

Investigating Political Scandals: Combining Conjoint Analysis and Audio-Based Experiments

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Abstract

This study explores how political scandals influence voter evaluations using a dual experimental design that combines conjoint analysis with multi-voice text-to-speech (TTS) technology. While voters evaluate candidates based on policy positions and partisan affiliation, political scandals represent critical negative valence shocks that can shape perceptions of integrity and competence. This research investigates how voters prioritize scandals relative to other candidate attributes and examines whether shared values, such as co-partisanship and ideological alignment, moderate their impact on voter assessments.

In the first experiment, we employ a fully randomized conjoint design to estimate the relative importance of scandals compared to party affiliation, policy stances, and competence displays. By differentiating between financial (e.g., corruption, bribery) and personal (e.g., sexual misconduct, drug abuse) scandals, the experiment sheds light on the conditions under which scandals are most consequential and how their effects interact with voters' ideological predispositions.

The second experiment complements the conjoint design with an audio-based approach, leveraging multi-voice TTS technology to simulate realistic political debates. Debate scripts generated using a large language model are converted into speech, where one politician attacks their opponent based on a scandal or a valence dimension while the other redirects the discussion to policy proposals. By varying the tone of delivery and comparing calm and aggressive accusations, we test whether rhetorical style influences how voters process valence-related information.

The combination of these two experiments not only provides causal leverage but also represents a methodological innovation in experimental design through audio-based methods that integrate multi-voice TTS technology. This approach deepens our understanding of how voters evaluate candidates involved in scandals and contributes to literature on negative campaigning and electoral behaviour, offering insights into how tone, delivery, and framing of political attacks influence candidate perceptions and voter decision-making.

Keywords: political scandals, voter behaviour, conjoint analysis, experimental design, valence theory, text-to-speech technology

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