

The Impact of Presidential Campaign Visits on Election Outcomes

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Intro:

- Campaign visits are an expensive campaign strategy, they require a lot of a candidate's time and money
- Does such an expensive strategy have the desired effect on election outcomes?

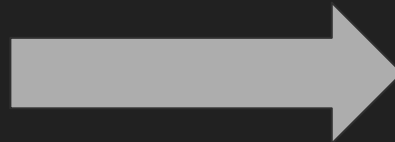
Research Question + Hypothesis

RQ: Does the frequency of presidential campaign visits impact election outcomes?

Hypothesis:

- Presidential election outcomes will not be significantly impacted at the county-level by the amount of campaign visits a candidate makes to that county.

IV: Campaign
Visit Frequency



DV: Election
Outcomes

Literature Review

High intensity campaigning has significant impact:

- McClurg and Holbrook 2009 + Strömberg 2008
 - Voter behavior more predictable in states receiving high-intensity campaigning
 - Intense campaigning in states where a candidate is behind impacts voter behavior

High intensity campaigning has minimal impact:

- Wolak 2006 + Devine 2018
 - battleground state environment reflects the partisan nature of the state rather than the effect of campaign efforts
 - visits don't have a large impact on election outcomes

Case Selection

2016 election, battleground states

- Why 2016?
 - Data is recent, accessible, and plentiful for this election
 - Trump made more visits than Clinton and won, was it a factor?
- Why battleground states?
 - Typically receive the most visits
 - 2016 battleground states (11):
 - Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin

Methodology

- Compare for each state and county visited:
 - # of visits made by Trump and Clinton in battleground states from 7/25/2016 - 11/7/2016
 - 2016 election outcomes
 - 2012 election outcomes

Determining significance:

- Candidate visits and wins a county that did not vote for their party in 2012.
- Candidate visits a county more than their opponent and wins it.
- Candidate visits a state more than their opponent and wins it.

Data example - Michigan

(Not enough space to show all 11 tables, so here's one with significant results for example)

County	Eaton	Kent	Macomb	Oakland	Ottawa	Wayne
2016 result	Trump (R)	Trump (R)	Trump (R)	Clinton (D)	Trump (R)	Clinton (D)
2012 result	D	R	D	D	R	D
# Clinton visits (4)	0	0	0	0	1	3
# Trump visits (7)	1	2	2	1	0	1

- Oakland and Ottawa Counties were won by the candidate that did not visit them
- Clinton visited Wayne County 3 times and won, Trump visited it once
- Trump visited and won Macomb and Eaton County, which both voted Democrat in 2012

Data Summary - 11 States

Clinton

- 78 total visits in 42 counties
- Won 32 of 42 counties visited
- Did not win any county visited which had voted Republican in 2012
- Won 3 of 9 battleground states visited - (did not visit Virginia or Wisconsin)

Trump

- 125 total visits in 88 counties
- Won 50 of 88 counties visited
- Won 8 counties visited that voted Democrat in 2012
- Won 7 out of 11 battleground states visited

Analysis

County level impact - supports hypothesis

- Results suggest frequency of campaign visits does not have an impact on election outcomes at the county level
- Both candidates lost counties they visited multiple times, but won counties they visited only once
- Candidates would lose counties they visited, even though their opponent did not visit there, suggesting other factors contributed
 - Michigan - Oakland and Ottawa Counties
 - Happened in at least one county in 9 out of 11 states examined

Analysis

State level impact - additional finding

- Trump's higher number of counties visited and states won compared to Clinton suggests that campaign visit frequency has an impact on election outcomes at the state level.

Outliers:

- Virginia, Colorado, New Hampshire
 - States won by Clinton that Trump made significantly more visits to
 - Suggest that the impact of the frequency of campaign visits is minimal

Conclusion

My hypothesis was supported

- Election outcomes were often inconsistent with the number of campaign visits candidates made, suggesting that campaign visits do not have a significant impact on election outcomes at the county level

Additional findings:

- Campaign visit frequency has a small impact on election outcomes at the state level
- Outside factors concerning the battleground state environment could have influenced this as well, so the impact is minimal at most