

Blogging and Hyperlinking: use of the Web to enhance viability during the 2004 US campaign

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ABSTRACT *This study focuses on the online campaigning of presidential candidates during the 2004 US presidential campaign. A random sample of the front pages of the websites and weblogs (“blogs”) of George W. Bush and John Kerry was collected between Labor Day and Election Day 2004. These pages were analyzed in order to examine both candidate blogs and websites in terms of online fundraising, hyperlinking practices, and concentration on certain political issues. Results suggest that candidates more frequently use websites than blogs as fundraising mechanisms. In terms of hyperlinking, the Bush and Kerry campaigns were likely to confine visitors to the bounds of their websites by providing links to content within the overall site, but also linked consistently to outside, advocating sources. On the other hand, candidate blogs were more likely to provide directives to external links. Regarding issues discussed online by the campaigns, results suggest marked differences between the most salient issues in candidate blogs as opposed to candidate websites.*

KEY WORDS: *Blogs, Hyperlinks, Interactivity, Internet, US Elections, Web Campaigning*

Introduction

The Web has enabled candidates to create a non-linear, controlled media product that, through the use of hyperlinks and interactive features, facilitates communication with the electorate. The Web has also proved very successful in enhancing candidate fundraising, as evidenced by the stunning success of John McCain in the 2000 election cycle and Howard Dean during the primary season of campaign 2004. In the 2004 election cycle both incumbent Republican President George W. Bush and challenger Democrat Senator John F. Kerry continued to actively use the Web as a primary campaigning tool.

This study provides an initial overview of how the Web has been used in campaigning and reports on how the Democratic presidential

candidates and President Bush used the Web during the primary season of the 2004 election cycle. It then compares in detail Bush and Kerry’s Web campaigning and focuses on how these two presidential candidates used their websites to promote their issue agendas and to reach the electorate for fundraising purposes during the general phase of the campaign.

Web Campaigning

Since the 1996 presidential campaign, the campaign website has become a more vital and integrated tool (Davis, 1999; Tedesco, 2004). During the 2004 campaign, the Pew Internet and American Life Project’s survey of Internet (2004) users found that 40 percent of those online sought political material related to the

election. This was more than 50 percent higher than the 2000 campaigns. Additionally, the same survey found that Internet users were not using the Internet merely to reinforce political opinions. Rather, Internet users who seek political material are more aware of arguments in support and opposition to their preferred candidates.

The first campaign websites tended to be positive and to focus on the sponsoring candidate (Tedesco et al., 1999). In the 1996 Senate campaign, a majority of candidates' websites included issue sections with economy, education, and crime discussions (Klotz, 1997). Although websites were mainly positive, 34 percent of the websites contained negative comments about the opponent.

While that initial electronic campaign left much to be desired in regards to posting of information (Davis, 1999) and interactivity (Stromer-Galley, 2000), campaigns have improved their use of this tool which now acts as a campaign headquarters open 24 hours a day to provide voters with answers to the questions most important to them. However, the road to present-day online politicking was not an easy one (Selnow, 1998). Although research has shown that interactivity on a candidate's website can enhance the viewer's perceptions of the candidate's sensitivity, responsiveness, and trustworthiness (Sundar et al., 1998), campaigns often dodged true interaction and two-way communication with their constituents (Stromer-Galley, 2000). They also limited content to simple brochures providing issue stance (Tedesco et al., 1999), and improperly integrated communication tools such as e-mail messaging (Trammell and Williams, 2004).

As the Internet advanced and was used by more people, the content provided on candidate websites increased (Greer and LaPointe, 2001). For example, in 1996, candidates initially did not use their websites for campaign fundraising at all (Banwart, 2002). Since then the Internet has grown as a key fundraising device. Dulio et al. (1999) asserted that, with campaign costs rising, candidates would turn more to the Internet as a fundraising source.

The effects of online communication on voters' perceptions of the candidate and of the

political process in general are under intense study by the research community at this time. There is some evidence that viewing a candidate's website can increase liking for a candidate (Hansen, 2000; Hansen and Benoit, 2002). Although some researchers found that exposure to candidate websites in the 1996 campaign did not result in much increased knowledge (Johnson et al., 1999), Tedesco and Kaid (2000) found that those exposed to a presidential campaign website in 2000 exhibited lower levels of political cynicism.

The Blogging Phenomenon

An emerging area of computer-mediated communication scholarship now highlights blogs. Blogs are Web pages frequently updated with posts centered around one topic arranged in reverse chronological order (Blood, 2002). While blogs are not new to the Internet, the social and political power they can harness has received much media attention in the past two years. For instance, Senator Trent Lott is said to have lost his job because bloggers would not allow the story of his inappropriate racial remarks at Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party to go away. More recently, bloggers questioned the authenticity of documents held by CBS regarding President George W. Bush's military service in the Texas National Guard in an incident known as "RatherGate." Certainly, not all blogs have the power to influence or make news, but such anecdotes certainly provide justification for scholarly inquiry.

The 2004 presidential campaign was the first political campaign in the United States to use blogs as a communication tool with the electorate. In the 2004 primary cycle, Democratic contender Howard Dean mobilized groups never before politically active through a grass roots effort based in blogs (Trippi, 2004). Noting this, every viable candidate in the race soon began blogging as a way to raise money, mobilize volunteers, and spread their message.

Currently, published blog scholarship primarily deals with the most common blog genre (Herring et al., 2004) and analyses of medium characteristics. The structure of blogs allows a more in-depth, interlinked, and possibly inter-

active form of electronic communication. These possibilities are often centered on the role of the hyperlink and its ability to link conversations to provide background material on the topic discussed in the blog (Blood, 2002). However, researchers are beginning to understand that such popular press claims overstate the prevalence of hyperlinking (Trammell et al., 2004). In this vein, empirical examinations note linking within blog posts is sporadic and not the norm (Herring et al., 2004).

Hyperlink Concept

Interconnectedness of content on the Web is often proclaimed to be a significant attribute known as hyperlinking. Hyperlinks allow Internet users to navigate the World Wide Web by clicking on words or images, making them one of the simplest methods of Web interactivity (Peng et al., 1999). Hyperlinking may be considered to be a social interaction among websites. It gives cues to what other information a given website views as similar or related content (Halavais, 2003). A level of trust and prestige is indicated by what hyperlinks are present on a given Web page (Brin and Page, 1998; Kleinberg, 1999). However, if a website does not offer hyperlinks, the Internet user must find other means of navigation. Research shows that Internet users' satisfaction with navigation and usability increases when a website offers a greater level of involvement (Kamali and Loker, 2002).

Online newspapers are an example of websites that are unlikely to link to external news sources and use the interactivity of the Web (Dimitrova et al., 2003). Most online newspapers link to advertisers rather than to websites that could potentially increase their readers' understanding of a story (Peng et al., 1999). This lack of hyperlinking may exist because it potentially causes a loss of control over the communication environment (Stromer-Galley, 2000). Eveland et al. (2004) investigated public affairs learning from online news websites and found learning apparently varies according to user familiarity with the Web. Hyperlinks in a news story can discourage learning of the facts for users who are less familiar with the Web. However, for

those users familiar with the Web, hyperlinking apparently encourages more deeply, interconnected knowledge about public affairs.

Moving from online newspapers to online campaigns, Stromer-Galley (2000) interviewed campaign staff and analyzed campaign websites and concluded that most political campaigns used the Web as a public relations device. Campaigns did not take advantage of Web interactivity in the 1996 presidential and 1998 gubernatorial elections. That trend may be changing. In 2002, a Pew survey of 33 senior campaign staff members in US Congressional campaigns found that campaigns used the Web less for message dissemination and more for recruiting and mobilizing volunteers, raising money, and creating and maintaining press relations (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2002).

Stromer-Galley and Foot (2002) reported focus group participants appreciated interactivity on campaign websites, viewing websites as enhanced engagement and a control of campaign dialogue. Campaign websites and hyperlinking offer Internet users more empowerment and control of content compared to television and print media. Another important distinction between online and traditional media is that online media can serve as a many-to-one or many-to-many communication model, whereas traditional media represents a one-to-many communication model (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1996).

In an experimental study designed to investigate how campaign websites' hyperlinking patterns affect Internet users' impression formation of candidates, participants were split into three exposure groups consisting of websites with no hyperlinks, a single layer of hyperlinks, and two hierarchical layers of hyperlinks (Sundar et al., 2003). These researchers found that the level of website interactivity influenced participants' perceptions of the candidate and their levels of agreement with his policy positions.

Gatekeeping

The theory of gatekeeping posits that a few individuals determine what stories will and will not be covered in the mass media. Gatekeepers have the power to shape the public agenda and

public opinion. Gatekeeping is defined as “the process by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media” (Shoemaker et al., 2001, p. 233). Presentation, production, and space constraints contribute to the gatekeeping process, as well as editors’ personal opinions about news content (White, 1950; Snider, 1967). Another influence of newsworthiness for gatekeepers is the news that the top, major media sources (that are gatekeepers as well) are reporting on (Dimmick, 1974). The media are often criticized for similarity and repetition of content, and the cause of the criticism may be due to the gatekeeping process (Riffe et al., 1986).

There is concern among media critics and scholars that the current media landscape of a few mammoth media conglomerates will come to dominate news and culture to the detriment of society. The Internet provides an opportunity to give every opinion and viewpoint a voice with its infinite news hole and space. However, Beard and Olsen (1999) view Internet gatekeeping as a way of controlling the information that is eligible for use on a website. Of course, hyperlinks are an important element of this gatekeeping process.

Campaign Web Use in the Primary Season 2004

In the presidential primary season of 2004, the researchers found that all 10 Democratic candidates for nomination and the Republican incumbent apparently appreciated the advantages of the Web. Studies of the candidates’ use of the Web during the primaries indicate that the candidates appeared to open up their communication process through use of interactive features such as blogs and by allowing users to contribute with content, mostly blog posts and comments, to their campaign websites (Trammell et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004a,b). However, visitors’ access to external information was restricted and carefully controlled through use, or lack of use, of hyperlinks. These studies of 2004 primary websites found that candidates were reluctant to link to external material. Of the candidates’ hyperlink destinations, about 70 percent of the links analyzed

across the candidate Web pages took the user to content within the campaign site. The main hyperlink destination of blog posts was also the candidate’s website.

Sometimes, these links led to neutral destinations like media articles more often than advocacy or special-interest groups. About 42 percent of all of the candidates’ front pages linked externally to media articles, compared to about 32 percent linking to special-interest groups. This finding is further illustrated by comparing the links to .com sites (88 percent) versus .org domains (22 percent). Candidate blogs linked externally at a greater rate than the Web pages did, but directives to neutral content and advocacy groups were similar.

Interactivity was also evident in the candidates’ use of newsletter sign-ups and other interactive features. Perhaps most noteworthy, over half of the candidates participating in the primary phase of the election hosted blogs; only Carol Moseley Braun, Richard Gephardt, Bob Graham, and Al Sharpton did not. In fact, blogs became such a popular interactive feature that they were often included in the navigation for the overall site.

Howard Dean, who became well-known in the media for his grass roots efforts as a result of his active blog base, hosted the most features on his blog by letting visitors comment on blog posts and subscribe to the blog through syndication (RSS, XML). He also categorized the blog posts by subject and posted “trackback” data showing the context and links to other (non-campaign-related) discussions of particular blog posts.

Wesley Clark’s blog was equally packed with interactive features, which could be attributed to his hiring of an early and well-known blogger, Cameron Barrett, to run the Clark campaign blog. The most common campaign blog policy was to offer syndication to the content and enable visitors to make comments to posts.

During the primary season, distinct visual differences between Bush and Kerry’s Web presences were observed. While both Kerry and Bush used similar colors and mobilization techniques on their front pages, the blog posts differed substantially. For instance, Bush’s posts linked to media articles at a greater rate than

Kerry's, but Kerry's blog enabled a moderated comment feature, which created an illusion of participation in the campaign and blog discourse. Overall, neither campaign appeared to establish the blog as a major force in fundraising. However, Democratic candidates were making such requests more often than Bush during the primary phase.

Hyperlinks to donations did not appear frequently in blog posts, accounting for only 12 percent of all blog hyperlinks among all primary candidates. Out of the posts mentioning fundraising, 6 percent explicitly asked readers to make a contribution, 2 percent talked about the current money raised, and a few others (0.5 percent) urged readers to either host a fundraiser or to encourage others to contribute. Dean was the candidate with the most blog posts that related to fundraising (26 percent), while Lieberman and Bush did not use blogs to raise campaign money at all.

Unlike the blogs, nearly every candidate front page analyzed contained a link to an area where site visitors could contribute to the campaign (98 percent). Often, these links were featured as a part of the site navigation, placing an increased importance on the contributions over other content. Only Dean, Edwards, and Lieberman had front pages that did not link to a donation/contribution section on their websites.

In terms of issue agendas, Bush used his blog mainly to make political statements (44 percent), inform readers about his calendar (30 percent), promote positive media coverage (30 percent), and to thank users for their support (16 percent). The dominant issue discussed was the economy (21 percent), followed by the war (14 percent). Comparatively, Kerry talked about the war (8 percent) as well, but his blog posts were much more diverse, in terms of issue content. Many of Kerry's posts (42 percent) were direct communication tools with the readers.

Additionally, "Meet Up," a non-profit website that links up people in the same geographic area based on interests, became another new term in online campaigning during this primary season. While the media credits Dean with transitioning the Meet Up network into a political mobilizing

site, in fact half of the 11 candidate sites also linked externally to Meet Up.

Hypotheses and Research Question

The prior research on Web campaigning as a public relations tool for candidates, as well as our findings from the primary phase, led to the following three hypotheses and one research question:

- H₁ Candidate blog posts will link to external websites at a higher rate than the front page of candidate websites.
- H₂ The front pages of candidate websites are more likely to link to campaign promotional material, advertisements, and donation/volunteer requests than candidate blog posts.
- H₃ The issue agenda discussed on website front pages will correlate with the issue agenda discussed in the candidates' blog posts.
- RQ₁ Are the online issue agendas of Bush and Kerry similar or different?

Method

This study employed a quantitative content analysis to evaluate the content of the front pages of candidate websites and blog posts during campaign 2004 in order to identify the blogging and hyperlinking strategies used by the two presidential candidates. The websites and blog posts for Bush and Kerry were systematically downloaded and archived daily by the researchers. From this collection, a random sample of blog posts and front pages was selected for analysis. The sample was selected using a stratified method to select 10 percent of the days in the hot phase of the general election period, from Labor Day through Election Day 2004. From the days selected, the front pages of the websites and all blog posts on the candidates' blogs for that day were analyzed. Thus, website front pages ($N = 42$) and blog posts ($N = 362$) served as the units of analysis.

Modified versions of the Webstyle (Bystrom et al., 2004) code sheet were used to understand the content on the front pages and in the blog posts. Webstyle describes a candidate’s Web presentation style. Webstyle has been used to analyze political and non-political content on blogs (Trammell, 2004).

The categories focused on issues, hyperlinks, and graphics on both website front pages and within blog posts on Bush and Kerry sites. Each item (website front page or blog post) was reviewed for the presence of particular issues, such as war, economy, health care, and other campaign issues. The number of hyperlinks and the internal to external hyperlink ratio was recorded. Hyperlink destination was investigated by determining if links led users to media outlets, advocacy groups, within the candidate’s own site, political party site, or other external websites. Finally, the presence of graphics was analyzed. Items with graphics were reviewed for patriotic images and the number of people in an image.

All items (website front pages and blog posts) from the randomly selected days were coded using an online code sheet by five trained coders. This resulted in a total of 42 versions of the candidates’ website front pages and 362 blog posts. To determine intercoder reliability, one day of data was randomly selected and analyzed by all coders. This day included one Web front page for each candidate and a total of 24 blog posts between the two candidates. Intercoder reliability was established at 0.84

across all categories, using Holsti’s formula (Holsti, 1969).¹

Results

Hyperlinking Practices

The first hypothesis predicted that candidates’ blogs would link to external websites more frequently than candidates’ websites. This hypothesis was partially supported (see Table 1). While blogs were more likely to link to external media sites, they were 12 times less likely than websites to link to supporting group sites, four times less likely to link to special-interest group sites, and about half as likely to link to national political party sites. That said, however, candidate home pages were more likely than blogs to contain both additional links within the candidates’ blog as well as additional links within the candidates’ website. There were no differences between candidates’ websites and blogs in links to external blogs or links to the endorsements of interest groups.

Website and Blog Comparisons

Hypothesis 2 predicted that candidates’ websites would be more likely than their blogs to link to promotional material, political advertisements, and requests for donations. Hypothesis 2 was fully supported (see Table 1). Websites were much more likely to link to promotional material such as campaign merchandise sales (100 percent) than blogs (19 percent), as well as to

Table 1. Use of hyperlinks on Web front pages and blogs

Type of hyperlink	Web front pages ^a (N=42)	Blog ^a (N=362)	χ^2	p
Links within candidate’s blog	81.0	25.9	45.805	<0.001
External blog posts	1.5	0.0	0.648	0.42
Media sites	28.6	52.3	7.798	<0.01
Donations	100.0	19.3	101.27	<0.001
Campaign merchandise	100.0	18.8	103.20	<0.001
Endorsement of interest group	4.8	1.0	2.95	0.086
Supporting group sites	69.0	4.1	111.74	<0.001
Political advertisements	92.9	8.6	136.89	<0.001
National political party sites	45.2	18.8	13.51	<0.001
Special-interest group sites	11.9	3.0	6.19	<0.05
Candidate’s own website	100.0	64.0	21.53	<0.001

^aValues given as percentages.

Significant Chi-square values are those with p values less than 0.05.

political advertisements (websites 93 percent, blogs 9 percent), and fundraising in the form of donation requests (websites 100 percent, blogs 19 percent).

Website and Blog Issue Correlations

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the issue agenda discussed on the website front pages would correlate with the issue agenda discussed in the candidates' blog posts. This hypothesis was not supported ($r_s = 0.405, p = 0.216$), as shown in Table 2. The candidates' Web pages tended to discuss the same few issues repeatedly and allocated a large amount of coverage to each issue. On the other hand, the blog posts had more diverse topics, but each topic received a smaller amount of coverage. For example, more than 80 percent of Web pages mentioned the candidates' stance on the economy, and a similar percentage talked about health care. Comparatively, only about 20 percent of blog posts were related to the economy, and a slightly larger number of posts addressed health care.

Candidates' Issue Agendas

The research question asked if the issue agendas of the two candidates were similar or different. The data analysis identified a strong correlation between the agenda of issues discussed online by Bush and Kerry ($r_s = 0.818, p = 0.01$). Although the issue agendas of the two candi-

dates are not identical, in general both opponents focused their discussion on the same topics. As Table 3 shows, Bush was most preoccupied with the war in Iraq (30 percent), terrorism (21 percent), economy, (20 percent), and health care (20 percent). Similarly, Kerry talked about health care most frequently (40 percent), followed by the economy and the war in Iraq in almost equal percentages (34 percent and 33 percent respectively).

Discussion

Overall, this study suggests that the Republican and Democratic campaigns for president in 2004 used the Internet in similar ways. The online issue agendas of Kerry and Bush were strongly correlated and, in this way, the campaigns seemed to use the Web as a platform to discuss many of the same issues facing the country. The issues discussed in websites, though, were significantly different from issues discussed in blog posts, which indicates that the campaigns used these online communication tools to discuss and debate very different issues. In terms of hyperlinking and fundraising, websites tended to link internally and frequently offered promotional and revenue-generating materials, while blog posts frequently linked externally and were less likely to solicit donations or otherwise engage in fundraising.

As shown by previous research in the field of political advertising, each candidate focused on the issue over which they could claim owner-

Table 2. Issues on campaign websites and blogs of Bush and Kerry

Web front pages (N=42)			Blogs (N=362)		
Agenda (rank order)	%		Agenda (rank order)	%	
1. Economy in general	86	1.	War	28	
2. Health care	81	2.	Health care	25	
3. Education	69	3.	Economy in general	21	
4. War	67	4.	Homeland security	17	
5. Environment/pollution	64	5.	Terrorism	16	
6. Defense/security	48	6.	Unemployment	16	
6. Job growth	48	7.	Education	14	
8. Homeland security	45	8.	Dissatisfaction with government	14	
9. Unemployment	41	9.	Taxes	12	
10. Taxes	36	10.	Defense/security	11	

Spearman's rho correlation ($r_s = 0.405, p = 0.216$, two-tailed).

Table 3. Issues discussed on the campaign websites and blogs of Bush and Kerry

Bush (N = 184)		Kerry (N = 220)	
Agenda (rank order)	%	Agenda (rank order)	%
1. War	30	1. Health care	40
2. Terrorism	21	2. Economy in general	34
3. Health care	20	3. War	33
4. Economy in general	10	4. Unemployment	28
5. Taxes	16	5. Education	25
6. Job growth	15	6. Homeland security	24
7. Homeland security	14	7. Environment/pollution	24
8. Education	14	8. Dissatisfaction with government	24
9. Defense/security	13	9. Defense/security	17
10. Senior citizen issues	8	10. Foreign policy	16

Spearman's rho correlation ($r_s = 0.818$, $p = 0.004$, two-tailed).

ship. Bush's main topics were war and terrorism. In staying on target, and through the consistency of his communication strategy, one can say that he "owned" these two topics. Kerry's emphasis was focused on health care and economy—issues traditionally "owned" by the Democrats. Similarly, neither candidate discussed extensively issues that they did not "own" in their blog discourse.

In some ways, the websites took on a personal approach similar to that of the blogs. They frequently highlighted personal stories of Bush or Kerry supporters and linked to their websites and organizations. This is perhaps one reason that websites were more likely to link to special-interest group sites and other external locations. Bush's website frequently linked to a hurricane relief website, in an attempt to demonstrate that the Bush team was sympathetic to the plight of Floridians battered by several large storms during the campaign.

Perhaps this indicates that political website strategists are not afraid to link externally and do not mind giving up some of the authority they wield in terms of gatekeeping. However, links are still chosen to serve the overall goal of promoting the candidate and are most likely sending the user to favorable content.

It is important to note the stark differences between these two communication tools in terms of promotional material. Candidates' blogs are official campaign communication tools, and the fact that candidates did not use these mechanisms very frequently to sell mer-

chandise and promotional materials to the extent that the websites did is significant. Candidates have not yet used the blog to its full capacity in terms of promotions. It could also mean, though, that blogs are a personal form of campaign communication, and promotional materials seem less appropriate in this setting. For example, Bush's website frequently peddled "W stuff," which consisted of bumper stickers, buttons, yard signs, and other such materials that supporters could order to demonstrate their devotion to the incumbent. Posts on Bush's blog, however, usually did not contain such promotions.

This suggests that campaign organizers do treat blogs and websites differently in interesting and significant ways. Whether the difference between promotional linking practices was deliberate or whether the use of promotional material on candidate blogs simply slipped by political techies, these differences are substantial in the 2004 campaign.

Candidate blogs do appear to share some of the characteristics of websites in both style and content, and in this way a bit of cyber-convergence may be taking place between these two political communication vehicles.

The issues most frequently discussed by both candidates were concrete and pragmatic (economy, war, health care, security). Neither candidate's online message included "moral values," although many exit polls suggested that voters weighed this election in terms of "moral values."

Another issue that was given a lot of online space, although it was less emphasized in other campaign communication channels, was the environment. Table 2 shows that more than 64 percent of all Web page items coded for both candidates included some mention/statement about the environment.

The lack of correlation between the candidates' blog posts and Web pages is perhaps due to a lack of an integrated, congruent political marketing strategy. It was surprising to see that messages published on home pages of the campaign websites were not directly reinforced by blogs.

This disconnect leads to the following questions: Are blogs designed to serve a different campaign purpose than the Web pages? Are they aimed at "personalizing" the candidate and establishing informal/friendly relationships with the audience rather than detailing the candidate's position on issues? Based on this finding, can blogs be considered "soft" campaigning and websites "hard" campaigning?

One obvious limitation of this study is that hyperlinks were not followed to additional levels, in order to analyze the media content to which a candidate linked, nor was material examined from the special-interest groups and other organizations in the link path.

Future research should also investigate if there is evidence to support the notion of inter-candidate agenda setting through both website pages and blogs posts. Additionally, common blogs—those not associated directly with a campaign—can be quite different in structure from political websites. Continued research will determine if a true cyber-convergence has taken place between political candidates' websites and blogs, or if these two fundraising and overall promotional vehicles will become more distinguishable from each other.

Conclusion

This study enhances the understanding of Web campaigning through the examination of the use of blogs and hyperlinks as online campaign tools. The strategic use of these interactive features proved ubiquitous in the 2004 US presidential campaign, and despite the differing ways in which the candidates used these advanced technological features, it is undeniable that a modern campaign now requires websites that are interactive and invite user participation.

Note

- ¹ Intercoder reliability was calculated based on Holsti's formula: $IR = 2M / (N_1 + N_2)$, where M is the number of agreements between the coders, N_1 is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 1 and N_2 is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 2.

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