



# Media Messages in American Presidential Elections (Contributions to the Study of Mass Media and Communications)

*Diana Owen*

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## **Media Messages in American Presidential Elections (Contributions to the Study of Mass Media and Communications)** Diana Owen

Focusing her attention on the audience, Diana Owen investigates the way people process media messages during campaigns. This study examines the role of ads, news stories, poll results, and debates in presidential elections. Based on surveys fielded during the 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns, Owen compares these four message categories to determine their relative importance to voters. In addition she investigates how individuals make use of messages in establishing their perception of candidates and issues. Mass communication's uses and gratifications approach provides this study's theoretical foundation. The book is designed for researchers and students in communications and mass media, voting behavior, and public opinion.

Using surveys conducted during the 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns, Diana Owen first addresses two basic research questions. How do media messages transmitted during presidential elections shape voter attitudes toward and perceptions of candidates and campaign issues? Do different types of media messages influence voters' feelings about candidates and elections in different ways? Focusing on candidate advertisements, newspaper and television news stories, poll results, and presidential debates, she also ties voters' general media use habits to the way they receive and process media messages.

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