

Actions speak louder than words. The effect of brands' political advertising on consumers' negative e-WOM

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## **Abstract**

This study explores how brands' political advertising affects consumers' online responses (i.e., negative e-WOM). Recently, many companies have become vocal on political issues through advertising, ranging from immigration to gender equality. However, it is still not clear how this more activist approach is perceived by consumers. A mixed-method design combining a content analysis (Study 1) with an online experiment (Study 2) is presented to obtain a multifaceted representation of the phenomenon. Study 1 provides information on consumers' reactions toward brands' political advertising on social media, while Study 2 tests the effect of political advertising on consumers' negative e-WOM, by comparing a political communication initiative with a political action and proposing perceived genuine concern and hypocrisy as the underlying mechanisms. The research offers insightful theoretical and practical implications, providing brand managers actionable levers on how to reduce negative e-WOM.

**Keywords:** *Brands' political advertising; Attribution of genuine concern; Perceived hypocrisy*

**Track:** Advertising & Marketing Communications