



Media Monitor

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NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA MOMENTUM ALIVE AND WELL IN 1988 PRIMARIES

The demise of "media momentum" in election '88 has been greatly exaggerated, according to a new study that compares TV news coverage with poll results during the primaries. The study finds that Jesse Jackson and, surprisingly, George Bush benefitted from bursts of good press at critical moments.

The study was conducted by Dr. S. Robert Lichter, co-director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs and the DeWitt Wallace Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He compares the Center's on-going content analysis of ABC, CBS and NBC election news with CBS/New York Times preference polls. Results appear in the May issue of Public Opinion magazine.

Major findings:

*Jackson's share of TV news coverage more than doubled after New Hampshire and rose again after Super Tuesday. This surge of media attention was followed by his biggest rise ever in the Democratic presidential preference polls.

*Gore won more state contests and popular votes than Jackson on Super Tuesday. But Jackson's TV news coverage nearly doubled the following week, while Gore's actually declined.

*Jackson got by far the most positive coverage of any candidate until the New York primary, when his level of bad press doubled and his fortunes fell.

*Bush got mostly bad press except after his loss in Iowa, when his level of good press jumped from 35% to 66%. He then came from behind to win in New Hampshire.

*The day after their Iowa victories, Gephardt and Dole each jumped twelve percentage points in the New Hampshire tracking polls. The momentum was there; it just fell short.

*The fates of Gary Hart and Joe Biden show that media coverage can produce losers as well as winners. Wining the field is a media function as important as momentum.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs is a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization that conducts scientific studies of news reports. A complimentary copy of the study is enclosed.

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