

New Study Reveals the Emotional Impact and Effectiveness of Negative Campaigning

Signal Patterns' SP Labs Election Patterns Report explains the impact of negative campaigning tactics and the emotions of voters; report also reveals that openness and conscientiousness are best predictors of candidate preference and other key findings

Pleasantville, NY, October 23, 2008 – SP Labs – the research arm of Signal Patterns, developers of scientific-based social web applications that characterize and connect people in meaningful ways – today released its *Election Patterns* report and survey results¹ from the recently released *Election Patterns* application that matches personality traits to voting patterns. This week's report revealed three key findings: 1) the emotional impact that negative campaign ads and events have on voters affects McCain supporters more so than undecided voters and Obama supporters; 2) openness and conscientiousness are the best predictors of candidate preference; and 3) undecided voters' personality traits most resemble Obama supporters.

The Impact of Negative Campaigning Tactics and the Emotions of Voters

Emotionally, both camps do not vary by their extraversion level, meaning that they get the same "kick" out of positive things in life. However, undecided voters resemble Obama voters in that they are emotionally stable and negative events and campaign ads don't affect them as much; whereas McCain voters are more emotionally affected by negative events and ad campaigns.

This finding is fascinating considering the recent public debate over negative campaign tactics. While both candidates cannot lure undecided voters by using negative campaign tactics, McCain can reinforce his existing supporters' choice by using elements that raise negative emotions.

According to Jason Rentfrow, Ph.D, Psychology, SP Labs Science Team researcher and Cambridge University lecturer, "This relationship suggests that ads that play on people's fears may only get the attention of undecided Republicans. Undecided Independents and Liberals, on the other hand, should be affected less by political messages that aim to evoke anxiety."

Openness and Conscientiousness are Best Predictors of Candidate Preference

The *Election Patterns* findings look at the election psychographics of voters and revealed that openness and conscientiousness are the best predictors of candidate preference. The findings show that McCain voters are more conscientious, and Obama voters are more open to new experiences. Obama voters are three times more likely to identify Openness as their top trait compared with McCain voters, who are twice more likely to be Conscientious.

"This goes beyond party affiliation and suggests that a good psychographic targeting strategy for McCain would be to show that he is open to promoting change and reform, but will do so in a

systematic and organized way and always according to plan,” said David H. Rosen, Ph.D, Psychology, and SP Labs Science Team researcher. “And Obama would benefit from stating that he has concrete and detailed plans that he will follow, and that these plans are bold and focus on change.”

Undecided Voters’ Personality Traits Most Resemble Obama Supporters

The personality traits of undecided voters resemble Obama voters more than McCain voters. This could mean good news for Obama if his campaign emphasizes these psychological similarities. Both Obama and Undecided voters rank highest on being intellectual and aesthetic, while McCain voters describe themselves as mostly scrupulous and warm.

Other key findings from the *Election Patterns* report revealed:

- A highly-examined and sought after group by both Obama and McCain are Independents; and of these voters who do not identify with either of the two major parties, 51 percent support Obama, 17 percent support McCain, and 32 percent remain undecided.
- Undecided voters could decide the election, but so could voters who cross party lines. Only two percent of Democrats plan on voting for McCain, while nine percent of Republicans support Obama.
- Obama wins in a landslide among voters ranking high in Openness; and McCain closes the gap among Conscientious voters
- Top personality traits vary by state. For example, in the swing states of Colorado and Ohio, McCain supporters in Colorado are Introspective, Unflappable, and Intellectual; whereas Obama supporters in Ohio are Warm, Friendly and Scrupulous.

To see full report visit: <http://is.gd/4zf4>

People can still take the *Election Patterns* survey, which only takes a minute or two, at [Facebook](#) and see their results immediately. Next week, SP Labs will also issue further findings as we head into the final week before the November 4th election.

¹The Election Patterns findings were based on the results of 4,302 survey participants as of October 22, 2008.

About Signal Patterns

Signal Patterns develops social web applications that characterize and connect users to each other based on their interests, personality and preferences. With these scientific-based applications, consumer can discover more about themselves as well as make valuable connections to like-minded individuals, while publishers, advertisers and social networks can increase their own user engagement. Signal Patterns' patent-pending technology results from a unique combination of in-house behavioral science research and data mining expertise. Founded in 2006, Signal Patterns is based in Pleasantville, NY. For more information: <http://www.signalpatterns.com>

About SP Labs

SP Labs is the research arm of Signal Patterns and consists of a team of top scientists from different disciplines: personality psychology, machine learning, biometrics, social psychology and neuroscience. SP Labs focuses on developing research techniques, surveys and studies that look across seemingly unrelated areas to discover connections and patterns. Through rigorous science and sheer computational power, the SP Labs team's research is able to identify patterns emerging from the data,

making connections between disparate subject areas with the goal of helping people learn more about themselves, their relationships and the people around them. For more information visit: http://www.signalpatterns.com/corporate_labs.html

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