

# The Videostyle of Philippine Senatorial Candidates in the 2004 Elections

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*The study explores the videostyle of senatorial candidates in the Philippines during the 2004 national elections through content analysis of their televised political spot ads and by using Hall's culture context theory and Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension of cultural differences as indicators. Results indicate that Filipino senatorial candidates followed cultural expectations and exhibited high-context communication characteristics in their ads. The candidates associate themselves with demographic groups and highlight their personal characteristics to depict an image of a "patron" who is approachable and reliable. These conform to what voters look for in candidates as indicated in past studies. The candidates tend to use image ads, adopt a rapport style in communicating, avoid negative attacks, smile more often, and wear casual clothes to show that they are like ordinary people. But there are characteristics that did not conform to the expected high-context communication such as the use of symbols that was only present in less than half of the total ads and the immediate appearance of the candidates and their names in the first portions of their ads. Results also show that spot ads of winning candidates showed more characteristics of collectivism and high-context communication than losing candidates.*

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## Introduction

Political advertising has changed the way election campaigns are conducted in the Philippines since the ban on its use was lifted in 2001. Candidates now rely on the power of political advertising to communicate their campaign thoughts efficiently as it delivers their messages to millions of voters across the archipelago instantaneously, apart from the traditional campaign methods that involve personal and face-to-face communication.

Nielsen Media Research estimated that candidates spent about P2 billion in 2004 to advertise themselves in the media during the election campaign period. Of this amount, about P1.4 billion or 70% of the total political advertising expenditures were spent for broadcast airtime on television. The 12 winning senatorial candidates in 2004 spent about P400 million for political advertising, representing an increase of 265% from the amount spent by the 12 winners in the 2001 elections (Gloria, Tabunda, & Fonbuena, 2004).

In 2001, about 38% of Filipinos said political ads “helped them a lot” (SWS, 2001) and 67% said television was the most credible source of news and information on the candidates (Hofileña, 2004). Candidates and campaign strategists believe that political advertising would now be crucial in bringing in half of the candidate’s total number of votes and increasing chances of electoral victory (Go, 2004; Defensor-Santiago, 2002). Candidates in future elections must not only have sufficient resources to mount an effective political advertising campaign. They must also be able to discern what images and issues they want to convey to the voting public.

The increasing importance of political advertising in Philippine election campaigns has raised several concerns. Defensor-Santiago (2002) argues that campaign resources would likely determine the outcome of future elections with rich candidates, who are able to purchase expensive broadcast airtime for spot ads, getting elected into public offices. Studies in the US found that the richer candidates are more likely to win (Grush, 1978, in Perloff, 1998; Elebash & Rosene, 1982). The need to raise enough campaign funds becomes important, which could divert candidates’ attention to contributors than voters (Arteron, 1992; Bennett, 1992a in Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Political advertising is thus blamed for making elections more expensive (Gloria, et al., 2004), trivializing political discourse and reducing it to clever tricks (Qualter, 1991; Franklin, 2004), being anti-rational (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991, as cited in Scammell & Langer, in press) as candidates are judged by their appearances rather than their capabilities, and transforming media institutions into political kingmakers and “autonomous power centers” (Swanson & Mancini, 1996).

While some candidates lament that they are being sold like “cans of sardines” (Gloria, et al., 2004: 19) similar to commercial ads, Scammell and Langer (in press: 8) argue that “politics is sold with far less regard

for audience pleasure,” encouraging candidates to make good use of political advertising in cultivating a more “pleasurable” and “emotionally intelligent relationship with the citizens.” Contrary to what critics fear about political ads making political discourse less meaningful, studies have shown that political ads affect voter knowledge levels, voter perceptions of candidates, and voting preferences (Kaid & Johnston, 2001).

With the huge amount of money spent by Filipino candidates, there is no doubt that political advertising has become the dominant form of communication between candidates and voters in the Philippines. This can be seen as an influence of the United States of America, a colonizer for a number of years that introduced elections to the Philippines (Rimban, 2004). The use of candidate-centered advertising, the hiring of communication professionals, and the reliance on scientific polls are some of the American-style campaign techniques that can now be seen in Philippine campaign politics. Such a phenomenon is called “Americanisation” (Swanson & Mancini, 1996) or “American-style video-politics” (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, in Kaid, 2004).

While US-style campaign techniques may be applicable to the Philippines, American campaign strategists tapped by some Filipino candidates in past elections had noted the differences in the political cultures of both countries that served as challenges to their work. These include the Filipino voters’ treatment of elections as festive occasions, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the role of women in society, the problem of electoral fraud, and the practice of multiparty system that leads to popularity contests and weakens the political party system (Chua, 2004). Strategists would also have take into account the cultural differences that affect communication in both countries.

Hall’s (1976) culture-context theory explains how culture affects communication, suggesting that people in different cultures communicate differently. The theory can be related to one of Hofstede’s (2001) five dimensions of national culture—individualism as opposed to collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Gudykunst et al, in Kim & Papacharissi, 2003). Hall’s theory can be considered as an aspect of individualism vs. collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). It suggests that high-context communication fits collectivist societies, while low-context communication occurs in individualist cultures. Based on Hofstede’s study, the Philippines and the US belong to different types of culture. The Philippines is a collectivist

society, whereas the US is the most individualist culture. Using Hall's theory, it suggests that communication in both societies differ. Filipino candidates may adopt American-style campaign techniques, but they may have to differ in communicating their messages because of cultural differences. The study seeks to examine how Filipino candidates, particularly senatorial candidates, present themselves in TV spot ads by analyzing their videostyle and using Hofstede's individualism-collectivism theory and Hall's culture-context theory.

### **Hofstede's Individualism/Collectivism Dimension of National Culture**

According to Hofstede (2001: 209), individualism "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society." It exists in societies where ties that bind people together are considered loose. People look after their own interests or their family's welfare. On the other hand, collectivism can be seen in societies where people are "integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001: 225)."

In individualist societies like Western countries, the smallest unit is the individual whose interests prevail over the group's interest (Hofstede, 2001). Speaking out one's thoughts is considered good and people are expected to take criticisms constructively. People have to engage in social conversations as silence is deemed abnormal.

In collectivistic cultures like Asian countries, the family is the smallest unit. A family is not limited only to parents and children, but also includes neighbors, co-villagers, servants, lords or housemates. Confronting a person is considered rude and undesirable and saying "no" is hardly used. People being together is considered enough even if they don't converse (Hofstede, 2001).

### **Hall's Culture-Context Theory**

Related to Hofstede's individualism-collectivism is Hall's culture-context theory. Hall (1976) says that meaning is composed of three elements, namely the communication, the recipient's background and preprogrammed responses or the internal context, and the situation or

the external context. It is necessary to know what the receiver actually perceives in order to understand the nature of context which affects the entire communication process. Meaning and context are intertwined. He posits communication can either be high-context or low-context.

High-context communication is “one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message (Hall, 1976: 91).” In transmitting messages, only minimal information is given because people know what to do and what they mean due to their close interpersonal relationships. Information may not be verbalized or written as it could already be seen in the physical environment or internalized by a person (Hofstede, 2001). Meaning resides in the situation and the relationship (Littlejohn, 1996). What is said is less important than how it is said and who said it (Griffin, 1997). Non-verbal cues like tone, countenance, gestures, and postures are important as communication is subtle, indirect or implied and bluntness is rude (Griffin, 1997). It fits collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 2001) wherein people value group harmony over individual achievement (Kim, 2000, in Kim & Papacharissi, 2003). People foster family-like ties, honor their ancestors, and dislike direct confrontation. Classified as a collectivist culture in Hofstede’s study (2001), the Philippines would therefore experience high-context communication.

On the opposite end, low-context communication contains “mass of information that is vested in the explicit code” (Hall, 1976: 91). Messages must be clearly spelled out because people in low-context societies spend shorter time together. They value logic and directness as they do not focus on contextual cues. People in low-context cultures believe in straight talk and assertiveness and ask questions to reduce uncertainty (Griffin, 1997). It occurs in individualist societies like the US (Hofstede, 2001) wherein people are governed by reason. In individualistic cultures, the ties that bind people together in a society are loose. People lead their own lives even at a young age and hardly keep memories of their ancestors.

According to Hall (1976), high-context communication and low-context communication are placed at both ends of a scale. There is no culture that “exclusively exists at one end of the scale, some are high while others are low (91).” It may be possible for people to exhibit both high and low-context communication, but one would always dominate the other. Hofstede’s concept and Hall’s theory have been used in various commercial and political advertising research.

Zhou, Zhou, and Xue (2005) found that Chinese ads used tradition and history more often as heritage is important in high-context cultures, while US ads were more complete in information and used direct product comparisons. Callow and Schiffman (2002) found that consumers from the Philippines, a high-context culture, were more able to discern implicit messages from visual images in print ads and a tendency to perhaps even over-read visual meanings than American consumers.

Similarly, Choa (2003, 2004) conducted an audience study on the 2001 senatorial spot ads in the Philippines and showed how participants in focus groups took note of the various symbols used in spot ads and gave various interpretations to the use of fire, lighthouse, and doorknob in representing some candidates. They keenly noted the candidates' gestures, facial expressions, interactions with common people, tone, and postures. Candidates who interacted with plain folks and ate with their bare hands elicited warm feelings, whereas spot ads with negative attacks and candidates who smiled less often turned off the participants.

Another study conducted shortly after the 2004 elections on the usefulness of political ads showed some similar findings. Using focus groups, Pulse Asia (2004, in Gloria, et al., 2004) found that negative ads were thumbed down, while humor made an ad click. Spot ads with jingles had stronger recall. The participants also looked at the candidate's background and character, saying that seeing the candidates' faces helps them to get to know the candidates better. Results from these two studies show that Filipino audiences exhibit high culture context communication attributes.

Hall's culture context theory has often been linked with Hofstede's individualism and collectivism theory in various researches. Wen, Benoit, and Yu (2004) found that the collectivistic Taiwanese' political spot ads emphasized character over policy, highlighted past deeds over future plans, and focused on leadership more than the individualistic policy-centered US spot ads. Chang (2000) said that the collectivistic Taiwanese spot ads showed characteristics of high-context communication such as fewer negative attacks, more implied information, more crowd shots, more formal settings, used metaphors and songs, while the individualistic American spot ads highlighted issues, used direct communication, and contained more negative attacks. Kaid et al. (2003) conducted a videostyle comparison of political spot ads from 12 countries. Although the authors did not apply the culture context and the individualism-collectivism

theories, some similarities and differences among individualistic and collectivistic societies can be seen. In this study, countries that had more issue-based spot ads were France, the US, Italy, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, and Israel. These countries ranked high in the individualism scale in Hofstede's study. On the other hand, there were more image ads in Korea, Turkey, and Greece, which ranked low on the individualism scale. The findings were similar to the study by Wen et al (2004) that showed a candidate-centered campaign in collectivistic Taiwan and a policy-focused campaign in an individualistic US. Kaid, et al. (2003) also showed that negative political ads were only pervasive in the US.

These studies suggest that cultural differences do affect communication and context is crucial in giving meaning to a message. This study therefore would look into the verbal and nonverbal components of the senatorial candidates' spot ads and examine if culture context influenced the Filipino candidates' videostyle.

### **Philippine Political Culture**

Montiel (2002) describes the Philippine political culture as highly personal, collectivist, and family-oriented. A politician's visibility in the community is very important. Even politicians' wives are expected to play a role in the community. Using in-depth interviews and focus groups with public officials and staff members, the study found that Filipinos value personal relationships. Politicians are viewed as patrons and family, who must exude qualities of a friend such as being approachable, easy to talk to, and someone to turn to especially during in times of need. Even physical gestures, considered as high-context communication, such as shaking hands, patting a shoulder, or having an arm on one's shoulder are viewed as signs of being friendly. Living up to such cultural expectation is expected of a politician. Gamalinda (1992) said candidates must have "an image that stands out" and which people can relate to, making image important in Philippine elections.

Studies on Philippine campaign politics have so far focused either on how the political actors and their staff members operate and function (e.g., Montiel, 2002) or how voters view them and their attitudes towards political ads (e.g., SWS, 2001; Choa, 2003, 2004; Pulse Asia, 2004 in Gloria et al., 2004). Studying the contents of political ads is therefore necessary to find out how candidates communicate their campaign messages to the voters.

## The Philippines' National Elections in 2004

In the 2004 elections, the Filipino voters were to vote for 12 senators. There were two major coalitions of political parties. The administration-led *Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan* (Coalition of Truth and Experience for a Better Future) or K-4 and the opposition-led *Kapisanan ng Nagkakasiang Pilipino* (Association of United Filipinos) or KNP. Each coalition fielded 12 candidates. There were also candidates who belonged to other political parties or who ran as independent. In the end, seven administration and five opposition candidates won. Some of the candidates' victories were ascribed to the power of political ads as they were virtually unknown prior to the elections, but no known empirical studies have proven this. While there was a strong association between voters' recall of spot ads and the final results of the 2004 elections, it was not a proof that voters relied on ads alone in deciding whom to vote for (Pulse Asia, 2004, in Gloria et al., 2004).

### Videostyle

Videostyle refers to how candidates present themselves to voters through TV spot ads. It describes the candidates' self-presentation by analyzing three components of the spot ads, namely verbal, nonverbal, and production (Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Kaid, 1998, 2004; Kaid & Johnston, 2001). The verbal component looks at the messages, both aural and visual graphics, contained in a spot ad. The nonverbal component deals with nonverbal communication contained in the ad such as candidates' appearance and body language. A face can communicate information regarding a person's personality, interest, and emotional state (Knapp & Hall, 1978). The production component involves the various television techniques used in a spot ad, such as camera angles, shots, special effects, etc., which can influence how people view the images shown in a spot ad.

It has been used in several studies on the content of political advertising based on party affiliation (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Joslyn, 1980), incumbents and challengers (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Kaid & Davidson, 1986), winners and losers (Kaid & Johnston, 2001), males and females (Benz & Declerq, 1985; Johnston & White, 1994; Bystrom, 1995 in Kaid, 2004), cross-cultural comparisons (Kaid, et al., 2003), image



ads and issue ads (Johnston & Kaid, 2002), and interchannel comparison of candidate self presentation (Banwart & Kaid, 2002).

Using videostyle, the studies were able to draw differences in candidates' self presentation in spot ads in the US. In terms of electoral outcome, it has been suggested that candidates are more successful when their issue advertising focuses on issues over which they can claim ownership (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994 in Kaid, 2004). Winners tend to acclaim, while losers often attack (Benoit, 1999; Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997, in Kaid, 2004). Winners exude more optimism, while losers show more realism in their ads (Ballotti & Kaid, 2000, in Kaid, 2004). Winners tended to attack their opponents' record, while losers attacked their opponents' personal qualities (Kaid & Johnston, 2001).

The videostyle thesis holds that candidates develop their own way of presenting themselves in spot ads (Kaid & Johnston, 2001). While it is not primarily developed and used to study or test Hall's culture context theory and Hofstede's individualism and collectivism theory, it has been shown in past studies that categories and variables used in videostyle can indicate how candidates use the medium to communicate their messages. The study shall look at the elements of videostyle in candidates' spot ads and examine if the Filipino senatorial candidates used high-context communication, such as using image ads, highlighting warmth and compassion, appearing with extended families who may be their constituents, emphasizing crowd shots, employing symbols, referring to their ancestors considered as patriots or heroes, using jingles, and avoiding direct attacks. It shall answer the research questions: What is the videostyle of the Filipino senatorial candidates as seen in their spot ads during the 2004 national elections? How similar or different are the videostyles of winning and losing candidates? In what ways, if any, did culture context influence candidates' videostyle?

## **Research Design and Methodology**

Studying videostyle entails the use of content analysis. Videostyle categories have been refined and developed since the concept was introduced by Kaid and Davidson in 1986. In addition, the researcher created a number of categories that would show whether the spot ads contain high or low context communication characteristics.

One way of studying the problem was to pursue a cross-cultural study on American and Filipino senatorial candidates' spot ads to investigate the influence of culture context in the candidates' self presentation. But there have been many studies done in the past on the US that already characterize the communication style of American candidates (e.g., Joslyn, 1980; Benoit, 1999; Kaid & Johnston, 2001; etc.), which mostly reflect characteristics of low-context communication such as use of direct attacks, discuss more issues, and fewer crowd shots. On the other hand, there has been a lack of study on the content of Philippine political spot ads since the time it was introduced by the Americans. By replicating some of the categories used before and introducing new categories, the results of the study can provide insights into the influence of culture in Philippine political communications. While content analysis studies communication messages systematically, objectively, and quantitatively (Kerlinger, 1986, in Wimmer & Dominick, 1997), they may only produce descriptive studies. The frameworks of culture context and individualism-collectivism theories were incorporated into the study to address this concern.

## **Method**

The study content analyzed all 114 spot ads of 28 senatorial candidates that were aired on national television, any time of the day, during the campaign period in the Philippines from February to May 2004. As the law had required, all political broadcast ads were paid for by the candidates, their parties, or their supporters prior to the telecast. The researcher obtained copies of the spot ads aired during the campaign period from Nielsen Media Research, a company that monitors and records all TV and radio commercials aired daily.

## **Coding Instrument**

The researcher used the videostyle code sheet by Kaid & Johnston (2001) and introduced some new coding categories for this study. These categories would look into the nature of the candidate presented in the spot ads, the nature of discourse, the portion when the candidates' names were first mentioned aurally or visually and when the candidates were

first seen in their spot ads, the presence of family and what kind of family is shown, the kinds of interaction with the crowds, and the use of jingles.

Three new categories are introduced in the verbal component. A candidate's nature is coded as either leader/dynamic speaker or friend/patron/father figure. Ads in individualistic society would likely have candidates speak on issues and portrayed as capable leaders, while ads in collectivistic society would likely portray candidates as family or friend. The manner in which the candidate spoke in the ad is coded either as report style, where information is transferred or issue discussed, or rapport style, where emotion is used to connect to audiences and make them feel that candidates understand their plight and feelings. The presence of a candidate's jingle is also coded, whether it is used as background music or a music video.

Three new categories are also introduced in the nonverbal component. A candidate is coded as appearing alone or with other people when they deliver a spiel. Who they interact with as seen in the video or any still photo in the ad is coded as present. Candidates are seen interacting with their families, constituents, or celebrities (government and non-government). How they interact with the people, either in moving images or still images is also coded as present or absent in the ad. Candidates are seen shaking people's hands, patting their shoulders, waving, kissing, embracing, talking, and smiling. Gestures are important cultural signs that may have a positive meaning in one country, but a negative meaning in another country (De Mooij, 2005). Filipinos judge a candidate's character by looking at a candidate's face and body movement (Choa, 2003; Pulse Asia, 2004, in Gloria et al., 2004).

For the production component, two new categories were introduced. Coders took note at which portion of the ads the candidate appeared as well as the portion where the candidate's name is seen or heard in the ad. They were coded either as appearing in the first 1/3 portion, second 1/3 portion, or the third 1/3 portion of the ad.

### **Intercoder Reliability**

The intercoder reliability computed across all categories was computed at 97.67% (+.9767) using the Holsti (1969) formula, wherein reliability

(R) is equal to twice the number of coding decisions agreed by the two coders (2M) divided by the total number of coding decisions by the first and the second coders ( $N_1 + N_2$ ).

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

Frequencies of dominant characteristics and presence of predefined categories were presented in this study. Cross tabulations and chi-squares were computed to determine significant differences between winners and losers at a significance level of 5 percent. Significant differences were considered if the p-value is  $\leq .05$ .

### **Results and Discussion**

In determining the videostyle of the Philippine senatorial candidates, descriptive statistics were used to obtain the frequencies in the coding categories.

#### *Results*

#### Videostyle of Philippine senatorial candidates

The results shall be discussed in three parts: verbal, non-verbal, and production components.

##### *1. Verbal component of Philippine senatorial ads*

Table 1 shows Filipino senatorial candidates exhibiting characteristics that conform to a collectivistic culture. There were more candidates portrayed as a friend, patron, or father figure and used a rapport style, wherein candidates conversed to exchange feelings or convey emotions that they understand the people's feelings. Boots Anson Roa, for example, was seen as a mother figure in her spot ads. Speaking calmly and slowly, she emphasized that as a mother, she understands the importance of family in society. Two-thirds of the candidates used their campaign jingles not only as a mnemonic device for name-recall, but also to point out their personal attributes in catchy songs instead of directly telling the people who they are.

Table 1. Verbal components: Nature of candidates, candidates' discourse, and use of jingle (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Nature of Candidate <sup>a</sup>	<i>n</i> =113	
Friend/patron/father figure	60	53.0%
Leader/dynamic speaker	53	47.0%
Nature of candidate's discourse <sup>ab</sup>	<i>n</i> =113	
Rapport style	37	56.0%
Report style	29	44.0%
Use of candidate's jingle	<i>N</i> =114	
Yes	38	33.3%
No	76	66.7%

<sup>a</sup>"Cannot determine/Not applicable" responses excluded.

<sup>b</sup>"Candidate did not speak in the ad" responses excluded.

All spot ads focused on the candidates positively. None of them made any direct attacks against their opponents. The results are consistent with cultural expectations in a collectivistic culture. Some candidates made indirect attacks against fellow candidates and corrupt public officials in their spot ads in 2001 but the technique appalled viewers who found negative attacks unacceptable (Choa, 2003). They said that negative ads do not do anything good for the electorate and the candidates (Gloria et al., 2004). A common insight generated from both studies is that Filipino voters think no candidate is really clean. Table 2 shows only two ads containing portions of general and indirect attacks against corrupt officials.

Image ads are those that emphasize candidates' personal qualities, background, traits, qualifications, etc. This can be seen in the ads of Pia Cayetano, Robert Jaworski, and Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. Issue ads show the candidates' issue concerns, policy preference, or policy proposal. Juan Ponce Enrile promised to solve the problem of rising cost of electricity, while Boots Anson Roa vowed to put an end to domestic violence. A past study showed that viewers tended to favor image ads as the use of

Table 2. Verbal component: Negative attacks (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Presence of negative attack		
Indirect attack vs. government & other parties	2	1.8%

issues in spot ads may either reinforce or alienate potential voters, depending on their views on the issue. Studies (Choa, 2003; Gloria et al., 2004) showed that image ads sit well with voters as they put a premium on candidates' background. Viewers may perceive some candidates with limited capabilities if they focus on single issues (Choa, 2003).

Consistent with literature findings that image is important in Philippine politics, most of the senatorial ads (76.3%) are image ads, associating the candidates with certain demographic groups (69.3%) such as plain folks, laborers, students, housewives, market vendors, etc., and highlighting their personal characteristics (66.7%).

Many candidates use ethos appeal or source credibility (41%) in portraying themselves as approachable by tapping ordinary citizens to vouch for them. Richard Gordon had his Subic volunteers and supporters talking about him positively, while John Osmena showed students, professionals, and other plain folks thanking him for his work in the Senate that paved the way for more cellular phones in the country. This is followed by the use of emotional appeal (31%), which could be seen in Defensor-Santiago's "*Dasal*" (Prayer) television commercial (TVC). The ad opened with a slow dramatic music, while showing the candidate kneeling and praying intently to God, thanking Him for teaching her how to love her children and her country. Logic appeal, a characteristic expected in an individualist culture, ranked lowest at 28 percent. This can be seen in Alfredo Lim's TVC wherein he promised to give free education and hospitalization and to fight injustice.

Table 3 shows that about 12% of the total senatorial ads have ordinary citizens as the dominant speaker in the ad. The result showing that 25.4% of the ads have candidates as the dominant speaker would seem to defy cultural expectations in a collectivistic society where indirect communication is preferred, but it must be noted that 29.8% of the ads have anonymous dominant speakers doing the voice-overs (anonymous announcer, 19.3%) or singing the candidate's jingle (anonymous singer, 10.5%) as the dominant speakers, which would be expected more in a

Table 3. Verbal components: Emphasis, content, appeal, and dominant speaker (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Emphasis of the ad	N=114	
Image	87	76.3%
Issue	27	23.7%
Ad content (code for presence)	N=114	
Linking of candidates with demographic groups	79	69.3%
Personal characteristics of candidate	76	66.7%
Candidate's issue concern	51	44.7%
Emphasis on partisanship of candidate	22	19.3%
Vague policy proposal	19	16.7%
Specify policy proposal	5	4.4%
Type of appeal used <sup>a</sup>	n=113	
Source credibility/ethos appeal	46	41.0%
Emotional	35	31.0%
Logical	32	28.0%
Dominant speaker	N=114	
Candidate	29	25.4%
Anonymous announcer	22	19.3%
Ordinary citizens	14	12.3%
Anonymous singer	12	10.5%
Government official/office holder	5	4.4%
Non-government celebrity	2	1.8%
Combination	30	26.3%

<sup>a</sup>"Cannot determine/Not applicable" responses excluded.

Table 4. Verbal components: Dominant issue in ads (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Top five dominant issues emphasized in the ad		
Economic concerns	15	13.2%
Good governance/leadership	10	8.8%
Graft and corruption	8	7.0%
Justice and human rights	7	6.1%
Nationalism/love for country	5	4.4%
Education	5	4.4%
No dominant issue	34	29.8%

collectivistic society. Viewers of political ads in a past study did not mind if the candidate spoke or a voice-over is used (Choa, 2003).

Many of the ads did not tackle any issue (34%) in their ads. Of the ads that mentioned some issues, economic concerns such as price increases, employment, housing, and poverty top the list. Table 4 shows the top five dominant issues emphasized in the ads. The results were almost similar when the ads were coded for issues mentioned, not dominant, in the ads. Economic concerns were mentioned in 23% of the ads, followed by good governance, education, justice and human rights at 10.5%, graft and corruption at 9.6%, and environmental concerns at 8.8 percent. The absence of issues in most ads indicates a strategy favoring image-building, a characteristic expected in a collectivist culture.

## 2. *Nonverbal component of Philippine senatorial ads*

In high-context cultures, nonverbal messages are equally important as verbal messages. How the candidates appear in the spot ads would be as crucial as what they or the dominant speakers would say.

Table 5 indicates that most candidates (61%) appear dominantly alone in their ads, especially when they speak in their ads. But they employ special effects like montage, slow motion, and freeze frames to show photos and still video of candidates interacting with their constituents. Interdependence, group harmony, and cooperation are valued in collectivistic cultures. About 56% of the ads showed candidates with



Table 5. Nonverbal component: Candidates in ads and their gestures (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Was the candidate seen <sup>a</sup> ... (code for dominant)	n=113	
Alone	69	61.0%
With other people	44	39.0%
What kind of people did the candidate interact with in the ad either in picture, video or audio? (code for presence)	N=114	
Constituents and followers	64	56.1%
Celebrities (government/non-government)	27	23.7%
Immediate and extended family	10	8.8%
Candidate's form of interaction with the people (code for presence)	N=114	
Smiling to other people	39	34.2%
Talking with people	32	28.1%
Shake hands	26	22.8%
Embrace somebody	15	13.2%
Pat on the shoulders/stroking	14	12.3%
Wave to the crowd	14	12.3%
Kiss somebody	1	0.9%
Others	9	7.9%

<sup>a</sup>"Cannot determine/Not applicable" responses excluded.

their constituents, followers, and ordinary people. In terms of interaction, the candidates are mostly seen smiling to (34.2%) and talking with (28.1%) people and shaking their hands (22.8%). The results indicate that candidates follow cultural expectations of being visible, approachable, and friendly. Using crowd shots showing candidates interacting with the people is a way of sending the message to the viewers indirectly.

Table 6. Nonverbal components: Candidate characteristics, eye contact, countenance, and dress (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Candidate characteristics	N=114	
Competency	68	59.6%
Performance/success	65	57.0%
Toughness/strength	51	44.7%
Warmth/compassion	49	43.0%
Qualifications	41	36.0%
Aggressiveness	18	15.8%
Integrity/honesty	18	15.8%
Activeness	12	10.5%
Eye contact directly with viewers <sup>a</sup>	n=110	
Almost always	68	62.0%
Sometimes	18	16.0%
Almost never	24	22.0%
Candidate facial expression <sup>a</sup>	n=110	
Smiling	66	60.0%
Attentive/serious	39	35.5%
Frowning/glaring	5	4.5%
Dress <sup>a</sup>	n=111	
Formal	23	20.75
Casual	63	56.8%
Varied (combination of formal and casual)	25	22.5%

<sup>a</sup>"Cannot determine/Not applicable" responses excluded.

In all senatorial ads, about 59% mention the candidates' competency and 57% highlight their performance (see Table 6). Candidates spell out their accomplishments to display their capabilities and imply to the viewers that they can be relied on. Defensor-Santiago highlighted her qualifications and accomplishments by citing the honors

Table 7. Nonverbal component: Symbols in ads (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Presence of symbols in ad (code for presence)	51	44.7%
	(n=51)	
Flag	23	45.0%
Past & present presidents/national officials/heroes	22	43.0%
National colors	18	35.0%
Famous Philippine landscapes and buildings	13	25.5%
National bird -- Philippine eagle	1	1.96%
Famous documents	1	1.96%
Other patriotic symbols	3	5.8%

and awards she earned in universities and public offices. Robert Jaworski's ads summarized his accomplishments as a senator and used a basketball coaching board to symbolize his stature in Philippine sports.

Candidates are mostly smiling (60%) and wearing casual clothes (56.8%) when appearing in spot ads to convey the idea that they are friendly and approachable, although a study indicated that audiences think that dress is not important because it has no relationship with the candidates' capabilities (Choa, 2003).

Symbols are stimuli that have learned meaning and value for people (Griffin, 1997). They can be used to stir emotions (Johnston & White, 1994). People in high-context cultures are likely to use symbols to convey their messages. About 45% of the senatorial ads contained a national symbol (see Table 7), mostly the flag, a commonly used symbol in political spot ads to represent a country. It was followed closely by past and present national officials (43%) and the national colors of red, blue, white, and yellow (35%).

### 3. *Production component of Philippines senatorial ads*

Wells (1986, in Taylor et al, 1994) says communication styles in high-context and low-context cultures differ. Product ads in high-context culture would build on mood in the first part and introduce the brand at the latter part of the ad, whereas ads in low-context cultures would

Table 8. Production components: Candidate's first appearance, camera angle, and camera shot (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
First appearance of candidate in ad <sup>a</sup>	n=113	
First part	85	75.2%
Middle part	16	14.2%
Last part	12	10.6%
First mention/appearance of candidate's name in ad	N=114	
First part	80	70.2%
Middle part	18	15.8%
Last part	16	14.0%
Dominant camera angle <sup>a</sup>	n=111	
Straight-on	109	98.2%
Bird's eyeview (looking down)	2	1.8%
Ant's eyeview (looking up)	0	-
Dominant camera shot <sup>a</sup>	n=111	
Tight	46	41.4%
Medium	64	57.6%
Long	1	0.99%

<sup>a</sup>"Cannot determine/Not applicable" responses excluded.

show the brand in the earlier part. The results, as seen in Table 8, do not conform to Well's findings. A large majority (75.2%) of candidates appears in the first 1/3 of their ads and their names are mentioned or appear on screen in the first 1/3 of their ads (70.2%) as well. Belonging to a high-context and collectivistic culture, candidates should have appeared either in the middle or the last parts of the ads. If communication in high-context cultures is described as indirect or not straightforward, then candidates should have fewer tight camera shots. Results indicate that majority of the scenes have medium camera shots (57.6%) and almost all use straight-on camera angle (98.2%).

In terms of ad format, Table 9 shows that the three popular formats are bio-ad (31.6%), testimonial (21.9%), and music video (16.7%). Music video would entail the use of a campaign jingle, like Mar Roxas' "Mr. Palengke" jingle which described the candidate as "suave, masipag, at matalino" (agreeable, hard-working, and intelligent). Pia Cayetano,

Table 9. Production components: Format and production technique (N=114)

Categories	No. of Spots	Percentage
Format of the ad		
Bio-ad	36	31.6%
Testimonial	25	21.9%
Video clip/music video	19	16.7%
Issue statement	17	14.9%
Introspection	9	7.9%
Issue dramatization	7	6.1%
Others	1	0.9%
Presence of production technique		
Cinema verite	70	61.4%
Candidate head-on	54	47.4%
Somebody other than candidate head-on	44	38.6%
Slides w/ print & VO/movements; print & VO	38	33.3%
Animation and special production	10	8.8%

Francisco Tatad, and Digs Dilangalen were some of the candidates who also used such format. Testimonials would rely on what other people say about a candidate. Celebrities such as Judy Ann Santos said Jamby Madrigal would be number one in her ballot, describing Jamby as a “*totoong kaibigan*,” “*totoong tao*,” and “*kakampi ng kabataan*” (sincere friend, genuine person, and an advocate of the youth). Actress Kris Aquino vouched for the integrity of Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. and Alfredo Lim. Public officials and then candidates Noli De Castro, Mar Roxas, and Defensor-Santiago endorsed Orlando Mercado. Not all candidates, however, tapped prominent personalities to do testimonials. Defensor-Santiago and Richard Gordon had ordinary people saying good things about their leadership and character. A past study showed participants preferring common folks giving testimonials, saying they are more believable, while tapping public officials may work against the candidate as it may give the impression that they are weak (Choa, 2003). Bio-ad highlights a candidate’s personal characteristics, past performance, and accomplishments. Ads of Jinggoy Estrada depicted him as the hope of

the masses for a brighter future, while those of Ernesto Maceda spelled out his achievements in the Senate, particularly exposing big anomalous deals in the government. These formats have characteristics that adhere to high-context communication.

In terms of production technique, about 61% of the ads use cinema verite or slice of life technique that shows past footage of candidates while doing their work or spending time with their constituents. It is an effective technique used by 2001 senatorial elections topnotcher Noli De Castro as those who viewed his ads, which showed video clips of his days as a brave and caring broadcast journalist, found him to be caring, an important trait that they look for in a candidate (Choa, 2003). Other popular techniques include the candidate speaking in the ad (47.4%) and having other people speak for or about the candidate (38.6%).

### *Discussion*

In answer to the first research question, the results indicate that the videostyle of Philippine senatorial candidates' spot ads carries influences of high-context communication. Results reveal that Filipino candidates tended to project themselves as a patron, adopt a rapport style or use emotions in conversing and connecting with viewers, and use campaign jingles in their ads. A majority of them produced image ads, linking themselves with certain demographic groups and highlighting their personal characteristics. The results support past findings that ads in high-context cultures tend to play on audience's emotions, using songs and image ads to emphasize character instead of policy. They meet cultural expectations for candidates to be seen as patrons. They emphasize competency and performance to show that they can be relied upon and stress toughness and warmth as well. They smile in 60% of the ads and wear casual clothes in 56.8% of the ads. Almost all of the candidates did not make any attack in their ads, meeting cultural expectations that shun negative political ads. In a high-context culture, it is likely that candidates should rely on others to speak for them rather than speaking about themselves. This perhaps explains why source credibility or ethos appeal was used in 41% of the ads. Candidates tap ordinary citizens, celebrities, or national officials to give testimonies about their character and track record. The use of cinema verite as a production technique in 61% of the ads, helps candidates achieve this as it would show them interacting and mingling with the people outside their offices and project a friendly

image. Expectedly, there were more scenes that used medium shots rather than tight shots.

However, some of the results also show that certain videostyle elements contradict cultural expectations in a high-context, collectivistic culture. First, less than half (44%) of the ads contained symbols. Of the ads that have symbols, they mostly contain the Philippine flag, past and present national officials, and the national colors. High-context cultures are expected to have ads that use many symbols and would emphasize ancestry, tradition, and history. Second, the candidates tend to be alone when they speak in their ads, rather than being surrounded by other people. Third, candidates immediately appear in the first 1/3 portion of their ads and have their names mentioned or spelled out on screen at the same time.

On issues emphasized in ads, the candidates tend to focus on economic concerns, graft and corruption, and good governance. The emphasis on these issues support Hofstede's study (2001) that the Philippines is a collectivistic society which implies concern with group interest.

### Videostyle of Winning and Losing Filipino Senatorial Candidates

In answer to the second research question, Table 10 shows significant differences in some videostyle elements found in spot ads of winners and losers. Winners exhibited more high-context communication and collectivistic culture characteristics in their ads by stressing candidates' charisma,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=4.56, p=.033$ , using slogans,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=4.807, p=.028$ , tapping ordinary citizens to speak,  $\chi^2(6, N=114)=16.057, p=.013$ , emphasizing warmth,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=4.411, p=.036$ , interacting with and embracing other people,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=12.854, p<.0005$ , waving to crowds,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=4.926, p=.026$ , and wearing casual clothes,  $\chi^2(2, N=111)=10.258, p=.006$ .

Losers, on the other hand, were seen as patrons in their ads,  $\chi^2(1, N=113)=6.177, p=.013$ . They tended to smile,  $\chi^2(2, N=110)=11.547, p=.003$  and used jingles,  $\chi^2(1, N=114)=11.133, p=.001$  in their ads more often (see Table 10). Overall, the winners' ads tended to show more characteristics of high-context communication. The study, however, does not prove that ads adhering to cultural expectations made candidates win in the polls. It merely suggests a videostyle that may set the winners apart from the losers.

Table 10. Summary of the videostyle of winning and losing Filipino senatorial candidates in the 2004 elections

Winners	Losers	p-value
<b>Verbal component*</b>		
Seen as leader/dynamic speaker	Seen as friend, patron, father figure	.013
Put a stress on charisma	Highlight competency	.033
Use slogan <sup>1</sup>	Use jingle <sup>2</sup>	<sup>1</sup> .028 <sup>2</sup> .001
Tap ordinary citizens and anonymous singers as dominant speakers	Rely on government officials, anonymous announcers, or candidates themselves as dominant speakers	.013
Dominant speaker tends to be male	Dominant speaker tends to be female	<.0005
Focus on economic concerns	Focus on good governance and graft and corruption	.006
Use Filipino as dominant language	Mix Filipino and English in their ads	.010
	Emphasize partisanship and make vague policy proposals	.028
<b>Nonverbal component*</b>		
Emphasize integrity/honesty <sup>3</sup> , warmth/compassion <sup>4</sup> , aggressiveness <sup>5</sup> , and activeness <sup>6</sup>	Highlight performance and success <sup>7</sup>	<sup>3</sup> .034 <sup>4</sup> .036 <sup>5</sup> .034 <sup>6</sup> .005 <sup>7</sup> .013
Shown with other people	Tend to be seen alone	<.0005
Wave to the crowd		.026
Embrace people		<.0005
Exude serious/attentive mien	Smile more often	.003
Wear casual clothes	Wear formal clothes	.003
<b>Production component*</b>		
Use testimonial and music video	Use bio-ad and issue statement	.006
More cinema verite		.005

\*p<.05 for the difference between winners and losers



### *Conclusions*

Hall's culture context theory and Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension of cultural differences served as good predictors of how Filipino senatorial candidates would communicate their messages to the voters. In terms of high-context communication, Filipino senatorial candidates smile a lot, dress casually, and made no attacks. Messages are implied or can be derived from the context of the visuals used in the ad, rather than explicitly spelled out by a voice-over announcer. In terms of collectivism, the candidates are seen more often with their constituents than their families, interact with people, and emphasize economic concerns. People consider candidates not as individuals, but as family.

In conclusion, the study shows that Filipino senatorial candidates exhibit in their spot ads characteristics that affirm past findings that Philippine politics has a collectivistic culture and some features of high-context communication. Campaign messages about the candidates are not only emphasized verbally, but are also shown non-verbally. The Philippine senatorial ads generally shun negative attacks, highlight candidates' character over policy, show more crowd shots, and use slogans. Candidates emphasize competency and past performance to show that they can be relied upon. The study also proves that culture context theory and Hofstede's individualism dimension of cultural differences are useful in studying political communications since they can show how political candidates communicate their campaign messages or shape their videostyle.

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