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Zentrum für USA-Studien
Center for U.S. Studies

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The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Occasional Paper No. 2

Political Marketing in the Information Age

Carsten Hummel



LEUCOREA

Carsten Hummel

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Preface

Last month, the Center for United States Studies launched its *Occasional Papers* series. The second issue comes quickly after the first because we believe that Carsten Hummel's study of *Political Marketing in the Information Age* is very apropos to the current debate on the information society. It is the condensed and updated version of a larger study which was accepted as a *diploma* thesis in American Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

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Hans-Jürgen Grabbe

Wittenberg, February 1999

1 Introduction

Information superhighway, cyberspace, electronic frontier, electronic town hall, and virtual community – all these metaphors are used to describe the breathtaking technological advances that are accompanying the advent of the information age. They embody various visions, concepts, and ideas, and they stand for traditional values and experiences deeply rooted in the society and the history of the United States of America. New information technologies are regarded as an opportunity for allowing individuals a far more powerful voice in their own affairs than ever before, streamlining government both locally and nationally, and strengthening representative democracy in the United States by introducing elements of a direct democracy.

Many of these theories and predictions were formulated or became popular in the years 1993 to 1996, when the beginning of the construction of the Information Superhighway marked an important transformation in the United States and beyond. Although we have to be aware of the unfinished character of this transformation, some valuable experiences have been gained since that time, and can be reviewed. From the technological point of view, some predictions have not been fulfilled yet, while others were surpassed by the fast progress in telecommunications technology. The *Internet*, which is mainly based on technology originally created for defense purposes in 1969 and later for academic institutions in the 1980's, boomed in the mid 90's after the introduction of the first graphic-capable browser software for the *World Wide Web* in 1993 and transformed the Net into a mass-market medium.

Describing the impact of this new medium on society, several works concentrate their analysis on the participatory elements that are possible in an *electronic democracy*. Nevertheless, while some efforts have been made to develop and introduce such elements, another branch has promoted, used, and adopted these technological advances in a much more impressive way: political marketing. In the 1996 presidential campaign, the Internet made a high-profile appearance for the very first time, and with them a new quality of political marketing. Since real understanding of these workings of political marketing in the Information Age is quite important for all those who want to make themselves heard in an electronic republic, they are worth being discussed here in more detail.

If political marketing utilizes the new technological advances, how is political marketing changing itself? What are their main strategies for the Information Age. How successful are such campaigns? What role still has the individual in the democratic process? Who is actually using these technologies, or will their usage only reflect and reinforce existing hierarchies and powers?

In order to answer these questions, chapter 2 starts with some general remarks on information technologies and their impact on the democratic process. To derive conclusions about political marketing in the Information Age, some principles and characteristics of political marketing are presented and explained in a brief form in chapter 3, including voting behavior, the public opinion process, and legal considerations. Findings of commercial marketing about the Internet as a new medium are transferred to political marketing theory in chapter 4, and possible components of an interactive campaign are outlined. Some examples from the 1996 presidential election illustrate how information technology can change traditional political marketing, and how political marketing already utilizes these new opportunities today. The last chapter examines the introduction of new technologies to political communication in the United States and gives some examples how these advances are used both for communicating with the electorate and for marketing purposes.

Although many of the theories, problems, and experiences do apply to other countries in the western world in a similar way, the focus of this work is on the United States. Therefore, global aspects or influences, which exists, are not considered. For examples of new interactive media, the emphasis is placed almost exclusively on the first experiences with the Internet including the World Wide Web, newsgroups, and email, since other interactive media, such as interactive cable television, are still of rather marginal importance. Traditionally quite passive broadcast media, however, are partly compared with the new media but not described separately, since they will probably merge with interactive media some day.

When discussing political marketing, a special emphasis is put on election campaigns and especially on presidential campaigns. Most of the findings, however, should be considered universally applicable since campaigning for specific and controversial issues or for reelection have become permanent undertakings. Traditionally, political marketing has been somewhat neglected in both the marketing and political literature. Among the books that deal with this specific

branch are such publications of the *Praeger Series in Political Communication* like Johnson-Cartee and Copeland's *Inside Political Campaigns*. Other works used are, for example, Bruce Newman's *The Marketing of the President*, and the second edition of Darrell M. West's *Air Wars*. Additional information was taken from several journals and magazines, such as *Brandweek*, *Campaigns and Elections*, and *Time*.

Writing about cyberspace means dealing with many ideas, predictions, and first impressions. The whole development has just started and is changing rapidly. What once was revolutionary in 1993 might be questionable in 1998, and rather marginal in the year 2000. Therefore, statistical data are provided for certain periods to illustrate the specific context of theories, statements, or examples where this seems to be appropriate.

Thanks to the World Wide Web, some primary sources used in this work are easily accessible on the Net. The two emails that are presented in Appendix D were part of Bob Dole's promotional efforts for his campaign in 1996. Scientific publications about the Internet and profound analysis of its general impact on the American society have just started being published on a larger scale. A few "older" works, however, are still of great importance, like Toffler's *Third Wave*, which should be regarded as a highly influential book. Today, his theories strongly influence the Republican's attitude towards the Internet. In *The Electronic Republic*, Grossman provides detailed information and a quite unspectacular but profound description of an electronic democracy. A variety of valuable information and first analysis are given in Diamond and Silverman's *White House to Your House. Media and Politics in Virtual America*, in Browning's *Electronic Democracy* and in Kleinstauber's collection of works *Der "Information Superhighway" Amerikanische Visionen und Erfahrungen*. Chris Casey's *The Hill on the Net. Congress Enters Information Age*, with its insider's view, proves a valuable source in understanding how the Congress got on the Net and how the 'wired' Congress works. Detailed and up-to-date statistical data about the Internet can be found in Peter Clemente's *The State of the Net*, published 1998. Among the articles cited or mentioned in the text, those from the magazine *Wired* magazine play a very special role.

The Information Age also produces a whole string of new vocabulary. These words are often not yet included in traditional dictionaries. When they are included, they vary according to the dictionary, or a number of choices are given. In this text, the spelling

of a few words, like email or Web site, follow the *Wired Style. Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age* published by the editors of *Wired*. They rest both on observations of the words' real usage, especially on the Net, and on practical considerations.

2 Information Age and Democracy

In the United States, millions of citizens acquire personal computers each year, go online with computer networks, or subscribe to cable and satellite services. Many people have just gained first experiences with interactive information technology. New breathtaking technologies have recently been introduced. With them came new opportunities for many-to-many communications as well as new ways of one-to-one communication. Interactivity is the key concept. The impact on industries, employment opportunities, and the entire American economy and society is enormous, and telecommunications and information-related industries will account for approximately 20 percent of the U.S. economy by the 21st century.¹ Information itself is regarded as valuable merchandise.

Information Age and *information society* became frequently used keywords in this process. The following definition of 'Information Age' should be used as the starting point for further consideration.

Information Age - an information-based era brought about by the advent of computer technology and improvement in communications.²

The usage of the term 'Information Age' to label an information-based era, however, should not be regarded as absolutely undisputed since several other approaches exist. In his remarkable book *Being Digital*, Nicholas Negroponte already declares the end of the Information Age and proclaims the *Post-Information Age*.³ According to Negroponte, this era is characterized both by extremely personalized information and by a reduced importance of time and distance. Here, a person's email address symbolizes and embodies this shift to a virtual world.⁴ Quite similar to Negroponte, several publications, such as *Wired Magazine*, strongly prefer the expression *Digital Age*. Using this

¹ United States, Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *NTIA Fact Sheet*, 1998, <<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiafact.html>> (3 Feb. 1998).

² Sheila Reynolds, "Computer Technology and Society," 1998, <<http://www.monroe2boces.org/shared/instruct/babca/mod1.htm>> (2 Mar. 1998).

³ Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Knopf, 1995) 163.

⁴ An email address like *your.name@aol.com*, for example, gives no information about a person's place of residence or current stay anymore. Cf. Negroponte 163-65.

term, they not only put a main focus on the technologies behind the Information Age but try to use their characteristic feature for a description of modern society.⁵

What numbers or what methods can be used in order to decide whether a country has already entered the Information Age or not? Does the United States of America represent an information society? For general conclusions, the following points should be considered especially from a technological and demographic point of view: share of telecommunications and information-related industries on the national economy, availability of telecommunications technologies, their household penetration, and real usage, adoption rates for state-of-the-art technologies, and their general acceptance. Since some of these points are highly complex, results can differ depending on different methods for surveys or research.⁶ For the United States, the *Wired/Merrill Lynch Forum Digital Citizen Survey* conducted by *Luntz Research Companies* introduced a model that distinguishes the Superconnected, Connected, Semiconnected, and Unconnected based on their actual usage of target technologies like email, laptop computers, cell phones etc.⁷ The survey was limited to the U.S., so direct comparisons with other countries can not be made on the basis of these specific data. Nevertheless, since the *Semiconnected* are defined as people who use at least one but not more than four of the target technologies, the number of 71 percent who are semi-connected or more indicates that the United States has long entered the Information Age, though 29 percent are still excluded from the information society.

For the United States as a whole, regional differences are still significant. The figure for Internet households by state, for example, ranges from 10 percent in Mississippi up to 21 percent in Alaska.⁸ Though we have to consider that online penetration can vary significantly within a state,⁹ the map in *fig. 1* should illustrate some differences that still exist between the states.

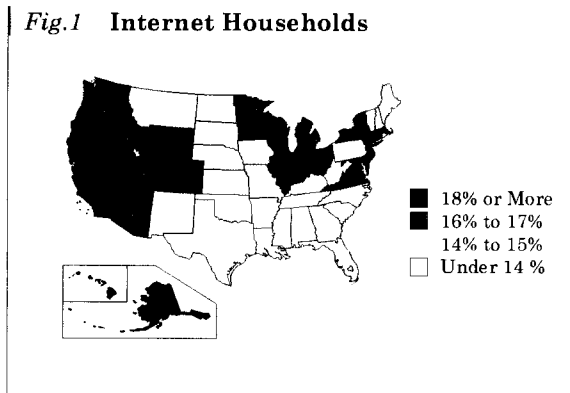
⁵ Cf. Constance Hale, ed., *Wired Style. Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age* (San Francisco: HardWired, 1996) 19-20.

⁶ Cf., Peter Clemente, *The State of the Net* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998) 151-155. For the third quarter of 1996, for example, different surveys present numbers for Internet user that range from 27 million (MRI) to 48 million (Nielsen). Ibid 152.

⁷ Jon Katz, "The Digital Citizen," *Wired* Dec. 1997: 71.

⁸ Clemente 104.

⁹ Ibid 107.



Source: FIND/SVP; Peter Clemente, *The State of the Net* 105.

Taking all the technological and social changes in account, it can be assumed that new information technology could exert a powerful influence for change on the democratic process. Interactive telecommunications now make it possible for tens of millions of widely dispersed citizens to receive the information they need to carry out the business of government themselves, gain admission to the political realm, and retrieve at least some of the power over their own lives and goods that many believe their elected officials are squandering.¹⁰

Therefore, it is often predicted that democracy in the future will be different from democracy in the past,¹¹ especially since this process seems to be driven by those who are the most frequent users of these new technologies and who own key-positions in the information society. *"Digital Citizens are optimistic, tolerant, civic minded, and radically committed to change."*¹²

¹⁰ Lawrence K. Grossman, *The Electronic Republic* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995) 6.

¹¹ Cf. Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 339-41.

¹² Katz, "The Digital Citizen" 68.

Just as disputed as the usage of the term 'Information Age' is the variety of terms describing its impact on society. Various publications are predicting the emergence of an *electronic democracy*,¹³ an *electronic republic*,¹⁴ or a *virtual America*,¹⁵ just to name a few. Besides these differences in the terminology, different visions and concepts exist. They are closely linked with principle theories, agreements, and different views on democracy in the United States in past and present.

Two books illustrate this lively debate: futurologist Alvin Toffler's influential book *The Third Wave*,¹⁶ already published in 1980, and Lawrence K. Grossman's *The Electronic Republic* (1995). Founded on the prediction of a *Third Wave* that transforms the previous industrial society into information society, Toffler diagnoses an obsolescence of the most basic political institutions and offers the theory of a *semi-direct democracy*¹⁷ as the model for democracy in the information age, which will be characterized by the reduction of political institutions and a "shift from dependency on representatives to representing ourselves."¹⁸ Similiar Grossman, who describes in his quite optimistic view an electronic republic that revives Athens' ancient democracy by using interactive telecommunications technology: with electronic polls instead of a show of hands, and interactive networks instead of a single meeting place.¹⁹

Although all these statements about the future of democracy still have the nature of predictions and speculations, they strongly influenced existing approaches to the Information Age concerning democracy

¹³ Cf., e.g., Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy. Using the Internet to Influence American Politics* (Wilton, CT: Pemberton, 1996).

¹⁴ Grossman.

¹⁵ Edwin Diamond & Robert A. Silverman, *White House to Your House. Media and Politics in Virtual America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Morrow, 1980).

¹⁷ Ibid 443.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid 48. We should consider that Grossman's vision mainly rests on first experiences with online computer technology gained in the in the early 90's. At that time, less than 10 million Americans were online (1994: 4 million Internet user, 1995: 9 million. Clemente 43). Online communities like *The WELL* were formed by people with higher education, economic and social status, and political awareness. Cf. Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1993), Katie Hafner, "The World's Most Influential Online Community. The Epic Saga of The Well," *Wired* May 1997: 100.

and government. They were described, for example, with the plan for an advanced *National Information Infrastructure* (NII)²⁰ by the Clinton administration in 1993, which can be considered as one of the key documents for the development of technologies like the Internet in the United States. The *Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*²¹ published by the *Progress and Freedom Foundation* (PFF)²² is another example, as well as the whole conflict over the *Communications Decency Act* (CDA) appearing with the *Telecommunications Act of 1996*.²³

Can we conclude that the United States is on the road to an 'electronic democracy'? On the one hand, first experiences with community networks,²⁴ electronic town-meetings (ETMs) or electronic voting have shown their limited ability to maintain their role in a fast growing and extremely commercialized Internet business, so their impact on today's democratic process is rather marginal.²⁵ On the other hand, however, new information technologies have already proven their tendency and potential to reflect and reinforce existing hierarchies and powers.²⁶

The advent of electronic democracy could signal the beginning of an age in which all Americans truly have a voice in their own governance, or herald the dawn of one of the most powerful propaganda tools in modern history.²⁷

²⁰ United States, Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *The National Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Action*, 1993, <<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/agenda.doc.txt>> (10 Oct. 1998).

²¹ Progress and Freedom Foundation, *Cyberspace and the American Dream: A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*, rel. 1.2 1994, <<http://www.pff.org>> (10 Oct. 1997).

²² The PFF is a Washington think tank closely allied with House Speaker Newt Gingrich (Republican).

²³ United States, Congress, *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, 104th Cong., 2nd sess., S. 652, sec. 501, 507-9, <<http://thomas.loc.gov/>> (10 Oct. 1997).

²⁴ Cf., e.g., Stephen Doheny-Farina, *The Wired Neighborhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

²⁵ Cf., e.g. *ibid*, Hagen, Casey, Diamond & Silverman.

²⁶ Cf., Charles Ess, "The Political Computer: Hypertext, Democracy, and Habermas," *Hyper/Text/Theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 231, Diamond & Silverman.

²⁷ Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy* xvii.

3 A Brief Introduction to Political Marketing

Analyzing the impact of new information technologies on democracy and American politics, political marketing is crystallizing not just as an important user of these technologies but as a main driving force for their breathtaking development. Consequently, role and character of political marketing are worth being considered for a discussion of the Information Age. The same is true from another view as well: Since political marketing has always been dependent on the media of its time, political professionals have to know how these new interactive media work and how they influence society.

3.1 Development

Modern political marketing began with the advent of television in the 1950s and finally made the breakthrough with the election campaign of 1968.¹ At that time, organizational politics faded away. Party machines lost their power to recruit candidates, mobilize voters, and shape policies. This development was accompanied by the sharp rise in the *political consultants* business and the so-called “*media age politics*.”² Nowadays, political parties do not serve as the means of contacting voters anymore; promoters and journalists link the news sources with the audience, and TV has changed both substance and style of American political discourse.³ Campaigns are centered on candidates rather on parties. Media coverage is absolutely vital, since the media define the character of the mediated political campaign. In the media-age politics, candidates must be attractive, telegenic, and have “*access to money*.”⁴

Traditionally, political marketing and the literature about it focus on election campaigns (especially on presidential elections) as the most important link between constituents and representatives.⁵ Current

¹ Cf., e.g., Bruce I. Newman, *The Marketing of the President* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994) 1-3.

² Karen S. Johnson-Cartee & Gary A. Copeland, *Inside Political Campaigns. Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997) 8.

³ Cf. *Ibid* 6-12.

⁴ *Ibid* 15.

⁵ R. Michael Alvarez, *Information and Elections* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) 203.

developments, however, indicate a change towards *permanent campaigning* as a result both of campaigns for specific and controversial issues, like NAFTA or health-care, or as permanent efforts for re-election.⁶

3.2 *Political Marketing and Commercial Marketing*

In the past, it could be observed that political marketing had been somewhat neglected in both the marketing and politics literature.⁷ Many had viewed marketing “*with condescension, perceiving it to be trivializing and unethical.*”⁸ Nonetheless, the discipline of marketing with its knowledge and technical expertise related to the analysis and persuasion of large groups of people is perfectly able to contribute to an understanding of politics.⁹

Political marketing should be regarded as a business of selling – “*the selling of political candidates, parties, and ideas.*”¹⁰ Hence, political marketing is using many of the selling and advertising methods once developed and introduced for commercial marketing. The most fundamental of them are probably the competitive *positioning* of the candidate/product, the determination and analysis of the *target group(s)*, the creation of a *brand image*, and the examination of the *selling propositions* for a certain candidate/product¹¹ In addition to that, *paid advertising, direct mail, publicity, comparative advertising, packaging, and resonance strategy* (messages that are harmonious with the experiences of the audience) are not just important elements for a commercial marketing strategy but are useful tools for political marketing as well.¹²

Yet even though there are obvious similarities between political and commercial marketing, the fundamental differences that still remain between these two should not be forgotten. The *persuasive goal* of

⁶ Winston Fletcher, “Marketing is not a Johnny Come Lately to Politics,” *Marketing* Apr. 1997: 17; Newman 145-46.

⁷ Cf. Gary A. Mauser, *Political Marketing. An Approach to Campaign Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1983) ix.

⁸ Patrick Butler & Neil Collins “Political Marketing. Structure and Process,” *European Journal of Marketing* 28.1 (1994): 19.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 37.

¹¹ Cf. Ibid 37-40.

¹² Cf. Ibid 40-43; Butler & Collins 19.

political advertising is much higher, because a political program can fail if it does not “sell” to 50 percent of the “market.”¹³ This becomes even harder since for political marketing, the *advertising season* is much shorter and periodic. In this period, campaigners have to react to news, events, and opposition advertising, and give political marketing a *responsive nature*. Another fundamental difference rests in the observation that the degree to which the public is willing to accept *image retouching* is much lower than for commercial advertising, as several studies and surveys conducted by market research companies have proved for the United States.⁴

3.3 Political Marketing Strategy

Several approaches to political marketing and campaign strategies can be distinguished, and different models were developed. Many of these models were derived from commercial marketing theory.¹⁵ For presidential elections, Bruce I. Newman introduced a model of political marketing that brings together the two campaigns that are interdependent: the *marketing campaign* on the one side and the *political campaign* on the other.¹⁶ (See *Appendix A* for the complete model.)

According to Newman, the marketing campaign supports political candidates to get through the four stages of their political campaign (preprimary, primary, convention, and general election). These two campaigns are strongly influenced by the candidate’s *strategic orientation*, which has changed from “*pleasing party bosses to satisfying voter needs.*”¹⁷ *Environmental forces* form the second group of influences. Technological advances are described as an important environmental force. Structural shifts, like changing regulations or rules, and shifts in power, which has been caused by a diminished power of party bosses and a growing influence of consultants, media, pollsters, and political action committees, are some other environmental forces.¹⁸ *Market (voter) segmentation, candidate positioning, and strategy formulation and implementation* are the three parts of a political marketing campaign.

¹³ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 44.

¹⁴ Ibid 44-45.

¹⁵ Cf. Mauser 13; Butler & Collins.

¹⁶ Newman 11-12.

¹⁷ Ibid 14.

¹⁸ Ibid 14-15.

Market Segmentation

All voters are broken down into segments which the candidates then target with their messages.¹⁹

Candidate Positioning

The candidate assesses both his own and his opponents strengths and weaknesses in order to target the appropriate segments and to establish a certain image. This image is crafted through the media by emphasizing certain personality traits of the candidate, and stressing various issues.²⁰

Strategy Formulation and Implementation

The “four Ps”²¹ of the marketing strategy:

- *product* (the campaign platform),
- *push marketing* (the candidate’s message is communicated to campaign workers before it gets to the voter),
- *pull marketing* (communication through mass media).
- *polling* (provides the information necessary to develop the marketing campaign).²²

Market segmentation, candidate positioning, and strategy implementation are fundamental components of political marketing campaigns. Their role in interactive campaigns using new information technology is described in section 4.2.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid* 67-84.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid* 86-92.

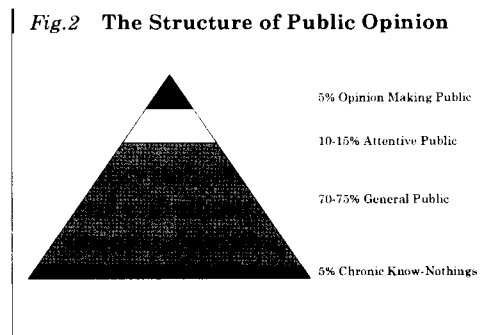
²¹ These “four Ps” refer to the “four Ps” of commercial marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. Cf. William Pride & O.C. Ferrell, *Marketing. Concepts and Strategies* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995) 13.

²² Newman 13-14.

3.4 Public Opinion Process and Voting Behavior

The limited knowledge of a majority of Americans concerning political issues has been a constant theme in political science and public opinion research for decades. While only a very elite group (less than 15 percent) is capable of evaluating political issues in a meaningful way, the average voter is quite open to any persuasive appeals utilizing deepseated beliefs, stereotypes, or even prejudices.²³

Considering these rather distressing data, how do political candidates evaluate the contents of their platforms? A first step is viewing the American population as a pyramid to get a more differentiated picture.



Source: Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, *Inside Political Campaigns* 56-58.

The 'chronic know-nothings' are totally apolitical, whereas the largest group of citizens, the general public, may care about specific public issues and may choose to seek information and to get involved. They have in general very little interest in politics, do not actively seek information on a regular basis, and do not hold meaningful belief systems about public issues. In contrast to the general public, the members of the attentive public actively seek information, talk about politics with friends or colleagues, and join social or political groups. Since it is hard to draw a sharp line between the attentive public and the general public, the attentive public may swell to between 20 and 40

²³ Cf., e.g., Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 51-56.

percent of the population.²⁴ The fourth major group shares the same general characteristics of the attentive public, but, in addition are the political players of America. They may be officeholders or they may run for a political office. They are political consultants, lobbyists, or news reporters, and they establish, structure and define the political debate.²⁵

From the pyramidal structure described above, political scientists traditionally concluded that a vast majority of the American public is not just open to mass-communicated messages but to demagogic appeals that take advantage of their unsophisticated decision-making process.²⁶ Recent research, however, has chosen a different and less pessimistic approach. According to Shapiro and Page, a “*collective public opinion*”²⁷ must be distinguished from the changing opinion of individual citizens.

... the American public, as a collectivity, holds a number of real, stable, and sensible opinions about public policy, and (...) these opinions develop and change in a reasonable fashion, responding to changing circumstances and to new information.²⁸

Shapiro and Page argue that the individual citizens who form the general public seek orientation from people they know and trust, from *opinion leaders* with their elected representatives among them.²⁹ Hence, the public is obviously not that “sitting duck” for mass media, although the critical aspect of possible dependency still remains.

For planning and managing election campaigns successfully, it is necessary to know the general influences on both the American public opinion and voting patterns. In their book *Inside Political Campaigns. Theory and Practice*, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland determine following factors for the United States:³⁰

²⁴ Ibid 57.

²⁵ Ibid 56-58.

²⁶ Ibid 58.

²⁷ Benjamin I. Page & Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public. Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 1.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid 17.

³⁰ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 59-72.

Party Identification

Traditionally, party identification has been regarded as quite important for explaining voting behavior. Although always seen as a stable personal characteristic, elections of the last decade prove the decreasing impact of party identification on voting patterns.

Sociographics

Region, class, race, religion, age, and gender are the main categories for a sociographical analysis of voting behavior. Recent analysis indicates a decreasing dominance of regional aspects caused by shifts in party loyalty. This development is accompanied by an increase in class-based politics, a majority of African-Americans who identify themselves as Democrats, and a widening gender gap concerning political alignment. A significantly higher percentage of women than men tend to vote Democratic.

Voter Turnout

Despite the relatively low voter turnout in general, it can be observed that voters are more likely to vote in presidential election years than in off-year elections.

Timetable for the Voting Decision

Although normally about 80 percent of the American voters have made their decisions by the August before the November election, in highly controversial races up to 35 percent delay deciding until the last week before the election.

News

The impact of the news transmitted by the mass media about the campaigns is generally considered as relatively high. In this connection, it can be observed, that the influence of the media on issues with less personal experience of the voter, such as foreign relations, is more likely. On the other hand, the agenda-setting impact of the media is weaker on the

local level. Managing the news has become a vital task for political campaigning.

Reporting Public Opinion Polls

When interest in an election is low, or when little information is available, publishing public opinion polls may help establish voter preference. Hence, such polls are crucial during primary contests, because they help distinguish similar candidates from one another. Both an underdog and a bandwagon effect caused by reporting opinion polls can be observed.

3.5 Legal and Ethical Considerations

When discussing regulations for political marketing, it has been pointed out more than once that “*there are more regulations concerning the marketing of soap or cornflakes than concerning the marketing of political candidates.*”³¹ Political competition and democratic decision-making is seen as a free marketplace of ideas that is provided and guaranteed by the First Amendment. In this respect, regulating the marketplace of ideas is widely regarded as restricting free speech.

Because of increasing problems concerning fair play, honesty, and decency, some states have enacted *campaign falsity laws* and *fair campaign practice codes*.³² While such fair campaign codes exist without powerful enforcement mechanisms, and are described as rather toothless, falsity laws potentially carry criminal penalties. Only seven states, however, provide guidelines for fines, only five of those provide imprisonment guidelines within the falsity law itself, and only four states (Hawaii, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Mississippi) require the removal of convicted candidates from public office. Since the law sets penalties for those who make accusations, these laws may discourage voters or candidates from bringing charges against a candidate.³³

³¹ Ibid 185.

³² Similar codes were adopted by the *American Association of Political Consultants* (AAPC) and the *American Association of Advertising Agencies*. Ibid 208.

³³ Ibid 188-194.

Running for a public office is an expensive enterprise. It is estimated that \$2.7 billion was spent for and by political campaigns during local, state, and national 1988 elections.³⁴ In 1992, the Democrats spent \$34.8 million on buying broadcast time.³⁵ Raising funds for a campaign, however, is not only “one of the most vital and sensitive task facing a political candidate,”³⁶ but very expensive. In 1992 congressional races, nearly \$85 million was spent for fund raising activities like direct-mail funding requests.³⁷

The *Federal Election Commission* (FEC), which was mandated by Congress to serve as a watchdog over expenditures of federal election campaigns, provides in its *Campaign Guide for Political Party Committees*³⁸ detailed information about regulations concerning campaign contributions and expenditures. Such contributions are defined as “anything of value given for the purpose of influencing federal elections”³⁹ and are “subject to the limits and prohibitions”⁴⁰ of the *Federal Election Campaign Act* (FECA) of 1971.⁴¹ The FECA and the *Revenue Act of 1971* were the two major campaign finance reform packages of the 1970s and should be seen as a efforts to deal with rising political campaign contributions and expenditures as well as problems associated with them. Campaign contributions and expenditures have been controversial issues throughout the 1990s.⁴²

The Revenue Act of 1971 and its 1974 extension regulate a mechanism where taxpayers voluntarily contribute one dollar to a general presidential campaign fund each year as a pool for presidential campaigns, presidential primary elections, and national nominating conventions. These funds are provided as *matching funds* which are bound on a certain amount of individual contributions raised by the candidate in a certain number of states. The Revenue Act sets spending limits for those candidates who take federal matching funds. John

³⁴ Ibid 214.

³⁵ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency. A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1996) 492.

³⁶ Mauser 16.

³⁷ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 215.

³⁸ United States, Federal Election Commission, *Campaign Guide for Political Party Committees* (Washington: GOP, 1996).

³⁹ Ibid 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 215-16.

⁴² Cf., e.g., Jeffrey H. Birnbaum et al., “The Money Mess,” *Time* (Atlantic Edition) 11 Nov. 1996: 26+.

Conally in 1980 and Steve Forbes in 1996 have been the only major-party presidential candidates who did not apply for public financing in order to avoid expenditure limitations.⁴³

The FECA regulates all kind of contributions, including services, gifts, discounts, unpaid personal loans, or extensions of credit beyond business practices, just to name a few.⁴⁴ These contributions are either limited or even prohibited, such as contributions from foreign nationals.⁴⁵ Political campaigns must keep careful and accurate records on contributions, contributors, and expenditures. *Political committees* play an important role in receiving contributions, and running and financing a campaign. Different regulations apply to the three different types of political committees: *political party committees*, *candidate committees*, and *political action committees*.⁴⁶ These committees act as the sponsors of any public political advertising. The laws and regulations that govern each group are different.

As for political campaigns, the broadcast news media have certain legal obligations that must be met, while the print media have no legal obligations to accept political advertising. These regulations are based on the assumption that public airwaves are a scarce public resource. Since radio signals could cross state lines, broadcast media were considered as interstate commerce and placed under federal control (*Radio Act of 1927*).⁴⁷ Political advertising on broadcast media is still regulated by section 315 of the *Communications Act of 1934* and its subsequent renewals. Section 315 intends to guarantee access and equal opportunities. It regulates the advertising time that must be provided to federal candidates, sets rules for charging candidates for advertising time, and forbids censorship of legally qualified candidates.⁴⁸ Considering these regulations, it can be predicted that, on the one hand, new information technology can potentially provide new ways for fund raising or communicating political messages. On the other hand, however, these technologies can challenge existing regulations and could force further changes. Problems may arise, for example, from the internationality of the Internet and the rather limited opportunities to control the Net.

⁴³ Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 215.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Campaign Guide* 6-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid 8.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Campaign Guide* 82-84.

⁴⁷ Ibid 211.

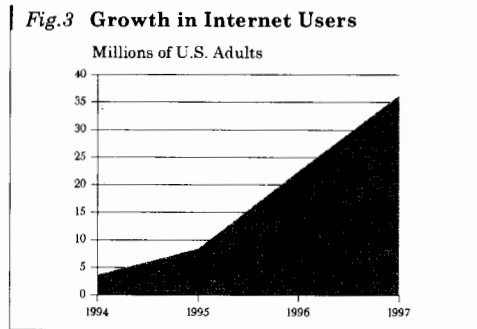
⁴⁸ Ibid 211-14; *Campaign Guide* 81.

4 Political Marketing on the Electronic Frontier

4.1 *The Internet as a New Medium*

4.1.1 Statistical and Demographic Data

The period 1994 to 1997 was marked by a tremendous growth of the Internet in numbers of users. In 1997, about 36 million U.S. adults used the Internet, compared with 3.5 million in 1994.¹ Historically, no single communications or electronics technology has been adopted as rapidly as the Internet.²



Source: FIND/SVP; Peter Clemente, *The State of the Net* 51.

The Internet continues to expand in terms of absolute numbers, and increasingly mirrors the U.S. population as a whole. Consequently, changes in the basic demographic characteristics of Internet users have taken place over the period 1994 to 1997. Until recently, Internet users have been regarded as a quite homogeneous group. Findings from 1996 seem to confirm this knowledge. According to a study which was published by the market research firm *Yankelovich Partners*,³ approximately 22 percent of all adults were online in the United States in October 1996. This group was dominated by those male *Baby Boomers* (born between 1946 and 1964) who were better educated, had

¹ Clemente 51.

² Cf. *ibid* 40-41.

³ Walker J. Smith & Ann Clurman. *Rocking the Ages. The Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1997).

higher income, and were self-assured and optimistic about their future.⁴ Although the cyberspace was broadening at that time, Boomers still outnumbered the so-called *Xers* (born between 1965 and 1977), whereas the group of *Matures* (born 1909-1945) were dramatically under-represented relative to their size in the U.S. population.⁵

New findings draw a more differentiated picture of the online community, and recent tendencies can be described. Over the course of the past few years, the characteristics of Internet users has shifted to a much more diverse community of individuals that more closely resembles the overall U.S. population. The numbers presented in *Appendix B* illustrate the changing Internet user profile. Internet users have become older, have less education, and their income is closer to the average income. They are more likely to have families, and are not predominantly male anymore. Today's users are more likely to represent a broader range of occupational categories. The Internet is becoming a mainstream medium.⁶

What, however, are all these people doing on the Net? An analysis of the most popular content preferences reveals that the importance of the Net as a major source of news is rising. The 23.6 million Internet users who retrieve news online get 18 percent of their overall news intake from sources on the Net (radio 21 percent, print 24 percent, and TV 35 percent).⁷ A list of the top 15 contents used on the Net, as given in *The State of the Net*, includes a comparison between all users and those who began to use the Internet before 1995. The significant decline in users seeking information about government and community is one of the most notable changes from previous years' surveys. Only 46 percent of all users describe these types of content as personal preferences, compared with 62 percent of those users who began before 1995. If we transfer these findings to the pyramidal structure of the American public opinion, as described in section 3.4, we can assume a shift of the average user away from the *opinion making* or *attentive public* towards the much more diverse but less politically interested *general public*. As for political marketing, the online community is not a homogeneous segment anymore which can be as easily targeted as in 1992 or 1994. Concerning the idea of an electronic

⁴ Ibid 144-50.

⁵ Ibid 145.

⁶ Clemente 52-54.

⁷ Ibid 80.

democracy that follows the Athenian model, we have to conclude that its vital prerequisite, the educated and actively participating citizens, will be a minority on the Net very soon.

Despite the Net's striking tendency of going mainstream, however, online users are not yet absolutely indistinguishable from people not online. Individualism and personal responsibility are still powerful ideas in the online world. A majority of people online are confident in the workings of the free market,⁸ and they are much more likely to vote than people not online.⁹

4.1.2 The Internet in the Marketing Mix

Web sites provide the opportunity to combine such different types of media like language in any form, graphics, pictures, animation, music and sounds, video, games, and even TV or radio in one hypermedia document. The strengths of the Internet are interactivity and the ability to provide personalized content.

For these reasons, marketing experts have discovered that the Internet is not as strict defined as print media or television concerning their role in a traditional marketing mix. According to commercial marketing theory, a marketing mix consists of decisions and activities on *product, price, promotion, and distribution*, all adjusted to the potential customer and summarized in a *marketing strategy*.¹⁰ Four different components of the *promotional mix* (as part of the marketing mix) can be distinguished: *publicity, advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion*. The *media mix* (TV, radio, print, direct mail, etc.) is a part of the advertising component. Placing the Internet solely in the media mix means underestimating and limiting the abilities of marketing on the Net. Although some companies' Web pages still look like modified versions of their print ads, successful marketing on the Web will utilize all the components of a successful marketing and promotion mix, though the main focus will probably differ from one marketing strategy to another.¹¹

⁸ Jon Katz, "The Digital Citizen" 80.

⁹ Hoffman.

¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Pride & Ferrell 13.

¹¹ Charles Skuba, "Web Site vs Web Session," *American Advertising* Spring 1996: 22-23.

On the other side, however, a Web site must be integrated into a media plan which includes other media as well. *"New media are additive; they increase the consumers' options, rather than subtract from them."*¹² Because of the uncountable number of Web pages available, successful marketing on the Net still needs the support of other marketing tools and media. In order to promote a Web site, its address has to appear in all kinds of ads and media of a campaign.

Some other characteristic features of promotion of the Net have to be considered as well, since they describe some real limitations. The relatively low resolution of personal computer displays results in reduced reading speed and comprehension. The impression of quality and value of a presentation is reduced, for example, in comparison with a high-quality print.¹³ Paying for online time per minute is still common for many of today's users of the World Wide Web, so the problem of long download times caused by graphics, sounds, video etc. has to be considered. Producers also have to realize that in contrast to newspapers or TV, the original data are interpreted differently by each user's computer depending on the individual hardware and software configuration. Not every user will see the video on his monitor or hear the sound that comes with a Web page. Colors of pictures can range from 16 to 16 million, layout and typography can differ dramatically.

All these limitations cause a need for a quite efficient and dense presentation which mainly focuses on valuable information and facts.¹⁴ The following advice given to advertisers on the Web can help to understand and to characterize advertising on the Net:

... highjacking of time or attention is perceived as theft unless immediately qualified as truly imaginative and useful. Net citizens will respond coldly to synthetic or contrived 'impressions' which lack currency, relevance, and credibility. (...) False or hollow impressions on-line will be a big bust, for users and advertisers alike."¹⁵

¹² Diamond & Silverman 22.

¹³ Cf. George P. Landow, "What's a Critic to Do?: Critical Theory in the Age of Hypertext," *Hyper/Text/Theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 3-5; see also Patrick J. Lynch & Sarah Horton, *Yale C / AIM Web Style Guide*, 1997, <<http://info.med.yale.edu/claim/manual/>> (5 June 1997).

¹⁴ Joe Vitale, *Cyber Writing: How to Promote Your Product or Service Online* (New York: Amacom, 1997) 33; Lynch & Horton.

¹⁵ Mark Kvamme et al., "Boom or Bust. A Panel of Predictions for the Year Ahead," *Brandweek* 6 Feb. 1996: IQ14-7.

These experiences of commercial advertisers on the Net can be transferred to political marketing, as political campaign techniques have almost always followed the lead of commercial marketing. All the elements of political marketing that were described in section 4.3 could be influenced or even substituted by the new technologies of the Net. They can help the candidates get through all stages of their political campaign. The Net can be used as a powerful tool for voter segmentation, candidate positioning, and the formulation and implementation of the campaign strategy, as well as for monitoring the environmental forces reacting to them.

4.2 *Strategies and Elements of an Interactive Campaign*

Interactive marketing in the future will still rely on identifying the needs and desires of their potential voters. It can be predicted, however, that, one day, political marketing is not dealing with voter segments anymore, but with individual voters, and creates individual relationships with them.¹⁶ The *White House Office Database* (WhoDB) should be regarded as a first step in this direction. The once top secret database files about 355,000 names, nicknames, birthdays, fax numbers, special interests or projects, and even special dietary needs of those who once donated to the Democratic National Committee. The database was used to make sure that these people were treated in a way that they will come right back and give the next time. For this purpose, the database included a category for recipients of Kennedy Center tickets, personal notes from Clinton, and invitations to bowl, play tennis, or watch a movie at the White House. *WhoDB* helped the Clinton's team to stay on top of donors during the 1996 campaign.¹⁷

The virtual center of each campaign is a state-of-the-art interactive Web page. Phil Noble, whose political consulting firm *Phil Noble and Associates*¹⁸ was among the first who specialized in Internet services, described such a successful Web page as a "life-like 'campaign headquarters.'"¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf. Grigsby 32.

¹⁷ Michael Weiskopf, "A Secret Cash Link," *Time* (Atlantic Edition) 8 Feb. 1997: 28.

¹⁸ *Phil Noble & Associates*, 1998, <<http://www.pna.com>> (10 Apr. 1998).

¹⁹ Phil Noble, "Net the Vote," *Campaigns and Elections* July 1996, <http://www.camelect.com/july96/net_the_vote.html> (4 Nov. 1997).

... Internet users can walk into (...), view the campaign's video of the day, pick up a position paper on any subject, and walk away with a full color campaign poster that they designed themselves and can download directly to their own computer, or with a bumper sticker and button that will automatically arrive in the mail.²⁰

Transferred to the model of political marketing (see *Appendix A*), interactive campaign techniques can be used at all stages:

Voter Segmentation

- New information technologies not only enable strategists to identify multiple voter segments as their target groups, but to deal with individuals. ("*demographics of one*")²¹
- Truly interactive communication and tracking of a voter's preferences allows to assess the voters' needs and to profile the voter. Such a voter profile is not merely the description of a group or their members anymore, but the model of the individual voter.
- Truly personalized messages become possible.²²

Candidate Positioning

- Web sites give candidates the opportunity to present a much more complete picture of themselves than can ever be delivered by a 30-second TV commercial.²³
- Since public information are becoming more accessible, the Internet is a great tool for any kind of *issue research*.
- *Opposition research* using the opportunities of the Internet has a new quality.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Grigsby.

²² Cf. Negroponte 165.

²³ Cf. Casey 222-23.

²⁴ Cf. Noble.

Strategy Implementation

- The Net allows highly efficient *campaign operations*. Using *intranet* technology (internal communications network linked to the Internet), campaign offices, headquarters, volunteers, and officials can be wired at low costs.
- The Net is not only used as a media that helps to create and communicate the *campaign platform*, Net issues are part of it.
- *Grass-roots activists* get much more involved at the stage of strategy formulation and implementation. Strategy sessions can be held on the Net, messages to these activists can be communicated, and promotional material can be downloaded by campaign offices all around the country. (*push marketing*)²⁵
- The Internet as a fully interactive media allows to communicate the message instead of delivering it. The potential voter can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (*pull marketing*)²⁶
- A *Press Gallery*, which is placed on the campaign's Web site, offers daily briefings and the day's video and audio clips to the members of the press. Hence, the press can be managed and even 'trained' in a much more efficient way.²⁷
- Although an interactive and participatory rather than a real scientific exercise, *polling* on the Net can complement or even substitute similar polls on TV or radio stations.²⁸

Throughout all stages of the marketing and the political campaign, the Internet is an ideal environment to *raise funds* at relatively low costs compared with expensive mailing campaigns. Both the high dollar givers and the low dollar givers can be reached. Potential donors could be shown how they can contribute to the campaign, and what their contributions are used for. With *electronic cash*, the whole procedure of fund raising on the Net becomes even easier.²⁹

Interactive campaigns that rest on the technology of the Internet can be described as highly flexible. Unlike any other media, the Net provides the opportunity of *rapid response* to all new challenges and

²⁵ Ibid; cf. Newman 13.

²⁶ Noble.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hagen 73.

developments. Texts, graphics, sounds, and video can be delivered with almost unlimited capacity.³⁰

Because of these technological advancements, the ways of planning and managing a campaign are changing, and new concepts and strategies are being developed. According to Phil Noble, successful campaigns on the Internet demand both decentralization and empowerment. *“Just as corporations have been forced to rethink every aspect of what they do as a result of technological advancements, campaigns will have to do the same.”*³¹

4.3 The 1996 Elections

The 1996 campaign is described as both *“the first presidential campaign that aspired to take place in the Information Age”*³² and as *“the last election of the Industrial Age.”*³³ New media were almost everywhere evident in the campaign, from the wired headquarters to the press corps’ cellular phones and modem-equipped laptop computers.³⁴ Especially the Internet made a high-profile appearance. The campaign on the Net was covered by the press, and several books published the addresses and information for the Net campaign ‘96.³⁵ *“If you really want to get involved,”* Dole said to the millions of Americans watching him on television, *“just tap into my home page. It’s www.dole96.org.”*³⁶ At that time in 1996, however, only 20 percent of all adults had access to the Internet, but 87 percent of American households had owned a television set in 1960, when television emerged as a major political force.³⁷ This comparison makes it easier to understand the actual role of the Internet in the 1996 elections, and explains the different evaluations seen above. The Internet was hardly decisive for the 1996 election results, but “old” media were. In 1996, about \$1.5 billion were collected

³⁰ Noble.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

³² Diamond & Silverman 159.

³³ Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy: Online Update*.

³⁴ Diamond & Silverman 159.

³⁵ Cf. Michael Wolff, *Net Vote 96* (New York: Random House, 1996).

³⁶ Bob Dole, qtd. in Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy: Online Update*.

³⁷ Darrell M. West, *Air Wars*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, 1997) 53.

and spent to purchase television and radio time, and only \$6 million on Internet campaigning.³⁸ Nevertheless, although these first attempts to use the Internet were still oriented and dependent on traditional mass-media, the Net campaign '96 gave a first impression of what is ahead.

4.3.1 Primaries '96

Unlike broadcast ads, nearly all information presented by the candidates on their Web sites in 1996 were positive portrayals of the candidates' positions and organizations. The sites emphasized the candidates' strengths and focused on their background and family. In general, the messages on their home pages were consistent with the candidates' campaign messages. Except for some press releases downloadable from the home pages, there were no attacks on the opposition and no negative advertising on the Net.³⁹

Many of these sites, however, offered only one-way communication – from the candidate to interested voters.⁴⁰ The Net's opportunities as an interactive marketing tool were widely neglected. Obviously, the solely presence on the Web was already regarded as a public relations success. Many sites provided video clips in order to present the candidate, but most of these clips were "*rather unimaginative by contemporary standards.*"⁴¹ Buchanan's home page featured 113 separate audio clips, including speeches, debate statements, and appearances on network interview shows.⁴² Darrell West points out that Buchanan's style of presentation had the most emotional tone. Among the provocative quotes listed on Buchanan's Web site were "*Don't wait for orders from headquarters! Mount up! And rise to the sound of the guns!*" or "*Real Americans Don't Wear UN Blue.*"⁴³

Forbes's *Flat Tax Calculator* was the most novel and interactive feature of all the candidates' home pages. Visitors entered their wage and salary income, and checked boxes for their personal exemption

³⁸ Diamond & Silverman 164.

³⁹ West 53-54.

⁴⁰ Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy: Online Update*.

⁴¹ West 54.

⁴² Ibid 55.

⁴³ Ibid.

and their number of dependents. Then, this interactive tool automatically calculated the viewer's income tax under Forbes's 17 percent flat-tax proposal. "*It's simple. It's honest. And that's a big change for Washington.*"⁴⁴

4.3.2 Dole-Kemp '96

In September 1995, some 15 months before Election Day, former Senator Robert Dole of Kansas broke ground for future campaign strategists by putting up a highly advanced campaign Web site, which was reworked in August 1996.⁴⁵ His web site offered video and audio clips, press releases, listings of the Republican candidate's campaign stops in every state, a volunteer sign-up-by-email section, interactive games, virtual postcards, and downloadable screen savers.

On his fall general election page, Dole featured a wide array of videoclips with titles like "Doing What's Right," "Honesty," "The Better Man for a Better America," or "Economic Plan to Help Every American." It is interesting that topics like drugs and crime, which Dole emphasized in his broadcast commercials, were absolutely absent in the spots offered on the Net. While character attacks on Clinton, or attacks on other topics, were avoided as well as the Internet indecency debate, most of the releases dealt with substantive issues.⁴⁶

The Dole-Kemp *Interactive Tax Calculator*, which was introduced at the final stage of Dole's campaign, was clearly modeled after Forbes's *Flat Tax Calculator*. It gave visitors the opportunity to calculate the value of the tax cuts proposed by Dole and Kemp. "*No games. No gimmicks. No rhetoric. Real tax savings in dollars and cents.*"⁴⁷ promised the announcement of the interactive tax calculator. A closer inspection of this interactive segment reveals that this calculator, however, did not include the impact of such important components like the earned income tax credit, the capital gains tax cut, or the education and training deduction.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid 54.

⁴⁵ Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy: Online Update*.

⁴⁶ West 56-57; Diamond & Silverman 162.

⁴⁷ Bob Dole, <bob.dole@dole96.com> "Check Out the New Interactive Tax Calculator," 28 Oct. 1996, distribution list, (29 Oct. 1996).

⁴⁸ West 56.

The electronic mailing list which was integrated in Dole's campaign on the Internet is worth examining as well. A collection of Dole's email messages sent in the period August to November 1996 shows that the definition of the target group for the messages was obviously quite vague. The messages targeted neither the potential voter exclusively (pull marketing) nor the volunteers and activists to give them support and valuable information (push marketing). Some of the messages only mimicked the candidate's thirty-second TV ads, some announced the candidate's appearances on television, and some others urged onliners to call radio talk shows to voice their complaints about the Clinton administration. At the final stage, the Dole-Kemp campaign team tried to respond to the quite negative coverage of their campaign in the news media. The same week when *Time* reported that because of a "20-point spread in the polls, it may not be much of a race anymore,"⁴⁹ the email "96 Hours to Victory" proclaims that "Republican Bob Dole has cut President Clinton's lead in the presidential race to only 5.5 percentage points."⁵⁰

4.3.3 Clinton-Gore '96

The Clinton-Gore campaign effectively had two sites in the 1996 elections, the White House home page and the official Clinton-Gore Web site. It is noteworthy that the Clinton-Gore '96 home page was not launched on the Net until almost ten months after the Dole Web site appeared. The delay was due to strong opposition to a campaign Web site from Dick Morris, President Clinton's political advisor.⁵¹

The Web site included several of the same offerings which could be found on other candidates' pages. In addition, real audio of the candidate's speeches and animated message boards were provided.⁵²

⁴⁹ Nancy Gibbs & Michael Duffy, "Election '96. Two Men, Two Visions," *Time* 4 Nov. 1996: 66.

⁵⁰ Bob Dole, <bob.dole@dole96.com> "96 Hours to Victory," 1 Nov. 1996, distribution list, (2 Nov. 1996).

⁵¹ Graeme Browning, *Electronic Democracy: Online Update*.

⁵² Diamond & Silverman 160.

Press releases were an important part of the Web site. Only 25 percent, however, were devoted to substantive issues (Dole: 50 percent), while the most of the press releases announced the campaigns latest ads.⁵³

The *Electoral College Computer* was featured as an interactive segment on the Clinton-Gore home page. Modeled after the American method that filters the choice of the voters in selecting the national leader,⁵⁴ visitors of the Web site chose a certain candidate and predicted which of the candidates would win the various states. Then, the computer automatically tabulated the first candidate to reach the 270 Electoral College votes required.⁵⁵

⁵³ West 56.

⁵⁴ Cf., e.g., Lewis Lipsitz & David M. Speak, *American Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993) 373-74.

⁵⁵ West 56.

5 Political Communication

5.1 Objectives

While political marketing strategies as described in the preceding chapters mainly focus on election campaigns, political communication functions in a larger context. The objectives of political communication are not exclusively marketing-oriented, though it plays an important and increasing role in campaign strategies and the day-to-day political business. Here, the Internet does not only provide new opportunities for an effective communication on all levels, but are challenging traditional ways of political communication nationwide. We can distinguish communication within and between all levels of the legislative and the executive branch, the pure publication of information, and the interactive communication between the representatives and those they represent. We also have to consider the communication activities of those who are lobbying or monitoring the political process in different functions.

Concerning the communication needs of all these different groups, the following main objectives for the introduction of new information technologies into the process of political communications can be derived:

- Improving efficiency and flexibility, providing up-to-date information for institutions, organizations and political professionals at reduced costs, especially through the Internet, *intranets* and *local-area networks* (LAN)¹
- Promoting participation in the democratic process by providing broad access to information and offering improved services
- Using new interactive media in order to influence the public opinion process and to have an advantage over political competitors

¹ Cf., e.g., Chris Casey, *The Hill on the Net. Congress Enters the Information Age* (Boston: AP Professional, 1996) 15-16, 40; see also Frank Koelsch, *The Infomedia Revolution* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1995) 272-81.

5.2 Introduction of New Information Technology

Started in the first year of the Clinton administration in 1993, it took just a few years to bring political Washington on the Net. Today Web sites and public email addresses are available almost completely for the capital's institutions, House members, senators, and committees. Though similar developments can be observed on state and local levels as well, the following paragraphs will mainly be focused on Washington D.C. and the federal government.

With regard to the implementation of new technologies, the White House under President Clinton and Vice President Gore was pioneering on the *Electronic Frontier*. In June 1993, the White House announced the President's and the Vice President's public email addresses for the very first time. The White House Web site, which was launched at the end of 1994, set new standards not just for political presentations on the World Wide Web but for the Web as a whole.² As for the Congress, it can be observed that the House of Representatives is typically several steps ahead of the Senate. Obviously, the short two-year terms of the representatives resulting in a much more direct dependency on the electorate, creates a need for House members to adopt the new technologies in order to increase the efficiency of their jobs and to improve their public perception.³

Senator Edward Kennedy's Technology and Policy Advisor Chris Casey provides in his book *The Hill on the Net* a critical and highly interesting report on how the Congress got on the Net and how the 'wired' Congress works. According to Casey and based on his insider's perspective, the introduction of new information technologies in Washington went everything but smoothly and gloriously. Their proponents had to cope not only with differences regarding technological standards and computer literacy, but also with doubts, lack of understanding, ignorance, and, last but not least, objections for reasons of security.⁴ Casey quotes one shocked Democratic system administrator asking at a *Senate Computer Center* briefing on Internet

² Cf. Diamond 150.

³ Casey 30-31.

⁴ In November 1997, the Senate Rules Committee denied a request by Michael Enzi (R-Wyoming) for permission to use a laptop computer at his seat. Todd Lappin "Change? Phooey!" *Wired* Feb. 1998: 83.

email, “Do you mean Republicans will be able to send us e-mail!?”⁵ Discussing the introduction of the Internet in politics, observers often like to mention that even Newt Gingrich (‘Cyber Newt’) had not set up his home page before 1997.⁶ Though just a fact of rather marginal importance, it nicely illustrates discrepancies between own claims, images, and reality in virtual Washington.

Generally, first experiences clearly show that many politicians tend to be more interested in the Net as a candidate than as an officeholder. Obviously, the chance to reach prospective voters on the Internet is more likely to be a driving force in utilizing the Net than the pure need to keep in touch with constituents.⁷ While Bob Dole, for example, launched his sophisticated and highly rated “Dole for President” home page in September 1995, Dole as a Senator remained completely absent on the Net for his constituents in Kansas at this time. Similar observations could be made for other Republican officeholders vying for the Republican nomination for President in 1996.⁸ On the other hand, however, using the Net for campaigning purposes creates some of the technological prerequisites and helps to gain those experiences that promote the utilization of media like the Internet. The Clinton administration, for example, based their first steps on the Net mainly on their efforts once made with experts from the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* (MIT) for the Democratic election campaign in 1992.⁹

⁵ Casey 39.

⁶ Hagen 74; Casey 123-25; *Newt Gingrich*, June 1997, <<http://www.house.gov/gingrich>> (14 Feb. 1998).

⁷ Casey 201.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Cf. *Ibid* 33, 39.

5.3 *Electronic Mail*

Analyzing the potential role of email for political communications in the United States, we have to consider what traditional mail has been embodying for long time:

Sending a letter to Congress is an important and fundamental cornerstone of representative democracy, an essential means of communication between lawmakers and the public.¹⁰

For this reason, handling the vast amount of mail is an important challenge especially for Members of Congress and their staff. They have to manage not just all the letters sent by individuals expressing their concerns and opinions but in addition to that they have to cope with lobbyists' mass-mailing campaigns that bury the Congress' mail rooms.¹¹ On account of this, elected officials at all levels soon used several *correspondence management programs*. These programs create *robo letters* as a reply to letters expressing the same position on the same issue. An integrated constituents' database that contains personal data and information about a constituent's previous letter can help to personalize these robo letters.

Although these experiences with mail management systems might have promoted the wide utilization of email instead of plain mail, a first pilot program that started in June 1993 was rather timid. Because of the fear that uncontrolled public email access to Congress would create an unmanageable public and could cause a *spamming*¹² of the official's electronic mailboxes, each participant who wanted to send an email to members of the House had to register for this email contact with a postcard in advance. Since this procedure is not only inefficient but apparently anachronistic to the whole idea of electronic mail, the practice never took hold and was abandoned quickly.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid 13.

¹¹ Hagen 75; Casey 41-45.

¹² Spam: "Electronic garbage. Junk postings. Purportedly named in honor of SPAM, that tasteless luncheon-meat-in-a-can, and in homage to the Monty Python skit in which the word was repeated incessantly to drive folks crazy." Constance Hale, *Wired Style. Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age* (San Francisco: HardWired, 1996) 78.

¹³ Casey 41.

Today, the use of email is growing tremendously, and handling email messages has become quite a common practice. *Auto-acknowledgment* software protects mailboxes from floods of email and helps sort incoming messages and create computer-generated replies. Since members of Congress usually only reply to mail sent by their own constituents, and email addresses quite often do not indicate the region of the sender, software tools are used to scan the mails for strings that stand for any location, like 'Mass.' or 'MA' for Massachusetts, and sort these messages in or out.¹⁴ Although the introduction of email already led to an increased participation in the democratic process,¹⁵ these kinds of automatically generated replies can be just one element for an improved communication between the constituents and their representatives. Email should not substitute other ways of communication, but can help organize and manage them in a more efficient way. Therefore, several methods of analyzing, processing, and evaluating the incoming information and providing an appropriate response are used and developed in order to make this communication truly interactive and a powerful marketing tool.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid 50.

¹⁵ Hagen 75.

¹⁶ Cf. Casey 44-52.

6 Summary

On both the local and the national level, citizens must have timely access to adequate information on which to base their sound decisions. This access is a vital prerequisite for improvements in the democratic process. Communication within and between political institutions and administrations, in a timely and economical manner, is another important prerequisite. New information technology, such as electronic mail, helps streamline administration and gives the electorate a new and sometimes better opportunity to communicate with their representatives. Experiences, however, reveal that these new means of communication are used for all kinds of promotional activities rather than for democratic participation.

Since the development of political marketing in the United States has always been closely linked with technological advancements and new media, information technology was discovered as a powerful tool for various forms of political marketing. Political marketing tries to influence the public opinion process in order to support a candidate to get elected, or in order to promote a specific or controversial issue. Political campaigns have evolved from a party concept to a marketing concept, which utilizes many of the techniques and strategies developed for commercial marketing, but differs with regard to the much higher persuasive goals.

Traditionally, political marketing has been less regulated than commercial marketing, since regulations for campaigning are regarded as free speech restrictions. Hence, existing regulations mainly focus on campaign finance laws and access to the media in order to create relatively fair conditions and equal opportunities. Technologies like the Internet offer totally new opportunities for fund raising, advertising, and communication, and are therefore challenging existing regulations.

The technology of the Net can potentially influence or even substitute the elements of the traditional marketing mix, which is integrated in a campaign strategy. Marketing experts have discovered that a Web site is not a digital ad but an universal and powerful marketing tool. These experiences of commercial marketing can be transferred to political marketing and will influence the strategies for political marketing in the Information Age. In such a strategy, the Internet is used for running highly efficient campaigns, communicating

the messages directly to the voter, optimizing the activities of volunteers, raising funds, and managing the news. As for the candidates, it provides totally new opportunities to position and to present themselves. Above all, new forms of communication, marketing, and advertising will be extremely personalized. Instead of identifying and targeting voter segments with the traditional one-to-many approach, political marketing in the Information Age will regard voters as individuals with individual needs.

Existing hierarchies and powers are hardly jeopardized. Although the Information Age promotes broader participation in the democratic process, politics are still dominated by the few who know the rules, and who are able to utilize technological advances. Managing these technologies and understanding the strategies for political marketing will be absolutely necessary for those who seek support for their ideas and try to get them accepted in an electronic democracy.

It is not merely information technology that transforms American society. Technologies like the Internet rather act as catalysts for existing social developments and changes. Traditional party politics faded away before the advent of the personal computer. Diversification, individualism, and decentralization have been important issues in the United States before the Internet. The transformation into the Information Age has been a long process, and it is still unfinished. Recent examples for political marketing and democracy in this age should therefore be considered as rather simple first steps towards what can appear at the final stage at that process.

Appendix A: A Model of Political Marketing

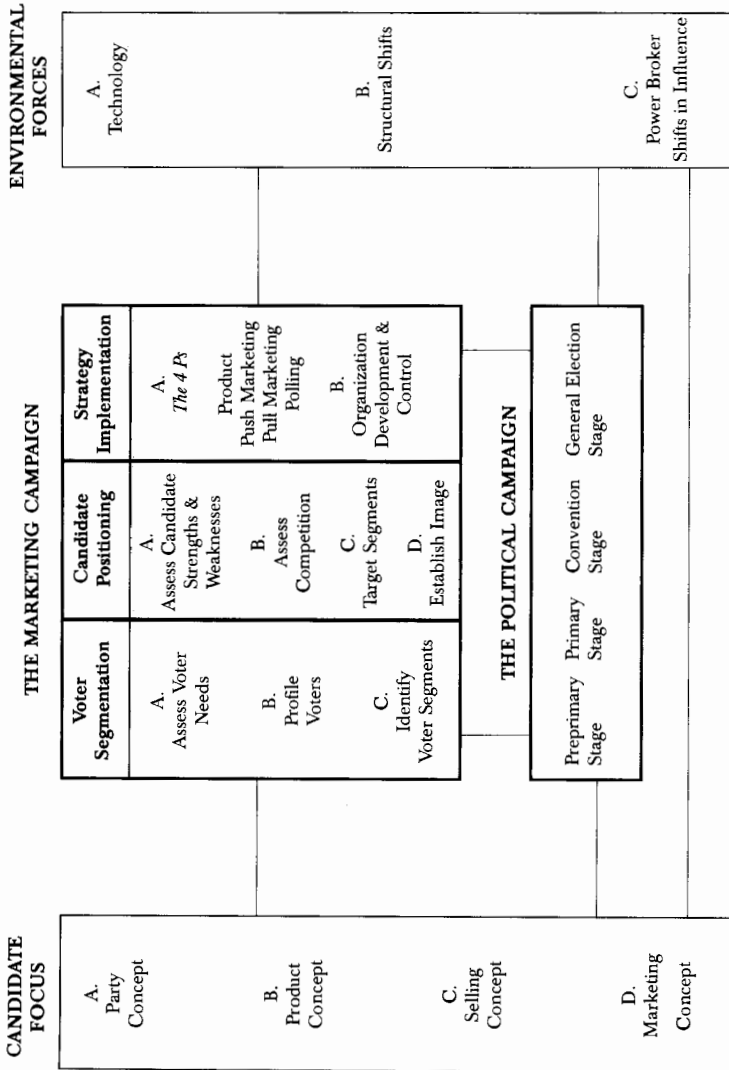


Fig 4. Source: Bruce I. Newman, *The Marketing of the President* 12.

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