

**POLITICAL SUPER BRANDING THROUGH
THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY:
THE BARACK OBAMA
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
IN 2008**

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless otherwise indicated in the text, is my own original work. This research has also not been submitted to any other institution for degree purposes.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine the exponential growth of social media technology as a key component in recent American political campaigning, as well as its use and impact on the larger disciplines of marketing and branding. Adopting the approach of a case study with the focus firmly on the current American president, Barack Obama, the study identifies the key media and technologies used in the build-up to the 2008 American presidential elections in order to unpack and understand how such media channels, technological platforms and patterns were successfully utilised. References are also made to the concepts of 'branding' and 'super branding' in the discussion, and to the myriad ways in which social media has helped create and roll-out what has since become commonly known as 'brand Obama'.

To provide a framework for the discussion and in order to further understand the rapid growth and proliferation of social media on the political campaigning landscape, a comparison is made with the 2004 American presidential election campaign. This, it is posited, will assist us understand the drivers of new media technologies especially as they are used to create and impact positively on the growth of political super brands.

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This study is dedicated to my late parents, Ramachandra and Parvathy Pillay. I know that you were by my side every step of the way. You are always in my thoughts.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATL	Above The Line (media)
BTL	Below The Line (media)
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
IT	Information Technology
LSM	Living Standard Measure
ROI	Return On Investment
RSS	Really Simple Syndication
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
SMS	Short Message Service
TTL	Through The Line (media)
URL	Uniformed Resource Locator
USP	Unique Selling Proposition/Point

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

I began working in the advertising industry almost two decades ago. While many of the design principles I learned still hold true, the range of media for which both my team and I design today – especially electronic – has evolved and expanded exponentially over the years. Accompanying this evolution in and expansion of media types, platforms and choices were serious design and communications challenges which we continue to grapple with. While many have been overcome by sourcing lateral solutions, it was social media and its potential as a marketing tool that presented the biggest challenge to all of us in the industry during the past decade.

My experiences to date have thus been as varied as they have been rewarding. In this regard, I thought it prudent to provide a brief overview of my personal journey through advertising, marketing and communications as it is key to understanding my reasons for choosing the topic I did for this paper.

After completing my undergraduate studies in Graphic Design, I worked on a variety of advertising campaigns and creative projects on behalf of a range of clients, including those operating in such sectors as retail, manufacturing, banking, tourism, health care, media, communications and travel. Just over twelve years ago, my current business partner and I noticed a marked

increase in requests from clients for a through-the-line (TTL) agency service, a one-stop shop as it were, rather than have one agency work on their below-the-line (BTL) efforts, a second on their above-their-line (ATL) campaigns and a third managing their media planning and bookings. The gap, it seemed, was clear and this was the primary motivation behind us launching a TTL, branding/communications service which, at the time, became one of the few agencies offering a comprehensive marketing service in Durban, South Africa, where our head office is now located. A number of clients on whose accounts we simply “worked on” previously, joined us on our journey and, within a relatively short period of time, we went from being salaried employees to managing clients with marketing budgets totalling millions of rands.

Although we enjoyed a fair degree of success both as entrepreneurs and media communications specialists, I grappled with the account management end of the business, something which continues to challenge me even today. Yes, the client is king, I have come to terms with that, but over the years I have been forced to entertain some strange client requests and, forced to smile through the process. These include the coffee shop franchisor who wanted his entire marketing budget allocated to billboard advertising, and requested that the billboards be placed strategically in front of modelling agencies so that his coffee shops would be frequented by “beautiful people” which, he was convinced, would attract other “beautiful people”. Suffice it to say, he only retracted when we offered written evidence that no media space was available near said agencies.

Our agency also remembers the entrepreneur who requested a high-end, cutting-edge packaging concept for his low cost, bottled water range that he simply called, “Tap Water”. He felt that bottled water drinkers were gullible and he wanted to “tap into that collective gullibility”. There were brand extensions, of course, which he hoped to launch in year two and three of his operation. These included, “River Water”, “Rain Water” and, if memory

serves, “Sea Water”. Thankfully, the market research we commissioned at the time showed that the barriers to entry were high and that “Tap Water” would require a massive marketing budget to compete against multi-nationals like Coca-Cola, who dominated the bottled water market at the time.

Many of the older designers at our agency still recall the Durban-based cellular phone retailer who insisted on paying cash in advance for all his media work, no matter how large the amount, and who brought along an entourage of armed body guards on every visit to the agency. He passed away a few years ago under what can only be termed mysterious circumstances and it continues to perplex our design corps as to whether his funeral expenses were paid for in cash, in advance, as was his wont.

Then, there are the fads. These are generally non-traditional media that are created or surface in response to a particular situation or set of circumstances and clients often think of these as being the “next big thing”. In the early nineties, it was taxi advertising and by the mid-nineties, every second client wanted a “piece” of the changing face of South African commercial radio. By 1999, multi-media presentations were the “next big thing” and we were churning them out for practically every one of our corporate clients. By the early noughties (2000 - 2009), we braced ourselves for the advent of mall advertising. By the mid-noughties though, malls began running out of media space – the escalators, lifts and food courts were “owned” by most of the ‘fast moving consumer goods’ (FMCG) giants – and I recall quite vividly the premium one of our pharmaceutical clients was willing to pay in order to “get into mall toilets”.

On the television side of business, the first South African free-to-air television channel, e.tv, launched in 1998 and with it came a range of promotional opportunities for smaller clients. These included e.tv’s “pay-one-get-one-free-spot”, which a large percentage of our clients wanted in on, but backed off

when they realised that the massive production costs associated with television commercials were for their account. The channel nevertheless made its presence felt and, by 2001, our agency began receiving reports from the market of the huge strides e.tv was making into winning over a number of ATL spenders that traditionally spent on the other four South African terrestrial television channels, i.e. SABC 1, 2, 3 and M-Net.

With the increased use of and access to email and the internet, came just as many challenges for us in the industry. The winds of change were clearly blowing but trends and protocols had yet to be established. In the early days, a number of clients insisted on including email marketing and internet advertising in their media mix, but were uncertain about exactly how it could be optimised. Clients nevertheless often forced us to design for these platforms whether or not it segued with their marketing strategies. As one client remarked, “We can’t afford to not be a part of the cyber revolution. Pull a Nike and just do it”.

At the other end of the continuum, there were clients who refused to see the internet’s potential as a marketing tool even when the fit was glaring. I remember one client talking to my partner at a breakfast meeting who said, “I want nothing to do with that email, ‘shemail’ bullshit. People are always going to read the newspaper. That’s where I want my ads”.

With advances in technology behind internet advertising and direct email marketing, and the applications that became available which could provide accurate psychographic and demographic statistics among other information that could be tracked, came a flurry of activity. This gave rise to the “Internet Strategist”, i.e. former information technology (IT) practitioners, web designers or multimedia production specialists who claimed to be able to create and drive an internet strategy, arrange “search engine optimisation” (SEO), place adverts on strategic websites and manage email databases in one fell swoop. As an agency, our task was to simply create a concept and

design accordingly. The fruit of our labour was then handed over to the external strategist.

Clients, however, soon realised that they were back where they started: dealing with more than one agency on a single campaign. To address this, we bolstered our internal capacity as well as partnered with strategic players in the industry to once again offer a comprehensive service.

With the advent of social media, came a new set of marketing opportunities. The potential of the technology was plain for all to see from the very beginning, but harnessing it to serve marketing ends in such a manner that the essence of the platform was not compromised, was the big challenge. Then, of course, there was the question: was this just another fad?

Our concerns were laid to rest in 2008, when one individual used social media technology to successfully create a brand. Up until then, brand building was a discipline all of its own, and involved a complex set of marketing activities, operational interventions, and communications initiatives over an extended period of time. This individual showed how social media could be harnessed to drive the communications imperative and power the campaign as a whole. The dramatically shortened time-to-market notwithstanding, it was not just a case of new media replacing traditional media, but new media driving and complementing traditional media. It is no secret that the individual in question was Barack Obama, the current US president, who successfully employed social media technology to assist him win that country's 2008 presidential race.

Marketers the world over have since realised that social media is not a fad. Hundreds of millions of users employ the technology on a daily basis as they chat to their friends and colleagues, keep up to date with the latest news, post their thoughts and innermost feelings for all to see, share photographs and home videos and generally stay connected to the world around them.

To the marketer, then, the Obama campaign successfully demonstrated, for the first time, how social media could be utilised to tap into the collective and build a brand in the process.

Context

This study then seeks, primarily, to examine the exponential growth of social media technology as a key component in recent American political campaigning. Adopting the approach of a case study, i.e. utilising a real-life example and drawing conclusions thereof rather than testing a hypothesis within a purely academic context, the study focuses firmly on the use of social media in the Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. The investigation identifies the key media and technologies used in the build-up to the 2008 American presidential elections in order to unpack and understand how such media channels, technological platforms and patterns were successfully utilised to create and roll-out what has since become commonly known as the "Obama brand" (Sanger 2009: 128).

With political campaigns often being likened to marketing campaigns, in that both adopt strategies, demarcate target audiences, devise tactical plans, aim for measurable outcomes and utilise resources firmly embedded in the communications realm (Metzer 2011: Interview), this study is thus located within the larger disciplines of marketing, communications and branding. As such, it refers to concepts and practices linked to these disciplines, as well as to studies conducted in these fields.

Social media, and indeed the technology that drives it, has come to mean many things to many people. To the youth and the office-based worker, it is all about 'making friends' through social networking sites such as Facebook or growing business networks through sites like LinkedIn. To marketers, it is all about using technology to communicate directly with target audiences in a way where messages can be customised and outcomes measured. To the

creatives among and indeed within us, social media is all about posting one's thoughts on such sites as Twitter, or home videos on sites like MySpace and YouTube (Pillay, M. 2011: Interview).

Theoretical Framework

Branding is ultimately about the equity or value accrued over time through consumer interaction with a particular product or service. Equity, as such, is generally driven by the product or service's expectation, and one brand most often differs from another when that expectation is continually met or surpassed. Branding is also about association with the use of a particular name, logo design, strap line, promise, visual sign, symbol or a combination thereof (Metzer 2011: Interview). There are, however, only a select number of brands that have so great an impact on so many that they are often referred to as "super brands" by both the industry in which they operate and the consumers they service. Such brand elevation usually results from companies, products or services consistently delivering quality and value to customers over extended periods of time in order to gain their loyalty (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009: 160). The *Sunday Times* annual brand survey, for example, lists a number of brands as being "super brands" including such brands as Coca-Cola, Microsoft, McDonalds and BMW (Sunday Times 2003: 8).

Using the above as a framework, well-known brands such as Nike and Disney may easily be referred to as super brands, as they have not only enjoyed years of success in their respective markets but have become product and category leaders in the process. In politics, such figures as Nelson Mandela, who have been vaulted onto the international stage for making positive changes to the world, have become household names in the process. In many respects, though, their political super brand status was garnered over time through effort, energy and personal sacrifice.

Obama, the first African-American President of the United States, is a

household name the world over and, like the retail brands discussed above, is a category leader. As such, he is considered a political super brand by both his allies, opponents and the world at large. This study, though, contends that his status as a super brand was not earned through effort, energy and sacrifice alone, but engineered through a carefully constructed political campaign that was augmented through the use of social media technology. Samples of a hand-written document crafted by Obama's campaign manager outlining this campaign, are provided in the ensuing discussion, as are clippings, pictures and photographs that illustrate the campaign's journey which further supports the contention. And, finally, excerpts from interviews conducted with ordinary Americans who voted in the 2008 elections are cited in the narrative, and further attest to the fact that technology was critical success driver in creating the Obama brand.

Examining Obama's campaign, the key drivers of its success were identified, isolated and are discussed at length in the course of this study. This forms the backbone of the discussion and shows how social media technology was harnessed to deliver Obama's success, and create a political super brand in the process.

- **Definition**

In terms of a definition of the term 'social media' then, there are a number of them and the South African-based marketer, Rob Stokes, seems to provide one of the more succinct among these. He refers to social media simply as the collection of various internet-driven tools and applications used to advance social interaction (2008: 22). Further, he is of the opinion that social media is characterised by the multiple ways in which users of both computers and mobile telephones communicate via the internet, as well as the manner in which they are encouraged to not only consume content, but to produce such content through the several accessible and easy-to-use publishing techniques available to them. For purposes of this study, Stokes' definition will be used as a point of departure.

As has been mentioned, this study is located within the disciplines of marketing, communications and branding. The latter is especially relevant to this study as it attempts to explain the creation of a brand through the use of social media technology.

Literature Review

A review of books, newspaper articles and internet references focussing on the 2008 Obama presidential campaign has also revealed a general consensus that the use of technology and new media contributed significantly to the success of the campaign and, consequently, to the creation of his super brand status. Such writers as Barry Liebert and Rick Faulk agree that:

He [Obama] unleashed social technologies. Obama won the 2008 election by seven percentage points, in large part because he used all the social technologies of our time - blogs, discussion boards, viral videos, texting, and cell-phone networks - to connect with his constituencies. He created a grassroots community MyBarackObama.com to market his campaign and raise an unprecedented flood of capital. (2009:10)

Similarly, Steve Dougherty in his book, *Hopes and Dreams: The Story of Barack Obama*, highlights the power of branding or super branding to elevate ordinary individuals to what he refers to as “superstar status”. He states that:

Often compared to the supernovas of rock, following his landslide victory in the US Senate Election, Barack Obama often attracted the sort of media attention greater than that which would be generated at the launch of a Rolling Stones tour. (2008: 9)

The combination of technology, branding and new media was a crucial success driver during Obama’s presidential campaign in 2008. As Deborah Willis and Kevin Merida tell us in their book, *Obama The Historic Campaign*

in Photographs:

He rewrote the presidential campaign playbook using technology, he shattered fundraising practices and, in record time, raised 340 million dollars using current networking technology. By collaborating with the media mavericks of Facebook, he raised most of the funds from small amounts donated by the masses. (2008: 142)

The power of technology created an edge for Obama, especially when addressing the younger market. As Willis and Merida continue:

The Obama Campaign was able to effectively use the internet to organise young people. Some who came to his Iowa State University rally on February 11, 2007, agreed to volunteer for Obama and were brought together through Facebook.com. (Ibid.)

The use of social media as a primary communications portal resulted in Obama being considered “more than just a presidential candidate” in a number of significant ways (Dougherty 2008: 34). Foremost among these was his consistent campaigning, both on his campaign trail and online, which allowed him to achieve cult hero status among many. The campaign ultimately pivoted on constant communications and this was achieved through the use of such media as blogs, discussion boards, viral videos and short message service (SMS) texts. Unsurprisingly, Obama soon joined such popular icons as David Beckham and Madonna in the society pages of major American newspapers.

Obama’s campaign awareness was given a further boost when he purchased a satellite network channel which he used to screen his campaign adverts 24-hours daily during the build up to the elections. This was complemented by constant updates on his website, www.mybarackobama.com, which incidentally was also used as an effective fund raising tool (see Figure 1,

which is the landing page of the Obama website). The use of both his website and satellite channel *in tandem* with his online marketing efforts drove Obama's technological imperative, and it was this combination that seems to have played a critical role in his eventual success (Liebert & Faulk 2009: 10).

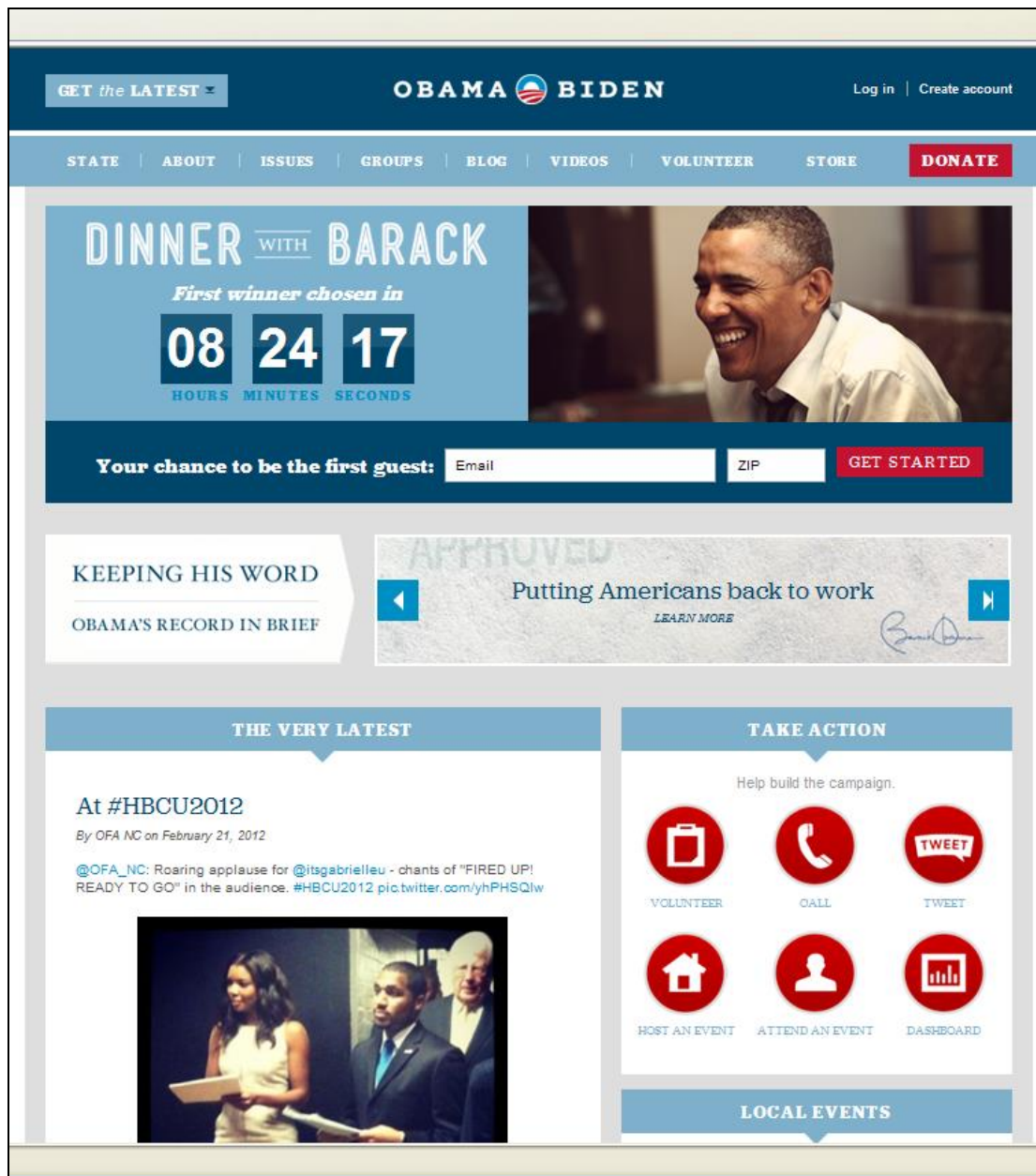


Figure 1: Landing page of Barack Obama's website

[Source: www.mybarackobama.com]

In highlighting the impact of communications technology in our lives beyond the political arena, a study was conducted by Karl Fisch and his colleagues, Scott McLeod and Jeff Brenman. The results were then posted as a video presentation on YouTube. Simply entitled, “Did you Know?”, the presentation revealed, amongst other facts, that, “The first commercial text was sent in December 1992. Today the number of text messages sent and received every day exceeds the total population of the planet” (Fisch, McLeod & Brenman 2008).

The statement above is ultimately about how communications methods have evolved, continues to be driven by technology and connects more people in more ways than ever before. Creating brands through communication technologies designed with social interaction in mind, however, requires forward and innovative thinking. When the ‘brand’ is a person, however, the challenge multiplies exponentially.

Research Aims

Using a case study approach with an emphasis on content analysis, the primary aim of this study is a consideration of the growth in the use of social media in political campaigning and brand building. It addresses three specific issues, viz.:

1. Social media practices, mechanics and marketing implications;
2. The utilisation of social media in the 2004 United States presidential campaigns that provided critical pointers for the subsequent 2008 presidential campaigns and, finally;
3. How the Barack Obama 2008 presidential campaign capitalised on strategic knowledge and technological developments in the formulation, crafting and implementation of an approach that conferred super brand status on Obama and has come to be viewed as a benchmark in political campaigning.

The premise of the study is that Obama's brand status was engineered through a carefully constructed political campaign that was fast-tracked through the use of social media technology.

Research Methodology

Whilst a literature review is integral to any academic investigation, the review undertaken for this study revealed significant gaps. Firstly, the medium under discussion is still in its infancy and not all developments have therefore been documented. Secondly, the rate at which the medium is growing, developing and progressing leaves a large body of literature vulnerable to being dated. Iceland, for example, led the world with broadband penetration as recently as 2005 with 26.7 inhabitants per 100 having broadband access. In 2008, the world leader was Bermuda, pushing Iceland much further down the list (ITU Report 2012). Given this fact, any Icelandic case study attempting to document broadband penetration best practices would thus have little validity after three years.

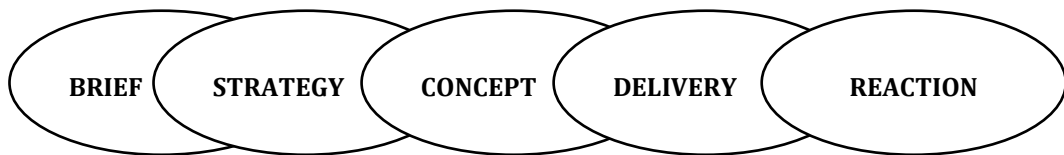
Thirdly, a search has revealed that there is insufficient academic treatment of social media technology to draw any broad conclusions based on the literature alone. And, finally, the medium's infancy notwithstanding, much of the literature has been crafted by social media marketers and practitioners themselves, who thus have a vested interest in penning their thoughts. Experience in the field has shown that information from such sources is vulnerable to commercial manipulation.

- **Pilot Survey**

Given the above, an informal pilot survey was conducted during the early stages of this study using TTL advertising agency clients, colleagues in the marketing industry and specialist social media marketers as sample groups. The intention of the survey was to determine this study's eventual research parameters, demarcate the research arena, discover overarching trends and

obtain basic data by interviewing the sample.

Of the pointers that emerged, two were significant. Firstly, between a client's brief to the agency and consumer reaction to, or consumption of, the client's product, service or message, the process followed can best be described as a value-chain comprising the following elements (see diagram below):



- **Brief**

At its most basic, the briefing link of the value chain involves clients providing descriptions of their product, service or message and outlining the objectives that the TTL agency-led social media campaigns need to achieve within a given time-frame and allocated budget.

- **Strategy**

Devising a suitable strategy for realising clients' objectives is the next link in the value chain and involves the agency strategist factoring in market research and all elements impacting on and resulting from the clients' brief. The strategist will also provide direction for the creative team, outline the parameters and need for a design and associated messaging that can be carried through to social media and, of course, specify the number and types of social media platforms to be utilised.

- **Concept**

The creative team would then use the strategist's input to create a singular, unified message and creative concept to take to market.

- **Content Creation**

As a follow-through on the creative team's output, appropriate content and messaging will be crafted by the agency's copywriters.

- **Delivery**

By this stage, the agency's production team would have sourced an appropriate IT partner who would ultimately be responsible for taking the message or delivering the relevant content to market in as efficient and effective manner as is possible. The IT partner will also provide the relevant analytics at the end of the campaign.

- **Reaction**

The last link in the value chain is the most important and involves a high degree of interactivity between all parties (client, consumer and service providers) to ensure that the key messaging is appropriate and consumer uptake of the clients' messages, products or services is optimal and sustained throughout the life of the campaign.

Further to actually demarcating the social media process flow at an agency level, isolating the value chain also helped identify the key sample groups whose opinions would need to be sought and factored into this study.

The second pointer, unsurprisingly, revealed that opinion, conjecture and indeed anecdotal evidence were as valuable to the study as was the documented information being gathered. Such data sources were rich in on-the-ground experiences with the medium, as well as being able to comment authoritatively on its scope and possible future direction.

It is for the reasons cited above that, formal interviews were undertaken with individuals from a range of backgrounds. This, it was felt, would lend an authenticity to the narrative that would not have been possible otherwise. In

this regard, three groups were eventually created.

- **Sample Groups**

The first group comprised marketers who, for obvious reasons, were active in the field for more than a decade and who considered themselves, and were considered by the industry, “specialist social media marketers”. Whilst none of the participants in this group actually used the title, “specialist social media marketer” to describe what they did, the term was a useful point of departure in categorising them as a collective since their core function within their respective agencies was to devise digital strategies, conceptualise online campaigns and then implement these across a range of social media platforms. Further, the individuals selected for this group were considered industry leaders in the field of social media marketing by their peers. Face-to-face, structured interviews were used with this group.

The second group comprised IT specialists with a track record of dealing with clients who use social media as a marketing tool. Where possible, individuals were selected on the basis of their understanding of how online strategies segue with IT to produce and deliver social media content. Like the first group, structured interviews were used with this sample as well.

And, finally, the third focus was on a group of Americans who were surveyed in a qualitative context via a structured questionnaire, and then interviewed. All members of the group voted in the 2008 US presidency elections, and at least half were active users of social media during that period. Due to the nature of the subject, the responses to the survey questions were invaluable and are thus cited in their entirety in Annexure One of this study. The interviews, and indeed the survey itself, were conducted via Facebook and the responses to the respective interviews from this group, as well as from the other two, have been threaded into the narrative where relevant.

- **Sampling Method**

Given that this study focuses on branding, social media, political campaigning and their symbiotic relationship, a number of sampling methods were initially reviewed. These included, among others, probability and non-probability sampling (Castillo 2009). Further to obtaining the results of the pilot study, though, it was decided that this study's strategic objectives could potentially be realised by either sampling method. However, as it was the examination of the interrelationship between branding, social media and political campaigning that lay at the heart of this study, it soon became clear that non-probability sampling would be the most efficient method. In this regard, convenience sampling was eventually selected as the key method of recruitment.

Given the above, the first two sample groups – specialist marketers and IT practitioners – were selected on the basis of their regard in their respective industries. Gerard Metzger, for example, was selected on the basis of his role in specialist marketing for more than two decades. Over the years, he has worked with some of South Africa's leading brands and, apart from his standing in the industry, he is also a former owner of an advertising agency. At the time of conducting research for this study (2009 – 2011), he was the marketing director of Plascon Paints, South Africa.

Whilst locating IT practitioners and specialist marketers, and obtaining their consent and cooperation to participate in this study, was a fairly simple process, this wasn't the case with obtaining a sample of American voters.

In mid-2009, contact was made with the US embassy in Pretoria where the objectives of this study were discussed with an official. He was made aware of the fact that we were attempting to locate between five and ten Americans between the ages of 25 and 49 who voted in the 2008 US presidential election, and was given a schedule of questions (see Appendix One for the full report). These included the following:

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?
2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialized/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?
3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?
4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?
5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?
6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?
7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?
8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/few)?
9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/few)?
10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people your work/socialise with mentioned in 8/9 above?

After much to-ing and fro-ing, the US embassy officials put us in touch with a US Aid Worker, Bethany Haberer, who promised to source us an adequate sample on her return to the US. A series of emails followed our initial contact with Haberer and, as promised, she supplied us with a list of names and email addresses of Americans who voted in the 2008 US presidential elections.

Contact was made electronically with each of the individuals to obtain consent followed by a series of emails to discuss the objectives of the study and address the associated ethical issues of using the information they supplied. A Facebook Group page was later started and all subsequent interaction took place via Facebook.

- **“Posts”**

Academic studies, especially those located in the field of anthropology and its sister disciplines, rely heavily on first person accounts from which conclusions are drawn. Such accounts are important primary sources as they paint vivid pictures of situations as they unfold. As the noted anthropologist Paul Thompson mentioned almost a quarter of a century ago:

We are dealing, in short, with living sources who, just because they are alive have, unlike inscribed stones or sheaves of paper, the ability to work with us in a two-way process. (1988: 149)

Thompson’s statement above is critical as the medium under discussion is, in a sense, a living and growing culture, thus forcing us to work with individuals in a “two-way process” in order to ensure a balanced perspective.

Much like the nature of social media itself, interaction is key and, in this regard, other sources cited periodically in this study are the users of the medium themselves. Their statements, thoughts and feelings, which are

collectively referred to as “posts”, reveal as much about who they are, as it does about the essence of the medium.

In an attempt to maintain the confidentiality of the users whose posts appear in the text, they are cited simply by number and date. Further, where necessary, posts cited include only those phrases, terms and conversation threads relevant to the study.

Conclusion

Whilst this study pivots on its focus on social media, it is ultimately about examining how social media was employed in a specific brand building exercise. Given this as a background, this study also aims to understand the drivers of social media, especially as they are used to create and impact positively on the growth of political super brands. As has been inferred, this in turn, will undoubtedly advance our appreciation, knowledge and understanding of how such platforms impact on the fields of marketing and communications generally.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL MEDIA: PRACTICES, MECHANICS AND MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

As the opening chapter of our discussion has demonstrated, social media began as an online networking tool linking friends, colleagues and individuals with similar likes and interests. As has also been mentioned, business recognised the marketing potential of the medium from its onset but did not fully leverage off its potential until the early 2000s for a variety of reasons (Stokes 2008: 3). Some of these are discussed below but, suffice it to say, its meteoric rise in popularity was due in large part to advances in the technology that gave people access to the medium. As Gerard Metzger, the South African-based Marketing Director of Plascon Paints, states:

No longer was it just the domain of office workers who were able to 'chat to friends' online using their companies' networks, but home computer and cellular telephone users soon joined the increasing number of people who were now 'connected'.
(2011: Interview)

Metzger's point that "access" was the pivot on which usage swung, is an important one as it was one of the key barriers to entry that was overcome through advances in technologies promoting internet access.

In support of Metzger's view, the International Telecommunication Union

reported that in 2005, the number of individuals with access to the internet in the developing world was four hundred and eight million and that the number had grown to more than one and a half billion by 2012 (ITU report 2013).

Accompanying the technological advances that promoted internet access were developments in the technology that powered social media, an increase in the number of social networking sites available to users and, on the statistics sides of the technology, the creation of reporting tools that could track and measure usage (Stokes 2008: 273). This meant that marketers using the medium could, in theory, not only measure their campaigns but do so in real time. This was a breakthrough for business and, by 2011, the number of marketers using social media were on the increase. In a survey conducted that same year by Eric Stelzner, which sought the opinions of 3 300 marketers around the world, a staggering 93 percent reported the use of social media for marketing purposes (2011:11). Further, 72 percent of the respondents reported that it helped them generate new business, with the primary benefit of the technology being that it separated their brand from the general marketing “clutter” (Ibid.:17).

The word “clutter” which is commonly used in the advertising industry to describe the barrage of conflicting and contrasting media or messages that consumers face on a daily basis or during a purchase decision, is related to another commonly used word, “spillage”. This refers to media that is wasted, i.e. media that was created and flighted with the intention of reaching a particular target market but did not, due to such reasons as poor planning or, what can best be described as “overkill” (Cele 2010: Interview).

Evolution versus Revolution

The evolution of marketing is inextricably linked to the evolution of products, services and, indeed, the manner in which the various modes of human communication evolved through the years. Marketing, much like human communication, has however progressed in steps rather than leaps; the rapid

rate at which it mirrored industrial development in the latter half of the 1800s notwithstanding (Perreault 1999: 5). From general announcements in printed dailies and word-of-mouth communications in community halls during the industrial age, to the advent of radio and television advertising in the early days of the information age, only a handful of marketing platforms have however taken a quantum leap forward. Social media is such a platform and has revolutionised not only the way in which people communicate with each other but, more importantly in the context of this study, how marketers communicate with their respective target audiences (Stokes 2008: 2).

As has been mentioned, social media began simply as a series of email-based communications platforms linking people with similar interests or backgrounds, but took firm hold in the mid-1990s as a networking tool when it harnessed the power of the internet (Romm-Livermore 2008: 271). It was only later when activity on such sites as Facebook reached unprecedented levels, though, that its marketing potential was first tapped (Stokes 2008: 3). Marketers realised that millions of potential customers could be reached in a single click and, more importantly, that this could be done at a fraction of the cost of traditional media. Efficiencies notwithstanding, marketers also realised that social networking was simply another form of word-of-mouth communications, which was the cornerstone of their industry and what drove their combined efforts in the first instance.

While its success as a marketing platform grew rapidly, its foundation remained steadfast. Firstly, as a medium of social interaction, it was unlike any traditional marketing platform as it was, and continues to be, based on dialogue or instant two-way communication. This meant that the medium represented, conceptually, an amalgam of the most effective elements of direct marketing with the most attractive benefits of customer care. Further, the time lag between research, development and product improvement was drastically reduced as the customer response loop was significantly shortened. Secondly, social media catered simultaneously for individuals as

well as the masses across country, nation, demographic and psychographic. And, finally, unlike traditional marketing platforms, social media could be tracked and measured.

Using the above as a backdrop, the following marketing example provided by Kanchana Moodliar, the former marketing manager of Unilever South Africa, refers:

Look at it this way: Traditionally when Retailer X wanted to embark on a brand building exercise with an advertising budget [adspend] of R5 million, his marketing mix typically comprised such below-the-line [BTL] items as pamphlets, radio spots, in-store and in-mall promotions, point-of-sale displays, print adverts in newspapers and, most likely, a PR activation campaign. Retailer X's above-the-line [ATL] items would most likely have included a mixture of television spots and outdoor billboards. In line with the South African retail industry-related adspend ratios, the ATL/BTL/concept and design split would roughly be 60/30/10 in favour of ATL, due to its generally high 'fighting' costs. Then, of course, Retailer X would have to budget at least another R1 million rand for agency management and media placement fees.

This traditional brand building approach however did not guarantee Retailer X success, as the model itself was fraught with problems. Firstly, Retailer X having spent all that cash would have no idea exactly how many people he reached (unless, of course, he commissioned a separate quantitative research study). Further, of the people that his campaign did indeed reach, he would have no idea what their retail needs, wants and desires were, nor what their demographics or psychographics were (unless, of course, he commissioned a separate qualitative study). Secondly, any campaign adopting an approach that we in the advertising industry best describe as "spray and pray", results in a high spillage factor. So, with not knowing whether his campaign objectives were truly realised, or exactly how much of his cash was wasted, Retailer X would simply reduce his marketing budget in the next fiscal and blame it all on the economy. (2011: Interview)

With an effective social media campaign as part of the marketing mix,

bolstered by an innovative concept and a cutting edge design, traditional ATL line items play a support role, and BTL simply follows through on the online dialogue between Retailer X and his customer. Retailer X's R5 million adspend, mentioned in Moodliar's interview above, is thus far more effectively spent, and his brand message reaches customers more efficiently than ever before. Besides, the new marketing ratios will free up his much needed cash resources, which can be channelled into Retailer X's other efforts, such as a product marketing or a customer care programme. Lastly, of course, the technology driving social media would ensure that Retailer X knows each and every one of his customers, "their wants, needs and, most importantly, their non-vocalised desires" (Ibid.).

Using the above as an introduction to this chapter, the ensuing discussion seeks to deconstruct social media's mechanics in order to fully grasp its impact on the creation of the political super brand.

Context

At a global level, the rapid increase of web-based technology and social media has generally changed the way consumers and companies interact with each other, and this has been the subject of a number of discussions on the topic to date. Wu, for example, tells us that:

Social media is a rapidly growing consumer trend and many companies are still figuring out how to use it effectively. However, it has changed the way consumers make decisions and it is important that companies understand how to employ it to their advantage. (2005: 27)

As has been mentioned, and given Wu's statement, this discussion will focus on the 'how' of social media, especially as it pertains to its role in furthering the political agenda. In other words, rather than examining its historical basis, our search hones in on the manner in which internet-based, social media has

been employed outside of traditional communications, to further ends other than those of social interaction.

In this regard, the following framework is offered as a starting point for this discussion:

Social media are media [from written to visual to audio to audio visual] that are designed to be shared. Sharing means that it is easy to comment on, that it is easy to send, and that there are no high costs associated with viewing the media. And, because of the connected nature of the Internet, it means that sharing; commenting and viewing can all be tracked and measured. (Stokes 2008: 122)

Although social media is still in its infancy as both an advertising model and a marketing platform in comparison to its traditional counterparts, the past ten years have seen market penetrations like never before. Consider, for example, BMW's flighting of a ninety second advert on YouTube in 2006, which was viewed more than a million times by 2008 (Stokes 2008: 127). The content was, of course, exceptional, and coupled with the fact that BMW invested nothing in flighting costs and the spot itself was not constrained by the thirty or sixty second time limit imposed by traditional media practices, turned the campaign into a resounding success. Further, as has been referred to, the 2011 social media marketing report that surveyed marketers around the world, revealed the following:

- Marketers place high value on social media: A significant 90% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business.
- Measurement and integration are top areas marketers want to master: One-third of all social media marketers want to know how to monitor and measure the return on investment (ROI) of social media and integrate their social media activities.
- Social media marketing takes a lot of time: The majority of

marketers (58%) are using social media for 6 hours or more each week, and more than a third (34%) invest 11 or more hours weekly.

- Video marketing on the rise: A significant 77% of marketers plan on increasing their use of YouTube and video marketing, making it the top area marketers will invest in for 2011.
- Marketers seek to learn more about Facebook and blogging: 70% of marketers want to learn more about Facebook and 69% want to learn more about blogging.
- The top benefits of social media marketing: The number-one advantage of social media marketing (by a long shot) is generating more business exposure, as indicated by 88% of marketers. Increased traffic (72%) and improved search rankings (62%) were also major advantages.
- The top social media tools: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogs were the top four social media tools used by marketers, in that order. Facebook has eclipsed Twitter to take the top spot since our 2010 study.
- Social media outsourcing underutilized: Only 28% of businesses are outsourcing some portion of their social media marketing.

(Stelzner 2011: 4)

Practices

At its most basic, social media promotes social interaction through online discussions among users who share common likes and dislikes. In a sense, it thus creates online communities who not only share their thoughts and feelings about particular subjects, but also invites others outside these communities to comment and share their ideas and experiences.

Given the above, it may be prudent to provide excerpts from an actual online social discussion to demonstrate some of social media's key practices.

A week before Valentine's Day, 2011, a Facebook user (User 1) who it seemed received a number of requests for dates and, it appears, proposals

of marriage as well, posted the following message:

2 al u guyz inboxing me. im not lookin for a date 4 valentinz so plz keep ur comentz 2 urself. im not avalible, dont wana go out wid u. im nobodyz bitch. dont wana b ur fuk buddy. not any 1z gal. not intrestd in mariage. ur proposal dosnt intrest me. i no lyk u & defnitly dont wana mit ur fukin mader. im yer 2 let luz wen i feel lyk & talk nonsins when i feel lyk so the short arnser is fuk of. (Facebook User 1: 2011)

The comments below, made by 12 of her Facebook “friends”, followed within 17 minutes of the post:

- u go gal !!!!!!! (Facebook User 2: 2011)
- I’m married. Does that count? (Facebook User 3: 2011)
- these mardirs [derogatory form of the word ‘mother’] got no fukin work.wat? (Facebook User 4: 2011)
- So sorry dear. Kno exactly wat u goin thru. (Facebook User 5: 2011)
- u must b a lezzy [lesbian]. (Facebook User 6: 2011)
- Wil u guyz plz remov me frm this conversation. Tx (Facebook User 7: 2011)
- Meee too babe ☺ (Facebook User 4: 2011)
- Many single women choose to be single & it’s sad when some men feel the need to remedy the situation when there’s no situation. I hear you sister. (Facebook User 8: 2011)
- The only life worth living is one that you are passionate about! Pass this along to 10 of your friends if you live your life with passion (Facebook User 9: 2011)
- gud nyt al ma peeps. c u n da moro (Facebook User 10: 2011)
- Aaaah Mwaaaaaah (Facebook User 4: 2011)
- i apoligiz ...[Facebook User 1]... didnt min 2 insult. wil

sms u n da morn. mis cal me if u want (Facebook User 11: 2011)

- Vote for this picture if you agree (Facebook User 12: 2011)

The morning after User 1's "friends" posted their comments, another "friend" posted the following:

I am glad you use the words 'some men' [User 8] b'cause you certainly don't speak for all of us men. [User 1's] experience was unfortunate but there are guys out there who really can't get a date. Do you really blame them for trying? Your thoughts? (Facebook User 13: 2011)

Further to User 1's initial post, and the responses it generated, suggests the exposure of all content she generates to an open market. In reality, though, social media posts are in a very real sense open to sharing, but only to User 1's "friends". In the world of online networking, a "friend" could be an individual, an entity or a group with who, or what, a user agrees to share information, content and posts. It is thus unnecessary to have met someone in order to "connect" with them or be their "friend" (Stokes 2008: 131).

In social media practice, networking begins with the entity, group or individual profiling themselves on sites such as Facebook, MySpace or LinkedIn. Setting up the profile means revealing information from standard demographics such as age, gender and location, "to nuanced and detailed lists of likes and dislikes" (Ibid.). Once the profile is saved on the site, the user then browses the rest of the site with the aim of creating a network of friends. Friend requests are then sent, and the respondents can either accept or reject the invitation. The relationship is characterised by the sharing of thoughts, pictures, videos, ideas, opinions and any related content, and can also include requests ranging from calls for assistance to a search for the contact details of an old school friend. In the case of User 1's statement

above, her post was shared with all 2 325 of her friends.

As is evident from the comments made by User 1's friends, and indeed from her statement itself, posting one's thoughts on social networking sites is not governed by the proper use of language, nor is it restricted to particular words or opinions. Further, with many users connecting to social media sites via their cellular telephones, the trend is to employ an economy of language and text, hence the proliferation of such words as "plz" instead of "please", "wana" instead of "want to" and "lyk" instead of "like".

Rules of Engagement

Rob Stokes tells us that there are three primary role players on the social media landscape (2008: 13), viz.

- Content creators: Users that create content for consumption;
- Content consumers: Users that consume content for transactional or awareness purposes; and
- Content sharers: Those that disseminate information to other users.

Whilst Stokes's nomenclature generally refers to such content as photographs, videos, thoughts and opinions, it may be prudent to use the "valentinz" post cited above to demonstrate the mechanics behind his thoughts. User 1, then, could well be regarded as a 'content creator' in the sense that she generated a piece of information that did not exist online before. User 11, to whom User 1's ire seems to have been directed in the first instance, read and responded to the initial post and, in a sense, is a 'content consumer'. 'Content sharers', then, would be such users as User 9 and 12, who are clearly 'reposting' content that they received from other sources. As is evident from their posts, and as is generally the practice, content creators are almost never acknowledged.

The success of disseminating information to a target audience is, of course, dependent on the method of communication and the tools used to communicate. User profiles provide critical market intelligence and when used in tandem with online tracking and measuring tools, or statistical applications, it is fairly simple for a marketer to determine where consumers are located and the type of media they utilise, in order to reach them. In the case of social media, then, the medium is an invaluable marketing tool.

The access to information by users is further aided by the fact that one of social media's strengths lies in the absence of any hierarchical systems based on class, wealth, companies or individuals. Rob Ford and Julius Wiedemann in their fairly recent publication tell us that if such a classification did in fact exist, it would hinder the seamless dissemination of information. In the case of social media, the technology and tools are available globally to anyone who has access to the internet and the desire to connect with others (2010: 232).

In order to ensure that content is shared seamlessly, the process of content sharing has to be as simple as possible. This is generally achieved through the use of icons on a website that indicate the availability of syndicated messages or information. The process is known as Really Simple Syndication or "RSS" and the icons indicating "RSS" feeds are known colloquially as "chicklets" ("Chicklets" 2010). Content sharing can also be activated by short, readable Uniformed Resource Locaters or what is commonly known in the IT industry as "URLs" (King 2010: Interview).

Social Media Tools and the Marketer

Due to the vast array of social media tools available, most of them offering many of the same features as the next, it is imperative that marketers cut through the clutter to avoid confusion. This is generally achieved by committing to a set of social media tools that best suit a business and its online marketing strategy.

The research suggests that the following social media tools are the most popular:

- **Blog**

A “blog” is much like a website that allows users or “bloggers” to post entries on different topics (see Figure 2 below). It often allows readers to comment on these posts (Stokes 2009: 123). Blogs have similar characteristics as websites with regard to accessibility on the internet and ease of navigation. However, a blog is ultimately a personal diary. When used effectively, blogs are an extremely efficient social media tool that allows for seamless two-way communication between marketers and their audiences. This two-way communication allows marketers to gather immediate feedback on the blog they post.

Since “blogging was launched in 1999, blogs have reshaped the web, impacted politics, shaken up journalism, and enabled millions of people to have a voice and connect with others” (www.wikipedia.org).

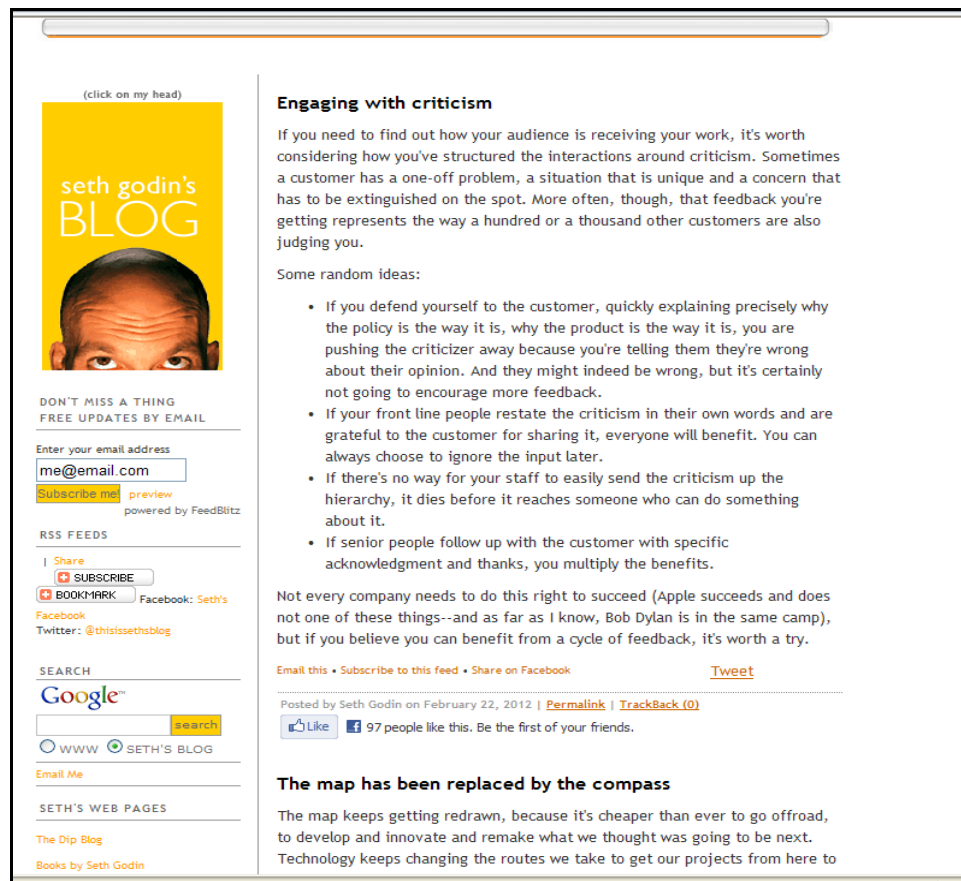


Figure 2: Example of a blog
[Source: <http://sethgodin.typepad.com>]

• Facebook

As has been mentioned, Facebook is a social network site that allows a user to create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages and other content with them. Facebook also automatically notifies users about updates, birthdays and any other information that they request when setting up their profiles. The site allows people flexibility in terms of interaction and caters for young party-goers as well as serious enthusiasts. Apart from the “valentinz” example cited earlier, another example of an entry includes the popular music group, “The Black Eyed Peas”, who created a Facebook group consisting of their fans in order to advertise a forthcoming concert. By mid-2010,

Facebook enjoyed the support of more than 500 million active users all over the world (www.wikipedia.org).



Figure 3: Example of a Facebook profile

[Source: www.facebook.com]

- **YouTube**

YouTube is a video-sharing site on which users upload, share and view videos (www.wikipedia.org). Powered by what the IT industry refers to as “Flash technology” (Pillay, P. 2011: Interview), YouTube encourages users to upload any media including music, film, television clips, amateur videos and video diaries or “vlogs” (Stokes 2009:127).

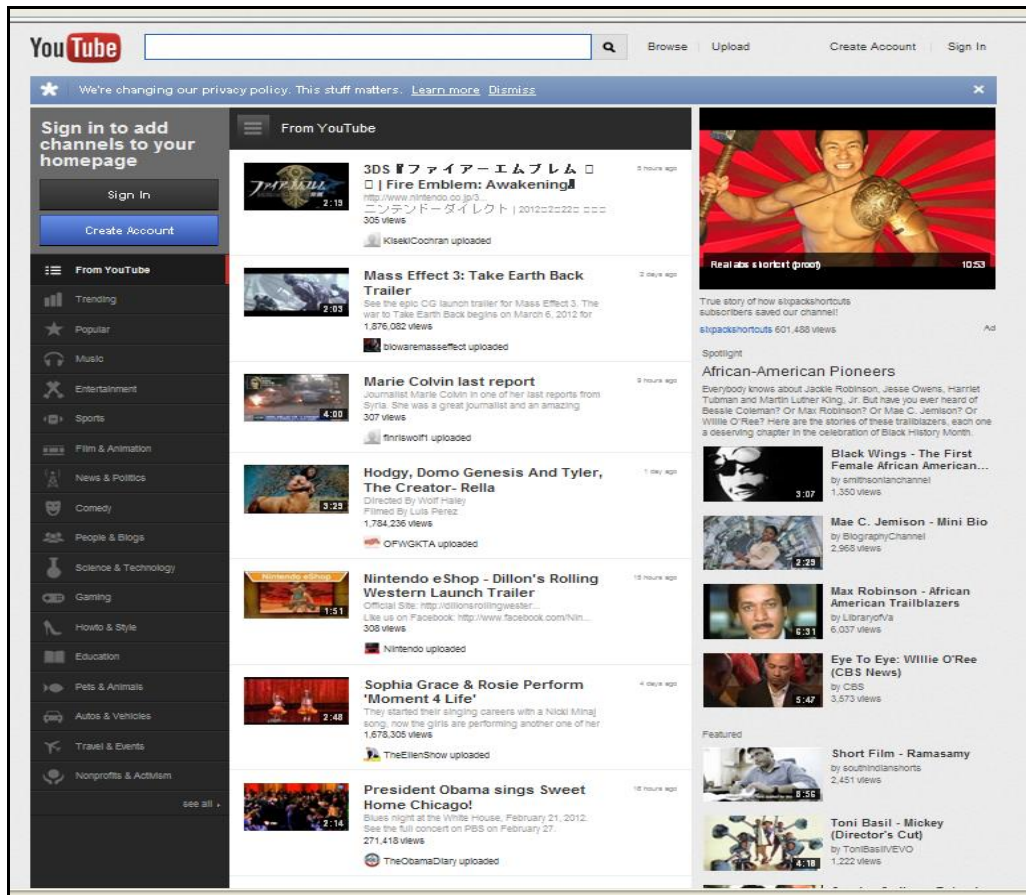


Figure 4: YouTube's landing page

[Source: www.youtube.com]

- **Twitter**

Twitter is a site that facilitates both social networking and blogging, *albeit* in terms of short information bytes. As a service, it enables users to send and read other users' messages called “tweets”. These tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters that are displayed on the user's profile page. Twitter attracts a passionately loyal user-group who frequently post their thoughts, or create links to interesting articles. It has gained popularity because of the speed at which tweets can be sent and received. Due to this immediacy, major news events are extensively covered by “Twitterers”, often beating print media or television to the punch. Twitter has attracted the likes of Obama and such artists as

Britney Spears among a host of others who use the site to stay in touch with their “followers” or fans (Stokes 2009: 127).

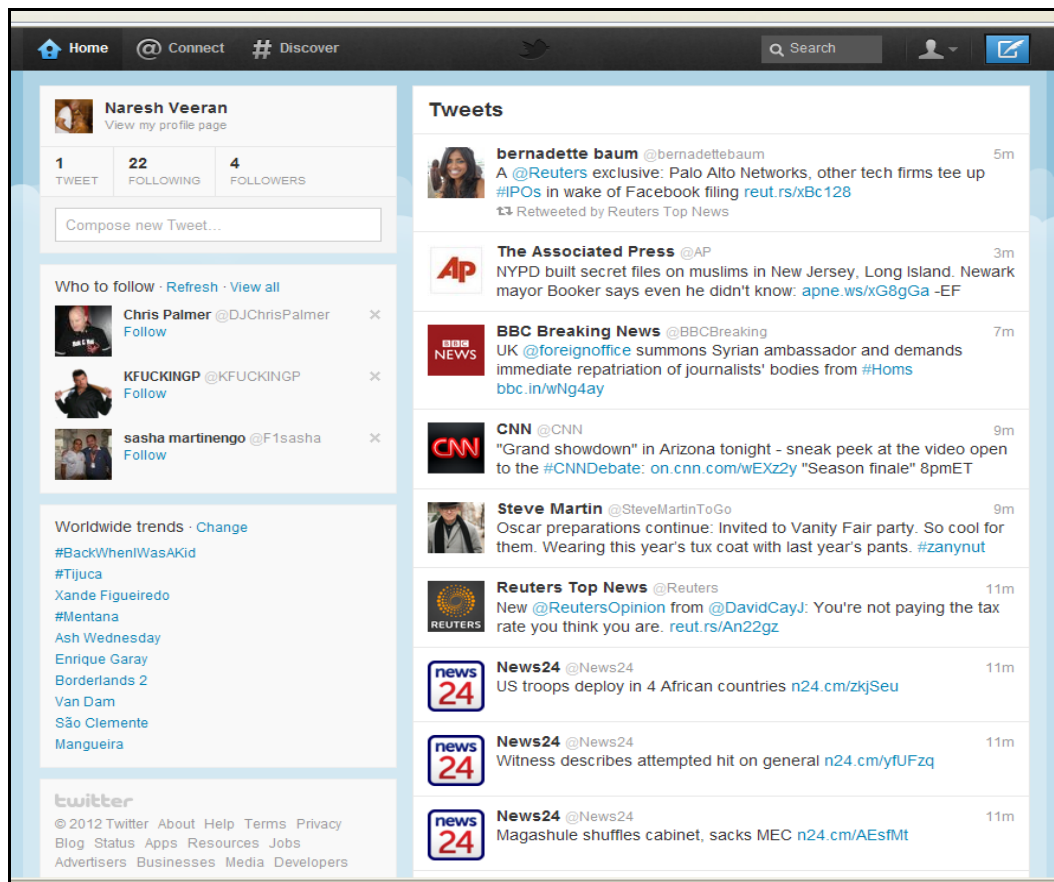


Figure 5: Example of “tweets”

[Source: www.twitter.com]

- **Podcast**

A “podcast” is an internet-based digital radio or video programme. Also referred to as a non-streamed webcast, it comprises a series of digital media files – either audio or video – that is released episodically through the internet (www.wikipedia.org). It began as audio blogs and progressed when the files were disseminated using the same RSS feeds, mentioned earlier, that were used to distribute blog posts. As Stokes tells us, “podcasting allowed users that aspired to become broadcasters the

flexibility and the ease to realise their dreams” (Stokes 2009:137).

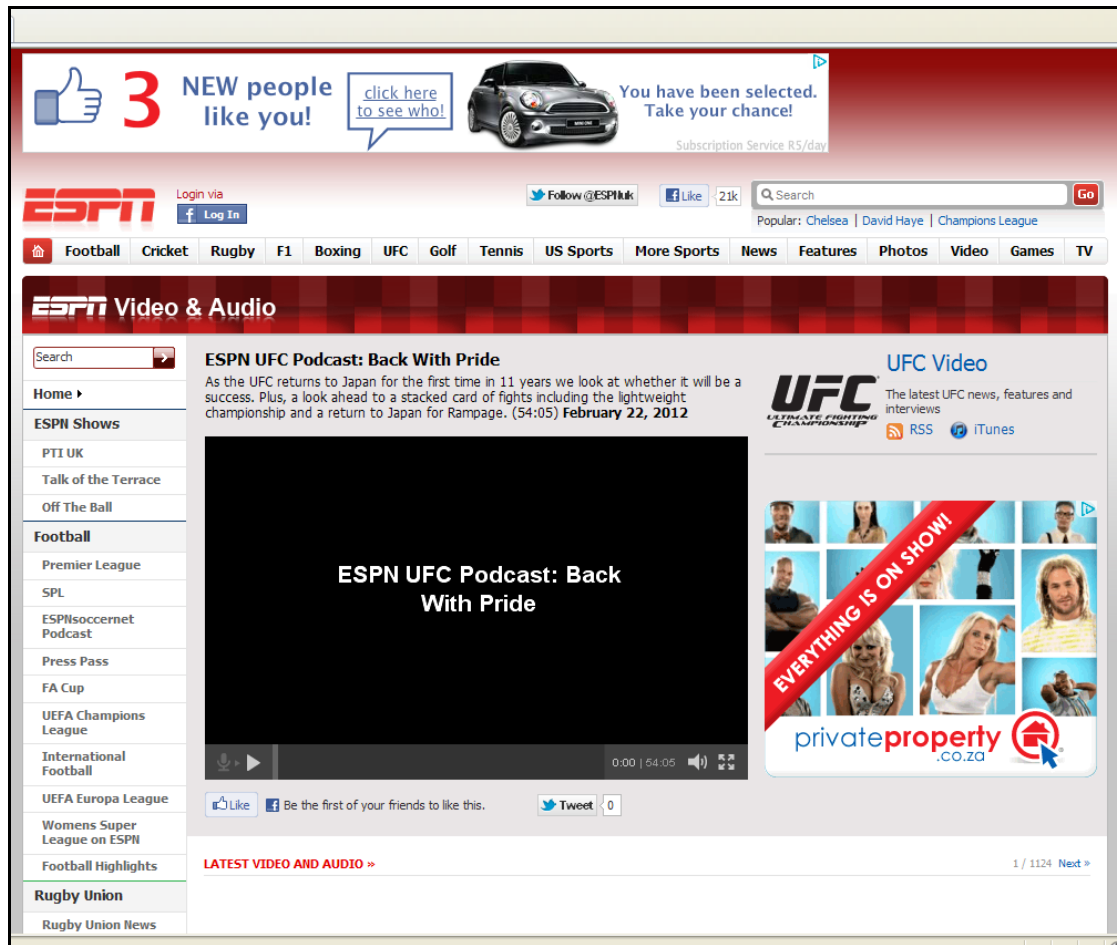


Figure 6: Example of a website featuring podcasts

[Source: www.espn.co.uk]

- **Flickr**

Flickr is a site that allows users to share and embed personal photographs and videos. The service is widely used by bloggers to host images that they embed in their blogs. In September 2010, Flickr reported that it hosted more than 5 billion images to date (www.wikipedia.org).

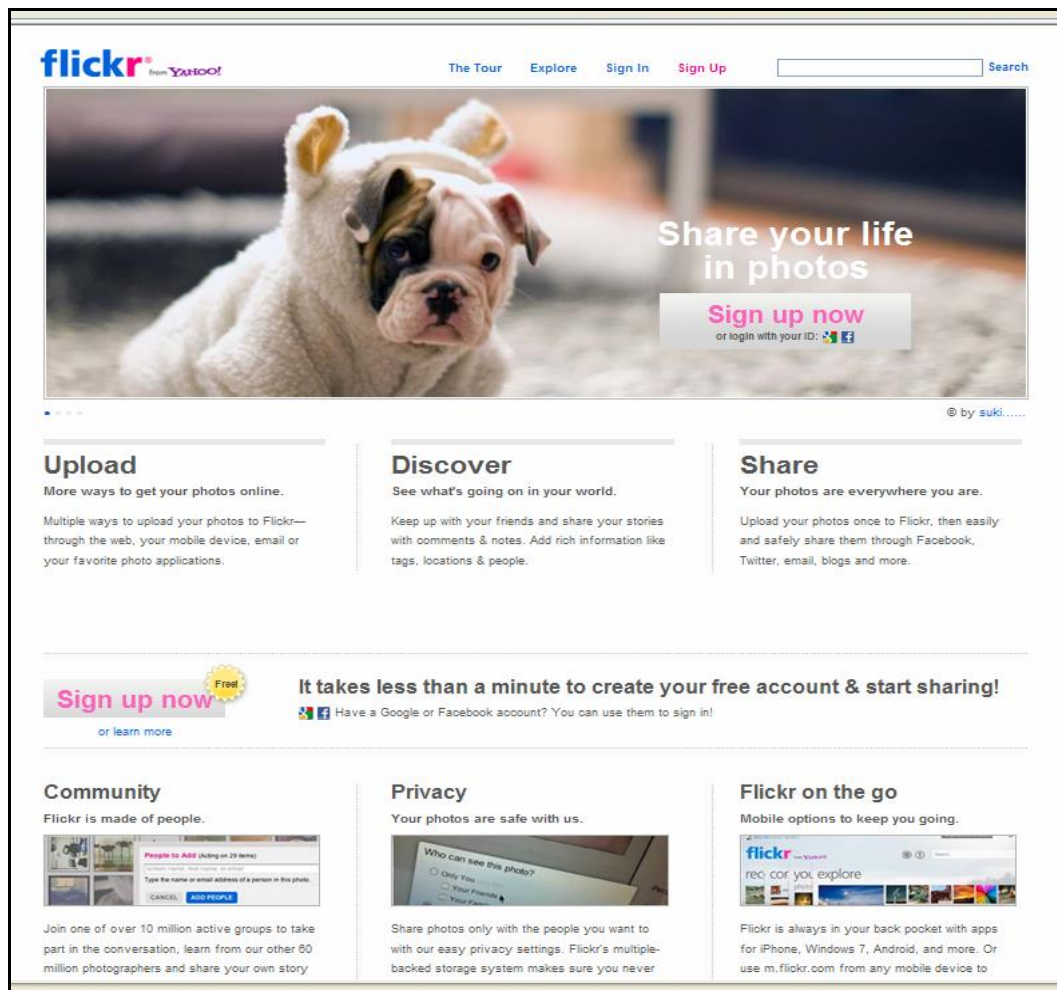


Figure 7: Flickr's landing page

[Source: www.flickr.com]

The Social Media Process Flow

As is evident from the above, some social media sites offer more complex functionality than others. For example: Twitter is based on a 140 text character statement versus Facebook which allows statements as well as interactive conversations. In this regard, an organogram is supplied below which is structured in hierarchical terms to highlight the increasing complexity with which different sites treat posts.

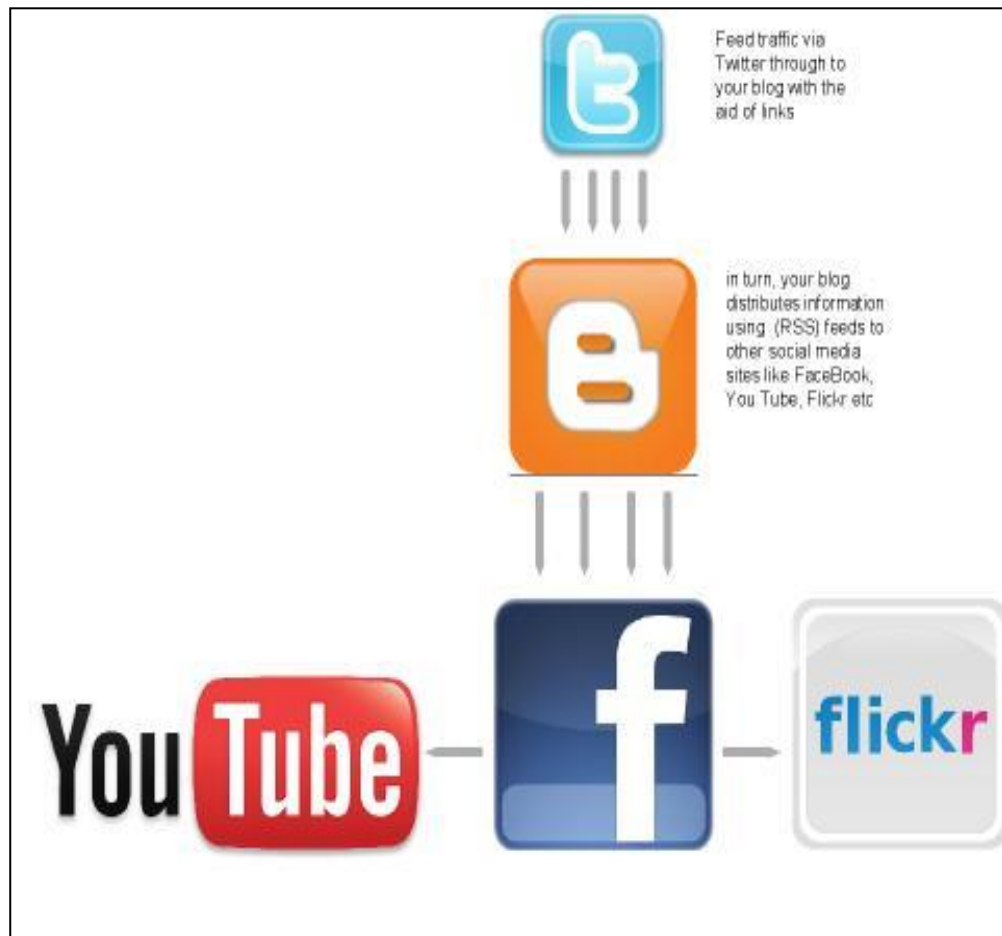


Figure 8: The Social Media Process

Flow

A particularly apt communication analogy to assist place this discussion in context, would be the manner in which one is first introduced to another. Communication is generally succinct and often kept to a minimum, e.g. what is your name or what do you do? Twitter, which appears at the top of the structure, is in a sense an online text version of chatting, which allows users to communicate up to 140 text characters each time they “speak”. This means that communication is short, quick and to the point. As mentioned, major news events often tend to break on Twitter before reaching the news stands as it is fairly instantaneous by design. Individuals use Twitter to keep in touch and follow other “Twitterers” but, most importantly, it can be used to direct traffic onto other, more detailed and personalised social media sites,

e.g. Facebook or a blog. The follower, or the followed, is then allowed the flexibility to link to any one of the various social media tools on offer.

Much like traditional communication, following an introduction, a person gets to know another better and the online equivalent would be a blog. A blog allows an individual access to another's thoughts and opinions on a wide range of topics. Blogs tend to lock-in personal information such as age, gender and location, which is often used by companies to develop direct marketing campaigns.

Facebook, which appears at the bottom of the organogram, allows users to create personal profile pages. This tends to remove the anonymity issue of the internet, but allows a user to create groups and "fan pages". As has been referred to, a user's personal profile is critical on a site such as this which, in turn, makes the site highly sought-after by marketers.

Flickr and YouTube are more specialised complex social media tools, and are thus positioned on the same level of Facebook in terms of their complex functionalities. BMW among other brands often use these sites to flight their adverts as they have shown to be highly dynamic with a dedicated following.

Benefits of Social Media to Marketers

When markets become bearish, it is not uncommon for marketing budgets to be among the first line items to be reduced. The need to realise efficiencies during such economic downturns notwithstanding, such a move is usually effected by companies for a variety of other reasons as well. These may include, for example, moving marketing savings to the distribution end of the business by offering bulk discounts on specific brands, in order to move such brands faster. This is done in an effort to maintain turnover, whilst simultaneously reducing costs (Veeran 2010: Interview). While such interventions can potentially harm the brand in the long term due to the brand's reduced presence in the market, marketers in such circumstances

are forced to search for cost-effective solutions to access their target markets. Further, such solutions need to be innovative in order to counter the budget reduction while simultaneously driving brand loyalty.

As Veeran stated:

When the going gets rough, most marketers adopt what can best be described as a 'sniper-target' approach, as opposed to a 'shot gun' approach. In other words, rather than go for big brand ads using 'shot gun media' like billboards and television, which often results in a high spillage factor, marketers go for more individualised, sniper media that have low spillage factors and that ensure you reach your audiences both effectively and efficiently. This is at the heart of the 'sniper target' approach. (Ibid.)

Metzer echoes the above in his statement that:

What is needed, ultimately, is media that work well together with other media, so that the overall effect is a tight, streamlined message to market that does not harm the brand in the longer term. (Metzer 2011: Interview)

As has been inferred by this study thus far, social media can be described, in Veeran's words, as "sniper media" in that it has the capacity to hone in on individuals and groups, coupled with its ability to link all ATL brand messaging with BTL promotions via an 'online' thread that fastens both securely together. Further, social media encompasses an array of tools available free to online communities, which benefits all role players. Lastly, social media benefits marketers in a number of other significant ways including the following:

- While social media tools are freely available, the medium itself operates, at a micro level, in a 'closed' or 'restricted' environment in that only 'friends' are privy to the communications. This means that when a brand engages its audience in such a closed space and is

accepted as a 'friend', there is minimum spillage;

- Social media is characterised by two-way communications, which eradicates the uncertainty a brand has of its target market's opinion. In other words, as a marketer, you know exactly where your brand stands and, more importantly, what it needs to grow and garner equity;
- Social media generally 'locks in' psychographic and related user data, having access to knowledge which enables marketers to create a clear and direct marketing strategy that has maximum penetration and unrestricted frequency;
- Social media is driven by dialogue and such dialogue in turn drives top-of-mind awareness, at a fraction of the cost of its traditional media counterparts;
- As a two-way communication medium, information gleaned can enable marketers to plan growth strategies;
- There is no restriction in terms of time and place where the target market can be engaged;
- Social media has the capacity to connect in a hydra-like manner with other marketing platforms, which connects individuals to like-minded online communities which, in turn, grows the target base; and
- Social media is viral in nature in that content is created, posted, shared and commented upon, supporting once again, the hydra metaphor mentioned above.

Social Media versus Traditional Media

When Eduardo Saverin and Mark Zuckerberg, the creators of Facebook, first conceived of an online platform that connected people through a network based on their likes and dislikes, the marketing possibilities of the site was never on their agenda (Mezrich 2010). As has been mentioned, marketers however saw Facebook's potential from the onset but were unable to create messaging without compromising the nature of the medium itself.

Gerard Metzger who owned and operated an advertising agency at the time recalls:

The real issue for my clients was that the site did not offer any advertising space, and the fact that their brands faced the challenge of becoming 'friends'. This meant that key brand messages then had to become 'posts'. Then, of course, brands in the social media space also shared the challenge that all children on their first day at a new school face: how do I make friends? (2011: Interview)

Metzger's challenges have, of course, since been overcome and brands the world over now have Facebook profiles. As Metzger continues (Ibid.):

You've got to hand it to the guys. They finally cracked it. So, let's say you buy a Canon camera. What Canon does is give you a basic instruction booklet, but publishes the really good stuff -- all the useful stuff the camera can do as well as tips and promotions -- on Facebook. So, if you really want the most out of your purchase, you talk to them . . . via Facebook.

You need an accessory or advice, you chat to them on Facebook. Now that they've got you as a friend, you're friends for life, especially if they keep you coming back for more. Promotions, prizes, special offers, upgrades, trade-ins, the works. Then, of course, you can chat to all of Canon's friends, who can talk to all their friends and so on. Pretty soon, you're talking to a photographer in Norway or a guy that's modified his tripod in Kyoto. It works for you but, most importantly, it works for Canon.

From retail brands like Woolworths in South Africa to high-end motoring brands like BMW in Germany, Facebook has become an integral element of the marketing mix.

Apart from the differences mentioned in the foregoing discussion, how then, do social media differ from traditional media?

At its most basic, social media is about interaction through the sharing of various types of content including, of course, one's thoughts and feelings

with one's online 'friends'. As has been mentioned, 'friends' on a social network are not really 'friends' as the concept is traditionally understood, but refers to individuals, groups or entities that one is comfortable connecting with online. Friends, then, are generally open to entertaining requests from other friends, sharing opinions about people, products and services, as well as ideas about the world around them.

When two way communications are maintained over time, the interaction develops into a relationship and, with it, comes a modicum of trust. As Pillay tell us:

So, when Friend 1 wants to watch a particular movie and posts a request for an opinion on that movie, and if Friend 2 has watched it and recommends it, Friend 1, who even though she has never met Friend 2 in person, will most likely follow Friend 1's advice rather than Barry Ronge's in the Sunday Times. (2011: Interview).

Recommendations from trusted sources, which is regarded as word-of-mouth communications, is the cornerstone of advertising and advertisers have always strived to achieve this in their campaigns, messages and the media they choose with varying degrees of success. Social media ultimately pivots on word-of-mouth communications which, in turn, pivots on trust, which is able to generate dialogue, interest and, of course, uptake.

Traditional media like television, magazines and printed dailies, on the other hand, are first and foremost services that are paid for or products that are purchased. Further, consumers of such media and, indeed the brands these media espouse and advertise, cannot interact with the brands with the immediacy that social media communications offer. For traditional media, the time lag puts it automatically on the back foot.

Traditional media is also difficult to measure in terms of return on investment (ROI). If it were a billboard campaign, for example, there is no way to

measure exactly how many people saw the billboard and, more importantly, how many among them were actually in the target demographic. Much the same can be said of television and radio campaigns unless, of course, a call-to-action such as a competition is built into the campaign. Even in such cases, though, it is still not possible to ascertain exactly how many people were exposed to the advert.

Due primarily to the technology that powers social media, and indeed the nature of the media itself, social media can not only be measured, but measured in 'real time'. In other words, as people view a spot, read a blog or comment on a post, the statistics are tabulated and made available almost immediately. If, for example, Toyota were planning to flight a spot on television showcasing a new model of theirs' and wanted to judge market reaction before going live with the campaign, posting the advert on a site such as YouTube would be an ideal way to gauge public reaction as the site not only measures the number of people who would view the advert but also makes provision for their comments. Such feedback means that modifications can be made before the fact, as it were.

In the past, gauging public reaction would mean that Toyota would have to initiate such research as focus group interviews, which were and continue to be both expensive and time consuming.

Table 1 below, summarises further key differences between social media and traditional media as these impact on marketing and communications.

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Social Media	Traditional Media
• Immediate	• Delay
• Affordable	• Expensive
• Multi-media	• Single media
• Two-way communication	• One-way communication
• Viral – Through sharing	• Unable to share
• All responses are measurable	• Measuring response accuracy
• Targeted audience	• Mass audience

Table 1: Social Media vs. Traditional Media

[Source: Table based in part on Stokes 2008: 122]

Advantages of Social Media

Apart from the obvious social benefits to users, and the individuals, groups and entities with whom they interact, the advantages of social media to marketers include the following:

- Social media's appeal or Unique Selling Point (USP) lies in its flexibility and ease of communication with a brand's target audience. Further, there are no costs associated with reaching this audience so the target demographic could be one or many thousands;
- The vast array of social media tools, coupled with its affordability, allow marketers the freedom to think in global terms yet interact with their markets at an intimate level. This means that initiatives such as customer care and loyalty programmes have the potential to become

highly efficient and just as effective;

- Most mobile telephones have access to the internet, which provides the gateway into social media. This, coupled with the proliferation of home computers on the market, means that the barriers to entry are low and, lastly;
- Social media has little or no restrictions on who can become users.

As Ford and Wiedemann point out:

It's not just that it's possible for a few celebrities with million-dollar smiles or media conglomerates with billion-dollar satellites, it's that it's easy for nearly anyone nowadays to network like jetsetters and publish globally in a few clicks of a mouse, usually for free and often without even realizing it. (2010: 232)

Disadvantages of Social Media

As a field, marketing encompasses a range of disciplines including advertising, communications, public relations, eventing, on-site activations, branding, promotions, market research and media management, among a host of related, tactical BTL initiatives, endeavours and interventions. Taken together, this comprises what can best be described as a company's marketing mix, with each element being intimately linked with the other and, indeed, segueing with the company's operations and its business plan (Cele 2010: Interview).

Putting together a team with the requisite skills and expertise in each of the disciplines mentioned, is virtually impossible for most companies as their core focus generally lies elsewhere. It is thus left to service providers, such as marketing agencies, to provide these companies with the necessary support, solutions and the management thereof. Marketing agencies, even through-the-line service providers, though, also face the same challenges that companies do in terms of searching, recruiting and maintaining expertise in each of marketing's disciplines. Agencies, therefore, tend to specialise in

one or other discipline, outsource the balance and manage these from strategy and quality perspectives (Moodliar 2011: Interview).

Social media has a strong BTL leaning but can drive ATL communications as well, so it is often categorised as a through-the-line function and is managed accordingly. In practice, this means that agencies have to work closely with brand managers, as content and messaging have to be jointly created, managed and driven (Veeran 2010: Interview). In effect, though, brand owners can, in theory, manage the tactical end of their social media strategy by themselves but, in reality, tend to rely on their marketing agency to ensure that there is no deviation from the core marketing strategy.

Social media is ultimately about interaction, discussion and content-sharing, so it works best for marketers as a tactical, top-of-mind awareness tool rather than a transactional platform where consumers can purchase products or services. It also has the ability to drive eventing initiatives from an awareness perspective, public relations endeavours from a support angle, and promotion campaigns from a communications standpoint. Further, it works well when directing traffic to a company's website or to another media platform and, as has been mentioned, as an effective research and development feedback tool.

As a TTL item, social media cannot function by itself and it is for this reason that it works best in conjunction with other media types. It is thus not uncommon for companies to categorise it as one element of their online marketing plan or as part of their internet strategy which, in turn, fits into their larger strategic marketing picture (Cele 2010: Interview). Social media therefore has limitations and key among these would be the following:

- Social media is all about instant communications and thus requires resources to manage the interaction, as well as senior resources to ensure that promises made online are kept, and that nothing is said

online that could impact on the brand negatively, off-line;

- “Will it help sales?” asked a client and the short answer was, “Not in the short-term.” Social media is effective in helping build brand equity, garnering brand loyalty and creating conditions for ongoing dialogue between a brand and its customers. These, taken together, provide a basis for increased sales, but only in the medium to long-terms and thus cannot guarantee ROI in the short-term (Pillay 2011: Interview);
- Social media forces brands to think laterally as a matter of course in order to maintain online interest. This consumes time, energy and resources and can become expensive over time;
- There are virtually no barriers to entry which means that, in the online space, multinationals are forced to compete with not only their primary competitors but with small, medium and micro enterprises as well as single person operations;
- The speed at which a brand is befriended is the same as that of it being “unfriended”. Brands therefore have to guard against losing share of heart by constantly updating, promoting and driving their social media endeavours;
- “Social media is quite possibly the most democratic platform available to users and consumers” (Moodliar 2011: Interview). It is thus not about exclusivity, and marketers have to constantly scan the competitive horizon to ensure that their brand stays ahead of any emerging online trends;
- The mass appeal of social media often lulls marketers into creating group or other impersonal communications, which tends to drive traffic away from the site; and
- There is a very real danger of communications becoming redundant as users of one site generally subscribe to others. This means that information on one topic can sometimes be sought successfully elsewhere.

Conclusion

Social media is ultimately a communications tool much like its electronic and out-of-home counterparts. Like these, it performs a specific function within the marketing mix and contributes in its own unique way towards delivering on a marketing strategy. While social media is able to thread itself into the fabric of the overarching strategy, it is not a strategy in itself nor can it function effectively in the absence of its sister media. Its strength lies in its ability to drive customer care, brand loyalty and maintain ongoing communications between a brand and its consumers. Further, it provides a fairly conducive environment to gauge consumer reaction to new product launches or existing product developments. As is evident from the success of the 2008 Obama presidential campaign, it comes into its own though when it is part of a brand building strategy as it is well positioned to help build equity in the shortest possible time.

It is to this end of its capability that we now turn our attention, especially with regard to how it assisted build the Obama brand.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL MEDIA IN US POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

My personal exposure to the marketing industry as joint owner of an advertising agency for over a decade, has given me a unique perspective on the day to day business and, indeed, political challenges that we as South Africans face ... When it comes to political campaigning and presidential elections though, all credit goes to Hollywood for helping shape my views. Movies like *The American President* starring Michael Douglas, *Wag the Dog* with Dustin Hoffman and, one of my all time favourites, *Dave* with Kevin Kline in the lead role, provided unique insights into the machinations of the electoral process. Granted all three movies were works of fiction designed for box office success, one cannot help but be enthralled by the drama that seems to underpin the election of the American president. This view was reinforced when Barack Obama's was successfully installed as the 44th US president as his life story and journey to the White House read much like a Hollywood drama. (Moodley 2011: Interview)

Context

During an online interview conducted via Facebook with Lucy Sandison, a US-based human resources consultant who lived in Boston during the 2008 US presidential elections, Sandison stated that:

American presidential campaigns have always been about the money – money for print ads, radio spots, television campaigns, billboards, flyers. The candidate who managed to rake up the most funding, usually had an edge over everyone else. Once the campaign got underway, it was crazy. Billboards everywhere, every second TV spot about some or other

candidate, the news programs dominated by presidential debates, flyers on your windscreen, flyers on your way to work, flyers on the train, telephone calls during dinner soliciting your support, people knocking on your door to talk about the candidate . . . you have no idea what it can be like during election time. Visual overload, Information overload, Sensory overload. You're talking clutter, come by and visit during election time and I'll give you clutter. (2011: Facebook)

As Sandison's comments show, presidential campaigning in the US is serious business, which sees the candidates spending huge sums of money on marketing. In every instance, though, the idea being to ensure that the candidate's key message gets through the clutter and, equally, to drive top-of-mind awareness of his profile on the day of the actual election.

The use of social media technology as a marketing tool in political campaigning initially surfaced during the build up to the 2004 US presidential elections. Although both the technology and the platform used to drive the medium were in their infancy, social media did indeed play a role in the presidential campaign but not to the extent that it did four years later. Daniel Thompson, who lived in Philadelphia in the US during the period of both elections states:

I don't believe the impact and power of Social Media was widely understood then to the extent that it was during 2008. It did kinda happen, but I think that in 2004, pundits and intellectuals still thought of Facebook as something for a population that was not worth courting. Now, it is a staple for everyone, including businesses. It is almost seen as a requirement for a business to have a Facebook/twitter page these days to have any kind of advantage/effect. Tangentially, I think it is high time for Microsoft Word to recognize Facebook as a widely used word in the English language and quit marking it as misspelled. (Thompson 2011: Facebook)

Given the above, then, this chapter draws a brief comparison between the 2004 and 2008 US presidential elections in terms of the use of social media

tools focusing more in-depth on the 2008 campaign and the use of social media tools to aid that campaign.

Lessons Learned During 2004

The 2004 presidential campaign in the US was ultimately a battle between George Bush, John Kerry and Howard Dean, a politician and physician who served six terms as the governor of Vermont (see Figures 9, 10 and 11 which contain campaign images of the respective presidential candidates). As early as 2004, presidential lobbyists, candidates and election campaign managers understood the importance of communicating and interacting directly with constituents at a fundamental level via technology. Further, social media was accepted as a possible avenue to achieve this.

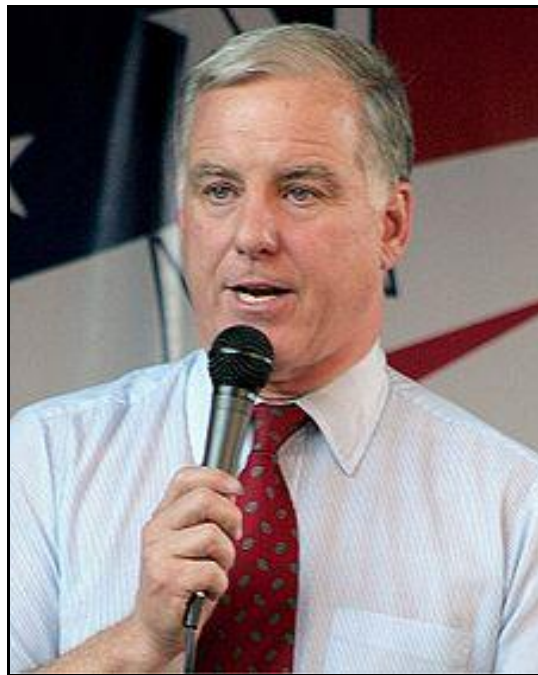


Figure 9: Picture of Howard Dean taken during a campaign speech

[Source: www.google.com]



Figure 10: John Kerry

[Source: www.google.com]



Figure 11: Photograph of George Bush taken during the 2004 presidential elections

[Source: www.google.com]

A number of challenges however, existed and Kieran Dunleavy, who was based in Arlington, Washington, during 2004, recalls:

The use of social media at the time of the '04 Campaign [i.e. Friendster, MySpace] was amateurish at best compared to how it was used by the candidates in the '08 campaign. (2011: Facebook)

Given that social media was in its infancy during 2004, this meant that the bulk of the online community were simply not ready to accept this form of communication. This was exacerbated by their lack of both capacity and capability to use the medium. Then, of course, there was the issue of internet availability, which placed severe restrictions on access. Lastly, as one campaigner stated, there was a distinct lack of skill at a campaign management level to “translate online enthusiasm into offline action” (Harfoush 2009: 22)

By 2008, the above challenges were all but non-existent. Internet access was readily available to the masses, social media was understood as the preferred method of online social interaction and, most importantly, marketers were beginning to grasp the myriad of ways in which to harness the technology for promotional gains. In an interview with Bethany Haberer, a healthcare policy developer for US AID, who was based in Washington during the 2008 elections she remembers that:

By the time Obama's 'Hope' campaign was up and running, everyone was connected. For me personally, I chatted daily with my parents in Omaha, friends in Philadelphia and family in New York using Facebook. Everyone I knew and worked with had access to computers and, apart from a few holdouts, everyone was using social media to interact with each other. (2011: Facebook)

History of Online Campaigning

Rahaf Harfoush, a volunteer in the Obama campaign, recently published the book, *Yes We Did*, which is an insider view of how the Obama brand was built. In it, he looked at some of the important technological innovations that made many aspects of the Obama campaign possible. Harfoush, however, believes that while social media represented a quantum leap in communications generally, the Obama campaign was ultimately one that could be tracked on a learning curve. He states, "Obama's achievements were made possible by the initiative, resourcefulness and experiences of those who came before him [referring to Bush, Kerry and Dean]" and further believes that the lessons learned from the 2004 presidential campaign was ultimately what allowed the Obama team to be innovative. In support of this claim, he states that a process of evolution is usually present in the perfection of previous inventions, discoveries and ideas, and so too was the case of their adopting social media and social media tools in political campaigning (Harfoush 2009: 42).

In developing their campaign strategy, Obama and his team considered ways in which to talk directly to the average American while still achieving critical mass in terms of their overall communications drive. A plan was conceived that was thus designed to be both versatile and agile while, simultaneously, targeted and focussed (see Figure 12, which is a photograph taken of the Obama team during an early strategy meeting). The central problem they faced, as Lucy Sandison put it quite succinctly above, was how to avoid getting caught up in the "clutter". In response, the Obama team's plan was to reduce their communications clutter away from all other media communications and to adopt a stand-alone social media plan that would support the campaign strategy as a whole. Television, billboards, flyers and other out-of-home media were indeed used, but purely for the purposes of advertising, i.e. to drive campaign awareness and brand presence, and not the communications imperative. In other words, while ATL and traditional BTL communications focussed on brand messaging, social media honed in

content, dialogue, organising, interaction and day-to-day communications. As Haberer continues (2011: Facebook):

Yes, I wanted to know who the candidate was and what he looked like, but that was only in the first 5 minutes. Giving me any more of the same was wasted. 'Yes, we can! Yes, we can!' That can only take one so far. I needed to know what issues he stood for, what his position on those issues were, where he was headed and what his plans for turning the country around were. I needed details, clinical stuff, not the sugar coated stuff plastered on a flyer or a billboard.

The perfection of the use of social media tools, coupled its ability to effectively reach constituents unlike any other platform that came before, together with the Obama team's understanding of the needs of his community, virtually guaranteed the success of his campaign. As Harfoush continues:

The success of the Obama campaign comes down to refinement -- not invention. The team improved upon existing new media tools to build a scalable organization with national reach that allowed the Democrats to compete in areas they had been unable to penetrate before. (2009: 112)

As Harfoush mentioned earlier, Obama's 2008 election campaign's success pivoted on the successes and failures of the 2004 election campaign. In this regard, lessons had been learned and these included the need for Obama to compete in areas that most candidates were "unable to penetrate before", and to deliver "customised messaging to supporters", not just traditional ATL and BTL advertising.

Customised messaging, however, was not new to political campaigning as "it was built on statistical techniques initially pioneered by George Bush's 2004 re-election campaign" (Harfoush 2009: 42). Bush, in fact, had been exposed to the idea as early as 2002 when Alexander Gage, a research consultant, pitched the idea of "micro-targeting", a concept that used a "statistical

technique called predictive market segmentation to identify groups of similar individuals and extrapolate their patterns of behaviour". The idea was pitched to Republican senior strategist, Karl Rove, who at the time saw a need to identify voter demographics and craft communications accordingly (Wayne 2008).



Figure 12: A photograph taken of the Obama team huddling around him during the early days of his campaign

[Source: www.google.com]

Obama also learned lessons from Howard Dean's 2004 campaign and key among these was the use of the internet for bringing people together. As Harfoush continues:

The social network strategy that guided the development of the Obama social network was [also] built on the foresight of people like Howard Dean who saw the internet's potential for effective organizing. (Ibid.: 42)

Howard Dean, unfortunately, saw the potential but lacked the capacity to "translate online enthusiasm into offline action" (Harfoush 2009: 22).

Emergence of new technologies fused micro-targeting with such online thinking as cellular telephone communications to create a new campaign tool by 2008, viz. social media.

Further, the Obama campaign adopted what became known as Dean's "Fifty-State Strategy" that targeted the "disaffected centre" of the Democratic Party and focused on small donors; these decisions ultimately led to the creation of an integrated, new media strategy (Harfoush 2009: 122). This strategy was ultimately about the following:

- Adopting micro-targeting methods to address constituents;
- Using the internet to organise the masses;
- Focussing on small donors for campaign funding (but concentrating on volume);
- Communicating with constituents in areas that the Democrats traditionally neglected and, finally;
- Using social media technology to pull together the above strands.

George Bush's Re-election Campaign 2004: The Use of Micro-targeting

The technique of micro-targeting, mentioned above, was not new to the world of marketing. As Metzger states:

Your question about micro-targeting, well, it was used to segment consumers as far back as the 1980s, as far as I can recall. It's based on the similar idea of determining what we in South Africa call Living Standard Measures or LSMs. Micro-targeting examines all those elements that make up individuals and groups, such as trends in income, family status and occupation. When you couple this with other useful information that would aid in direct, personalised marketing, it takes 'knowing your customer' to a whole new level. (2011: Interview)

The 2004 Bush election campaign adopted Gage's micro-targeting strategy

in 2002 when the campaign team was planning their strategy for the upcoming 2004 US presidential elections. By using micro-targeting techniques, "...the Bush campaign could discover segments of overlooked voters and create a tailored communication strategy to address their needs" (Harfoush 2009: 66). Although Bush was the first to utilise micro-targeting in a national political campaign, his strategist, Rove, was not entirely convinced at the outset that the strategy would work. He requested more evidence and statistics to support Gage's claim. Gage, who garnered his statistics from voters rolls and matched these against information from public and other marketing databases to create a profile for every voter, was up for the challenge and used his model to predict the outcome of voting for the different population segments in the Pennsylvania judicial races with a 90 percent accuracy score. This convinced Rove, and Gage's technique was employed.

Gage went on to analyse and micro-target states that posed a challenge to winning voter support. These statistics were then used to mould the 2004 election campaign strategy. Given the accuracy of the statistics, new population segments were conquered and converted to potential Bush voters, making this tactic highly successful. A comparison between the 2000 Bush election campaign and the 2004 re-election campaign was undertaken and the results were astounding. Compared with the 2000 Bush election campaign where 50 percent of potential Bush voters were contacted, the micro-targeting strategy enabled the Bush campaign to contact 92 percent of Bush voters in Iowa and 84 percent of Bush voters in Florida (Ibid.).

A similar strategy was adopted by the Obama campaign team in the 2008 presidential election campaign. The technique was incorporated into the campaign's email strategy to segment the population and create personalised and customised messaging (Ibid.: 73).

Howard Dean Campaign 2004: Online Organising

In many ways, Howard Dean's online campaign strategy paved the way for Obama's online grassroots campaign. The Dean campaign team connected with like-minded individuals through the use of their website called "Meetup". This communication channel was used initially to plan meetings and rallies where online group organisers would meet frequently with the Dean campaign team to manage the logistics of using this online tool, marking the birth of online organising. Dean, however, eventually used the site to raise funding almost exclusively. The concept was fine-tuned by the Obama campaign when putting together their online offering: www.MyBarackObama.com, which became popularly known as "MyBo" (see Figure 13). The key benefit of the site was, of course, its potential for crucial campaign fundraising but, unlike Dean's thrust, the site was ultimately designed to mobilise online communities rather than raise funds. "Dean was one of the earliest political candidates to use the web to fundraise, collecting more than 50 million dollars over the course of his campaign" (Harfoush 2009: 82).



Figure 13: The Barack Obama website showing a volunteer-oriented link called 'Organizing for America'

[Source: Digital Strategy 2009]

When adopting a social media strategy, a multi-pronged approach is generally the most effective. This was no different to Dean's 2004 presidential campaign. The first phase of which was to create online enthusiasm, while the second was the attempt to convert this online enthusiasm into offline action – actual votes. Dean however lacked ground support and the second phase of his campaign thus faltered. Further, as his site migrated its focus to funding, it lost its *raison d'être* – organising and mobilising.

The Obama campaign team on the other hand was fortunate as they learned from the challenges and mistakes of Dean's online strategy. The Obama campaign thinking was simple – online organising must equal offline action.

‘One of the lessons, obviously for us, is making sure that the grassroots enthusiasm translates into votes,’ Obama said in a New York Times interview. ‘And that’s something obviously that we’re going to be paying a lot of attention to’. (Harfoush 2009: 187)

The Obama campaign team also streamlined the Dean and Bush lessons to dovetail with their own thinking about how to attack the 2008 campaign. This included innovative ways to reach previously neglected voters, exploiting new avenues of fundraising, exploring original ways for soliciting donations and devising an overarching strategy to drive all online efforts, offline.

Innovation

In order to maintain the lead in the 2008 presidential race, the Obama campaign team continuously re-evaluated their playing field to identify new ways to connect with voters. Online social interaction enabled them to do just that by obtaining crucial voter demographic and psychographic information which, in turn, aided the team to take strategic decisions, and communicate those accordingly (Ibid.: 199).

- **Statistics**

See below, a snapshot of the 2008 US presidential campaigning social networking statistics, showing the strides in terms of both advertising reach and communications frequency made by Obama against his key opponent, John McCain (Owyang 2008):

- **Internet Usage in US**

- US Population : 303 824 646
- Internet Usage : 220 141 969
- Penetration rate : 72.5 percent
- Growth from 2000-2008 : 130.9 percent

- **Facebook**

- Obama : 2 379 102 supporters

- McCain : 620 359 supporters

Obama had 380 percent more supporters than McCain on Facebook.

- **MySpace**

- Obama Friends : 833 161
- McCain Friends : 217 811

Obama had 380 percent more supporters than McCain on MySpace.

- **YouTube**

- Obama : 1792 videos since Nov 2006
- Subscribers : 114 559
- Channel Views : 18 413 110
- McCain : 329 videos since Feb 2007
- Subscribers : 28 419
- Channel Views : 2 032 993

Obama had 403 percent more subscribers than McCain, as well as 905 percent more viewers than McCain on YouTube.

- **Twitter**

- Obama : @barackobama – 112 474
- McCain : @JohnMcCain – 4603

Obama had 240 times more followers on Twitter than McCain.

- **The Fifty-State Strategy**

Prior to Dean's 2004 campaigning efforts, any US state showing majority loyalty to a particular party was most often ignored by rival party campaigning as the effort to convert voters was generally considered "not worth the investment" in time, energy and resources. Using social media, Dean pioneered what he termed the "Fifty-State Strategy" which helped him and his party build a presence in all states, even ones where a victory was unlikely (Harfoush 2009: 146).

Dean's strategy, however, fell short as he focussed his attention on creating awareness for his party as well. This, he believed, would allow his colleagues to be elected to local and state positions, which in turn

would pave the way for future wins. This split focus posed a huge risk, which also demanded manpower and financial resources. Shifting focus to areas where his opponents had the advantage, instead of concentrating on swing states where he needed only a slightly higher number of popular votes to win, eventually jeopardised the entire political campaign (Harfoush 2009: 111).

Obama, on the other hand, learned from Dean's mistake and decided early in his campaign what he wanted to achieve. As his campaign co-ordinator tells us:

Obama was able to successfully execute the Fifty-State Strategy by ensuring that all online tools reinforced offline action and by empowering users to organize for his campaign in all states, including Republican strongholds. (Harfoush 2009: 57)

- **Focus on the Middle**

The Obama campaign team and the Bush administration differed in their strategy when it came to targeting voters:

Unlike the Bush Administration's strategy of catering to voters who leaned to the right, the Obama team focused on the disaffected center [sic]. (Harfoush 2009: 12)

This strategy of targeting the "disaffected" centre enabled Obama's Democrat team to communicate simultaneously with Republicans and independents who were dissatisfied with the Bush Administration.

From an online perspective, courting the center [sic] directed the tone and language of the blogs and the design of the website to ensure a welcoming and balanced atmosphere. (Harfoush 2009: 199)

- **Large Donations versus Smaller Donations**

Dean's fundraising efforts also had a direct influence on the way in which

the Obama team raised funds.

The Obama camp also took note of Howard Dean's fundraising strategy, which raised \$50 million over the course of his campaign, largely through small donations made online. (Harfoush 2009: 122)

Moving away from the conventional fundraising strategies of targeting wealthy political donors to fund his political campaign, Dean's strategy was to target the masses at the grassroots level, which saw an average donation of eighty dollars.

In addition to generating free publicity for Dean, who started out as a "long-shot" candidate and became a front-runner, the technique was also less expensive than traditional telemarketing, direct mail, and hosted events. (Harfoush 2009: 123)

The strategy of requesting relatively small donations enabled the campaign team to make multiple contacts with the donor, which in turn, could motivate the same donor to contribute multiple small donations.

- **Online Fundraising**

Of the three quarters of a billion dollars that Obama was able to raise for his campaign, two thirds were raised online. In September 2008 alone, Obama raised 150 million dollars when voters responded, in cash, to vice-presidential nominee Governor Sarah Palin's mocking of Obama's role as a community organiser and not a presidential candidate. Obama's offline speeches, rallies and appearances were firmly reinforced by his online efforts at maintaining awareness, presence and momentum. Using social media as a cornerstone of his online strategy translated proportionately into monetary terms.

Given the above, it may be prudent at this stage of our discussion to turn our attention to Obama himself to, firstly, contextualise his personal life and, secondly, to ascertain, his drive and thinking that propelled him to pivot his entire career on a social media-based strategy.

Barack Obama: Background and Personal Life

Barack Hussein Obama II is presently the 44th President of the US. Further, he is the first African American to hold the office. Obama previously served as a US Senator for the state of Illinois, from January 2005 until he resigned after his election to the presidency in November 2008.

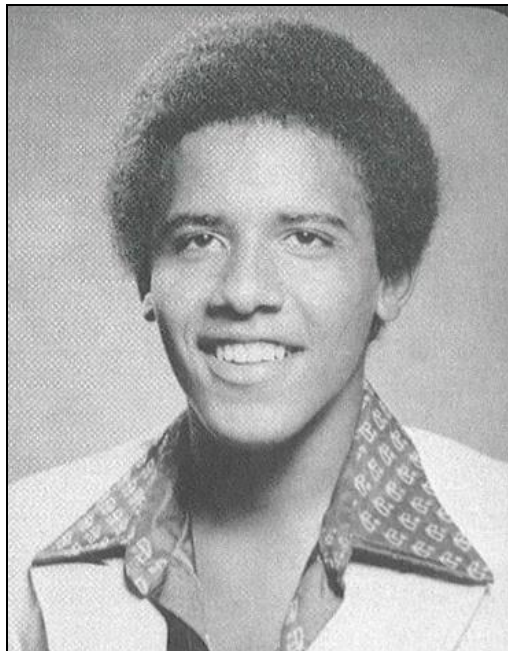


Figure 14: High school photograph of Obama. He was called Barry Obama then.

[Source: Dougherty 2008: 50]

A native of Honolulu, Hawaii, Obama graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he was the president of the Harvard Law Review. He was a community organiser in Chicago before earning his law

degree and worked as a civil rights attorney in Chicago before teaching constitutional law at the University of Chicago's Law School from 1992 to 2004.

In June 1989, Obama met Michelle Robinson when he was employed as a summer associate at the Chicago law firm of Sidley Austin. Assigned for three months as Obama's adviser at the firm, Robinson eventually married Obama in October 1992.

Obama wrote the book, *Dreams from My Father*, which was published in 1995 (see Figure 15 below), and applying the proceeds of a book deal, his family moved in 2005 from a Hyde Park, Chicago condominium to a 1.6 million dollar house in neighbouring Kenwood, Chicago.

In his book, Obama explains that through working with black churches as a community organiser in his twenties, he came to understand "the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change". He was baptised at the Trinity United Church of Christ in 1988 and was an active member there for two decades (Dougherty 2008: 87).

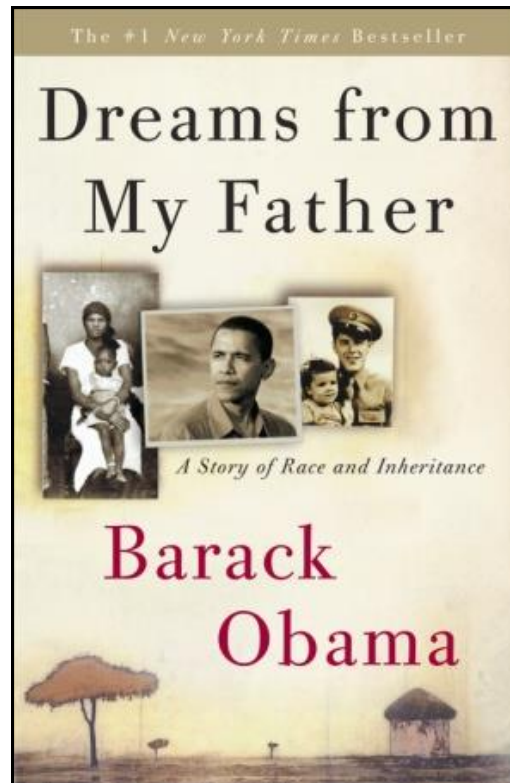


Figure 15: Cover of Obama's 1995 New York Times bestseller, *Dreams from My Father*.

[Source: www.wikipedia.org]

Obama's Thoughts on the Internet and the Online Campaign Strategy

Obama, together with his closest advisors, David Plouffe (Campaign Manager), Robert Gibbs (Communications Director), and counsellors Marty Nesbitt, Valerie Jarrett, as well as his wife, Michelle, met on November 5, 2006 at the Chicago offices of his Chief Campaign Strategist, David Axelrod. This was the day before the Democratic Party had achieved a sweeping victory over the Republicans, seizing control of the Senate, the House of Representatives and most of the governorships and state legislatures. As Liebert and Faulk tells us: "Obama chose this moment to chart the strategy he intended to pursue in his run for the Democratic nomination" (2008: 61). (See Figure 16 which was a strategy devised by the team and drafted by Plouffe on scrap pieces of paper).

In his presentation, Obama made it quite clear that the country was ready for an across-the-board change. Liebert and Faulk continue:

His chief opponent in the primary, Hillary Clinton, was sure to have an early lock on the big money donors and the backing of the most party leaders. (2008: 63)

Obama's intuition told him that he should travel a new and dramatically different route, and so he opted for a ground-up rather than a top-down campaign. This strategy was prompted by his experience as a political organiser; he had first-hand experience in successfully managing grassroots campaigns. In his experience as a political organiser, he had brought change to the streets of Chicago. He once registered 150 000 new voters, using just ten staffers and 700 volunteers. He felt that he could adopt the same grassroots campaign for the nation as a whole.

The grassroots approach was Obama's only option to catch up to, or overtake, Hillary Clinton who at that point was safely in the lead. In order for Obama to achieve this, he had to think laterally and move away from the old-fashioned "knock on every door" type of campaign.

...the grassroots Obama particularly wanted to target would be formed on the Internet - social media and user generated content in particular. If he could sell his message of change to the online millions, he could build a formidable campaign chest and mobilize a dedicated army of workers. He had to become intimately involved with and dependent on the electronic grassroots, or net roots [a term coined to describe political activism worked through online social media] (Liebert and Faulk 2008: 63).

DAVID PLOUFFE

MESSAGE

THEORY OF VICTORY
(LIKE BUSINESS MODEL)

! JOHN MCCAIN: Pioneered online fundraising in 2000

"FORTUNATELY FOR US,
HE FORGOT EVERYTHING
HE LEARNED IN 8 YEARS"

YOU MUST HAVE A STRATEGY
CHANGE TACTICS, not STRATEGY

STARTED W. \$50M RAISED \$58M BY JUNE

HOW IS
AMAZING

10% OF 1000'S OF PPL
RAISING A FEW HUNDRED \$
EACH

3/4 OF A BILLION \$
\$500M RAISED ONLINE

\$\$ STRENGTH ALLOWED A RISKY ELECTORAL
STRATEGY - states like Indiana

"We don't have a national campaign."
15 states decide the election

Since supporters
were so technically
adept, made it easy
to organize online



these states got the full
presidential campaign
TV - phone - doorstep

THIS PUTS THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
INTO STATES IT WOULDN'T OTHERWISE BE IN

↳ in response to online grassroots
presence, sent staff into those states

↳ "If we didn't have those grassroots
supporters on their own organizing
in those states, we wouldn't have
won."

ORGANIZING HEADSTART + MOMENTUM

⚡ Telling people where to go, right up to
the last minute

SOME CASES,
IN 25-30% OF PRIMARY/CAUCUS STATES
CAME FROM THEIR TECH PUSH

VOTER REGISTRATION
IN SOME STATES, 65% VOTE EARLY

50-50 among 2004 voters
71-27 margin among first-time voters

used tech to inform ppl -
had an iPhone app



CHANGING THE ELECTORATE
is the holy
grail

turned electorate younger,
more African-American,
more Hispanic (independent)

• If the John Kerry electorate
had turned out in Iowa,
we would have lost

↳ Internet advertising, text
↳ organized every high
school & college

tech was the gateway

usually 30-32% over 65 } NIGHT OF THE CAUCUS,
15% under 30 } THESE NUMBERS WERE
EQUAL

DIDN'T ACCEPT ELECTORATE AS IT WAS
in state after state

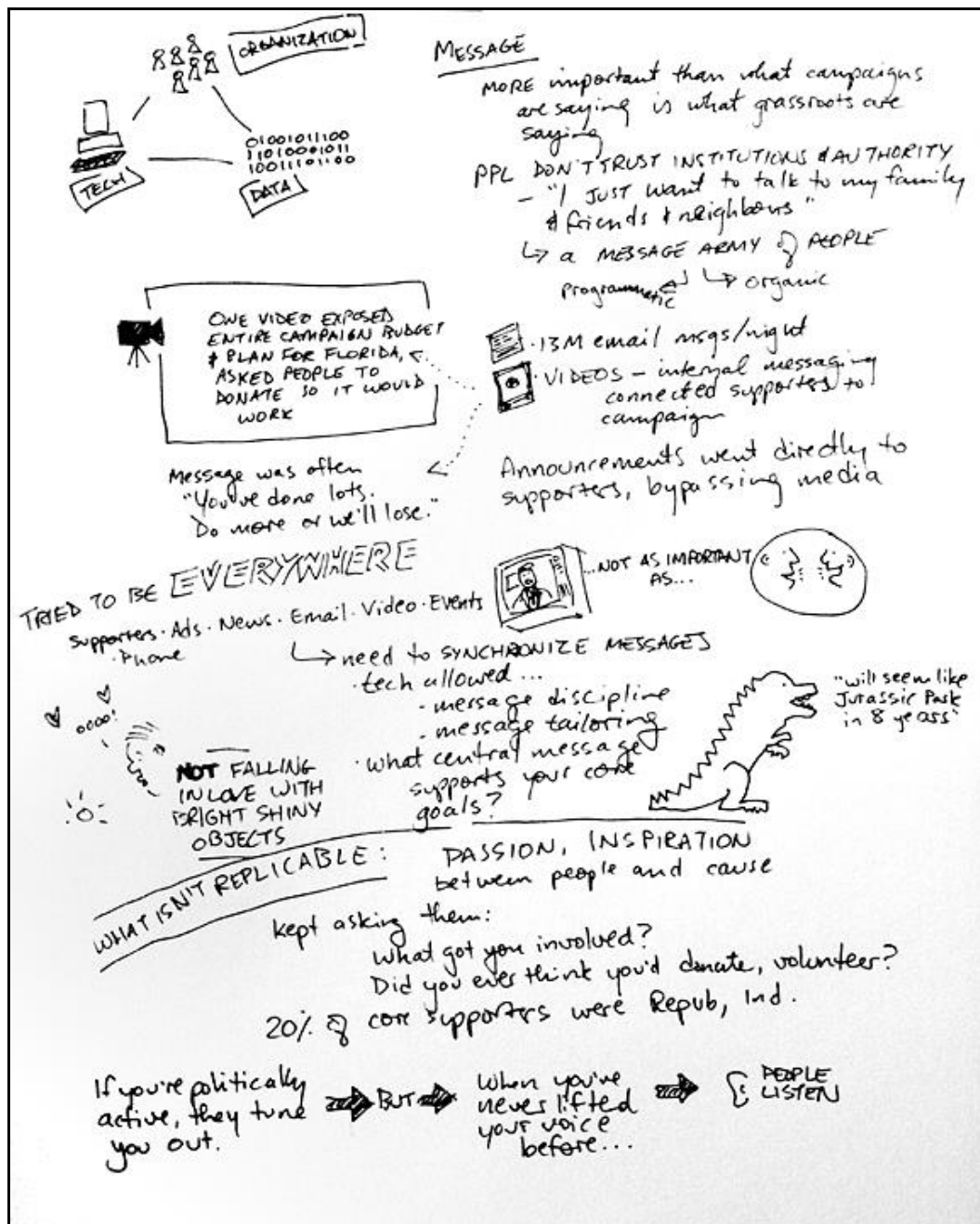


Figure 16: Obama's strategy devised by the team and drafted by David Plouffe on two scrap pieces of paper.

[Source: www.socialsignal.com]

The Use of Social Media in Creating the Obama Brand

Obama realised early in his campaign that the key to his success would be to raise his personal profile substantially, whilst simultaneously engaging in one-to-one discussions with every potential voter. Prior to 2008, this would have been virtually impossible due to both time and resource constraints. The internet however provided a solution that, in a sense, was tailor-made to address Obama's concerns. Using social media as the primary communications portal to talk to people in a language they understood, using a medium they were comfortable with, made all the difference in making him a real contender. Coupled with this, his consistent campaigning, both on the campaign trail and online, allowed him to achieve cult hero status among many (for an illustrative retrospective of the Obama campaign, see Appendix Two). In fact, Obama soon joined the ranks of such sporting and entertainment personalities as David Beckham and Madonna (Harfoush 2009: 127).

The Use of Technology to Address the Masses and Raise Funds

The combination of online technology, ATL branding and new media was crucial in addressing the masses during Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Further, his website – www.MyBarackObama.com – was used in new and innovative ways to mobilise both target markets and funding simultaneously. Willis and Merida, for example state:

He [Obama] rewrote the presidential campaign playbook using technology; he shattered fundraising practices and, in record time, raised 340 million dollars using current networking technology. By collaborating with the media mavericks of Facebook, he raised most of the funds from small amounts donated by the masses. (2008:142)

It was just a matter of time before Obama's campaign issues, personal profile, track record and career highlights fused to create a brand that came

to represent the dreams and aspirations of ordinary Americans. As Dougherty points out in *Hopes and Dreams – The Story of Barack Obama*:

Often compared to the supernovas of rock, following his landslide victory in the US Senate Election, Barack Obama often attracted the sort of media attention greater than that, which would be generated at the launch of a Rolling Stones tour. (2009: 28)

The power of technology was especially effective in mobilising Obama's younger target demographic.

The Obama Campaign was able to effectively use the Internet to organize young people. Some who came to his Iowa State University rally on February 11, 2007, agreed to volunteer for Obama and were brought together through Facebook.com. (Willis & Merida 2008:142)

As has been mentioned, the Obama campaign awareness generated through the use of social media received an additional boost by the purchase of a channel on a satellite network that was used to screen Obama campaign adverts 24-hours daily during the life of the campaign and which added substantially to his ATL presence (Liebert and Faulk 2009:10). Further, the effective and efficient use of social technologies – specifically blogs, discussion boards, viral videos, short message services (SMS) on cell-phone networks – virtually guaranteed Obama's victory.

Lastly, "MyBo" made it easy for ordinary Americans to donate money, the fuel for any campaign and which could very well have been the key to his success. Visitors could use credit cards to make one-time donations or sign up to make monthly contributions. "MyBo" also made donating money a social event where supporters could set personal targets, run their own fundraising efforts and watch personal fundraising 'thermometers' rise. To direct traffic onto the site in the first instance, the campaign sought to ensure Obama's presence on as many new media platforms as possible.

According to Blue State Digital, the company that added interactive elements to Obama's website and continues to maintain its daily care and feeding, the Obama Political Campaign had raised more than two hundred million dollars from more than a million online donors by July 2008. Further, "MyBo" had logged more than a million user accounts and facilitated seventy five thousand local events (www.technologyreview.com).

Hillary Clinton, who was the primary presidential runner on the Democratic Party's ticket, on the other hand, deployed tried-and-tested campaigning tools rather than online social networks and new media strategy in the early months of her fundraising campaign. She relied more on conventional methods like hosting big fundraisers in favour of smaller ones. Obama's huge financial resources however were secured from donations of less than two hundred dollars on average per voter according to the Centre for Responsive Politics (www.opensecrets.org).

"MyBo": Swinging Votes and the Effective Use of Social Media Tools

Campaign organisation in the build-up to any election is ultimately about volunteer participation and voter feedback on as large a scale as is possible. The integration of technology into Obama's campaign, especially the use of "MyBo" managed to successfully integrate all three elements, i.e. campaign organisation, volunteer participation and feedback from potential voters. As Shimon Prohow, a Programme Manager who was based in Washington during the election, remembers:

My lil' sister is a heck of a lot younger than I am, and she was hooked on Obama. She and her friends used to meet, discuss issues and volunteer for him in and around the neighbourhood. Once a week, she would then report to the campaign headquarters, and come back with more stuff. Before long, every one of her friends were Obama supporters. Following him on Facebook and Twitter. Low cost, low tech feel. It was like your best buddy was becoming president and he was giving

you a blow by blow account of how he was doing it. (2011: Facebook)

“MyBo”, as opposed to the other politically-driven social media sites, e.g. Dean’s “Meetup”, was not used solely to raise funds, but first and foremost, as an organising and mobilising tool. As Harvard lecturer, Marshall Ganz, said, “The Dean campaign understood how to use the Internet for fundraising, but not for organizing [sic]” (www.wired.com). Further, every aspect of the Obama 2008 political campaign was controlled and targeted.

The Obama Campaign allowed volunteers access to databases that had been constantly updated throughout the summer, through its field office computers and through MyBo. All information from the MyBo database was accumulated over time from previous election campaigns (Ibid.).

People that were identified as potential supporters were telephoned personally by the Obama campaign organisers and reminded where to cast their vote, while those present on the database who were identified as “undecided” were, in most cases, visited by a volunteer to be persuaded to vote for Obama. According to social media consultant, Sanford Dickert, it was “that blend of gumshoe canvassing and information processing ... [that was] ... a hallmark of the Obama campaign” (www.wired.com).

Dickert also mentions that:

The integration of technology into the process of field organisation is the success of the Obama campaign. Volunteers that were registered with MyBo were effortlessly organised by the Obama campaign. The database could arrange volunteers by geographic micro-region, pair people with appropriate tasks and prep nearby voters on caucus procedure. (Ibid.)

According to Stanford Law Professor, Lawrence Lessig, “The Obama campaign dominated new media and capitalised on a confluence of trends throughout the 2008 political season” (www.wired.com). Technology played a pivotal role in this online domination as American voters were able to access media-rich content online throughout the life of the campaign.

Andrew Leung was a film student living in Manhattan during the 2008 elections and recalls:

I canvassed for Obama in my neighbourhood and whenever I needed stuff: questions to be answered or his position on gay marriages or anything that I couldn't help a potential voter with, I would go online and access the stuff myself. No sweat. Then, I'd enter the voter's number onto the site and they would receive a text with the answer within 24 hours. (2011: Facebook)

Another critical success factor was that by 2008, more Americans had access to the internet both at work and at home, as compared to 2004. As Owyang tells us, of the 2008 US population of 303 824 646, 72.5 percent or 220 141 969 were internet users (2008).

And, finally, “the key networking advance in the Obama field operation was really deploying community building tools in a smart way from the beginning.” All of the 2008 presidential candidates had websites, ‘click-to-donate’ tools and social networking features, but the Obama team placed such technology at the centre of their campaign, and managed those tools well. Leung continues:

I remember this old lady who was hard as nails on the issue of abortion and wanted a word-for-word statement from Obama himself on the issue. No sweat. I went online, chatted to the organizer and, within an hour, gave the lady a print-out on where Obama stood on the issue. It was that easy. (2011: Facebook)

Supporters had considerable discretion to use “MyBo” to organise on their own as well. While the main campaign structure provided the overall parameters, organisational support and campaign materials, supporters were encouraged to adapt and leverage these in their communities. This, in effect, created a formidable political machine (www.technologyreview.com). Leung concludes:

It was a fairly simple process: anything I needed – stickers, buttons, posters – I simply called the local office and they’d come by and drop them off. I’d need to tell them, of course, where it was going and to who and what I was doing with it. But, it was all pretty cool. When I couldn’t answer a question, I just sent it up the wire and, if there was anything I was uncertain of, someone was always on the other end of my laptop to sort it out. (Ibid.)

The “stickers, buttons” and “posters” which Leung refers to, did indeed find their way to voters and, in this regard, Figures 17, 18 and 19 at the end of this chapter are an illustrative retrospective of the Obama campaign showing their use (further photographs from the campaign trail comprise Appendix Two of this study).

Television versus Online Videos

The majority of the candidates in the 2008 US presidential election campaign used online videos to generate awareness. As an internet post at the time reveals:

There’s no doubt that much of the 2008 US Presidential election is going to be fought out on the Internet – and specifically through online video. For example, Democrat potential candidate Barack Obama has a channel on Brightcove (an online video platform for websites), along with Republicans Sam Brownback, while others such as Chris Dodd (Democrat) are using YouTube. Even Hillary Clinton launched

her campaign by publishing a video on her site.
(www.wired.com)

While television was the medium of political-campaign choice from as far back as the Kennedy presidential campaign in the 1960s, its monopoly on mass media communications was due, in part, to its capacity to activate 'reach' and 'frequency' at the touch of a button and, in part, to the fact that it had no competitors in achieving those communications' aims. By 2008, however, its position had shifted dramatically, and it was relegated to being a support medium. The internet offered mass communications at a fraction of the cost, and social media sites offered not only 'reach' and 'frequency, but targeted communications and the option of dialogue as well (www.wired.com).

Obama took advantage of YouTube for free advertising and his political advisor, Joe Trippi, stated that Obama's videos were more effective than television advertisements as viewers chose to watch them, or received them from a friend instead of having their television shows interrupted.

"The campaign's official online video that was created for YouTube was watched for 14.5 million hours," Mr. Trippi said. "To buy 14.5 million hours on broadcast TV is \$47 million." There has also been a sea change in fact checking, with citizens using the Internet to find past speeches that prove a politician wrong and then using the Web to alert their fellow citizens.
(Dougherty 2008: 137)

Online political campaign videos offered, and continue to offer, a number of advantages over television (www.wired.com):

- The candidates may pick their settings;
- The candidates control their message without reporters' questions interrupting them;

- They are made instantly “cyber-cool”; and
- They get to speak eye-to-eye with the voters as internet video is a choice – you have to click to watch – and it is an intimate medium.

Further, unlike television, voters get to talk back. The web is a two-way medium and online video is no exception. Sites such as YouTube allow for comments, and these comments are shared across the internet. In fact, voters have been known to ‘talk’ to candidates by posting videos of their own, either original productions or mash-ups of existing footage.

The viral and unfiltered nature of the internet offered a myriad of ways to propagate Obama’s messages. A music video set to an Obama speech, “Yes We Can”, for example, by hip-hop artist Will.i.am was posted repeatedly on YouTube and the top two postings alone were viewed 10 million times. A single YouTube posting of Obama’s speech on race relations was viewed more than four million times (www.youtube.com).

In closing this part of our discussion, it is important to note that there are a number of negative aspects to social media that can adversely affect political campaigning, and indeed anyone that uses the medium. In this regard, Obama was no exception as the following excerpt posted on YouTube by his pastor and spiritual mentor, Reverend Wright, shows:

It just came to me within the past few weeks why so many folk are hating Barack Obama. He doesn’t fit the mould. He aint white, he aint rich and he aint privileged. Hillary fits the mould. Hillary never had a cab whizz past her and not pick her up because her skin was the wrong colour. Hillary never had to worry about being pulled over in her car as a black man driving in the wrong neighborhood [sic]. Hillary was not a black boy raised in a single parent home, Barack was. Barack knows what it means to be a black man living in a country and a culture that is controlled by rich white people. Hillary can never know that. Hillary aint never been called a nigger. Hillary has never had her people defined as non-present. Hillary aint had to work twice as hard just to get accepted by the rich white folk.

Hillary never had her own people saying she wasn't white enough.

Obama did not want to base his campaign on race and issues arising from the fact that he was African American, but Wright's videos played this card and were followed by a series of controversial remarks and snippets which were often distorted on YouTube. This ultimately led Obama to sever ties with Wright (Willis & Merida 2009: 105).

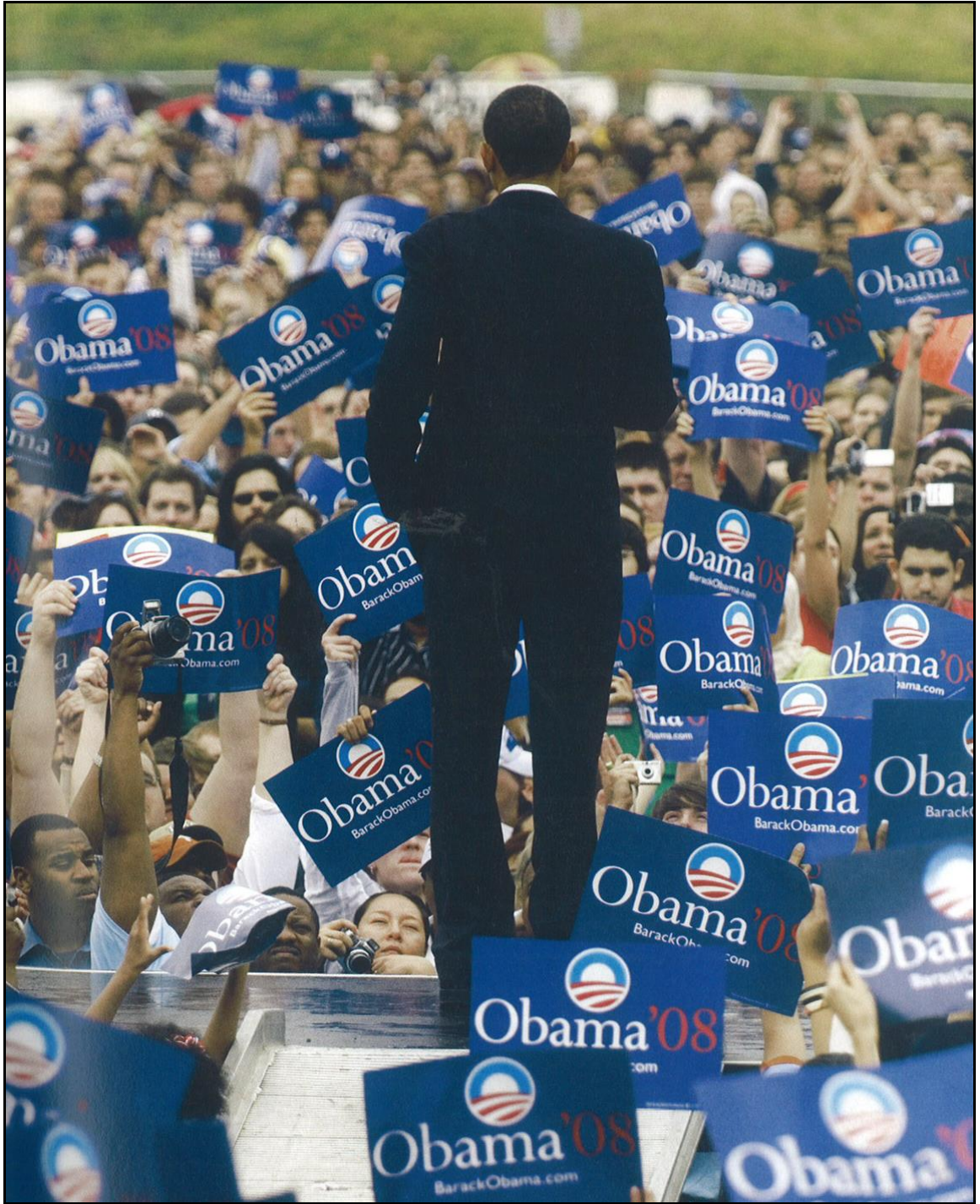


Figure 17: Obama flanked by flyers and supporters in Austin, Texas

[Source: Willis & Merida 2008: 39]



Figure 18: Obama addressing a rally of 75 000 people in Portland, Oregon

[Source: Willis & Merida 2008: 76]



Figure 19: Obama campaign buttons

[Source: Willis & Merida 2008: 18]

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In attempting to pull together the various strands of research undertaken during the course of this study, it may be prudent to present the summary of the study's key findings as detailed answers to a series of questions rather than to continue the discussion as a narrative. In this regard, this chapter will focus on answering the following:

- What prompted Obama to use social media tools and technology?
- How was the Obama campaign strategy developed?
- How was the strategy implemented?
- Is the Obama approach considered viable and is it replicable?

Context

Unlike the 2000 and 2004 US presidential races, the 2008 race was hotly contested as former US President, George Bush, had just served his two terms in office. Further, the American public seemed ready for a dramatic change and the Democrats were fairly certain that ordinary Americans were ready to accept the first female President in the country's history. The forerunner, in this regard, was, of course, Hillary Clinton – the wife of former US President, Bill Clinton. John McCain was the Republican favourite.

Securing the presidency is possibly the most coveted prize in US politics, but is a formidable task as it is ultimately about securing the largest amount of

votes and enough funds to power a communications plan to talk to and persuade those voters. When Obama, then Senator for Illinois, decided to run, his task was made even more difficult by the election happening at a time when the US was plunged into a recession that was deemed the worst since the 1960s. Then, there was the issue of delivering on a number of promises made by the Bush administration that were never realised. And, of course, Obama was black and the US had never had a black President of the country.

What Prompted Obama to use Social Media Tools and Technology?

Given the above as a backdrop, Obama realised early in the campaign that in order to even be considered a contender, he would need to focus his efforts on the approximately 300 million ordinary Americans and the everyday issues they grappled with, rather than on his race. Further, he would need to reach as many Americans as possible, and talk to them as frequently as possible during the build-up. Then, of course, there was the issue of raising funds – the resources critical to launching and sustaining any political campaign. Lastly, he needed a campaign slogan that was as much a representation of who he was and what he stood for as it was a ‘battle cry’ for the American people. Further, the slogan would need to not only segue with his campaign strategy, but would need to seamlessly integrate with his media and communications plan.

Armed with the campaign slogan, ‘Yes We Can’, the Obama campaign team opted to harness the power of the internet and thus adopted a strategy using social media technology as their primary communications vehicle. This, they believed, would be the most effective and efficient way to achieve their three primary goals, viz:

- Target voters on a mass scale;
- Raise funds on a mass scale; and

- Organise at a mass scale.

Television, print, outdoor and below-the-line communications were used as support media rather than to spearhead the campaign.

The strategy was a resounding success as the use of social media tools, firstly, made it possible to raise one of the most important resources needed to fuel a political campaign, money. The team successfully utilised social media tools to target the masses at grassroots level in order to appeal for small donations, ranging from five dollars upwards. And, secondly, the technology made it possible to easily manage the organisation of campaign volunteers who arranged rallies and visited voters in areas that required their presence.

How was the Obama Campaign Strategy Developed?

Using a 'bottom-up' approach, i.e. targeting the masses for smaller amounts rather than arranging smaller fundraising events to amass larger amounts, the Obama team opted early in the campaign to raise funds in a manner that enabled them to simultaneously speak to the masses. Fundraisers aimed at higher income earners, were thus not the answer as Obama needed to speak to as many voters as many times as possible. The team thus elected to elicit smaller donations, from low to middle income groups, rather than fewer large donations from the higher income echelons. Further, more smaller donations translated into more opportunities to talk to the people and, in this regard, Obama rewrote the social media playbook by using the technology to engage his supporters and non-supporters alike on an hour by hour basis (www.wired.com). See Figures 20, 21 and 22 below, which are copies of emails sent from Obama's campaign offices during the campaign build-up.

Friend --

There's nothing like being on the campaign trail with Barack -- right at the heart of the largest and most inspiring grassroots movement in the history of politics.

Our team put together a video that captures that energy, and I had to share it with you.

[See what this movement is all about, then make your first donation of \\$5 or more before it's too late to make a difference.](#)

Error! Filename not specified.

It's taken a lot of hard work to get this far, but we still have millions of voters to contact in a very short time.

This week alone, we need to grow this movement by 100,000 new donors -- but we're almost there.

If you make your first donation before tonight's deadline, a previous donor will match your donation and double your impact.

Please watch this short video and make a matched donation of \$5 or more for the change we need:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/match>

Barack will be the underdog until he's in the White House, so keep working, keep talking to your friends and neighbors, and together we can change the world.

Thank you for your commitment, passion, and hard work,

Michelle

**Figure 20: Email sent to constituents from Obama's campaign office
and signed by his wife, Michelle**

[Source: Digital Strategy 2009]

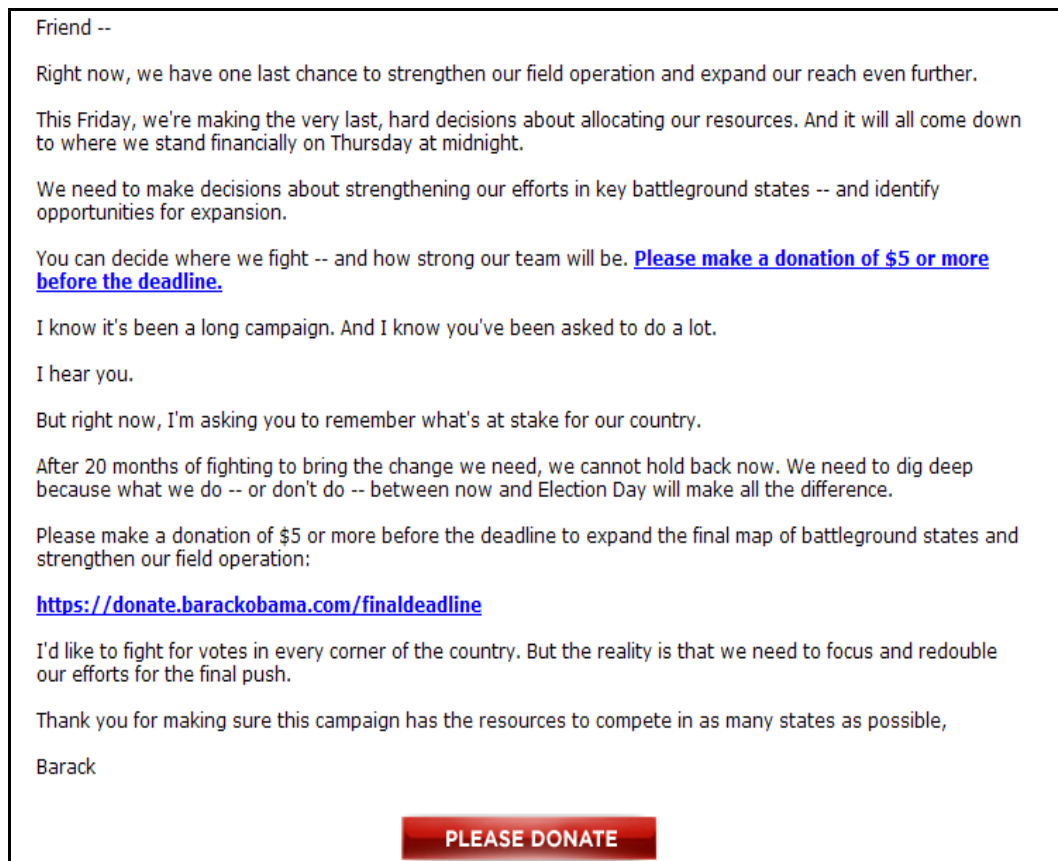


Figure 21: Email sent to constituents 2 days after Michelle's email (Figure 19), and signed by Obama
[Source: Digital Strategy 2009]

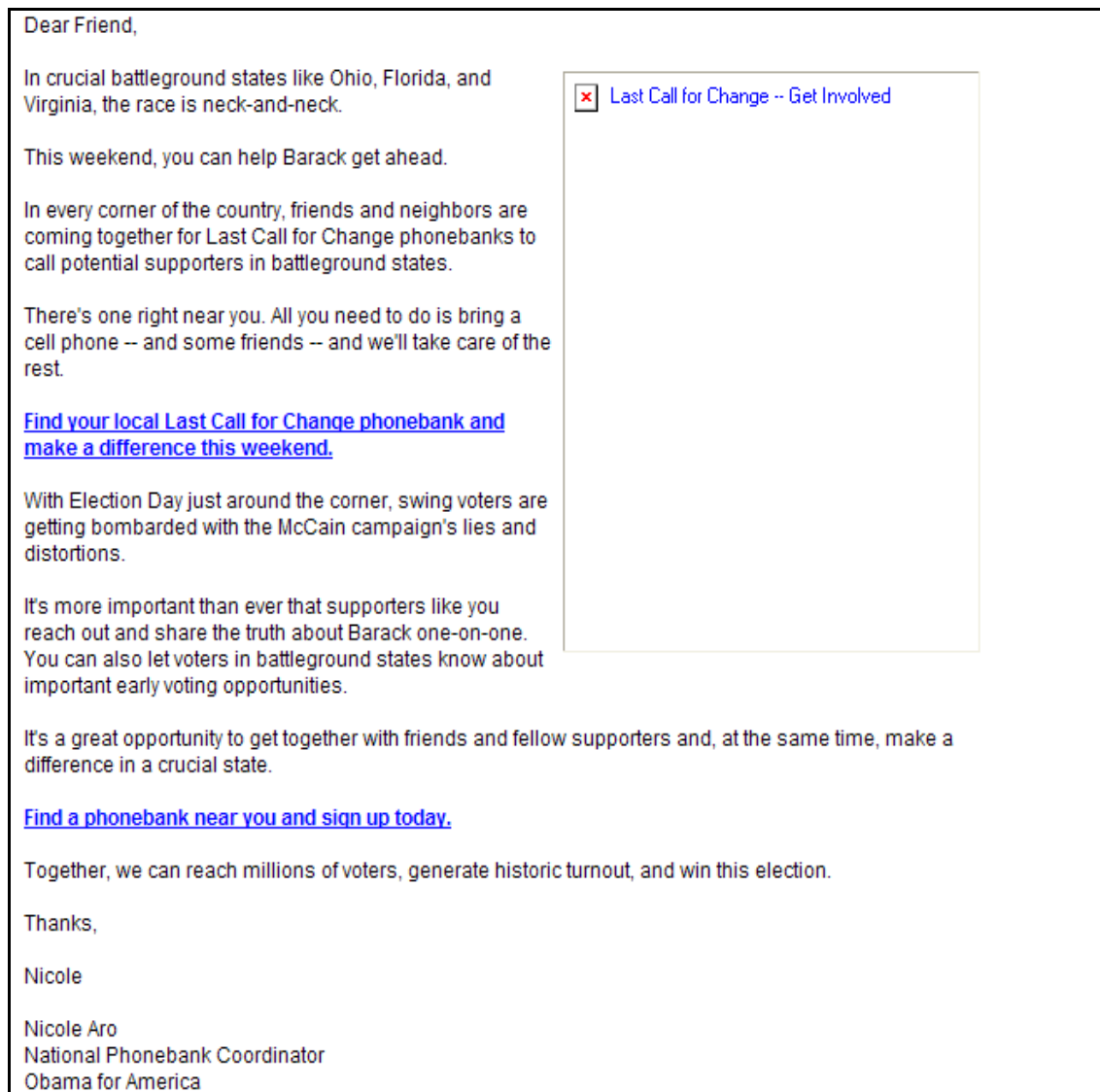


Figure 22: Email sent to constituents on behalf of the Obama team

[Source: Digital Strategy 2009]

How was the Strategy Implemented?

Obama began his campaign by recruiting people who were like-minded, techno savvy and who had a passion for online marketing. Two of his key recruiting decisions were Chris Hughes and Joe Blogs.

Hughes, one of the founders of Facebook, developed “MyBo” which served as the core platform for all online communication, organisation and fundraising, while Blogs ensured that all the tools that were developed worked seamlessly with each other. Further, he sought ways to deal with bandwidth issues as well as possible communication overloading on the site.

Is the Obama Approach Considered Viable and is it Replicable?

Obama’s use of social media tools and related technology in his 2008 election campaign was not new to politics. It had been attempted by both Bush and Dean in the 2004 presidential race, *albeit* to varying degrees of success. Obama’s triumph pivoted on his ability to activate social media in a way that made it both goal-driven and a primary platform on which he addressed the masses. Both Dean and Bush used it as secondary, add-on tools to their existing communications arsenal.

As discussed earlier, another critical issue facing online campaigning at the time was converting online enthusiasm into offline action. Neither Dean nor Bush was able to successfully execute this element as neither saw social media as being more than fundraising vehicles. Further, the available technology was prohibitive to a large extent. With newer applications, larger available bandwidth and easier access to the internet by 2008, Obama was able to plough time and resources into perfecting the conversion process. In sum, it was a combination of keen insight together with technological developments brought about simply by progress and the passage of time that made Obama’s social media campaign the success that it was.

The use of social media to connect people is as much a defining

characteristic of the current generation as is the role it plays in other spheres of their lives. As we have seen, its effectiveness in creating communication efficiencies and scale economies has not only spilled over into political campaigning and, of course, our daily lives but, in a sense, has come to define both.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I recall quite vividly my fascination at reading my first facsimile (fax) in the mid 1980s and, at the time, marvelled at the rate at which technological developments were improving the ways in which we communicate. I had of course heard about telegrams and telex technology in primary school but the fax represented, for me at least, a giant leap in communications generally. In point of fact, it remained at the forefront of technological innovation until the 1990s. By the early 2000s though, the fax had not only been relegated to the corporate back office to be used only in dire circumstances, but communications had taken a quantum leap, especially in the ways in which we as individuals, groups and corporate citizens interacted across both space and time. Indeed, satellite television, the internet, cellular telephones and other mobile communications continue to revolutionise how we work, socialise and live.

In many ways, the use of internet-based communications and social media technology in Obama's presidential campaign was not unexpected as it had not only been attempted in the previous presidential race, but was both a natural and an integral part of everyday communications by 2008. Obama however, was the first US presidential candidate to use social media technology as the primary driver of his campaign's communications. Further, the ways in which he harnessed the technology to tap into the general voter psyche across demographics and psychographics, elevated him to super brand status in the process.

As the illustrative retrospective in Appendix Two shows, internet-based communications was not the only ways in which Obama talked to the American public. He utilised the traditional media mix of television, print and other below-the-line communications tools as well. However, the traditional mix supported the campaign's primary communication's strategy rather than led it.

Adopting the approach of a case study with the focus firmly on the current American president, Obama, this study sought to achieve the following:

- Examine the exponential growth of social media technology as a key component in recent American political campaigning;
- Examine its use and impact on the larger disciplines of marketing and branding;
- Identify the key media and technologies used in the build-up to the 2008 American presidential elections;
- Unpack and understand how such media channels, technological platforms and patterns were successfully utilised to create and roll-out what has since become commonly known as the Obama brand;
- Examine the methods employed in activating the campaign roll-out; and
- Understand the drivers of new media technologies especially as they are used to create and impact positively on the growth of political super brands.

As has been inferred, if our discussion thus far has increased our appreciation, knowledge and understanding of how social media technology has impacted on advertising and communications generally, then this study would have achieved its aims.

In closing, and as has been mentioned, whether or not Obama's approach is

viable or replicable is fairly moot at this stage as social media technology has come to play a role in virtually every aspect of our lives. To what extent it will remain a critical element of the 2012 US presidential election race is outside the scope of this study and thus remains to be seen.

APPENDIX ONE

SURVEY RESPONSES FROM US CITIZENS

Interviewee One

Personal Details

Name : Lucy Sandison

Age Group : 35 – 39

Gender : Female

Education : College

Career : Private Sector HR Consultant

Questionnaire

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

I was living in Boston, with a lot of university students.

2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialised/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

Everyone was very excited and cared a lot about what was going on, staying tuned to election coverage

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

I personally recall the TV commercials that were being used by the candidates. A lot of advertisements were very aggressive especially toward the final hours of the election.

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

The use of Facebook was very big in the Obama campaign. It's what drew in a lot of young supporters

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

Yes

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

I think social media was critical to the Obama campaign.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

The 2004 didn't use social media nearly as much as the 2008. It was Obama's 2008 campaign that really utilized this tactic which mobilized younger voters who most likely would not have even voted in the first place.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

All

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Most, (most family and friends I know over 40 do not use social media)

10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people your work/socialise with mentioned in 8/9 above?

Average age is probably 25

Interviewee Two

Personal Details

Name : Bethany Haberer

Age Group : 35 – 39

Gender : Female

Education : Master's Degree

Career : Public Health

Questionnaire

3. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

Washington, DC. Big city, very diverse. Tends to be young and liberal.

4. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialized/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

Most people were really excited. Obama seemed like a different kind of candidate: youngish, cool, committed to changing our country.

Many of friends volunteered to canvass door to door, which takes a lot of energy and dedication.

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

Mainly TV coverage. I don't remember seeing any billboards. Even negative press about Obama seemed like it couldn't touch him. It was like the conservative were grasping at straws and Obama always had the best responses; he just came out looking better and better.

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

Yes, I connected to the campaign by Facebook and received updates on campaign issues and sometimes interacted with other supporters.

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

Yes

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

I don't think it was critical. It certainly helped with getting people together for rallies, etc and facilitated communication among supporters, but I don't know that it changed people's opinions of Obama. I think it's more correlation than anything: young people like Obama; young people use social media; therefore, young people use social media to talk about and organize around Obama.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

I was living abroad for that campaign, but aside from social media, I don't think regular mass media was that different.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

Absolutely all.

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Most, but there are few stubborn holdouts.

10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people your work/socialise with mentioned in 8/9 above?

I don't know that I would be able to split it. Certainly no gender split, but fewer older people use social media. My grandpa and one friend my age are the one two people I can think of who I know don't use Facebook.

Interviewee Three

Personal Details

Name : Andrew Leung

Age Group : 25 - 34

Gender : Male

Education : College Graduate

Career : Film (Entertainment)

Questionnaire

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

I was living in Manhattan.

2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialized/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

Everyone felt like they were rooting for the underdog, and everyone wanted to be a part of it. Barack Obama seemed like a very accessible politician at the time unlike the other candidates. In part it was due to the fact that it looked like his campaign depended on meetup groups and Facebook.

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

I don't really remember much of billboards other than the classic Obama "O" horizon over the flag. But that was stuff that was found on his website. Everyone I knew were more influenced by word of mouth and his book Dreams for my Father. We were just excited this same man was running for President.

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

At the time, I actually used meetup.com more. Obama would later on have his own website that was actually based on the Facebook engine. I didn't use it as much as other people because it felt too cumbersome.

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

Once, we figured he was probably too busy to talk to us. But through the meetup group we felt like we could have combined unified voice. Sometimes, one our meetup members would be invited to a dinner in which he would be there.

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

I think internet media was successful because there are people out there like me who don't pay attention to physical junk mail. Especially since if you were really into Obama you could just Google how to help out with his campaign.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

Yes. Other than voting, it felt inaccessible to a person like me. It felt like there wasn't really a way for me to voice my concerns. Whereas the relatively low-tech low-cost feel of Obama's campaign felt more accessible to me.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

Nowadays, pretty much everyone I know is on the internet. If they're not, I pretty much don't have much contact with them.

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Everybody. Even my mom and dad. The ones that don't, I don't keep in contact with them anymore.

10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people your work/socialise with mentioned in 8 /9 above?

My friends range from 24-60 and is a pretty even split between male and female. My parents are in their 60's. My two sisters are in their late 20s.

Interviewee Four

Personal Details

Name : Shimon Prohow
Age Group : 25 - 34
Gender : Female
Education : Master's Degree
Career : Government Sector (Program Manager)

Questionnaire

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

Washington, DC – city of 600,000 people, urban, government-oriented

2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialised/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

Energized, excited

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

I remember far more about the TV news about political events than about any campaign-produced media

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

Yes, for organizational purposes. I often received requests to canvas for Obama

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

Sorta

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

It was critical in organizing, but less so in spreading information. It didn't sway independents as much as it galvanized the base.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

I was out of the US for that election.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

All

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Almost all

Interviewee Five

Personal Details

Name : Daniel Thompson

Age Group : 35 - 39

Gender : Male

Education : Master's Degree

Career : Healthcare Policy

Questionnaire

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living?
Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

I lived 2008 in Philadelphia and Atlanta. Philadelphia's main industry (I believe) is industrial, specifically, oil import and export. Atlanta's main industry is hospitality, I think...although I'm not sure... that's pretty sad considering I was born and raised here.

2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialised/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

As I recall, folks were pretty excited about Hilary in the beginning. However, Obama caught fire after the GA primary and never looked back. Toward the end, it was a little overwhelming. The ads, the 24-hour news about the

candidates, the social media hitting your inbox – I think a lot of people experienced political hangover after the inauguration...

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

The most memorable piece of media I recall was the Obama “HOPE” posters. It was bold in its design and color palette and utilized one-word messaging that resonated with voters. Simple and effective.

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

You betcha! I believe Obama’s campaign more successfully branded him as more down to earth and “hip” with social media.

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

No.

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

I think it was critical to his success. I don’t know any statistics around it, but in terms of communication of campaign events and having a forum for dialogue I think it definitely played a part. Also, I assume he had more followers and fans on Facebook and Twitter compared to McCain, which is also a stat that the campaign could use in eliciting more support.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008

one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

Most definitely. I don't believe the impact and power of Social Media was widely understood then to the extent that it was during 2008. I think that in 2004, pundits and intellectuals still thought of Facebook as something for a population that was not worth courting. Now, it is a staple for everyone, including businesses. It is almost seen as a requirement for a business to have a Facebook/twitter page these days to have any kind of advantage/effect. Tangentially, I think it is high time for Microsoft Word to recognize Facebook as a widely used word in the English language and quit marking it as misspelled.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

Most

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialize with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Most

10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people your work/socialise with mentioned in 8 /9 above?

30

Interviewee Six

Personal Details

Name : Kieran Dunleavy

Age Group : 25 -34

Gender : Male

Education : College

Career : Business Analyst, US Military Industrial Complex

Questionnaire

1. During the 2008 Obama campaign, where were you living? Was it a big town, small city, rural . . . (Brief description re size of place, type of people, main industry, etc)?

Arlington, VA. Suburb of Washington, DC.

2. What was the general mood of the people you interacted/lived/socialised/worked with (in terms of their attitude to the political campaigning that year)?

Varied from informed, concerned to indifferent.

3. What media (TV/Billboards/Newspapers, etc) do you personally recall being used by the candidates and which among these was most memorable for you (and, of course, why)?

TV (Cable News), Radio, Newspapers, Magazines. TV was the most memorable since it allowed not only to hear the candidates but see them as well and observe their mannerisms.

4. Was the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) a big part of the campaign?

For me, not really. For the Candidates, I would say Yes.

5. Did you ever use social media platforms to interact with any of the candidates?

I did, yes.

6. How big a deal do you think was social media to the success of the Obama campaign? Was it critical, do you think?

Not critical, but played an important role for sure in targeting a younger demographic of voters.

7. This is going back a bit, but do you recall the 2004 presidential campaign? Was that campaign vastly different from the 2008 one in terms of the media utilised by the respective candidates (in, other words, was the contrast stark)?

Not stark. But the use of social media at the time of the '04 Campaign (ie Friendster, MySpace) was amateurish at best compared to how it was used by the candidates in the '08 campaign.

8. How many of your friends, family, people you work with and people you socialise with have access to the internet (some/all/most/a few)?

All.

9. [See 8 above] How many of your friends, family, people you work with, and people you socialise with use social media (some/all/most/a few)?

Most.

10. What are the average ages/gender splits among your friends, family, people you work/socialise with mentioned in 8 /9 above?

30 - 40s

75% Male

25% Female

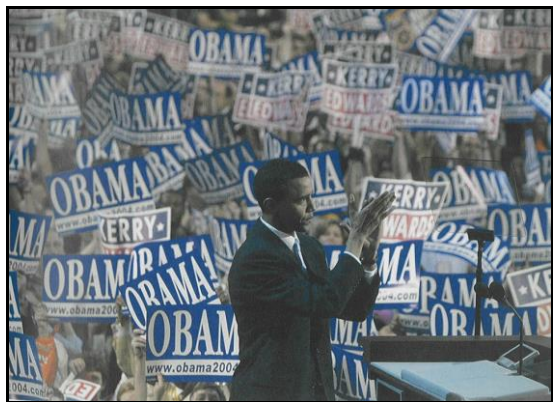
APPENDIX TWO

AN ILLUSTRATIVE RETROSPECTIVE OF THE 2008 OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign was as much about his leveraging off the communications technology of the time as it was about his use of traditional campaigning methods to help realise his objectives. Whilst this study has focussed firmly on the former, the following is a selection of photographs and newspaper clippings illustrating the latter.



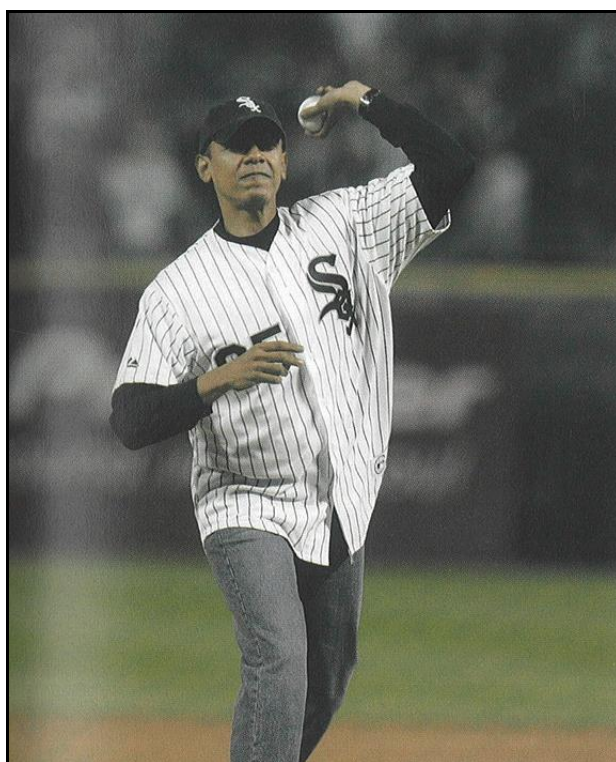
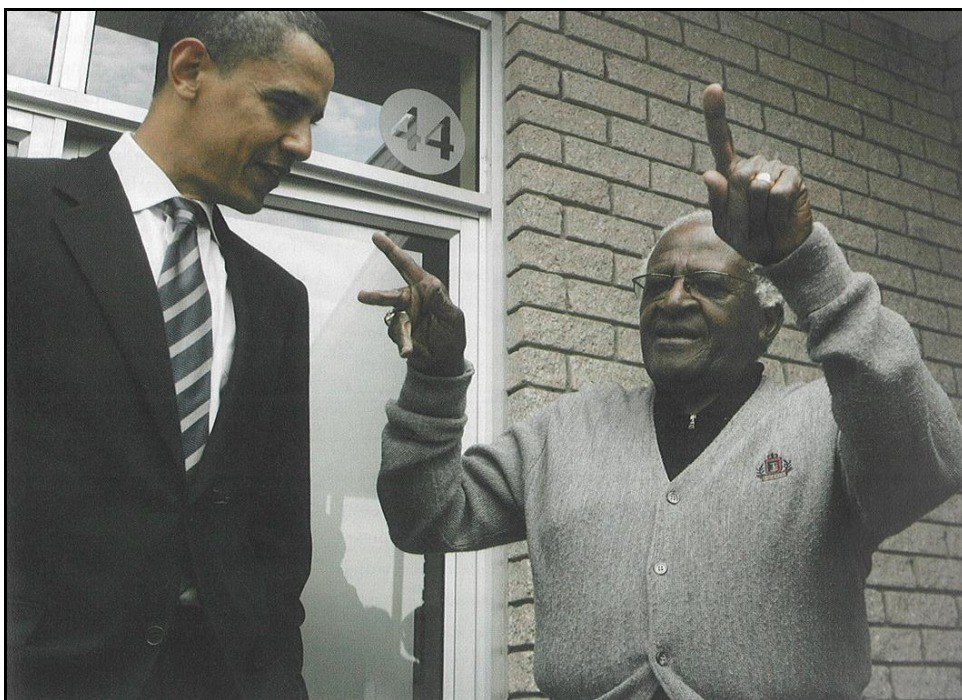
[Source: Dougherty 2008: 5; 86]



[Source: Dougherty 2008: 19; 65; 75]



[Source: Dougherty 2008: 84; 25]



[Source: Dougherty 2008: 109; 101]

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

ELECTION 2008 8 PAGES OF COVERAGE INSIDE

The Birmingham News

www.birminghamnews.com

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OBAMA WINS

PRESIDENT-ELECT | 'Change has come to America'
CONGRESS | Democrats expand control of Senate and House. **4B-5B**



"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," president-elect Barack Obama said during his acceptance speech in Chicago on Tuesday. AP/WIDEWORLD

THE ALABAMA VOTE

More than 2 million Alabamians cast ballots

By CHARLES J. DEAN

News staff writer

Record numbers of Alabama voters kept the state Republican red Tuesday, but it mattered little on a day that saw Democratic Sen. Barack Obama defeat Sen. John McCain to become the nation's first African-American president.

It's a wonderful piece of history, a wonderful time in history, almost a miraculous time, from my point of

view," said Richard Arrington Jr. as, at his home, he watched television networks declare Obama the winner; he will be the nation's 44th president. Arrington knows a little something about making history. He was elected Birmingham's first black mayor 29 years ago.

At the Bonnie Trace Cafe, on Birmingham's Southside, a crowd of about 200 Obama

See ALABAMA | Page 3B

THE CIVIL RIGHTS LEGACY

Civil rights foot soldiers watch a racial sea change

By TOM GORDON

THOMAS SPENCER

and GREG GARRISON

News staff writers

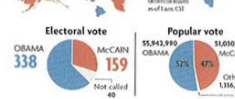
Even as they made history, breaking down barriers to black participation in American life, Fred Gray, Richard Arrington and Alvin Holmes never believed they would live long enough to see a black man elected

All were happy to be joined Tuesday night by Barack Obama on Tuesday night.

"It tells me the country is headed in the right direction because in order for him to be where he is now, he had to receive a lot of votes from people who do not look like he does," said Gray, who represented civil rights figures such as Rosa Parks and

See CIVIL | Page 3B

STATES WON



INSIDE

How will Obama lead? 1B

Alabama Supreme Court race undecided. 1B

In exit polls, women, blacks support Obama. 8B

THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Nation elects its first black president

By DAVID ESPO

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Barack Obama swept to victory as the nation's first black president Tuesday night in an electoral college landslide that overcame racial barriers as old as America itself. "Change has come to America," he told a jubilant hometown Chicago crowd estimated at nearly a quarter-million people.

The son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, the Democratic senator from Illinois scaled his historic triumph by defeating Republican Sen. John McCain in a string of wins in hard-fought battleground states — Ohio, Florida, Iowa and more. He captured Virginia, too, the first candidate of his party in 44 years to do so.

On a night for Democrats to savor, they not only elected Obama the nation's 44th president but gained their majorities in the House and Senate, and in January will control both the White House and Congress for the first time since 1994.

See PRESIDENT | Page 3B

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IN TODAY'S PAPER
An interview with John Parker Wilson
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[Source: The Poynter Institute 2008: 47]

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, limited sunshine, a shower,
high 63. Tonight, cloudy, scattered
showers, patchy fog, low 55. Tomor-
row, rain ends, remaining cloudy,
high 62. Weather map, Page B10.

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OBAMA

RACIAL BARRIER FALLS IN DECISIVE VICTORY

ONLINE

■ The latest state-by-state results: the presidential contest and House, Senate and governors' races.
■ The Obama blog: updates from The Times's political staff.



■ Interactive graphics: the electoral map, voter profiles and analysis.
■ Video, audio and photos: reactions from the voters and the campaign.
nytimes.com

PRESIDENT-ELECT

THE LONG CAMPAIGN

Journey to the Top
The story of Senator Barack Obama's journey to the pinnacle of American politics, in the story of a campaign that was, even in the view of many rivals, almost flawless. After a somewhat lackluster start, Mr. Obama and his team delivered. They developed a strategy to secure the nomination, and stuck with it even after setbacks. PAGE F1

SENATE

NORTH CAROLINA

Elizabeth Dole Is Out
After leading by a double-digit margin, the Republican Senator Elizabeth Dole, left, was defeated by State Senator Kay R. Hagan. In the campaign's final week, Mrs. Dole came under criticism for an advertisement that linked Mr. Hagan to a group called the Godless Americans. PAGE F2

Mark Warner Wins
Extending the Democrats' advantage in the Senate, Governor Mark B. Warner of Virginia easily won his race to replace John W. Warner (no relation), a retiring Republican. PAGE F2

Sununu Is Defeated
Another leading Republican, Senator John E. Sununu, was ousted by a wide margin by Jeanne Shaheen, the former New Hampshire governor when he lost in 2002. PAGE F2

HOUSE

G.O.P. Stalwart Falls
Representative Christopher Shays, the last Republican House member from New England and a political Houdini who escaped previous Democratic attempts to topple him, was defeated by a political novice, Jim Himes. PAGE F3

NEW YORK

Democrats Take Senate
Democrats won a majority in the New York State Senate, putting the party in control of both houses of the Legislature and the governor's office for the first time since the New Deal. Voters ousted two Republican senators whose combined years in office spanned more than half a century. PAGE F3



President-elect Barack Obama with his wife, Michelle, and their daughters in Chicago on Tuesday night.

THE CHALLENGE

No Time for Laurels; Now the Hard Part

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — No president since before Barack Obama was born has ascended to the Oval Office confronted by the accumulation of seismic challenges awaiting him. Historians grasping for parallels point to Abraham Lincoln taking office as the nation was collapsing into Civil War, or Franklin D. Roosevelt arriving in Washington in the throes of the Great Depression.

The task facing Mr. Obama does not rise to those levels, but that these are the comparisons most often cited shows even Democrats rejecting at their return to power. On the shoulders of a 45-year-old first-term senator, with the power of inspiration yet no real executive experience, now falls the responsibility of prosecuting two wars, protecting the nation from terrorist threat and stitching back together a shredded economy.

Given the depth of these issues, Mr. Obama has little choice but to "put your arm around chaos," in the words of Leon E. Panetta, the former White House chief of staff who has been advising his transition team.

"You better damn well do the tough stuff up front, because if you think you can delay the tough decisions and tuck them into the graveyard, you're in for a lot of trouble," Mr. Panetta said. "Make the decisions that involve pain and sacrifice up front."

What kind of decision maker and leader Mr. Obama will be remains unclear even to many of his supporters. Will he be willing to use his political capital and act boldly, or will he move cautiously and risk being paralyzed by competing demands from within his own party? His performance under the harsh light of the campaign trail suggests a figure with remarkable confidence and confidence under enormous pressure, yet also one who rarely wavers off the methodical path he lays out.

"It looks like you wonder whether inactivity is the

THE MOMENT

After Decades, A Time to Reap

By KEVIN SACK

ALBANY, Ga. — Rutha Mae Harris backed her silver Town Car out of the driveway early Tuesday morning, pointed it toward her polling place on Mercer Avenue and started to sing.

"I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote," Miss Harris chanted softly.



"I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote, I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote. And if the spirit say vote I'm going to vote. Oh Lord, I'm going to vote when the spirit say vote."

As a 21-year-old student (see right in photo), she had believed that same freedom song at mass meetings at Mount Zion Baptist Church back in 1961, the year Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, a universe away. She sang it again while marching in Albany's City Hall, where she and other black students demanded the right to vote, and in the cramped and filthy cells of the jail just where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described as the worst he ever inhabited.

For those like Miss Harris who withstood jailings and beatings and threats to their livelihoods, all because they wanted to vote, the short drive to the polls on Tuesday culminated a lifelong journey from a time that is at once unrecognizable and eerily familiar here in southwest Georgia. As they exited the voting booths, some in wheelchairs, others with canes, these foot soldiers of the civil rights movement could not suppress either their jubilation or their astonishment at having voted for an African-American for president of the United States.

"They didn't give us no mile and our acre, but things are better," Miss Harris, 62, said with a gratified smile. "It's time to reap some of the harvest."

Where Miss Harris arrived at the city gymnasium where she votes, her 10-year-old friend Marnie L. Nelson

Democrats in Congress Strengthen Grip

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive.

The election of Mr. Obama amounted to a national catharsis — a repudiation of a historically unpopular Republican president and his economic and foreign policies, and an embrace of Mr. Obama's call for a change in the direction and the tone of the country.

But it was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.

Mr. Obama, 47, a first-term senator from Illinois, defeated Senator John McCain of Arizona, 72, a former prisoner of war who was making his second bid for the presidency.

To the very end, Mr. McCain's campaign was eclipsed by an opponent who was nothing short of a phenomenon, drawing huge crowds epitomized by the tens of thousands of people who turned out to hear Mr. Obama's victory speech in Grant Park in Chicago.

Mr. McCain also fought the headwinds of a relentlessly hostile political environment, weighed down with the baggage left to him by President Bush and an economic collapse that took place in the middle of the general election campaign.

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," said Mr. Obama, standing before a huge wooden lectern with a row of American flags at his back, casting his eyes to a crowd that stretched far into the Chicago night.

"It's been a long time coming," the president-elect added, "but tonight, because of what we did on this date in this election at this defining moment, change has come to America."

Mr. McCain delivered his concession speech under clear skies on the lush lawn of the Arizona Biltmore, in Phoenix, where he and his wife had held their wedding reception. The crowd reacted with scattered boos as he offered his congratulations to Mr. Obama and saluted the historical significance of the moment.

"This is a historic election, and I recognize the significance it has for African-Americans and for the special pride that must be theirs tonight," Mr. McCain said, adding, "We both realize that we have come a long way from the injustices that once stained our nation's reputation."

Not only did Mr. Obama capture the presidency, but he led his party to sharp gains in Congress. This post

Continued on Page F3

THE PROMISE

For Many Abroad, An Ideal Renewed

By ETYAN BRONNER

GAZA — From far away, this is how it looks: There is a country out there where tens of millions of white Christians, voting freely, select as their leader a black man of modest origin, the son of a Muslim. There is a place on Earth — call it America — where such a thing happens.

Even where the United States is held in special contempt, like here in this beleaguered Palestinian coastal strip, the "glorious epic of Barack Obama," as the left-French editor Jean Daniel calls it, makes America — the idea as much as the actual place — stand again, perhaps only fleetingly, for limitless possibility.

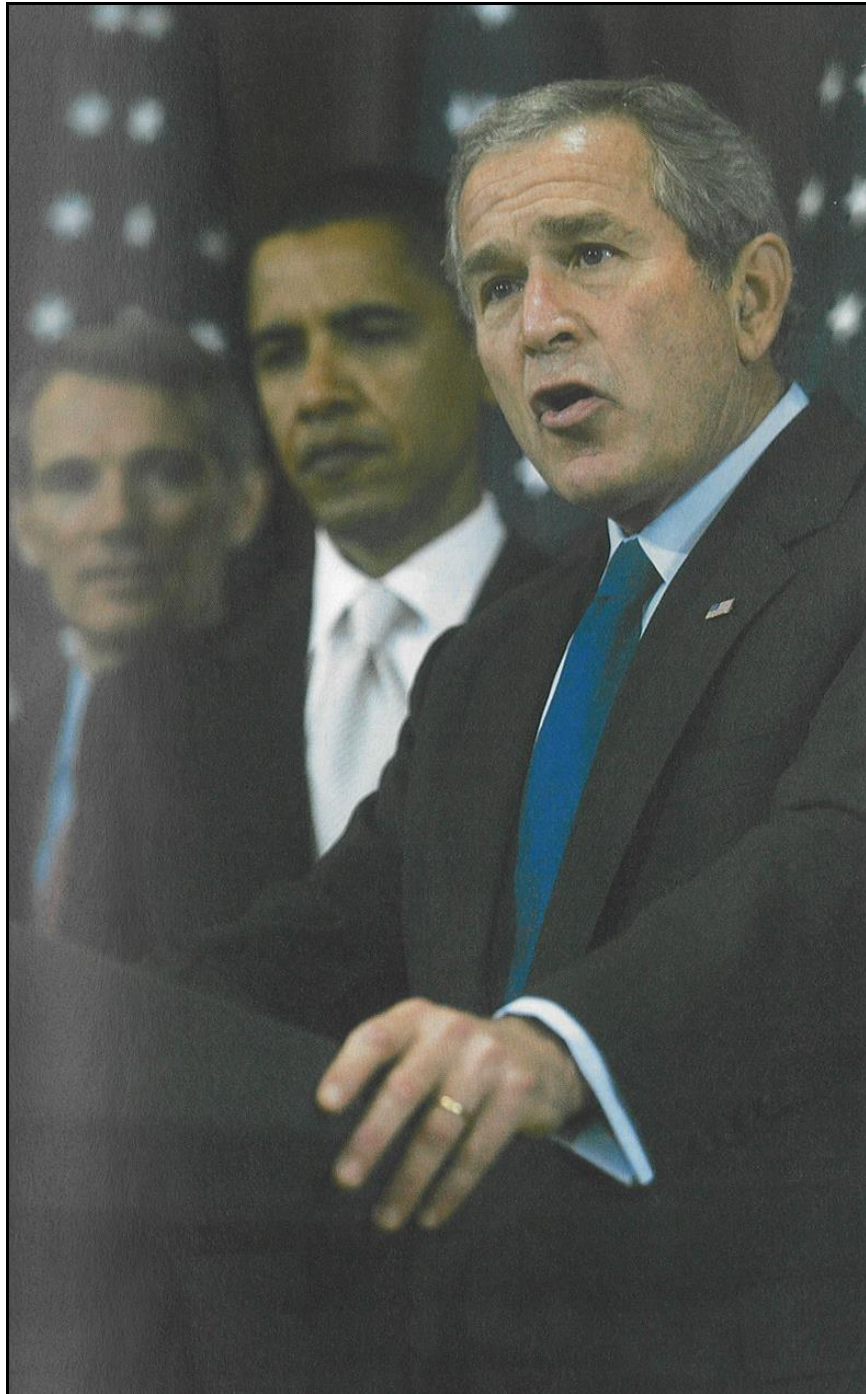
"It allows us all to dream a little," said Osama bin Laden, 58, a Venezuelan political activist in Caracas, in a comment echoed to correspondents of The New York Times on four continents in the days leading up to the election.

Triton Hunt, a British historian, put it this way: Mr. Obama "brings the narrative that everyone wants to return to — that America is the land of extraordinary opportunity and possibility, where miracles happen."

But wonder is almost overwhelmed by relief. Mr. Obama's election offers most non-Americans a sense that the imperial power capable of doing such good and such harm — a country that, they complain, preached justice but tortured its captives, launched a disastrous war in Iraq, turned its back on the environment and greedily dragged the world into economic chaos — saw the errors of its ways over the past eight years and shifted course.

They say the country that weakened democratic forces abroad through a tireless but often ineffective campaign for democracy — disavowing results it found unwelcome, cutting deals with dictators it needed as allies in its other battles — was now shining a transformation

[Source: The Poynter Institute 2008: 23]



[Source: Dougherty 2008:35]



[Source: Willis 2008: 143]



[Source: Dougherty 2008:121]

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