

## **The Use of Video in Candidates' Web Sites and E-Mail**

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### **The Lesson of Video in Campaign E-mail: To foster identity and mobilize**

The new architecture of e-mail designed by the Barack Obama campaign basically changed political communication. This new era is not conceivable without video and web 2.0 applications. The Obama e-mail and in part, the Clinton e-mail implemented video as a visual strategy for fundraising and mobilization. In addition the Web 2.0 applications enable participants to respond interactively with various options. Thus voters have the chance to participate in campaign activities with just a mouse click.

The combination of video and donation forms as well as the involvement of volunteers through Web applications is impressive and unique. The use of video helps to evoke strong emotions that can lead to a donation or registration. The e-mail is much more personal if it contains a video presenting the candidate or volunteers talking in front of the camera beside the main context. Consequently the pictures can become narrative by expressing unity and connectivity and can enhance the common identity between supporters. Of course this kind of mobilization via e-mail could achieve tremendous success; only because it was accompanied by a personal, face-to face communication.

### **Image building with Video**

The visual strategies on Hillary-TV and Barack-TV led to two very different ways of image building. While Barack Obama was presented as powerful and heroic, Hillary Clinton was shown as a neighbor, a people's person. Each way of creating the candidate's image is committed to a special context of media coverage and polls. Barack Obama has been named "Rock star of American politics" in the press, and he can use his image as charismatic leader in an affirmative way without transmitting political content.

Hillary Clinton had to fight against her image as a cold person. With her video "The conversation begins in Iowa" she tried to change her public perception to that of a neighbor, who is warm and close. While Barack Obama fosters his image in an affirmative way, Hillary Clinton tries to alternate hers. At the end of March 2007 polls still reported that 47% of Americans perceived Hillary Clinton as a candidate with a cold personality. The purpose of these videos is not only to affect the candidate's image, it is also to step outside the candidate's Web site and the Web itself in order to reach media coverage in print media. *YouTube* is the first step on this trail, because placing a video on this video sharing platform means to place it in an environment outside the small circle of supporters visiting the candidate's Web site. *YouTube* boosts the video's chance to be noticed by a wider audience, particularly if it is a kind of provocative clip.

Summing up, video strategies of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama differed in their strategic objective. In each case video was a useful tool to either change or emphasise the candidates' image in the 2008 presidential campaign. The Internet and in particular, *YouTube*

can prove to be tremendously effective to spread political information on the Web and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Poster will document the second part of this analysis: *Image building with Video*