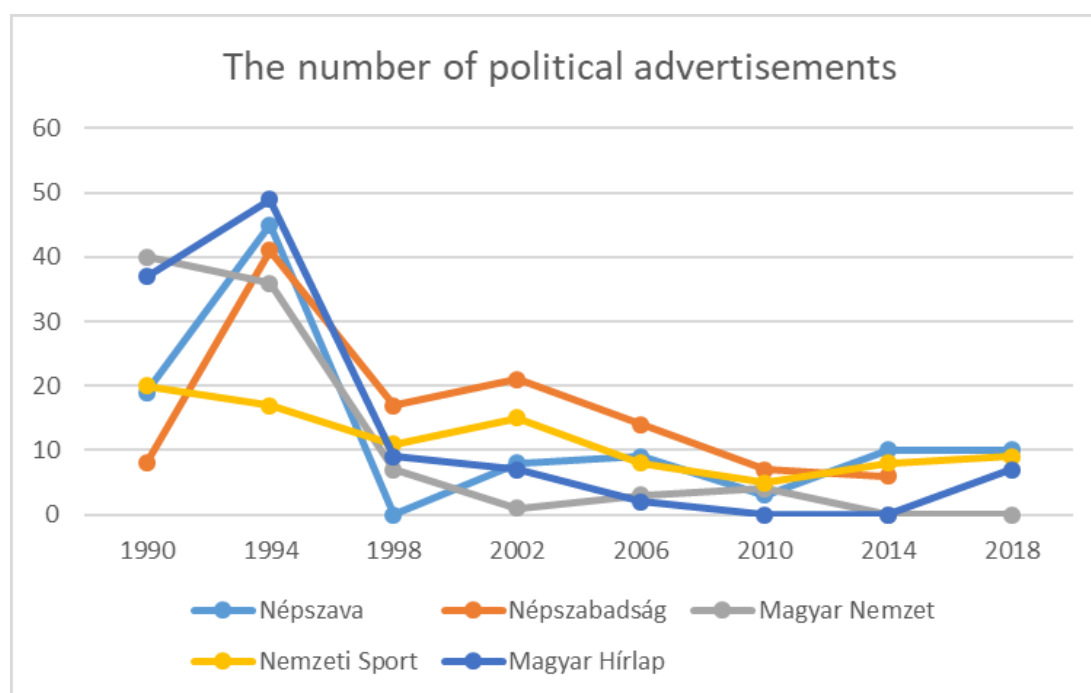
The first issue of the first year of Nemzeti Sport was published on March 15, 1903, on the day of Hungarian press freedom (Kókay, Buzinkay, and Murányi 2001). The paper was published under the name 'Népsport' during Communism, for four and a half decades it remained the name of the sports magazine (except for a few months after the 1956 Revolution, when the title was Sport only). After the transition in 1990 the newspaper got restored to its original name and foreign investors bought the paper. In 2014, Hungarian Mediaworks Publisher purchased the newspaper from the German Ringier (Arcanum Digitális Tudománytár 2019). The publisher can be seen as a traditional sports daily whereby special attention is given to the sports in which Hungary has traditionally performed well.

Chapter II: A temporal assessment of the campaign periods

2.1 The number of advertisements

The observation of the five newspapers throughout eight campaign periods has resulted in collecting 514 political advertisements. Overall, a robust growth can be seen in the number of political advertisements until 1994, which is then followed by a long-term decline until 2018, the last campaign period. The campaign periods of 1990 and 1994 were the most fruitful whereby the former generated 124 and the latter had 188 instances. The first 8 years of democratic competition in Hungary showed a spur in the intensity of campaigning and political actors bought more advertisement placements in newspapers. Népszava, Népszabadság and Magyar Hírlap published the highest number of ads in absolute terms during the campaign period 1994. Nonetheless, the campaign period of 1998 brought a huge fall, decreasing the number of ads to 44, which constitutes the biggest drop during the 28 years of the observation. All five newspapers experienced a massive decline whereas Népszava did not publish any political advertisement at all compared to 45 ads in the previous period. This decline was mainly driven by a change in the legal regulation of campaign financing which limited the expenditures of each political party in early 1998 (Transparency International Hungary 2014).

When taking a long-term view, the decrease was also partially attributed to the spread of television ownership and a shift to usage of television for advertisement (Upadhyay 2014). In addition, the diffusion of electronic media starting from the early 2000s also intensified this process. Roughly 40% of the population was using the internet in 2005 in Hungary, which grew to 68% and 76% respectively in 2010 and 2013 (National Media and Communications Authority 2014). However, the fall in the number of advertisements cannot be fully explained by the spread of new technologies since the centralization of the Hungarian media system also impacted the amount of political advertisements in various newspapers (The subsequent section will discuss this impact in more detail).



1. Figure: The number of political advertisements between 1990 and 2018. $N=514$.

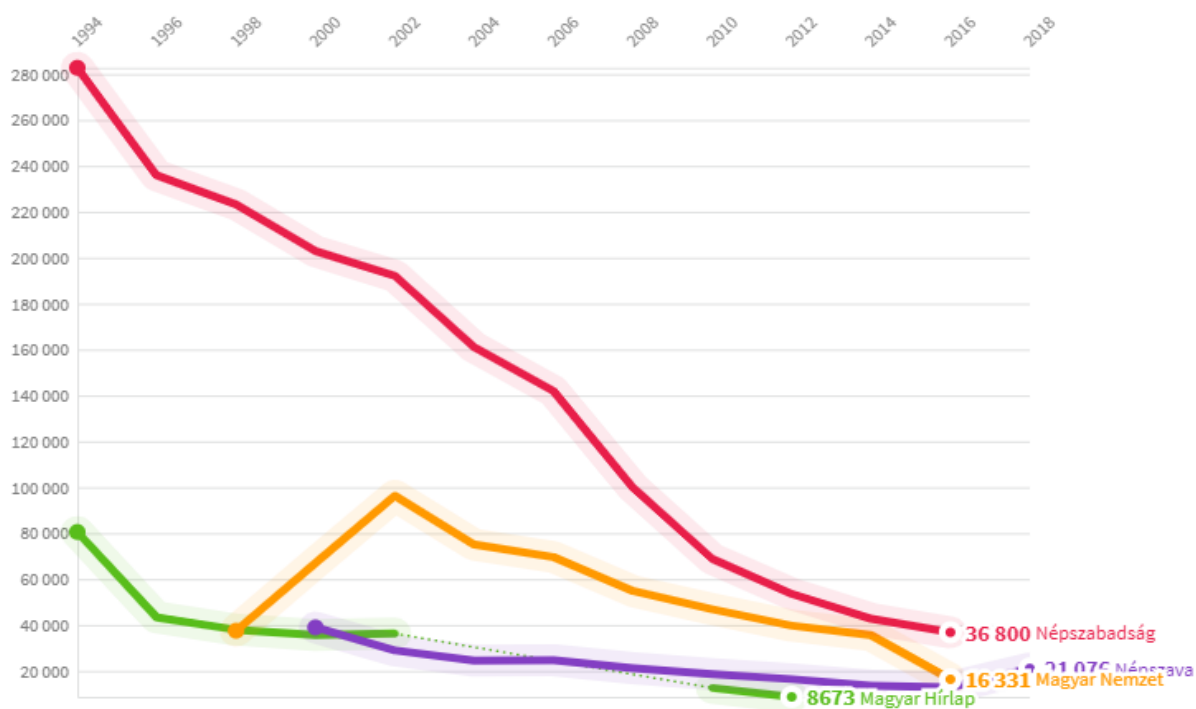
One can observe a slight increase in 2002 which is mainly driven by polarization and the closeness of the race during this election. This argument is elaborated subsequently in the analysis chapter. The campaign period of 2006 exhibited lower levels (with 36 ads when compared to 52 from 2002) until a subsequent decline in 2010 produced the lowest amount of advertisements, namely 20. Interestingly, the number of ads did increase slightly during the last two campaign periods to 24 and 26 but the number of ads failed to recover to its historical highs. The shrinkage in political advertising was exemplified by the fact that Magyar Hírlap did not publish a single political advertisement in 2010 and 2014, Magyar Nemzet also did not do so in 2014 and 2018, while Népszabadság stopped its operations in October 2016 and accordingly did not publish ads in the last period anymore. The Hungarian media system has changed drastically since 2010 due to the plans of the 2nd Orbán government to centralize control over media outlets.

The owners of Hungarian media outlets were almost completely replaced since 2010, leaving only a few owners on the market who have been continuously present before the election of the 2nd Orbán government. Which in turn changed the portfolio of the available media products and services, also indirectly influencing the number of political advertisements. The Hungarian media market was strongly weakened due to the negative effects of the 2008 global financial crisis, and it became less attractive in the eyes of foreign investors. After abandoning the market, these western investors gradually sold their businesses to local entrepreneurs who acquired the necessary resources through their political connections. As a result, new media owners have launched media services, while retaining strong connections to Fidesz. During this process, individuals with no prior experience of the industry could have become the most significant media owners of the Hungarian media environment (Polyák 2018). Nonetheless, one should not forget that the rules of campaigning have also changed during this period, so the effect of ownership changes is somewhat less direct.

Media owners with close ties to Fidesz, have acquired aggressive market positions, or even monopolies in some cases, in the distribution of daily newspapers, provincial daily newspapers, commercial television channels with nationwide coverage and commercial radio channels. These media outlets reach out to a much bigger part of society, than the remainder of critical media in all segments of the media environment, with the exception of online news sites where Index remains the most-read page. In addition, government-friendly media outlets possess huge advantages in the form of governmental advertisements, governmental loans, or due to biased decisions from the regulators of the media market, through governmental subsidies irrefutable of their functioning. Whereas, independent media outlets find it increasingly difficult to survive in the Hungarian market since Fidesz is generally not buying advertisements in outlets perceived as oppositional, furthermore opposition parties have less and less resources to spend

on advertisements as they suffer multiple investigations from state bodies and business actors also leave them behind due to the potential threat on the market (Atlatszo 2019).

The short ‘case-study’ about the fate of Magyar Hírlap provides a good example for understanding changes in the media system. The publishing company was sold several times after 1989 to foreign investors (to Maxwell, then to Marquard, then Ringier), so in 2004, after a change of regime, a newspaper with a liberal political background was closed down for a short period of time. The editor then resumed the newspaper but failed to make it self-sustaining. In 2006, Gábor Széles saved the newspaper from financial default and this also brought a 180-degree turn from liberalism to uncritically supporting Fidesz (Varga 2018). In any case, the ideological change of direction is initiated by the new owner who, in accordance with his political intentions, transforms the paper, which in turn drastically changes the readership. Such a change can easily decrease the number of hard copies that the publisher manages to sell. During the times of Communism, Magyar Hírlap was selling a 100 thousand copies, whereas the number of copies sold dropped to 13 thousand by 2010, and to 9 thousand by 2012 (Varga 2018). The publisher does not provide information on its sales anymore.



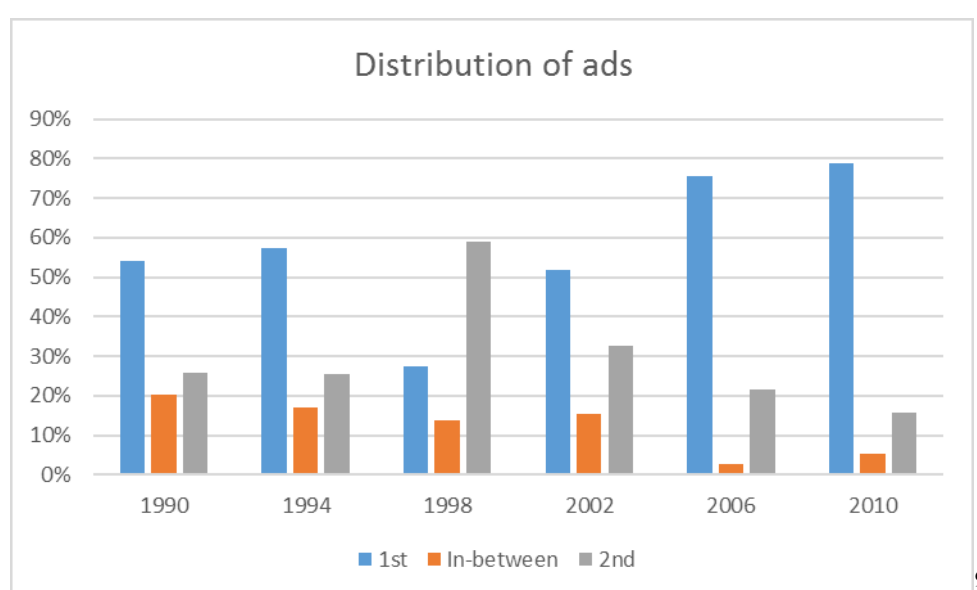
2. Figure: Number of newspapers sold between 1994 and 2018 (Attila Varga 2018.12.13. Index)

A positive correlation can be identified when comparing the number of newspapers sold and political advertisements published. Figure 2 above illustrates the sales of four political dailies between 1994 and 2018 exhibits a material decline, which aligns with the constantly declining number of political advertisements. This evidence suggests that declining readerships can also partially explain the declining trend in print media. Sponsors behind political advertisements wish to get their messages to as many people as possible, and the declining exposure through print media takes away from the attractiveness of this campaign platform (Róka 2006).

The law on election procedures, adopted in 2012 by Fidesz, prohibited the publication of political advertisements in commercial media. Understandably, this legislative act has also fostered a fall in the number of political advertisements. After the Constitutional Court found this law to be unconstitutional, Fidesz itself wrote in the constitution of the country that commercial media service providers may only publish free political advertisements (Kóczyán

2014). This in turn created a strong imbalance in the media environment since only those media can afford to place free advertisements that receive subsidies from the government, which in turn have close ties to the governing Fidesz. Nonetheless, market-based media outlets cannot afford to publish free advertisements and therefore opposition parties receive less space to represent their ideas. An assessment of the results will follow now considering the spread of advertisements during different periods of each campaign cycle.

2.2 The distribution of advertisements within individual campaign cycles



3. Figure: The spread of advertisements during each campaigning cycle between 1990 and 2010. $N=514$.

A look at the distribution of advertisements tells us a few easily identifiable patterns. Campaigning has been more intensive in the Hungarian parliamentary elections preceding the day of the first round of voting. The only exception in this trend was in 1998, when the ruling coalition of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) expected an easy re-election and therefore did not launch an intensive campaign. All Hungarian

⁹ Please refer to the appendices for tables that summarize the results of the data collection and provide the basis for the figures included in the thesis.

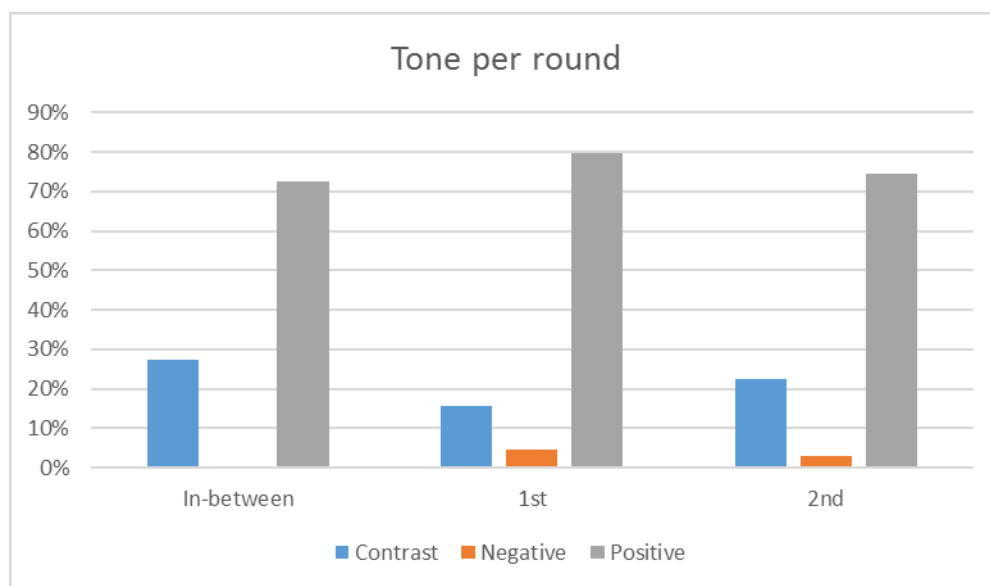
pollsters expected the previous government to remain in power even in March, a few weeks before the first round of the elections (Popescu and Tóka 2002). The MSZP leadership believed that the macroeconomic stability was perceived as a success by the whole country. In addition, several conflicts broke out between MSZP and SZDSZ during the coalition government which were openly visible for the public and accordingly decreased the legitimacy of these parties in the eyes of voters. For instance, the two parties entered into serious struggles concerning the quality of public safety, various corruption cases, the default of the Hungarian Post or the international strife with Slovakia over the construction of a dam at Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros.

Also, the second round of the voting seems to be connected to the intensity of the first round. The results of the study suggest a relationship of negative correlation whereby a more intense period of campaigning during the 1st period decreases the magnitude of advertisement in the second round. Which seems like a rational decision from political parties, when considering their cost-benefit calculus. In many elections the victor of the first round won by such a huge margin, that rival parties perceived additional campaigning as ineffective. The parliamentary election of 2010 could serve as an example for illustrating this trend, when Fidesz won c. 45% of the votes after the first round, whereas the second biggest competitor, a left-wing coalition of 5 opposition parties made up by the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Together (EGYÜTT), the Democratic Coalition (DK), Dialogue for Hungary (PM) and the Hungarian Liberal Party (MLP) only managed to win c. 25% of votes (National Election Office 2010.). Parties of this oppositional coalition decided to change their strategy after the first round, and rather focused on television ads that targeted Fidesz and the potential two-thirds majority it could acquire¹⁰, however the strategic turn proved ineffective and Fidesz gained a landslide victory by obtaining 68% of the seats in Parliament (Bátory 2010).

¹⁰ This strategic turn was not reflected in the results of the data collection, therefore external sources were utilized to understand the potential drivers behind the alterations.

Another discernable pattern was the declining intensity of campaigning between the two rounds, exemplified by figures that decreased to 5% in 2010 versus 20% in 1990. Especially the last two periods provided low figures when 76% and 79% of the advertisements within the campaign were published during the 1st week. The data collection did not provide an explanation for this decline, nonetheless, I hypothesize that strategic timing from party leadership could serve as a potential explanation. Party leaders want their campaigns to be as effective as possible, and the literature has shown that political advertisements are likely to be more effective when the day of election is approaching (Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer 2012). This would also reflect the process of professionalization that went down in campaign planning whereby foreign experts were invited to work on the strategy of various parties (Kiss and Szabó 2012).

2.3 The tone of advertisements within individual campaign cycles



4. Figure: The spread of tones during the voting rounds. N=514.

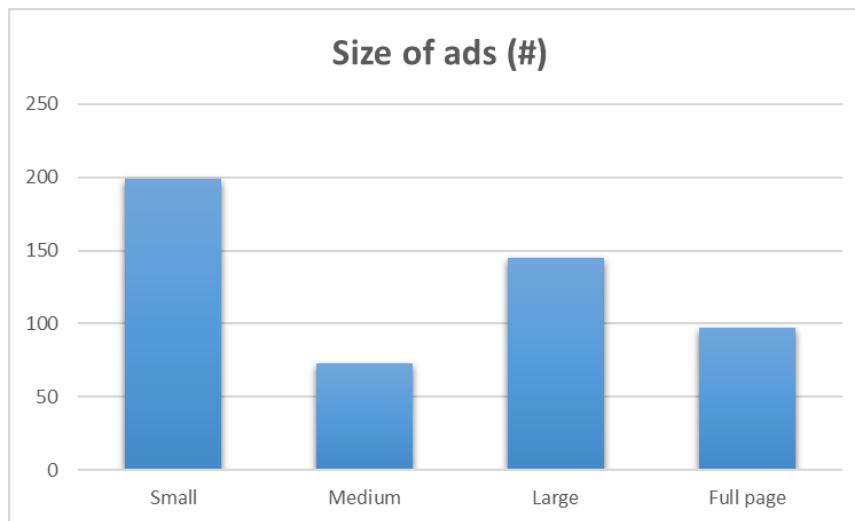
There were no material alterations between the tone of advertisements throughout different periods of the campaign. Although, one interesting phenomenon can be identified, namely that negative advertisements only showed up during the weeks preceding election days

with negative advertisements measured at 5% and 3% in the 1st and 2nd round respectively. This finding reflects a strategic decision behind the timing of advertisements, despite the small margin. An individual's exposure to negativity has been shown to be of key importance in the relationship between negativity and efficiency. Krupnikov demonstrated that “negativity will only be demobilizing when an individual is exposed to it at a certain time: after an individual selects which candidate he prefers, but before he has the chance to act on this selection with a vote (2014)”. Accordingly, the decision of party leaders and consultants to increase the proportion of negative advertisements during the weeks preceding elections day could potentially reveal a deliberate intention. Finally, the somewhat higher proportion of negativity during the weeks of the first and second rounds is more telling, when connected to the finding of the previous section of the thesis (2.2), namely that campaigning in general is less intense between the two rounds. Sponsor of the campaigns attempt to achieve a higher impact by intensifying the number of advertisements and by slightly increasing the proportion of negativity as the election day is approaching. This trend confirms the expectations of the literature (Van Aelst, Sheafer and Stanyer 2012, Krupnikov 2014) despite the small increase in negativity.

In sum, the temporal assessment of negative campaigning showed that campaigning has been more intense as the day of election was coming, especially the week preceding the first round of elections was historically more intense and that negative campaigning was slightly more prevalent during the weeks before election day. Note that the campaign periods of 2014 and 2018 were left out of the comparison due to the change of the electoral system in 2011. Although data was recorded for the two latest campaign periods, the results from 1990-2010 allow for a more consistent comparison due to the same electoral system in power. The thesis will now turn to the assessment of the intrinsic traits of advertisements by reviewing their size, issue and publisher respectively.

Chapter III: The intrinsic characteristics of the advertisements

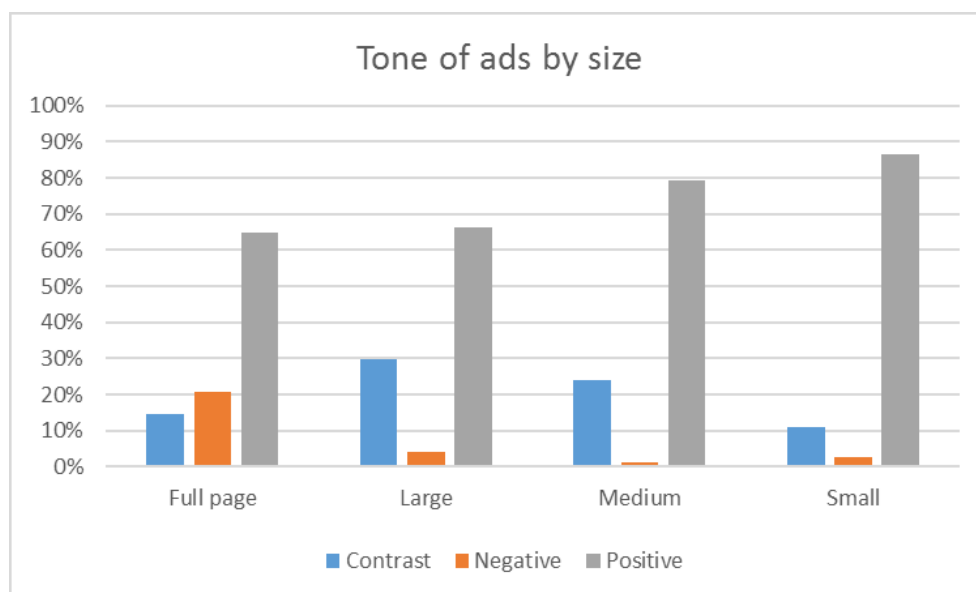
3.1 The size of the individual advertisements



5. Figure: The distribution of advertisements by their size. $N=514$

The small advertisements showed up most frequently (199) in the monitoring and bigger advertisements appeared at less occasions with large advertisements at 145 and full-page advertisements 97 each. Accordingly, the results support the expectations of the literature that bigger political advertisements appear less frequently in newspapers due to its financial implications (Upadhyay 2014). Which seems logical given that advertisements that take up a complete page are understandably more expensive and accordingly less affordable. Nonetheless, the usage of medium size ads goes against the expectation of the literature because this type was less popular (73) than the bigger formats. Based on the observations of this study, no evidence-based explanation can be given. The hypothesized answer is that reasons of cost-efficiency could have pushed actors to opt for another size¹¹. Figure 6 will exhibit the advertisements' tone by their size based on the data collection and its implications will be reviewed.

¹¹ No directly relevant research was found in the scholarly literature concerning the size of the advertisements that offered a potential explanation for the lower number of medium sized ads.



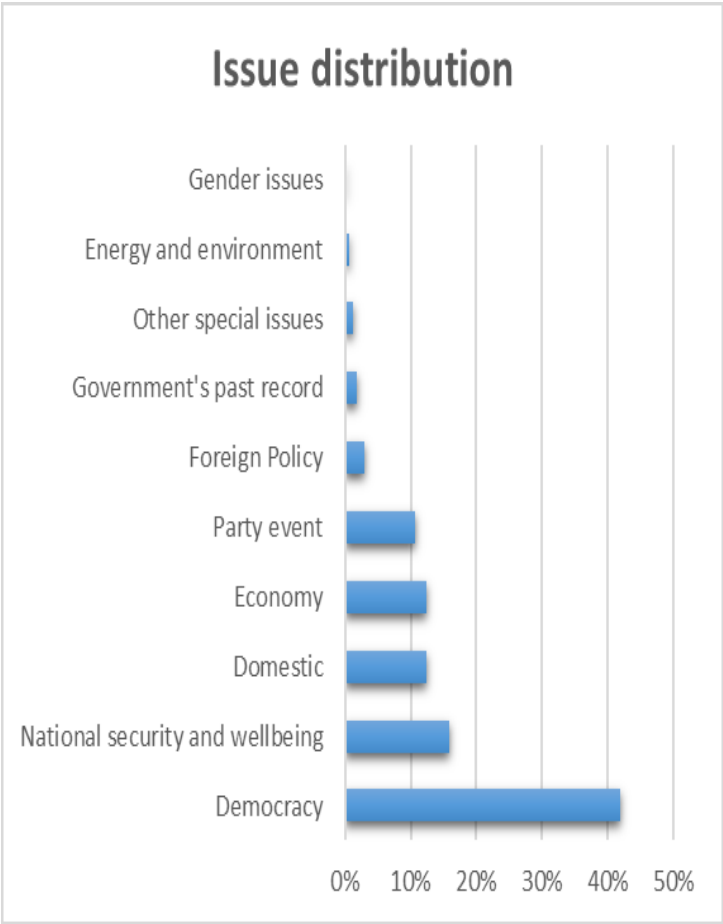
6. *Figure: The distribution of advertisements based on their tone and size. N=514.*

The tone of advertisements by size illustrate that a positive correlation exists between advertisement size and proportions of negative campaigning. The proportion of advertisements containing some form of negativity (meaning negative and contrast ads) keeps increasing simultaneously with the size of the advertisement. Whereas 86% of small sized ads were coded as positive, only 79%, 66% and 65% of ads were positive in medium, large and full-page sized ads respectively. Accordingly, full page advertisements exhibited the highest proportion of negative ads at 21% and contrast ads at 14%. The results of the data collection confirm that bigger sized advertisements host more criticism, since these provide more space for the communication of elaborate messages. In addition, full-page advertisements simultaneously attract more attention and can be more efficient in communicating the message of the sponsor (Kavanagh 1995). Whereas, small ads are adequate for simple messages that only aim to catch the attention of the electorate to increase name recognition. However, only bigger advertisements allow the space for the expansion of criticism, At the same time, small advertisement spots that usually take up less than one quarter of a page do not allow for a

detailed comparison of a party’s arguments and counterclaims. This might be a very practical consideration, nonetheless the results of the monitoring support this claim.

3.2 The distribution of issues in the observed campaign cycles

7. Figure: The distribution of issues in all advertisements of the sample. N=514.



Certain issues were completely missing from the targets of advertisements throughout the 28 years of the observation. Energy and environmental issues, gender equality concerns and foreign policy considerations are all questions that did not receive critical attention during the span of campaigns. Foreign policy matters were represented in 3% of the advertisements, green issues only achieved 1% and finally, there was one single advertisement throughout the 28-year period that discussed gender equality as

HAZÁNKBAN MA A NŐK ÉS A CSALÁDOK HELYZETE TARTHATATLAN.

A Szabad Demokraták nem szavakkal és nem tiltásokkal akarnak segíteni, hanem olyan tervvel, amely hatalmat ad a nők és a családok kezébe.

- A döntés hatalmát és a szabad családi vállalkozás hatalmát.
- Senki se dönthessen a nőkről nélkülük. Senki se dönthessen a családokról nélkülük.
- A nők szabadon lehessenek mások, mint a férfiak, mégis egyenlőek velük.
- De az egyenlőség ne a szegénység kényszeréből fakadjon.
- A család ne teher, hanem az élet és az életöröm forrása legyen.
- Mindehhez gazdasági, jogi, erkölcsi erő kell.

Szabad Demokraták
Tudjuk • Merjük • Tesszük

Illustration: The only advertisement in the sample, mentioning issues of gender equality.

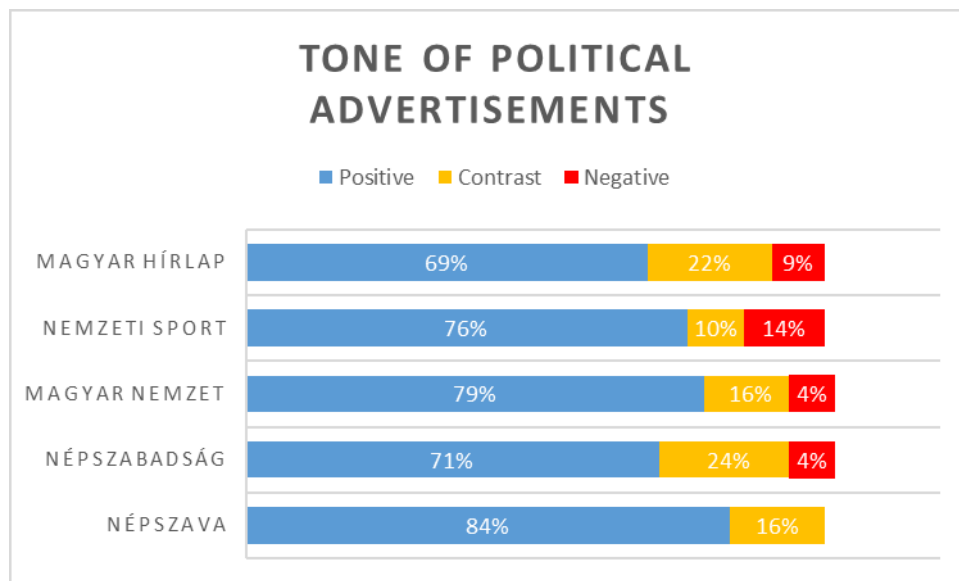
SZDSZ. 1990.04.20. Magyar Nemzet.

its main theme. See illustration 1, the advertisement sponsored by SZDSZ during the first free campaign period in Hungary that calls the attention of the electorate to the “untenable situation of women and families”. In this advertisement, SZDSZ promotes the empowerment of women by focusing on gender equality, the right of women to make individual decisions and the right to initiate free family businesses. The lack of criticism is peculiar since these topics provided numerous occasions for discussion during the first three decades of democracy in Hungary. The construction of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros waterworks and the expansion of the Nuclear plant in Paks both constitute issues with huge environmental and financial implications, nonetheless none of them appeared on political advertisements during the observed intervals. Influential foreign policy debates were also in abundance in the last three decades, but these could neither make to the pre-election campaign periods. Of course, the aforementioned three topics did receive attention from parties during the regular functioning of politics, however the

most intense campaigning period right before the elections seems to have a higher concentration on issues of economy, national security and wellbeing, and domestic political issues. Which is in line with the most popular topics internationally (Norris et al. 1999). The lack of environmental issues, gender equality and foreign policy issues among the observations can be partially explained by the decision to monitor newspapers directly preceding elections since conventional “hard topics” like matters of the economy and domestic political issues generally receive more attention in the last period of campaigns (Kavanagh 1995). But the weeks before election days provide the highest concentration of political advertisement and accordingly a trade-off was inevitable. Nevertheless, it is still surprising that these topics did not show up as important points in the campaigns.

3.3 Comparison of the dailies based on the tone of political advertisements

The comparison of the five observed newspapers has revealed some material differences between the entities considering the tone of political advertisements that they published. Népszava was the only newspaper that did not publish negative advertisements at all during the periods under review and 84% of all ads were coded as positive. Magyar Nemzet ranked second with 79% the advertisements containing a mainly positive message, and Nemzeti Sport followed closely with 76%. Népszabadság and Magyar Hírlap, two newspapers originally representing opposite ends of the political spectrum ended up with a rather similar gearing whereby only 71% and 69% of the messages remained positive. When approaching the results from the perspective of attack ads, Nemzeti Sport has disclosed the highest percentage of negative ads at 14% and Magyar Hírlap had the highest number of ads that contained some form of criticism with 22% of contrast and 9% of negative ads. Népszava is the last remaining political daily that remained roughly outside the control of the Fidesz government, but this cannot serve as an explanatory factor for the lack of negative advertisements in its portfolio. Since Népszabadság only functioned as a critical, oppositional publisher until its closure in



8. Figure: The spread of advertisement tone, illustrated by each publisher.
Based on the data collection of this study.

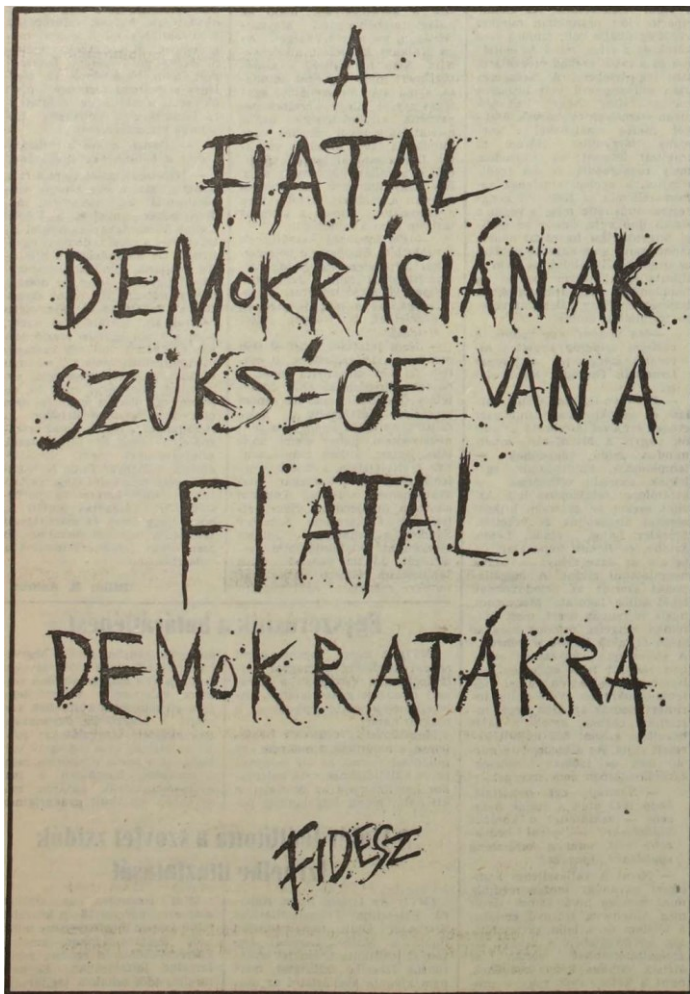
2016, but still shared negative advertisements. Nonetheless, the temporal distribution of negative ads does provide potential clarification. A material portion of negative ads in Magyar Hírlap and Nemzeti Sport were published after the takeover of these media outlets in 2006 and 2014. This evidence illustrates that partisanship can be linked to an increase in negative campaigning, and the fact that a change in media ownership can have far-reaching consequences even when it comes to the advertisement policy of a publisher. Nemzeti Sport is the only newspaper in the sample that stands closer to the characteristics of tabloid press, whereas the other four papers can be mainly characterized as political dailies. The traits of Nemzeti Sport being a sports magazine, half-way through tabloid press can explain the slightly higher proportions of negative campaigning. Mass media is characterized to seek conflict news more often and tends to emphasize negative news (Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2003). In conclusion, sections of this chapter showed that bigger political advertisements appear less frequently in newspapers due to their higher price; a positive correlation exists between advertisement size and proportions of negative campaigning; conventional issues were prominent during the campaign cycles; and that the type of newspapers exhibits an impact on the tone of advertisements published.

Chapter IV: The main characteristics of negative campaigning

4.1 The tone of campaigning on a long-term basis

The results of the coding mainly show a growth in the proportion of political advertisements that contain criticism (contrast and negative ads) over the whole period of the observation. Although, the campaign period of 2014 forms an exception, the long-term trend shows an expansion of negative ads and, simultaneously a decrease in the scale of positive advertisements. The scale of contrast ads was stable for two decades with similar levels throughout campaigns between 1990 and 2010, with 2002 as an exception. The shrinkage of contrast ads came in 2014 and was followed by the complete disappearance of this type by 2018 which illustrates the polarization of political ads in the most recent election. However, the latest campaign cycle was also special due to unforeseen levels of negative advertisements.

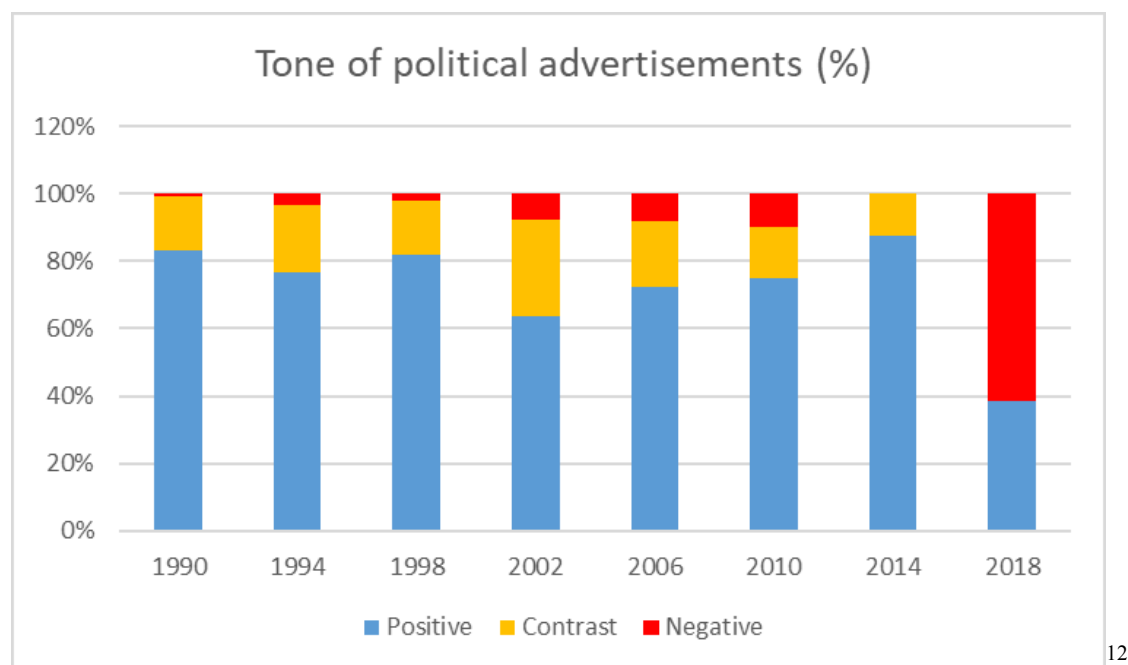
During the first campaign period 83% of all ads were positive, while 16% contained both positive and negative elements, and only 1 % of all ads were completely negative in their tone. The importance of the 1990 campaign period was huge as this occasion preceded the first free and fair election in Hungary after the end of the Communist dictatorship. The majority of advertisements were positive and those that contained some form of criticism were all related to the Communist history of the country and new conflicts that arose due to transition to democracy. The critique of former Communist rule was a reoccurring issue in the campaign of multiple parties and it served as standing point against which newly formed parties could



2. Illustration: "The young democracy needs young democrats" Advertisement from Fidesz. Magyar Nemzet. 1990.04.22

construct themselves. The fragmented nature of the party system reflected the traits of a newly formed post-Communist states and the directionality of party communication strategies only started to materialize in 1990 (Enyedi 2007). Fidesz stressed the need for young people in politics, SZDSZ criticized the previous power for not paying attention to families and women's issues, while MDF placed emphasis on the representation of the victims of 1956 who were seen as enemies of the ancient regime. The transition to democracy and a market economy brought massive changes in all aspects of life and this was also reflected in the themes of ads,

like in the case of MSZP who blamed hasty privatization and speculators who plan to seize all the land from the people.



7. *Figure: The tone of political advertisements between 1990 and 2018 by election cycles.*
N=514

By 1994 both contrast and negative ads increased to 20% and 3% and the themes of critical ads changed completely compared to the latest elections. Negative ads embraced new issues and targets, reflecting the learning phase of multi-party competition. Parties, like SZDSZ and MSZP who were in opposition during the first four-year term focused their campaign on the performance of the previous government (made up by a coalition of MDF, FKgP and KDNP). The parties in power became the new source of criticism and replaced the communists who

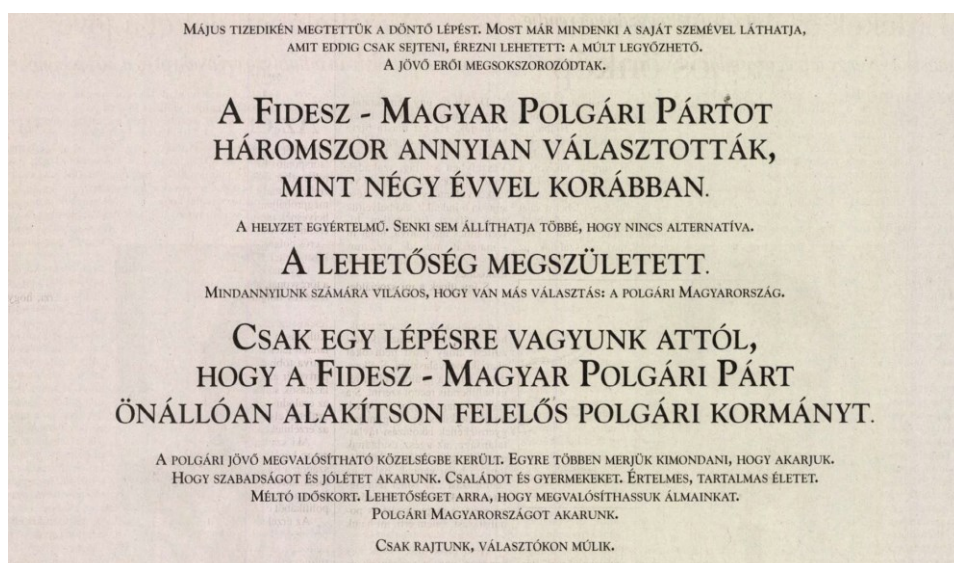
¹² The campaign periods of 2010, 2014 and 2018 are only based on 20, 24 and 26 observations, which makes them less reliable since even a small change in the tone of advertisements can result in a more visible change of the overall output. Nonetheless, a look at the whole period delineates a trend which reflects the increased presence of criticism in political advertisements.

constituted the “other” in the previous campaign cycle. The behavior of SZDSZ and MSZP confirmed hypothesis number three, in that parties in opposition turned out to be more willing to take the risks of utilizing negative campaigning (Kaid and Davidson 1986, Tinkham and Weaver-Lariscy 1995) and attempted to overcome the advantage of the incumbent this way. Not only the targets, but the issues brought forward have also changed during the campaign period of 1994. The quality of the political discourse was criticized by SZDSZ for being too radical and that it could lead to extremism, and MSZP also denounced the toxic nature of debates. In addition, inefficiency and corruption were also ranked highly among the issues which were stressed by the opposition. On the other hand, the critical advertisements of MDF concentrated on parties of the opposition of the left, especially on MSZP and SZDSZ thereby reciprocating the campaign „attention”. The number one issue of MDF’s campaign was the continuation of the old communist values and practices by the opposition parties. MDF perceived SZDSZ and MSZP as its main competitors and therefore framed these leftist parties as the successor of the Communist regime and its legacy. Gyula Horn, the president of MSZP between 1990 and 1994 was criticized by the incumbent for being inconsistent. This is an early example of personalized negative campaigning in the history of Hungarian democratic contestation. Furthermore, the first instance of mudslinging can also be attributed to MDF, who paid for ads that did not focus on any political issue, with the sole purpose of playing off SZDSZ and MSZP.

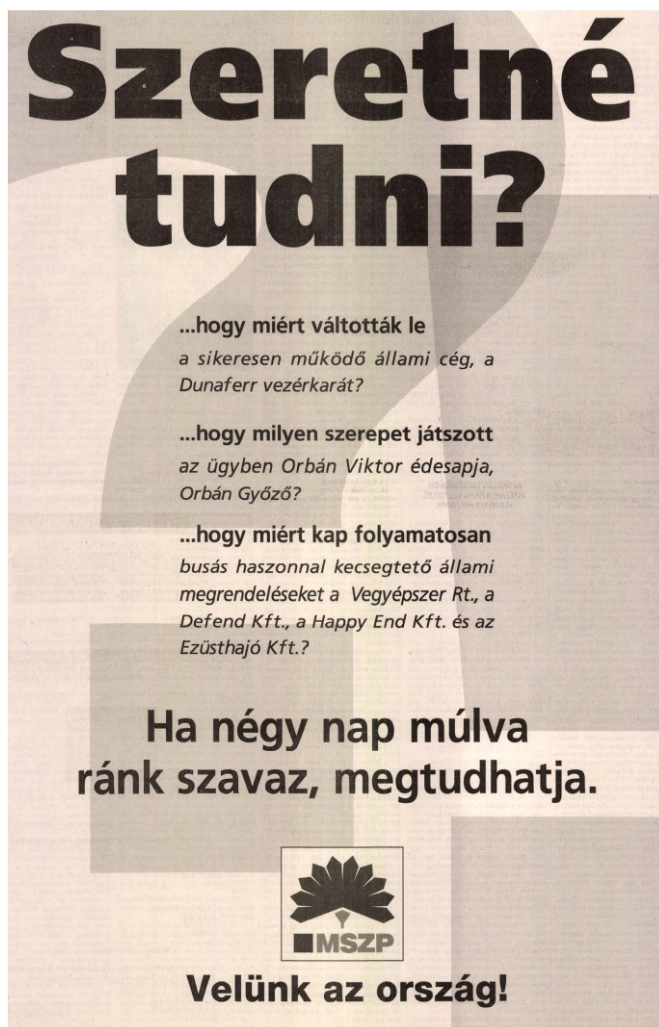


1. Illustration X: “Vote for MDF!”. *Magyar Nemzet*. 1994.05.26.

The incumbent coalition of MSZP and SZDSZ did not resort to negative campaigning during the election period of 1998 because they expected to remain in power for the subsequent period as well. The leftist parties conducted a predominantly positive campaign and those messages that contained criticism during this period only indirectly mentioned their right-wing rivals. In these ads SZDSZ and MSZP criticized the quality of the political discourse for being too radical and that it could potentially lead to extremism. Nonetheless, Fidesz, MDF or the FKgp did not appear directly as their targets. Due to the miscalculation of the incumbent parties and a strategic agreement between parties of the right encompassing Fidesz, FKgp and MDF a change of governments materialized (Mihályffy 2005). The behavior of the right-wing coalition turned more negative during the second phase of the campaign cycle. Illustration 3 criticized MSZP and SZDSZ for not taking Fidesz seriously and stated that the “past can be beaten” by referring to the Socialist Party. Fidesz identified well that the incumbents did not perceive them as real competitors in the race. Simultaneously, Fidesz wanted to display confidence in contrast to the more passive-positive communication strategy of the incumbent coalition. The ad claims that “Fidesz – the Hungarian Civic Party is one step away from forming a responsible government on its own”.



2. Illustration: “Fidesz – the Hungarian Civic Party is one step away from forming a responsible government on its own”. *Magyar Nemzet*. 1998.05.22.



3. Illustration: "Would you like to know?"
Népszabadság. 2002. 04.03.

2002 brought the second most critical campaign period among the eight observed cycles. The proportion of contrast ads and negative ads increased to 29% and 8% pushing down positive ads to 63%, its lowest since the introduction of democracy. Although the majority of ads were still positive, one should notice that each consecutive campaign period between 1990 and 2002 exhibited a growth in negativity. MSZP dominated the generation of critical ads, which all targeted Fidesz and its leader, Viktor Orban. The strategy of their campaign was diversified as they made use of positive ads, contrast ads and fully-fledged negative commercials simultaneously. The issues themselves that MSZP brought up were

also varied as they mentioned decreasing pension payments, the growth of the far-right, the lack of representation in the case of certain social groups and the issue of corruption. Illustration 4 by MSZP brings up three separate cases of alleged corruption in relation to the governing of Fidesz between 1998 and 2002. The party promised to shed light on these matters, if voters were to choose the Socialist Party to take over the country. Interestingly, no negative ads were found that originated from Fidesz in the five observed newspapers during the campaign period of 2002.

The spread of advertisement tones in 2006 was more positive roughly comparable to the previous cycle. The usage of negative ads reflected the rivalry of two major parties of the time: Fidesz and MSZP. The relationship of their campaigns was reciprocal, and all criticism was targeted at each other. The campaign strategy of Fidesz changed considerably as the party chose to use negative advertisements in contrast to the previous campaign. The preferred issue that Fidesz brought forward was healthcare whereas MSZP focused their efforts against Viktor Orban and not on the party of Fidesz in a more personalized manner¹³. Interestingly, the negative ads which were placed by MDF also illustrated the dominance of the aforementioned two parties, since MDF tried to appeal to the electorate by criticizing the idea of a two-party system. The campaigning strategy of MDF is in line with the assumptions of hypothesis number one, namely that actors who are lagging behind in an election are expected to conduct a more negative campaign. The direction of MDF's criticism also point towards those parties who are seen as more likely to win the elections. Interestingly, the criticism of MDF was not answered in newspaper ads by the two stronger candidates, which illustrates that Fidesz and MSZP did not perceive MDF to be a serious competitor. Retaliation would be expected from parties who serve as the target of attack ads (Dolezal et. al 2016) based on hypothesis number five, but no criticism was launched against MDF. This phenomenon exemplifies a power-relation whereby Fidesz and MSZP could 'afford' themselves not to react to the criticism. Based on these strategies it can be inferred that the examination of negative advertisements can also tell us much about the power relations and the nature of party competition.

¹³ Please refer to section 4.3 for this part provides a more detailed review about the targets of negativity

In the tight competition of 2006, neither did Fidesz, nor MSZP possess any decisive advantage which served as a catalysator for more negativity during the election campaigns. Fidesz was expected to receive 44.2% of all votes, whereas MSZP was measured at 44.7% in March 2006, one month before the election days (Gallup 2006). This cycle provided a textbook example of a situation whereby parties engage in more negative campaigning due to the closeness of the 'race' (Hale, Fox, & Farmer, 1996). The underlying logic of the hypothesis assumes that the potential gains from criticizing the opponent are calculated as more probable than the likelihood of backlash from the electorate under tight competition.

Both Fidesz and MSZP have placed great emphasis on negative messages during the campaign of 2006 which illustrates the increased stakes for winning the elections. Parties take higher risk in such situations because they increasingly perceive the elections as a zero-sum game. The increased usage of negativity entails potential backlash from the voters, but parties are willing to go further due to the characteristics of a tight election race. Among others, Geer argued that attack ads can actually foster participation by providing compelling information, and simultaneously motivating people to act against it by voting (2006). Meanwhile, the usage of forward-looking negative advertisements was a result of this close competition, whereby parties published advertisements that expected negative results from the competing party. Both Fidesz and MSZP implied possible financial restrictions, tax increases, and the incompetence of the other side in their ads. The behavior of these two parties support again, conform to the anticipation of the literature and showcase a continued bipolar contestation among Fidesz and MSZP.

The levels of negativity were comparable to the previous two campaign periods in 2010 and the conflict between Fidesz and MSZP remained in place with both parties targeting each other. This time also marks the diffusion of hidden political advertisements that communicate the stances of a party, while trying to remain covert in the form of a conventional newspaper article.

The spur in the number of hidden advertisements illustrates a shift in campaign strategies and partially explains the decline of traditional ads. The strong change in the characteristics of political advertisements can be partly explained by the merging of governmental communication and party communication. This practice allows for the utilization of hidden advertisements whereby Fidesz makes use of state resources in order to promote its own messages and it does so by publishing advertisements in the name of the government (Polyák 2018). In addition, the importance of the election campaign is in decline, since campaigning became constant. Fidesz perpetually advertises its own success and even more its current enemies let it be illegal migrants, Brussel or George Soros. Meanwhile, public funds are used to pay for these advertisements instead of separate resources of Fidesz which gives a huge advantage for them vis-à-vis opposition parties. For instance, during a period of only three months in 2017 between May and July, the government spent approximately €20 million on a negative campaign with the themes of “Stop Brussels!” and an attack on George Soros (Index 2017.09.27). Previous governments have also utilized the same technique, but only to a lesser extent (Győri 2019). Incumbent advantage is a clearly identifiable phenomenon, however Fidesz went further and overtly executed its communication strategy.

2014 was an outlier since the growing trend of negativity was interrupted by the “most positive” campaign cycle of the eight observed periods with 88% of ads possessing a positive approach. The high proportion of positivity could have been possible, in part due to the lack of real competition for Fidesz. The average pollster expected Fidesz to receive 51% of all votes from the electorate, whereas the second strongest competitor, a coalition of left-wing opposition parties was only measured to get 25% of the votes at March 2014 (Index 2014.03.16). Since polls expected a clear re-election for Fidesz before the elections, the party could afford itself not to engage in negative campaigning. The closeness of the ‘race’ proved as an important

factor in driving negativity in earlier cycles, like in 2002, nonetheless the campaign period of 2014 also confirmed the assumptions of hypothesis number by two. Levels of negativity were lower, in accordance with the considerable advantage of Fidesz. Although, the lack of negative messages from the opposition went against the anticipations.

Magyar Nemzet and Magyar Hírlap did not publish a single political advertisement during this campaign which influenced the results of this year since the proportion of positive ads has increased as a result. These newspapers chose to promote other media outlets like Echo Tv, that were also under the ownership of Fidesz-linked circles. Pseudo civil society organizations like the Civil Összefogás Fórum (Civilian Cooperation Forum), the Hungarian National Bank and state-owned utility companies like MVM took over the advertisements spaces formerly populated by political content. This development also implies that Fidesz does not need to conduct campaigning in newspapers based on conventional methods, since it has multiple other channels for the dissemination of messages, the Hungarian public television for instance achieves higher exposure among voters. In addition, the disappearance of political advertisements from newspapers can potentially signify a change in the campaign strategy as well. Since 2010, Fidesz is assumed to target Hungarians from the countryside and people with lower levels of education and a shift towards television advertisements could reflect this change in targeting (Győri 2019). This turn in the utilization of various media mirrors the findings of media scholars that individuals with higher education tend to consume more print media and less television broadcast and are more efficient in avoiding ads (Speck and Elliott 1997).

The decrease in the number of political advertisements was directly influenced by the conflation of Fidesz, as a political party and the government of Hungary. In the campaign period, the confusion between government and party politics is particularly serious. The opportunities for candidates and parties get impaired if a party in becomes coessential with the state (Bajomi-Lazar 2015). This habit was reflected in the campaign strategy of Fidesz concerning their

recurring theme of migration. According to this message the authorities are supposed stop migrants from entering Hungary. Although this message belongs to the campaign strategy of Fidesz, the political advertisements were published by the Hungarian government. In 2014, the Hungarian Supreme Court ruled that government advertisements that promote the goals of government parties are to be regarded as political advertising by that party (Nagy and Polyak 2014). Despite this ruling, the above-mentioned routine remains persistent (Herczeg 2016). To be consistent, ads commissioned by the government were included in the analysis as messages from Fidesz due to the above-delineated phenomenon.

The most recent election campaign of 2018 was distinctive as the proportion of negative ads was higher than that of the positive ones. 38% of the ads were positive and a 62% were coded as negative. Contrast ads completely disappeared from the campaigns and the first true single-issue campaign was conducted during this period. In the absence of domestic competition in 2018 low levels of negative campaigning were assumed, but Fidesz targeted external actors to retain its agency by dominating the public discourse (Polyák 2018). The sole target of Fidesz's campaign was migration and especially refugees arriving to Europe. The recalibration of negative campaigning against 'outside' actors was not predicted by the theory and shows the opportunistic usage of campaign strategies. With the decline of MSZP and Jobbik, Fidesz created a new opponent since these parties were not seen as significant challengers anymore.

Fidesz has been very successful in agenda setting and managed to keep the topic of the refugee crisis and immigration in the center of public discourse since 2015. At the same time, parties of the opposition failed to dominate the public discourse. The most significant concern of opposition parties is that due to their inferior financial situation and the lack of media exposure they cannot engage voters. Even if they manage to construct an effective message, it is very difficult to find a media platform that would be willing to publish advertisements that are critical of the government. (Pósfai, Mérce 2018). This in turn, also contributed to a low number of

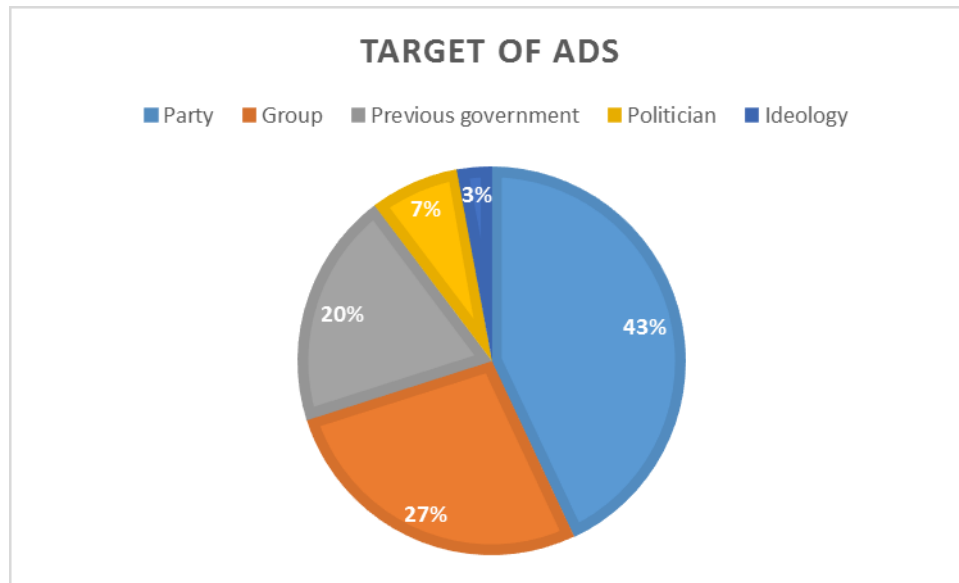
political advertisements in the observed period because Fidesz could rely on a variety of channels, whereas opposition parties are genuinely limited in the scope of potential advertisers.

It is nonetheless clear, that opposition parties bear responsibility in failing to bring up topics that could gain attention among the people. These parties remained re-active in their communication strategies and were constantly lagging in a persistent need to react to propositions of the government (Van Til 2015). The crisis of the healthcare system, the chaos of the education system, or obvious cases of corruption of individuals linked to Fidesz were among the themes which could have served as topics for the opposition to build on, nonetheless they failed to set the agenda for a lasting period mainly because of the uneven playing field among the parties with regard to their access to platforms for campaign (Pósfai 2018). Whereas, the aforementioned three themes never made it to government-friendly media, illustrating the polarized nature of the media system. Demonstrations organized by the opposition appeared most frequently in the messages, but no specific themes were intensively communicated.



4. Illustration: “Demonstration for the change of government”. *Népszava*. 2014.03.28.

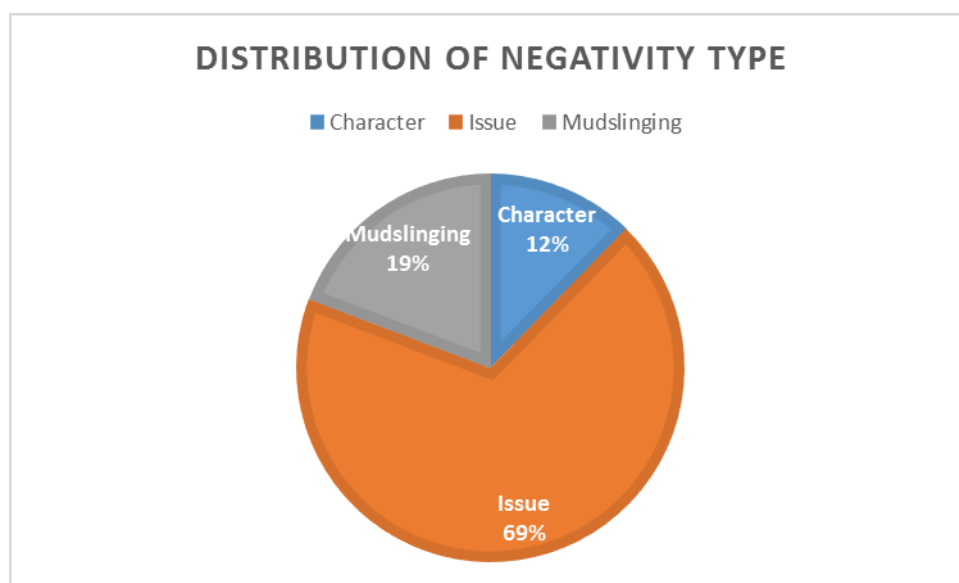
4.2 The targets of negative campaigning



8. *Figure: The target of negative advertisements*

The importance of political parties is again highlighted by their prominent role as the most popular targets of negative campaigning with 63% of all criticism. 43% of these ads were targeted at rival parties, whereas 20% was specifically aimed at a previous government. The Group value contained various actors with ‘migrants’, the UN, speculators and ‘supporters of the old Communist regime’ and received the second highest proportion of criticism with 27%. The party-centered competition of European politics is illustrated by the fact that only 7% of all criticism was levelled against individual politicians, which stands in a stark contrast with the candidate-centered political competition of the United States. Nonetheless, party leaders are obviously associated with their parties and even attacks levelled against them is connected to their party affiliation (Papp and Zorigt 2016). Interestingly, ideologies also received attention from agents during the cycle of 1990 when MDF, among others criticized the socialist ideology in connection with the ‘sins’ of the Communist regime.

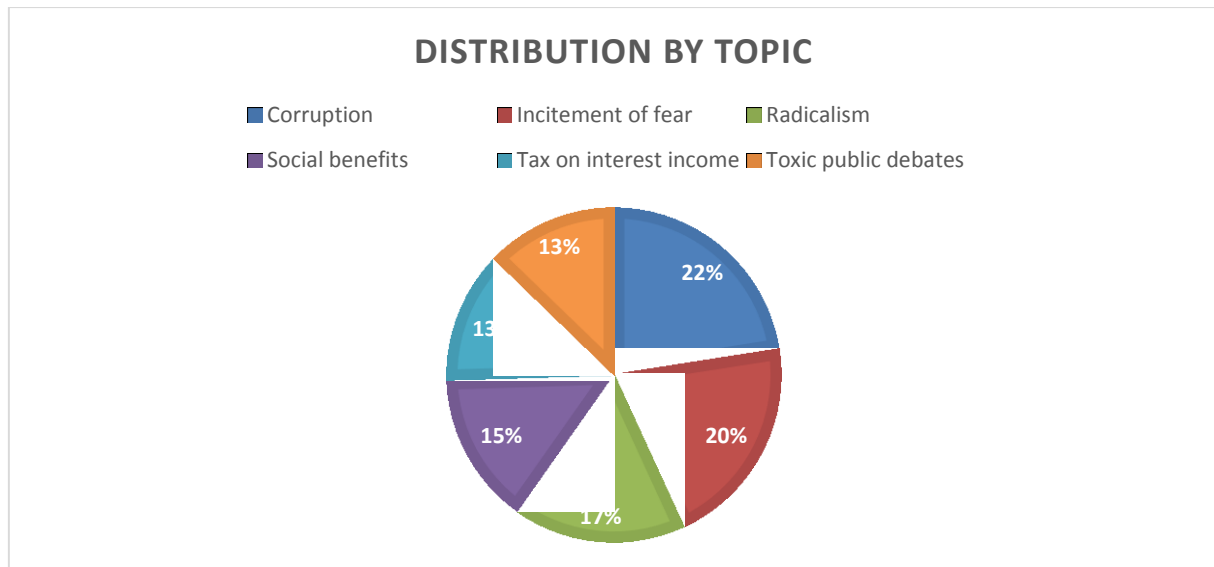
4.3 The distribution of critical advertisements based on the type of negativity



9. Figure: The distribution of negativity type among all advertisements.

A look at the distribution of negativity type shows that the majority of all criticism (69% of all advertisements that contain criticism) focused on a specific political issue. Negative ads that discuss politically relevant matters are generally more accepted among the electorate and are also perceived to be more beneficial to the workings of democracy by scholars (Kahn and Kenney 1999). The distribution of topics among issue-focused negative advertisements exhibits a diverse set of matters. Corruption ranked as the highest with 22% of the ads that focus on issues, which is dissimilar to the most frequent Western European topics, nonetheless it fits in the trends of Post-Communist Central Europe (Kiss and Szabó Gabriella 2012). The following two dimensions however do not belong to the most common topics and were not assumed by the literature. The incitement of fear with 20% refers to the issue of extremist ideologies, whereas radicalism also stood high on the third place with 17%. This is the result of the campaigning activities of SZDSZ and MSZP who criticized the quality of the political discourse for being too radical and that it could lead to extremism, and MSZP also denounced the toxic nature of debates. The focus of these two parties pushed the topic to the fore. Questions

of the economy with the matters of social benefits and the taxation of interest income were anticipated and their presence confirmed the hypothesized importance (Kavanagh 1995).



10. Figure: The distribution of topics among issue-focused negative advertisements.¹⁴

Advertisements coded mudslinging (forged attack) and negative advertisements targeted on someone's character are less accepted by voters (Trent, Judith and Friedenberga 1995) and these showed up in 19% and 12% of negative ads. These proportions do not seem high; however, the temporal distribution of these messages exhibits a trend whereby issue-focused criticism is in decline over the whole length of the observation, and simultaneously mudslinging showed a strong growth. The spread of criticism levelled against the character of someone remained largely even throughout the 28-year period.

Type of Negativity	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Character	25%	13%	0%	13%	19%	25%	6%	0%
Issue	19%	49%	9%	15%	6%	0%	2%	0%
Mudslinging	0%	12%	0%	16%	8%	0%	0%	64%

2. Table X: The temporal distribution of negativity type.

¹⁴ Please note that individual advertisements were grouped in order to ease the visualization of the results. Many advertisements only showed up once, and therefore they were organized into more encompassing categories for the sake of comparability.

The stark increase in the proportion of mudslinging is regarded as key because this specific type of negative campaigning is theorized to have unfavorable implications the functioning of democracies (Brooks and Geer 2007). The high concentration of mudslinging in 2018 is explained by the negative messages that Fidesz launched against refugees, George Soros and



5. Illustration: "The UN wants us to constantly accept 'migrants'." *Nemzeti Sport*. 2018.03.20.

the UN. The hike in mudslinging signals an alteration whereby the rational aspects of campaigning are substituted by emotional messages. Instead of political issues, an alternative reality has been created by Fidesz which engages the feelings of voters. This reflects a move towards post-truth politics, a framework which places a bigger emphasis on emotional considerations than on objective facts and rationality (Nábelek 2014). However, the dismantling of debates on conventional political issues has a negative impact on the quality of political communication since public opinion is impacted through negative

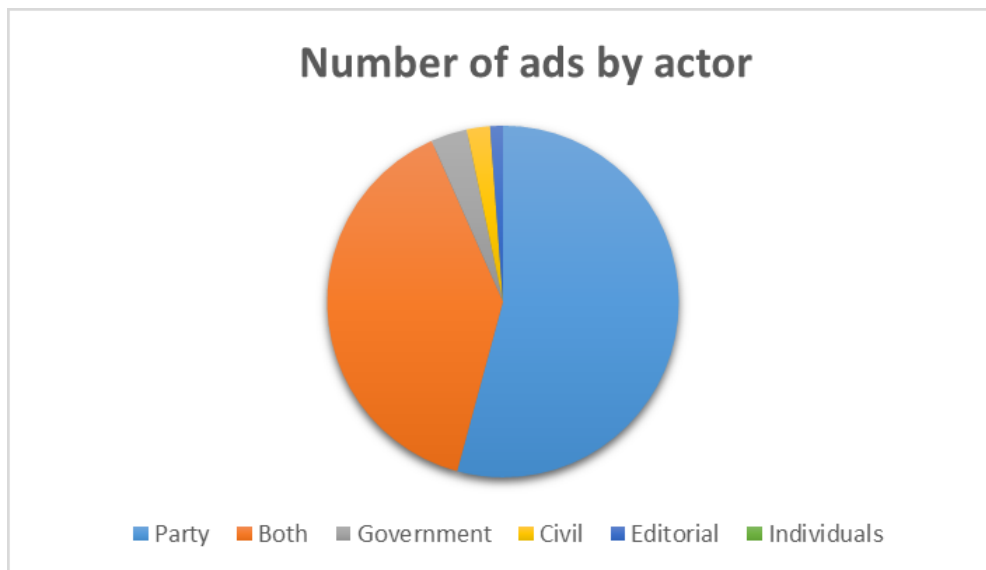
advertisements. This was clearly observable during the latest Hungarian election campaign.

The disappearance of political issues and rationality from the election campaign was also characterized by the rise of conspiracy theories as a prominent theme (Nábelek 2014). Governmental fora spread the message of the Soros-plan, which refers to a secret conspiracy that entails actors from the European Commission to the UN through the Hungarian civil organizations and plans to flood Europe with migrants. Interestingly, the distributors of these fake theories are not low-end websites, but the mainstream government media. The national

public service television channels, public radio stations, billboards, politicians, newspaper advertisements, websites and other platforms all share the same manipulative messages. In contrast to earlier election campaigns, the production of constructed conspiracies lacks any form of rationality and it reached unforeseen levels, while negativity also remained high. This chapter considered the tone of campaigning between 1990 and 2018 and compared it with the expectations of the literature. Afterwards, the targets of negative campaigning were reviewed, followed by the changes in the issues of criticism. The final chapter of the thesis follows now, which will focus on the actors behind campaigns.

Chapter V: The actors behind negative campaigning

5.1 The sponsors of political advertisements

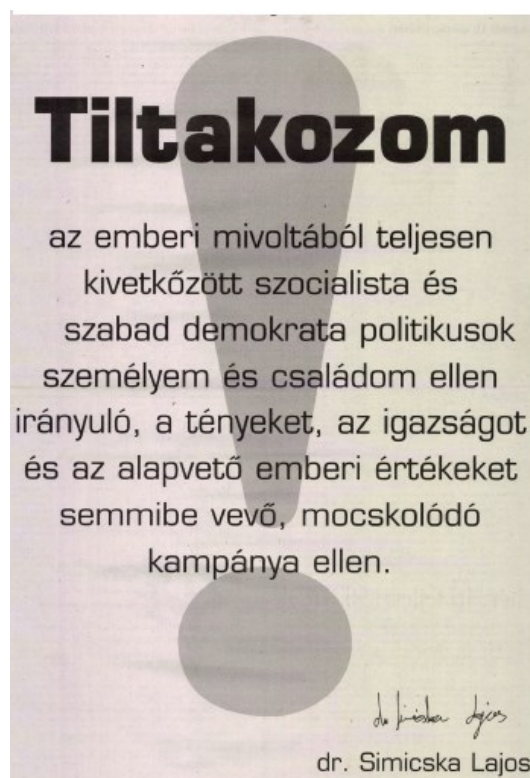


11. Figure: The number of ads commissioned by their sponsors. N=514

Parties were the essential actors when it comes to the agents responsible for the commissioning of advertisements. Political parties levelled 93% of the total advertisement quantum which clearly illustrates their importance in political campaigning and in the wider political arena. 54% of all ads were published to represent parties alone, and 39% simultaneously displayed the insignia of a party and its candidate as well. This spread reflects a political culture that places a bigger emphasis on the party, vis-à-vis the candidate on its own and accordingly conforms to wider European trends in campaigning (McAllister 2007). Historically speaking, European continental political advertising has been party-centered and therefore party-affiliation received more attention accordingly. Obviously, the results of this study show a stark contrast with American campaigning trends which exhibit a greater reliance on candidates instead of parties (Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000). Individuals who are not connected to political parties, civil society organizations, or other subgroups of society also appeared in the Hungarian context whereby 2% of the ads were administered by Civil society actors, 1% was ordered by the editorial staff of a newspaper.

While only parties were the creators of negative ads during the first two cycles in 1990 and 1994, civilians stepped to the scene as new agents in 1998. It was for the first time, that critical ads were placed by non-party actors which signaled the increased involvement of the people in the functioning of democracy, even though their role in campaigning never became material. The Magyar Szakszervezetek Szövetsége (Alliance of Hungarian Unions) advised the electorate to discover how well parties represent the interest of workers and unions but simultaneously also criticized parties that ignore their needs. Civil organizations also placed ads in newspapers denouncing radicalism with the aim of combatting the spread of extremism. The issues chosen by non-party actors were diverse, but sometimes these overlapped with party alignments. As a result, some unions were connected to conventional parties, however the important point here is that people started to get engaged. The Hazai Gyermekek és Ifjúsági Szervezetek (Domestic Children and Youth Organizations) called voters to be mindful about their choices and to take enough time to educate themselves about the program and promises of various parties. Although their activity can be regarded as indirect political advertisement by the party youth since certain subunits of the above-mentioned umbrella organization were connecting to parties of the left.

In addition, for the first time in 2002 a single individual appeared among the creators of negative ads, namely Lajos Simicska an entrepreneur who had close ties to Fidesz and was called out for winning too many state-led projects. He strongly opposed the criticism and paid for full page ads to

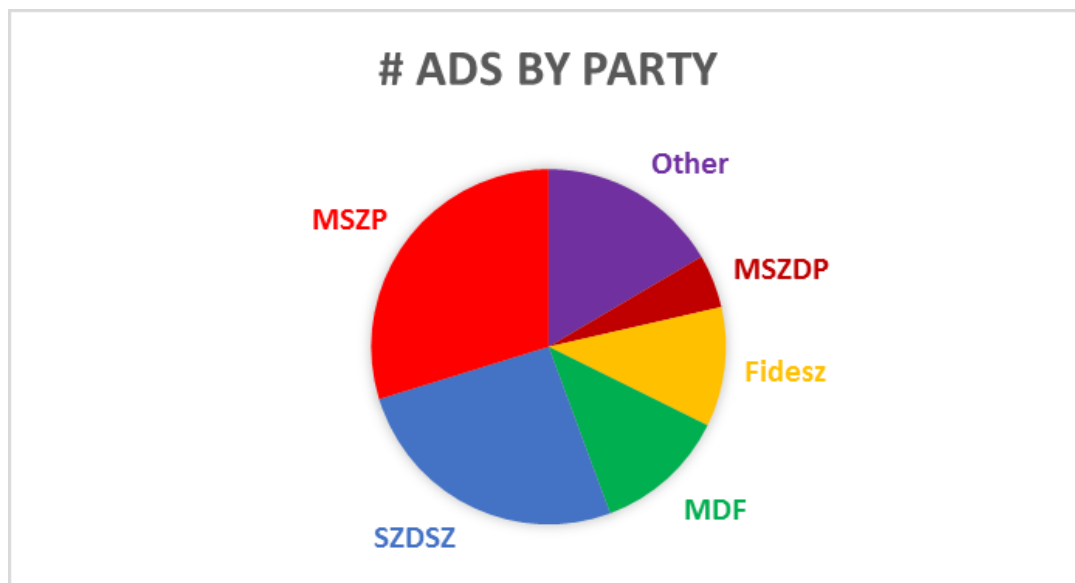


6. Illustration: Dr. Lajos Simicska denounced the alleged criticism of MSZP and SZDSZ. Magyar Nemzet. 2002.04.05.

counter the claims of MSZP and SZDSZ. See illustration number 7, which depicts a political advertisement, in which Simicska denounces all criticism against himself, while simultaneously criticizes the assumptions of MSZP and SZDSZ which he characterized as a poor smear campaign. Notwithstanding, less than 1% of the ads (3 pieces) were published by him, nonetheless he remained the only person to appear in the sample, without formal linkages to political parties or other institutionalized organizations. The involvement of a newspaper's editorial board in the creation of critical political ads was another phenomenon. During the campaign period of 2010, various board members of Magyar Nemzet were depicted on advertisements advising the voters which further broadened the spectrum of actors.

5.2 Political parties and negative campaigning

The list of political parties with the highest proportion of advertisements commissioned delineates fascinating trends. First of all, traditional parties are overrepresented in the sample, meaning that the usage of newspaper advertisement was the highest among older political groupings. This allowed for the striking phenomenon of MSZDP remaining present in the sample (with 25 advertisements), despite the fact that the successor party of the former Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) only commissioned ads in the campaign period of 1990. MSZP has commissioned the highest number of advertisements in the sample with 153 published campaign messages. In addition, SZDSZ and MDF managed to keep their positions as second and third parties in the ranking with 133 and 62 ads each, despite the dissolution of the parties in 2014 and 2011 respectively (Mikecz 2017).



12. Figure: The number of advertisements commissioned by each party. $N=514$

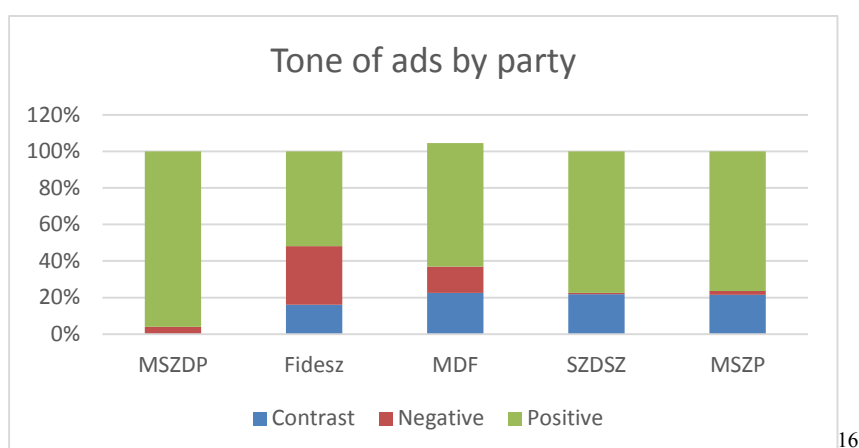
This development also points to the absence of younger parties from campaigning in print media. LMP (Politics Can be Different), a small leftist green party founded in 2009 only published three advertisements throughout the observed period, whereas the Momentum Movement and Jobbik had no advertisements published in the monitored newspapers at all. Which is striking considering that Jobbik, Momentum and LMP enjoy the support of 14%, 5% and 4% of the Hungarian electorate in March 2019 and have historically possessed higher support (Závecz Research 2019). The lack of new parties in the sample reflects different campaigning strategies from younger organizations who place a bigger emphasis on online campaigning, instead of opting for the print media (Papp and Zorigt 2016). In addition, the poor funding conditions of opposition parties vis-à-vis incumbents also played a role in their absence from the sample. Typically, public funding remains the most important source of financing for parties of the opposition and donations do not play a material role when considering their budgets (Enyedi 2007).

Another reason behind the absence of younger parties from the sample is the centralization of the Hungarian media system which made it harder for them to find media platforms that are

willing to publish their advertisements. Campaigning for opposition parties has generally been limited and in some cases even banned in the printed press (Kóczyán 2014). The lack of advertisements from Jobbik can be partially attributed to this development whereby the party changed its strategy and embraced an emphasis on online campaigning and by combining previously segregated groups though its extremist attitudes (Barlai 2012). Furthermore, the lack of younger parties also shows a bias of the sample towards parties with a longstanding history. Understandably, parties that have been around for a longer period had an extended interval for publishing advertisements and appear in the collection. Twelve parties belonged to the ‘Other’ category who together commissioned c. 17% of all advertisements (85 messages)¹⁵. Even prominent parties like KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) *inter alia* showed up in this group, which has been ruling in a coalition together with Fidesz since 2010. KDNP published 11 ads throughout the observed period (c. 2% of all ads), followed by Together, the Republic Party and the Hungarian Workers’ Party just to name a few other parties who represented c. 1% of all advertisements each.

¹⁵ It was an arbitrary decision to group these parties together in order to ease the visualization of the results. Please refer to the appendices for the table that formed the basis for the graph.

5.3 The tone of advertisements commissioned by Parties



13. Figure: The tone of advertisements by parties.

The review of advertisement tones by party suggests that Hungarian parties of the left were historically less willing to make use of negative campaigning, whereas right-wing parties used negative ads more frequently. This, however, does not mean that left-wing parties did not resort to any form of criticism, 22% of both SZDSZ's and MSZP's advertisements were coded as contrast ads. Interestingly, 96% of all advertisements from MSZDP were only utilizing positive messages. This was possibly because the successor party of the former Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) only ran during the elections of 1990 and they never participated again. The results of the data collection confirm hypothesis nr. 4 and the expectations of the literature, in that right-wing parties proved to be more likely to engage in negative campaigning, in contrast to left-wing candidates and parties. Based on this evidence it can be said that parties adhered to the special characteristics of their electorate and kept in mind that positive ads are more effective with voters of leftist parties whereas negative ads more often resonate with voters supporting right-wing parties (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). In sum, the review of the actors behind campaigning illustrated that political parties are the most

¹⁶ Similarly to the previous section, parties with a comparatively low number of published advertisements were not included.

active and influential actors when it comes to the commissioning of advertisements in Hungary, which is in line with wider European trends (McAllister 2007). ‘Older’ parties were overrepresented in the sample, whereas ‘younger’ parties were missing from the observation due to multiple reasons. Finally, the results of the data collection confirmed the hypothesis that right-wing parties are more likely to engage in negative campaigning. The thesis will now turn to the conclusion of this work.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to capture the changes in negative campaigning in Hungarian parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2018. By using the results of individual data collection and influential works from the scholarly literature the applicability of all five hypotheses in the context of Hungarian party politics was confirmed. Most actors increase the negativity of their campaigns when behind in an election, although the growth in the proportion of critical messages was lacking. These exceptions were explained by misperception about the power relations among parties and structural factors arising from the centralization of the media environment which hindered parties in the effective communication of their messages. An identifiable connection was present between the ‘closeness’ of a race and levels of negative campaigning. Although, the negative campaign of Fidesz from 2018 formed an exception when put in context of the expectations. It was hypothesized that in the absence of domestic competition Fidesz targeted external actors to retain its agency by dominating the public discourse. Parties in opposition tended to engage in more negative campaigning throughout the observation, but younger parties were not captured well due to a bias in the sample. Right-wing actors were shown to be more willing to make use of negative campaigning with Fidesz and MDF producing more critical campaigns than SZDSZ and MSZP. The retaliation by parties was mostly evidenced by the reciprocal campaigns of Fidesz and MSZP for three consecutive campaigns cycles. Nonetheless, retaliation did not appear in many instances due to the perceived insignificance of the attacker.

Furthermore, the proportion negative campaigning has increased in the long term. Campaigns varied essentially from completely positive campaigns that simply wished to introduce a specific party; to campaigns which only concentrated on negative messages, and interestingly several strategies were crafted by using a mixed communication strategy considering the tone of the ads. When it comes to the content of negativity, advertisements have shifted from policy-

oriented themes to emotional messages of post-truth politics. Issues were changing a lot through time. During the first campaign period the topics of critical ads focused on to the former communist dictatorship and the new conflicts that came with the transition to democracy. Later the spread of issues broadened to a high degree and campaigns also became more diverse. Some of them embraced multiple issues but others executed single-issue campaigns which was exemplified by the most recent cycle. The pool of agents who placed ads also became wider. In the wake of democratic competition parties served as the sole creators of political advertisements. With the passage of time new actors started to make use of this possibility like unions, civil organizations and individuals too but their significance never approached that of political parties. The relationship between hidden advertisements and the decline of traditional ads would be a fruitful direction for future research, as these are yet undiscovered and could improve our understanding of negative campaigning. The expectations of the scholarly debate about the communication strategies of parties can potentially be strongly affected by the usage of hidden advertisements and therefore would deserve more attention from researchers in the future.

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Appendices

1. Table on advertisements by newspapers

Cycle/ Newspaper	Népszava	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet	Nemzeti Sport	Magyar Hírlap	Annual total
1990	19	8	40	20	37	124
1994	45	41	36	17	49	188
1998	0	17	7	11	9	44
2002	8	21	1	15	7	52
2006	9	14	3	8	2	36
2010	3	8	4	5	0	20
2014	10	6	0	8	0	24
2018	10	x	0	9	7	26

2. Table on advertisement tone by newspaper

Tone/Newspaper	Népszava	Népszabadság	Magyar Nemzet	Nemzeti Sport	Magyar Hírlap	
Subtotal	104	115	91	93	111	514
Positive	87	82	72	71	77	389
Contrast	17	28	15	9	24	93
Negative	0	5	4	13	10	32

3. Table on tone by campaign cycle

Positive	Contrast	Negative	Period	Positive	Contrast	Negative
103	20	1	1990	83%	16%	1%
144	38	6	1994	77%	20%	3%
36	7	1	1998	82%	16%	2%
33	15	4	2002	63%	29%	8%
26	7	3	2006	72%	19%	8%
15	3	2	2010	75%	15%	10%
21	3	0	2014	88%	13%	0%
10	0	16	2018	38%	0%	62%

4. Table on Actors

Actor	# of ads		Actor	# of ads
Party	277		Party	54%
Both	200		Both	39%
Government	17		Government	3%
Civil	11		Civil	2%
Editorial	6		Editorial	1%
Individuals	3		Individuals	0%

5. Table on Negativity type

Type of negativity	# of ads		Type of negativity	# of ads
Character	12%		Character	16
Issue	68%		Issue	89
Mudslinging	19%		Mudslinging	25
			Total	130

6. Table on Issue distribution

Issues	#		Issues	%
Democracy	215		Democracy	42%
National security and wellbeing	82		National security and wellbeing	16%
Domestic	64		Domestic	12%
Economy	64		Economy	12%
Party event	55		Party event	11%
Foreign Policy	15		Foreign Policy	3%
Government's past record	9		Government's past record	2%
Other special issues	6		Other special issues	1%
Energy and environment	3		Energy and environment	1%
Feministic concerns	1		Gender issues	0%
Total #	514			

7. Table on the distribution of topics

Topic	Number of ads		Topic	Number of ads
Corruption	23%		Corruption	11
Incitement of fear	21%		Social benefits	7
Radicalism	17%		Radicalism	8
Social benefits	15%		Incitement of fear	10
Tax on interest income	13%		Tax on interest income	6
Toxic public debates	13%		Toxic public debates	6

8. Table on the distribution of Targets

Target	# of ads		Target	# of ads
Party	43%		Party	46
Group	27%		Group	29
Previous government	20%		Previous government	21
Politician	7%		Politician	8
Ideology	3%		Ideology	3

9. Table on the distribution of advertisement tone by target

Target/Tone	Contrast	Negative
Ideology	100%	0%
Previous government	90%	10%
Politician	86%	14%
Party	74%	26%
Group	51%	49%

10. Table on the Size of advertisements

Size	Small	Medium	Large	Full page
#	199	73	145	97

11. Table on the tone of advertisements by size

Tone/Size	Full page	Large	Medium	Small	Total
Contrast	14	43	14	22	93
Negative	20	6	1	5	32
Positive	63	96	58	172	389
Total	97	145	73	199	514
Tone/Size	Full page	Large	Medium	Small	

Contrast	14%	30%	24%	11%	
Negative	21%	4%	1%	3%	
Positive	65%	66%	79%	86%	

12. Table on tone distribution by issue

Issues	Contrast	Negative	Positive	Total
Democracy	19	4	192	215
National security and wellbeing	15	2	65	82
Domestic	24	8	32	64
Economy	21	1	42	64
Party event	8	0	47	55
Foreign Policy	0	15	0	15
Issues	Contrast	Negative	Positive	
Democracy	9%	2%	89%	
National security and wellbeing	18%	2%	79%	
Domestic	38%	13%	50%	
Economy	33%	2%	66%	
Party event	15%	0%	85%	
Foreign Policy	0%	100%	0%	

13. Table on tone by round

Round/Tone	Contrast	Negative	Positive	Total		Round	Contrast	Negative	Positive
In-between	20	0	53	73		In-between	27%	0%	73%
1st	40	12	205	257		1st	16%	5%	80%
2nd	30	4	100	134		2nd	22%	3%	75%
Total	90	16	358	464					

14. Table on advertisement distribution by campaign cycle

Campaign period	1st	In-between	2nd	Total		Period	1st	In-between	2nd
1990	67	25	32	124		1990	54%	20%	26%
1994	108	32	48	188		1994	57%	17%	26%
1998	12	6	26	44		1998	27%	14%	59%
2002	27	8	17	52		2002	52%	15%	33%
2006	28	1	8	37		2006	76%	3%	22%
2010	15	1	3	19		2010	79%	5%	16%
Total	257	73	134	464					

15. Table on the number of and tone of advertisement by party

	Contrast	Negative	Positive		Party	#
MSZDP	0%	4%	96%		Other	85
Fidesz	16%	32%	52%		MSZDP	25
MDF	23%	14%	68%		Fidesz	56
SZDSZ	22%	1%	77%		MDF	62
MSZP	22%	2%	76%		SZDSZ	133
					MSZP	153