Political Advertising in Pakistan: Comparative Analysis of General Elections 2013 and 2018

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Abstract- The present study analyzed the content of political advertisements in the leading English and Urdu newspapers by the three largest political parties of Pakistan; Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP)- one month before the general elections of 2013 and 2018. The newspapers were selected representing the four major newspapers publication groups. Two leading English newspapers Dawn, The News and two leading Urdu newspapers Daily Express, Daily Nawa-i-Waqt were chosen. It was revealed that the three political parties employed various advertising appeals, themes and the opponent attack strategy in their political advertisements to garner the support of the voters during the elections. It was found out that Pakistan People's Party surpassed its main competitors PTI and PML-N in publishing more advertisements. It was found that PPP used the content of its past performance together with themes such as roti (bread), kapra (clothes) and makan (home) in its political advertisements. Whereas PML-N used fear appeal, past performance, sanctity of vote in addition to some other mixed themes. PTI besides employing the opponent attack used its past performance, health, education, corruption and hope appeal in its advertisements.

Key words: Content Analysis, Political Advertisements, General Elections 2013 and 2018, Newspapers

I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising has been an important tool of seeking people's attention for the sake of selling ideas, goods and services. It has enjoyed the status of an important tool of persuasion which very tactfully invites people's attentions and mold their opinions in the desired dimensions. In our routine lives we come across a variety of advertisements on different subjects. In fact, advertisements are non-personal and structured presentation of ideas, goods and services by an identified source through certain media of communication (Arens & Schaefer, 2008). Concisely speaking, advertising influences our ideas, thoughts, feelings and attitudes. So, we need to be aware about that how it works and equips us with abundance of information whether we desire for it or not (Dyer, 1982). It is generally observed that advertising operates in all aspects of our lives. Likewise, political parties use it as a tool of persuasion for the sake of molding public opinions, beliefs and thought and attitudes as well. Political advertising is among one of the most important features of political communication and is widely used by the politicians to influence public perception in the desired dimension. Different political parties make frequent use of political advertisements in pre and post-elections time through various channels of communication varying from conventional media to social media . It has been observed that Election is the peak time when political parties frequently strive hard to grab their voters through different strategies of communication; especially through advertisements via media (Norris, Curtice , Sanders , Scammell, & Semetko, 1999). Media has become one of the important components of modern democracy due to its salient features of ubiquity, cumulation and consonance. People seek media to know about candidates, electoral procedure and political parties' manifesto (Norris, 2004).

Political Advertisement consists of communication opposing or supporting a political candidate to be nominated or electing candidate for political party office or public office. (Joslyn, 1986). Any communication which oppose or support a measure, political party or an officeholder is also part of political advertising. Similarly, the political advertisement can also be defined but this time instead of advertising for a material, they promote ideas.

Political parties in Pakistan also heavily rely on advertising their political content through various channels of communication especially during the elections times to persuade the voters. Main target of campaigns is to influence the electorates through political messages which mobilize them and helps them to adopt attitudes (Hovland & Janis, 1959). It is only possible through political advertisements that a voter

can be informed about all the versions available and let him choose the version he thinks is right. (Redlawsk, 2002).

In the past way to solicit the voters was a time-consuming process but now thanks to political advertising which has provided instant access to the voters through advertisement by media. Now all political parties have their own media wings and politicians have appointed media managers as well to run their election campaigns.

Elections and Political Advertising

Pakistan's electoral history reveals that political parties enthusiastically participate in the elections and utilize their optimum resources to reach the victory stand. To persuade the voters for their electoral success, political parties reach out the people to present their manifestos through the content of political advertisements and make all possible efforts to convince them to vote for their political agenda. Since the dimensions of political advertising has been mainly divided into print media and electronic media, therefore political parties in Pakistan now use these two popular platforms to disseminate their political agendas to the people. General Elections which were held in May 2013 and in July 2018, political parties in Pakistan advertised their programs and manifestos through political advertisements to influence the voter's political attitudes and behaviors. **Statement of the Problem**

Political advertisements have been the hallmark of political parties of Pakistan in general elections. Political advertisements in the mainstream print media have been one of the prominent features of their political canvassing. This study focuses on drawing a comparative analysis of how leading political parties in Pakistan have used the political advertisements in general elections 2013 & 2018 to influence the people and what type of advertisement's content they have used to woo the voters in elections?

Objectives of the Study

This study has been designed to fulfill the following objectives;

- To analyze the content of the political advertisements in the print media by the leading political parties of Pakistan (PTI, PML-N, PPP) in general elections 2013 & 2018

- To find out the frequency of political advertisements used by the political parties in newspapers

- To know the popular themes used by the major political parties in newspapers advertisements during elections 2013 & 2018

- To investigate that what types of advertising appeals were used by the mainstream political parties in the newspaper's advertisements.

- To draw a comparison of the political advertisements used by leading political parties in general elections 2013-2018

Significance of the Study

Political advertisements content deeply influences the attitudes and behaviors of the public. The significance of this study is that the comparison of political advertisement's content used by three leading political parties in general elections 2013 & 2018 will help the people to understand the nature of political content of advertisements used by the leading political parties in two general elections for their electoral success. This will help them understand the priority areas of leading political parties' political agenda.

Research Questions

RQ1: Whether and to what extent political advertisements were used by the leading political parties during political campaigns in general elections 2013 & 2018?

RQ2: What were the popular themes used by the leading political parties in newspapers advertisements in general elections?

RQ 3: What was the difference in the content of political advertisements of leading political parties in general elections?

RQ4: What types of advertising appeal were employed by leading political parties in

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fifty-seven countries were reported by International Foundation for Electoral systems (IFES) that conducted parliamentary, presidential or legislative polls in multiple electoral cycles over (IFES, 2012). Among numerous electoral campaigns in numerous countries, there is one common element however, i.e. political advertising.

Political advertisement is a growing area of research and researchers have investigated political advertisement employing different approaches such as content patterns, across-studies comparisons, technological advancements, advertisement types, ethics and policy, mix and strategy, cross-cultural comparisons, cognitive response and voter as consumer (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006) (Delorme, Palmer, Onton, Oostenveld, & Makeig, 2012).

Political Advertising Media

Research in this area of political advertising (marketing) looked at the new tools and methods used in election campaigning by politicians such as the use of cellular messaging and web in the context of political communication and image-building strategies. (Druckman, Kifer, & Parkin, 2010) and (Kaid L. L., Political advertising and information seeking: Comparing exposure via traditional and Internet channels, 2002) worked on effects of and comparisons between internet mediated and traditional mediated election campaigns advertising whereas, other researchers like (Mylona, 2008) and (Leppäniemi, Karjaluoto, Lehto, & Goman, 2010) tried to investigate out of politicians and voters that who leverages newer technology more.

(Leppäniemi, Karjaluoto, Lehto, & Goman, 2010) studied an election campaign that adopted dual-strategy for political advertisement dividing the target audience in two major age groups; a) conventional supporters b) young voters in general election of Finland in 2007. The researchers aimed at giving an insight to the innovative development of political marketing and to investigate the client-agency relationship in political marketing campaign. Through in-depth interviews from the sample the study found that dual-strategy advertisements were promising for political communication with youngsters. The researchers also suggested that political advertisement through internet should be a part of political campaign media mix and that the political marketing professionals certainly can help politicians' plan and design political marketing campaigns.

Mylona studied political advertisement campaigns in Greece found that forty percent of politicians use Short Message Service as a tool for political advertising. Young parliamentarians use short SMS more than their older colleagues (Mylona, 2008).

Taveesin and Brown interviewed 500 urban citizens to investigate the source of political information and political transformation in the society and found that television political advertisements and party websites rose political knowledge of likely voters in Thailand. However, it could not affect their voting behavior or political involvement with parties but increased the level of participation in the upcoming general elections (Taveesin & Brown, 2006).

Types of Political Advertisements

This area of Cresearch focuses on types of advertisements, their effects, effectiveness on audiences in terms of their response to different ads and change of behavior. (Meirick P. C., Nisbett, Jefferson, & Pfau, 2011) (Dermody & Scullion, An exploration of the advertising ambitions and strategies of the 2001 British general election, 2001) (Chou & Lien, 2010) (Ridout & Franz, 20087); examined negative ads mainly focusing on their effectiveness that whether they are successful strategy for candidates in election campaigning. (Newman, 2001) focused in investigating how image-building is

related to political candidate's ability of making emotional attachment to voters. Pakistani researchers mainly stressed on comparative analysis of political advertisements by major political parties in terms of type of ads, their themes and technology and language used in the content.

Youth Oriented Political Advertisements

(Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, 2018) studied youth-oriented political advertisements in their investigation of nexus of Pakistani politics, media and youth in general election 2013. The researcher focused on before elections youth-directed political advertisements published in three national Urdu Daily newspapers (Nawa-i-Waqt, Express, Jang) by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz and Pakistan people's Party Parliamentarians. The highest number of advertisements targeting young voters was 41% by Tehreek-e-Insaf and out of all three parties Muslim League Nawaz focused least on youth-oriented content.

(Clark & Fine, 2012) analyzed political advertising campaigns in new media environments and compared the findings with those of the previous research that used print media stimuli to influence voters. Political advertisement, within a campaign can be made even better and productive utilizing the new decision-making information (comparative political advertisement) considering its effectiveness on voters supporting one specific candidate.

Patrick C. Meirick in an experimental study compared negative and comparative political advertisements in terms of viewers' cognitive responses. Meirick used advertisements from congress elections in 2000 and found that comparative ads were less likely to provoke source derogations and but gave more counter attacks as compared to negative ads. The heavier portion of comparative counter arguments reflects differences in styles of information processing that advertisements implied. Comparative ads were viewed in more favorable manner as compared to attack ads and prompted positive affect, source bolstering and support arguments (Meirick P. , 2002)

(Pinkleton, 1997) posited that politicians and elections candidates disseminate negative information by employing a mix-strategy including the use of comparative advertising avoiding the stigma of "attack" ads.
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Branding typically remained associated with political parties rather than political candidates as individuals until recently (Smith, The 2001 general election: Factors influencing the brand image of political parties and their leaders, 2001) (White & Chernatony, 2002) (Needham, 2006).

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda setting theory
The agenda setting theory does not leave anyone in doubt in term of media influence. This theory was coined in 1972/1973 by Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell McCombs. The media set the agenda for people to follow is the main assumption of this theory. The basic hold of this theory is that our discussion is based on what we watch, listen and read in different mass media.

According to (Cohen, 1963), media may be unsuccessful to tell the people what to think but on the other hand the media is very successful in telling the people "what to think about". This theory is compatible with this research in such a way that the agenda for the electorate about what to discuss and what to think is set by the mass media. Hence, to persuade the voters during election to support a specific party or candidate can be done by the media.

Political Marketing Theory

The main feature of this theory takes its motivation form the current existed practices in the political sphere: management of political marketing happens. It manifests itself in such diverse activities as "focusing a campaign on the salient political issues of swing voters, through the application of sophisticated segmentation techniques, a consequent voter-('customer') orientation" (Newman, Handbook of Political Marketing, 1999), "the application of celebrity endorsement strategies as part of an integrated marketing communication" (Henneberg, 2004), or the institute of influential Communication Directors. Moreover, political communicators and political actors along with the voters believe that an important part of management in several situations is the marketing. This phenomenon has now modified

to become mainstream through continuous analysis and discussions of the weak concept known as the "spin of the media" (Harris, Kolovos, & Lock, 2001)

Methodology

The researcher in this research study carried out a qualitative comparative analysis of the content of political advertisements publicized by the leading political parties of Pakistan in the leading newspapers one month before the general elections 2013 and general elections 2018.

Population

Population for this research study was all the English and Urdu newspapers of Pakistan where various political parties placed their political advertisements to influence the public/voters to vote for them in general elections 2013 and 2018.

Sample size

Two leading English newspapers Dawn and The News and two leading Urdu newspapers Daily Express and Daily Nawa-i-Waqt were selected. These four newspapers represented four different publication groups of Pakistan.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the paid "advertisements" published in the two leading English newspapers of Pakistan "Dawn" and "The News", and two Urdu dailies Daily Express & Daily Nawa-i-Waqt in General elections 2013 and 2018.

Timeline

Time period for the content analysis of the political advertisements placed in the two English newspapers was from 10 April 2013 to 10 May 2013 and 24th June 2018 to 24th July 2018.

IV.   DATA ANALYSIS

Political Parties Advertisements

Table 4.1 Political Parties Advertisements in elections 2013

Political Parties	Dawn	The News	Express	Nawa-i-Waqt
PPP	12	18	26	14
PML N	0	0	3	3
PTI	0	4	3	5
Total	12	22	32	22

The Table 4.1 shows that the total number of advertisements published in Dawn, The News, Daily Express, Daily Nawa-i-Waqt were 88. The total number of advertisements by PPP was 70, PML N 6 and PTI 12 in general elections 2013 from the period of 10 April to 10 May 2013.

Table 4.2 Political Parties Advertisements in elections 2018

Political Parties	Dawn	The News	Express	Nawa-i-Waqt

PPP	4	4	11	8
PML N	0	3	2	3
PTI	0	4	3	1
Total	4	11	16	12

The Table 4.2 shows that the total number of advertisements published in Dawn, The News, Daily Express, Daily Nawa-i-Waqt were 43. The total number of advertisements by PPP was 27 whereas the number of advertisements by PML N and PTI stood equal in total i.e. 8 in general elections 2018 from the period of 24 June to 24 July 2018.

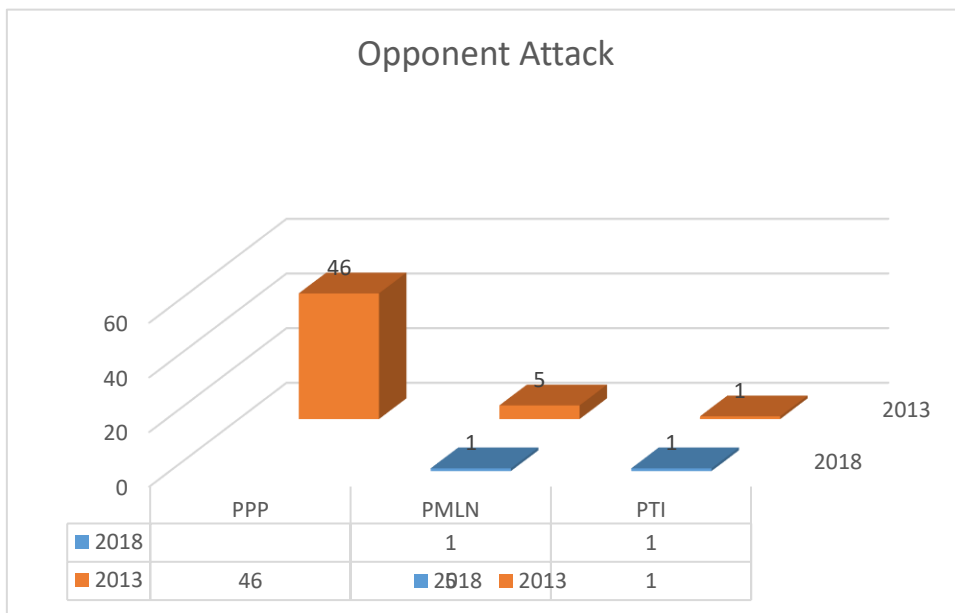**Opponent Attacks Used by Political Parties in Advertisements**

Figure 1

Opponent Attack Used by Parties During 2013-2018

A huge difference in the count of opponent attack was found between political advertisements of 2013 and 2018. As the above diagram indicates in 2013 Pakistan People's Party attacked its opponent political candidates in 46 advertisements which was the highest as compared to the other two parties Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz with 5 opponent attack ads and Pakistan Tehreek–e–Insaf with 1 opponent attack advertisement during general election campaign at that time. However, the opponent attack advertisement strategy was completely reverted by PPP in 2018 with 0 ad containing negative content i.e. opponent attack. PTI used attack strategy in one of its political advertisements and similarly PML-N also used opponent attack one and single time in 2018 general election campaign.
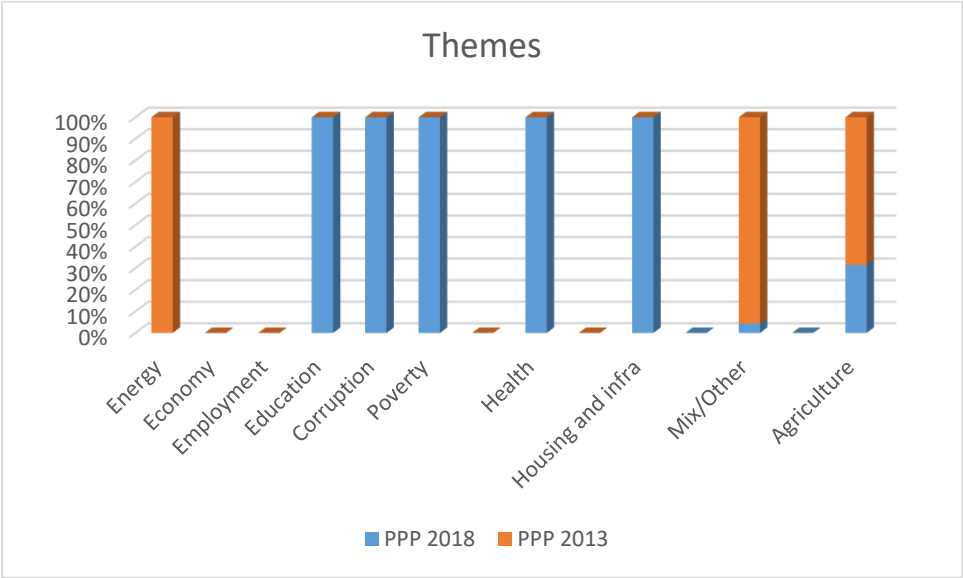
Themes Used by PPP During 2013-2018 Elections

Figure 2

Themes (PPP)

The above chart indicates Pakistan Peoples party's 90% political ads in 2013 contained energy as major theme of the message whereas, no ads used economy, employment, education, corruption, poverty and housing and infrastructure as themes at all. Overall 95% of ads used mixed themes trying to include all major concerns of the public, however, in 2013 PPP focused on agriculture sector reforms as major themes i.e. 65% ads to persuade public to vote it.

In 2018 however, there was a drastic change of themes used for persuasion by PPP such that not a single ad contained energy crisis as prime public concern, hardly 1% ads contained mixed themes i.e. 2% only. Major decrease was seen in the use of agricultural reforms as theme for persuading public going down from 65% in 2013 to 35% in 2018. A slight percentage of ads contained education, corruption, poverty, health, housing and infrastructure as theme of the content. Overall, a huge difference in the political advertisement strategy of Pakistan People's Party was found in 2018 general election campaign as compared to the general election campaign of 2013.
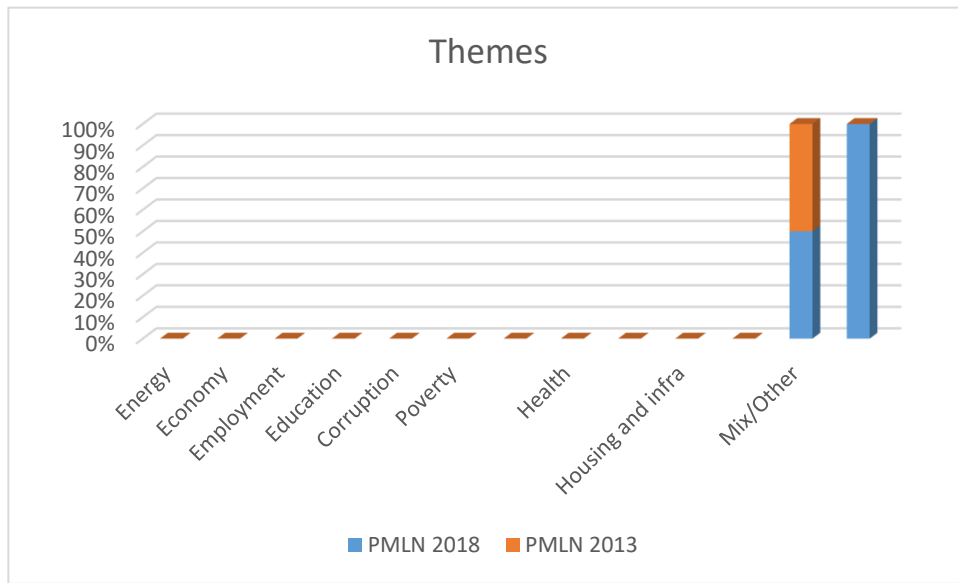
Themes Used By PML-N During 2013-2018

Figure 3

Themes (PML-N)

PML-N applied mixed themes in its political advertisements during general elections campaign both in 2013 and 2018. As indicated by the above chart PML-N used mixed theme content approximately equally in 2013 and 2018 campaigns. Below 1% advertisements hardly used any other specific theme. Another factor that's makes difference is that there were relatively fewer ads by PML-N compared to that of PPP. However, evidently PML-N used generic themes perhaps in order to address the public issues generally or to just make its campaign visible at least in print media. Regardless of Television political ads, PML-N' s print media ads were very few.
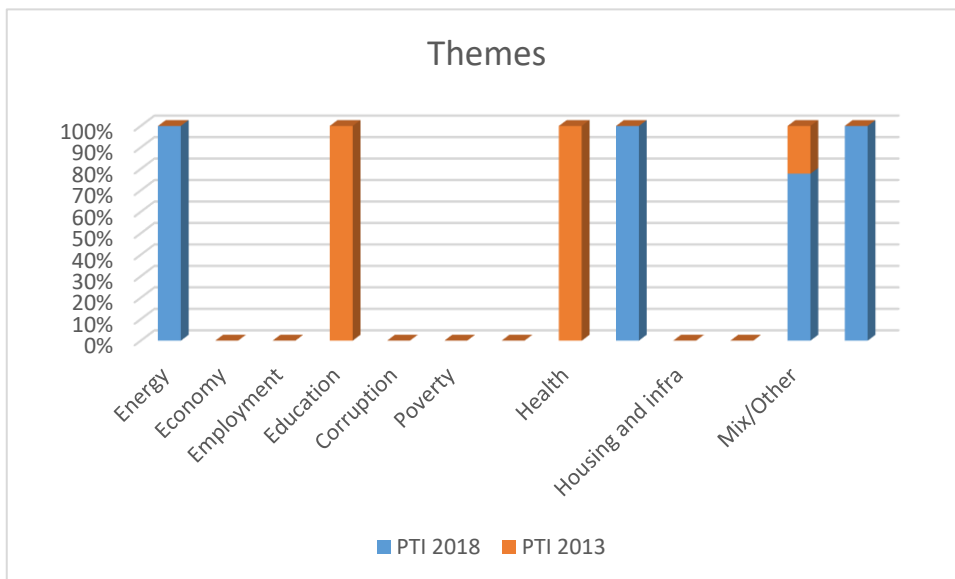
Themes used By PTI During 2013-2018

Figure 4
Themes (PTI)

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf rather seemed using different specific themes in its political advertisement campaigns in 2013 in comparison with 2018. More than 90% of advertisements in 2013 general elections

campaign contained education and health as specific themes of the content. Approximately 25% of ads in 2013 used mixed themes to persuade the voters. Whereas, energy crises overtook the other themes in 2018 general elections campaign as 95% of advertisements were put forth highlighting energy crises in the country. It was found that 70% of advertisements used mix themes to encompass the generic issues of the public.

The number of ads by PTI was also not big as compared to PPP. Fewer advertisements were placed in print media regardless of Television commercials put forth. Generally, PTI avoided opponent attacks and went for stressing its manifesto points in its advertisements. There were no exaggerated promises made in 2018 as compared to the ones in 2013 general elections political campaign.

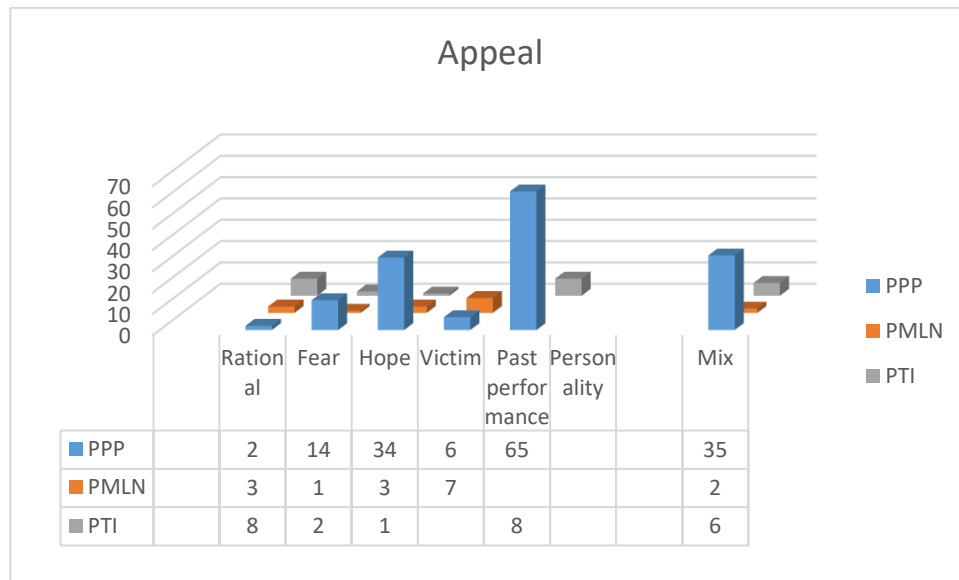**Appeals Used by Political Parties During Elections 2013-2018**

	Rational	Fear	Hope	Victim	Past performance	Personality		Mix
PPP	2	14	34	6	65			35
PMLN	3	1	3	7				2
PTI	8	2	1		8			6

Figure 5

*Appeals Used by political Parties During Election-2013*

It was found that out of total advertisements by PPP 65 used past performance as basic appeal to persuade public to vote for it. 18 ads used hope appeal convincing the public for better future. 5-6 ads used fear appeal, narrating the bad consequences of previous government's policies, similar number of ads were put forth using victim appeal and only one ad by PPP used rationale appeal for persuasion whereas, 35 ads applied mix appeal including, hope, fear and past performance.

PML-N being least active regarding political advertising in print media threw 7 advertisements using victim appeal mainly in 2018 because of supreme court' s decision against Nawaz Sharif. These ads were full of content portraying PML-N and its leadership as political victims. It was found that 3 advertisements by PML-N used rationale appeal to persuade the voters to vote for it whereas; similar number of ads gave hope appeal to the public promising better performance when given another chance to form their government. A couple of ads used mix appeal for persuasion and only one ad used fear appeal telling people the bad consequences for the country if any other party is voted to power.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf placed 8 advertisements using rational appeal which is highest as compared to PML-N and PPP, 2 advertisements applied fear appeal, and 6 ads used mix appeals to persuade the voters. 8 advertisements however, implemented past performance appeal highlighting the work and achievements of PTI rule in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan People's Party placed highest ads using various appeals for persuasion however, most of its ads were based on past performance appeal. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was on the second number that utilized past performance appeal and Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz used past performance in none of its advertisements. Most of PML-N advertisements used victim appeal to stimulate the emotional element in public to gain sympathy vote. Mix appeal was used by all the three parties in their political advertisements both in 2013 and 2018 general elections campaigns.

Size & Placement of Advertisements During Election-2013
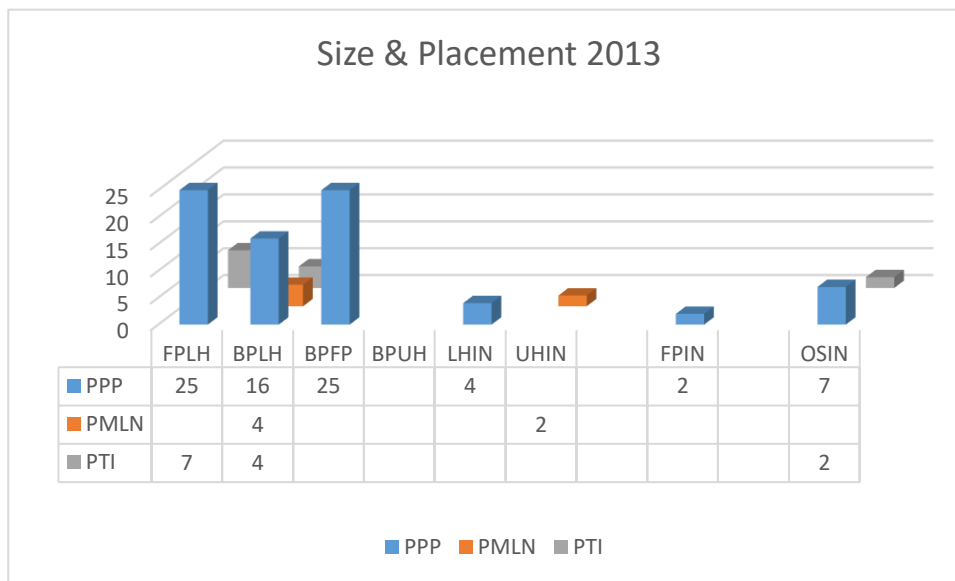
Figure 6

Size & Placement 2013

PPP made its election campaign most visible in print media by placing 79 advertisements one month before the election date. The size and placement of the advertisements were also more space covering as compared to the other parties. Word count within the advertisement was also higher than in ads by PML-N and PTI. PPP purchased lower half of the front page 25 times to place its advertisements in all 4 newspapers both Urdu and English dailies. The same number of advertisements took full back page portraying large pictures of Bilawal Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. 16 advertisements were placed at back page lower half. 7 advertisements held other sizes on inside pages, most of them one fourth of the whole page, 4 advertisements took lower halves of the inside pages both in English and Urdu dailies whereas, a couple of ads were placed on full pages inside. Considering these figures Pakistan People's Party's election campaign was vividly visible in print media in 2013.

The second largest visible election campaign in print media was of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in 2013 with 13 ads in total. It purchased lower half of the front page 7 times for political advertisements, 4 ads were placed at lower half of the back page, and a couple of advertisements took other sized on inside pages.

PML-N stood third visible party in print media through political advertisements one month before general elections in 2013 with a total number of 6 advertisements in sample English and Urdu dailies. 4 ads were placed at upper half of the back page whereas, 2 ads took upper halves on inside pages. Comparatively Pakistan people's Party spent most on political advertising in 2013 as compared to PML-N and PTI.

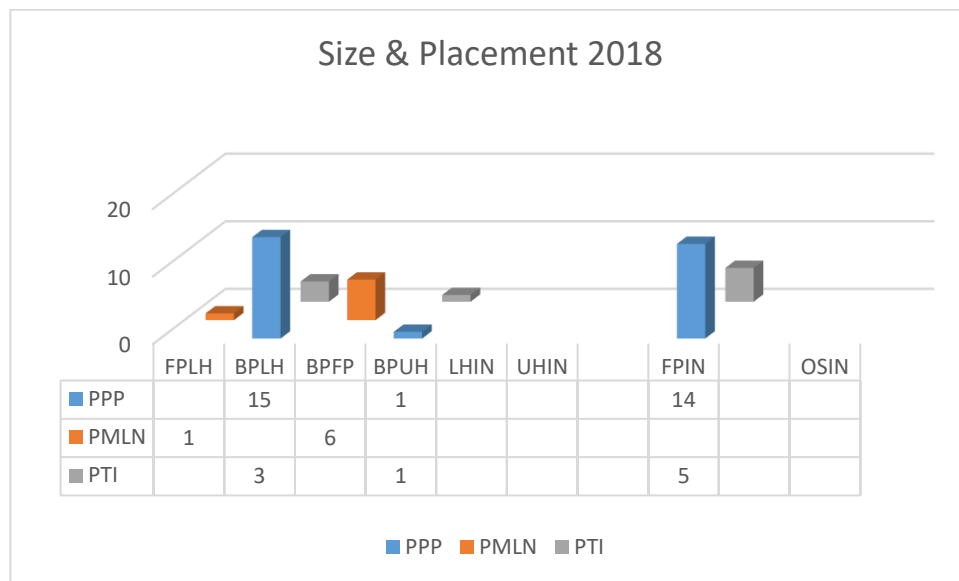**Size and Placement of Advertisements During Elections 2018**

Figure 7

Size & Placement 2018

PPP in 2018 remained as the most money spending party on political advertisements in print media with highest number of ads i.e. 30 in total; out of which 15 spaced at lower half of the back page one at upper half of the back page, and 14 advertisements taking full pages inside section of the paper. PTI remained at second stand in number of political ads with 9 placements in print media; 5 of which took full pages inside paper, 1 at the upper half of the back page and 3 placed at lower half of the back pages. PML-N also maintained its print media visibility position through political advertisements like 2013 general election campaign. 7 total advertisements were put forth by PML-N in sample national Urdu and English dailies, putting 6 at full page on the back page of the paper and one at lower half of the front page. PML-N had the fewest number of ads published in print media one month before elections date, PTI was the second largest spending on print political ads whereas, PPP, as it did in 2013 election campaign was the most spending on advertisement in print media in 2018.

V.   DISCUSSION

The present study focused on the content of the political advertisements used by the three leading political parties PPP, PTI and PML-N before the general elections held in 2013 and 2018. The researcher tried to make a comparative analysis of the political advertisements placed by the three leading political parties in two leading English and two Urdu newspapers of Pakistan.

The study was carried out to answer the research questions by using the qualitative content analysis of the data in terms of themes, appeals, opponent attack and size and placement of the advertisements placed by the three political parties in the sample newspapers. The study shows that Pakistan People's Party is the leading political party in the count of political advertisements as well as in size and their placements in the newspapers in both the elections. PPP used 46 ads having the content of opponent political party attack during one month before the general elections 2013. PML-N which was not much visible in the sample newspapers used only 5 ads with opponent attack content whereas PTI used 1 such ad.   In 2013 elections, PPP focused much on the past performance of their government besides highlighting the mixed themes in their advertisements content. The study also reveals that PPP used energy as major theme in its 2013 elections advertisements and other themes such as economy, employment, corruption was not touched upon. Majority of the advertisements used mixed themes which were of public interests. However, in 2018 elections, PPP drastically changed the themes in the advertisements as compared to the themes of 2013 elections.

PML-N on the other hand used mixed themes more frequently in elections of 2013 and 2018. The slogan of vote ko izzat do (respect the vote) was the main theme of the PML-N in 2018 elections but the frequency of the advertisements having such content was not much visible in the sample newspapers.

PTI used different specific themes in the political advertisements in 2013 in comparison with 2018. Health and education were the main themes of PTI in elections 2013. Energy crisis took the major share of the advertisements in 2018 elections.

VI. Conclusion

The results indicated that PPP mainly relied on the advertising appeals focusing on its government's past performance from 2008 to 2013 and then its government in the Province of Sindh from 2013 to 2018. However, the party also used political advertisements content on economy, agriculture, trade and basic human needs of food, cloth and shelter.

PML-N in 2013 elections focused on fear appeal as they aggressively attacked PPP governments past performance and used hope appeal to tell the voters that if they voted to power, they will bring progress and prosperity in the country. However, in 2018 elections, the party used its past performance appeal together with the victim appeal through vote ko izzat do slogan to get voters support.

PTI in 2013 elections mainly relied on the idea of change and castigated both PPP and PML-N for being corrupt, looters and plunderers of the national resources. The theme of change was the party's main political advertising content in both 2013 and 2018 elections. The party also used hope appeal excessively and asked for people's support if they want real change and prosperity in the country. Accountability was another major theme of PTI in both the elections. PTI also highly projected its performance in KPK during their elections campaign in 2013 and 2018.

VII. Recommendations

1.   This study suggests that the political parties should be more realistic in their approach as far as their political advertisements content is concerned. There should be less exaggerated content in the party's political advertisements, and they should put more focus on presenting solutions of the problems confronted by the people. Similarly, political parties should concentrate more on educating the people about the real issues of the country instead of hoodwinking them through their exaggerated and un realistic sloganeering.

2.   For future research studies it is recommended to focus on the social media which has emerged as a very popular platform for political parties to put their political advertisements content on the social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter and so on. The younger generation is the biggest consumer of social media and the future study should concentrate on this area.

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