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## **Heads Up: Should Political Candidates Care *Where* Slogans Appear on Campaign Posters?**

We tend to associate rationality with the head and emotion with the heart. Should the vertical placement of messages on a visual field reflect this? According to a recent study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), rational messages should be placed higher than emotional messages if you want to connect with consumers.



“Our research showed that people unconsciously associate rationality with ‘up’ or ‘higher,’ and emotion with ‘down’ or ‘lower,’ which affects how they perceive information and directly influences attitudes, preferences, and behaviors,” write authors Luca Cian (University of Virginia), Aradhna Krishna (University of Michigan), and Norbert Schwarz (University of Southern California).

In one study, consumers who viewed a news website template consistently preferred to see more “rational” news categories (such as science) higher on the page than more emotional news categories (such as music). Another study using political slogans showed similar results. Consumers’ intention to vote for a political candidate greatly increased when an emotional slogan was placed lower on a poster or a rational slogan was placed higher.

Think of Shepard Fairey’s iconic HOPE poster for the 2008 Obama campaign. The strong emotional appeal of HOPE appeared in the lower part of the image. This may not have influenced people with already strong opinions about Obama, but it may have led undecided voters to view him more positively than if the same slogan had been in the upper region.

“Because all visual formats—from the printed page to screens on a television, computer or smartphone—entail decisions on vertical arrangement, our research suggests that campaign designers consider the rational-emotional nature of their messages. Information will be much more powerful when vertical position matches the content,” the authors conclude.

Luca Cian, Aradhna Krishna, and Norbert Schwarz. “[Positioning Rationality and Emotion: Rationality Is Up and Emotion Is Down](#).” *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2015.



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