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Author: Marek Mazur, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa

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Marek Mazur
Agnieszka Turska-Kawa

The 2008 US Presidential Election Modernization and Professionalization of Election Campaigns

Abstract: Professionalisation of election campaigns, treated as one of the aspects of modernization, is characterized by the convergence and standardization of practices and concepts used by political organizations. This process is mainly determined by American innovations and is frequently adjusted to suit local institutional and cultural conditions.

An analysis of the professionalisation process of the US presidential campaign in 2008 shows a continuation of previously identified trends, with their common denominator being mediatisation and political marketing. Campaign activity intensified and the effectiveness of reaching potential voters in selected groups by political parties and candidates (targeting) greatly improved, as did the effectiveness of shaping the image of the candidates (popcultural trend in positioning).

The most innovative element was the usage of new media, mainly the Internet. Significant stimulation of the flow of information about the campaign can be attributed to online activities (especially to the phenomenon of social networking and activity on YouTube); they have also caused a greater involvement especially among the youngest group of voters, which translated into effective fundraising for campaigns and a greater mobilization of the electorate.

Key words: professionalisation, modernization, election campaign, elections in the USA, Internet in elections

As the globalization of democracy is becoming increasingly more dynamic, election campaign research is moving toward discovering universal, transnational evolutionary trends. The basic questions concern the issue of the type (convergence or divergence), the scale and direction of change of the concepts and practices of political communication, the main mechanisms that drive them (e.g. media-centric

perspective) and the barriers to this process. Regardless of the approaches being presented, an important point of reference are the American election campaigns.

By analysing the 2008 US presidential campaign, we plan to contribute to the current research on the modernization and professionalization of the election campaign. As such, an attempt is made to capture the dynamics of transformation in the process of American political communication and understand the global trends in the process of professionalization.

Modernization of election campaigns

The prospect of modernization in theoretical analyses of election campaigns is treated as an alternative solution to the process of Americanization, particularly with regard to changes taking place in Europe. This may be the result of a desire to eliminate this term[1] from everyday use, as it is believed to have pejorative associations with cultural and economic imperialism. Modernization can also signify a desire to find a universal dimension of change and emphazise the importance of endogenous factors in election campaign evolution.[2]

Americanization and modernization in fact refer to the same phenomena. The difference between the two terms is most probably linked with the direction of change each concept proposes. The important role the USA plays in the transformation of the process of competition between political entities is a feature of modernization and is understood as "the introduction and diffusion of innovation"[3] into the actions of political entities in an election campaign, reflecting the "diversity of conditions, the course and the effects of modernization processes in different countries, regions, societies and in different periods."[4] A modernization-oriented analysis also provides for a more precise description of the innovative nature of electoral practices, seen not only in terms of the actions taken by rival political parties to achieve electoral support, but also in terms of technological, cultural and socio-political transformation of the media and the voters.[5]

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[1] B. Dobek-Ostrowska: *Komunikowanie polityczne i publiczne*. Warszawa 2006, p. 260.

[2] D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini: *Americanization, Globalization, and Secularization. Understanding the Convergance of Media Systems and Political Communication*. In: *Comparing Political Communications. Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. Eds. F. Esser, B. Pfetsch. Cambridge 2004, p. 28.

[3] L.W. Zacher: *Modernizacja. Wielości kontekstów, modeli, dróg, prędkości i efektów*. W: *Modernizacja polityczna w teorii i praktyce. Transfer nowoczesnych idei, wartości, instytucji i mechanizmów*. Red. M. Barański. Katowice 2008, p. 19.

[4] Ibid., p. 21.

[5] M. Kolczyński: *Strategie komunikowania politycznego*. Katowice 2007, p. 137.

Among the most important reasons and manifestations of the modernization of election campaigns is the mediatization of politics and political communication as well as reconstruction of postindustrial societies. Both dimensions affect each other, accompany each other and generate political effects, which are fundamental in the transformation of the nature of the election campaign.

The evolution of the election campaign began to develop more dynamically after World War II. The revolutionary development of electronic media, especially television, contributed to a significant change of politics and of political communication. Mass media quickly gained a strong position as an intermediary institution in the articulation and aggregation of the needs of citizens, significantly affected the way the electorate was mobilized and, in the end, started showing a potential for exercising political influence as a relatively independent political entity. The main effects of the mediatization of political reality appeared in the merging of reality and media reality. The significance of the latter grew substantially, especially in terms of how the media have impacted the perception, and to some extent, also the reception of politics by the citizens. As a result, the media have become an important factor in shaping public opinion. They play an important role in democracy, and have contributed to the strengthening of their power of persuasion and their role in controlling political issues (i.e. agenda setting and framing)[6].

Today the media determine the political process (media-centered politics)[7] and dominate political communication. As far as the relationship between the media and politicians is concerned, the logic of the media have had a serious impact on the logic of politics. In order to adapt to the requirements of electronic media, politics have become dominated with visualization and schematization (simplification) mechanisms, and scandal, negative information, as well as information about the private lives of politicians have become normal means of expression. This led to a significant professionalization of communication management, manifesting itself through the popularization of the concept of public relations, increasing the importance of image strategy, which of course had its effect on the relevant decision-making processes in the country. The potential for attracting attention has become the most important priority for the commercial media in their conveying of political messages. The media bear a significant responsibility for personalization in politics, proliferation of political soft news, political tabloidisation and infotainment.

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[6] See S. Michalczyk: *Społeczeństwo medialne. Studia z teorii komunikowania masowego*. Katowice 2008, p. 23 in.; S. Iyengar, J. McGrady: *Środki masowego przekazu i perswazja polityczna*. In: *Perswazja. Perspektywa psychologiczna*. Red. T.C. Brock, M.C. Greek. Przeł. T. Sieczkowski, M. Kowaleczko-Szumowska. Kraków 2007, p. 296.

[7] F. Plasser, G. Plasser: *Global Political Campaigning. A Worldwide Analysis of Campaign Professionals and Their Practises*. Westport CT 2002, p. 78ff.

In the most far-reaching proposals, in which the impact of the media on political entities is taken into account, there is even talk about a change in the essence of politics. Hans Mathias Kepplinger hypothesized about the primacy of symbolic politics, understood as "measures aimed not so much on solving a problem, but on satisfying the media and its public."[8] In symbolic politics, the primary objective is to satisfy the public. Essential political decisions, however, are sidelined.

Transformation of the social sphere, including social differentiation and the development of the middle class, the individualization of society, weakening or redefinition of existing sociopolitical conflicts (divisions), a weakening, and at times even disintegration of traditional institutions and social groups, secularization[9] and the emergence of post-material values, are creating a new environment for election campaigns. As a result of the convergence of global economic forces, we are witnessing the internationalization of consumerism: "[…] global society thinks and behaves increasingly more like a consumer in all areas of life."[10] In consequence, a significant decrease was identified in voter loyalty to political parties, which is expressed in the decline in party identification and growth of electoral volatility. Retrospective models have become outmoded in explaining electoral behaviour. Meanwhile, the role of current factors, including election campaigns, has increased.

Parties had strategically responded to changes as far back as in the 1970s and initiated a process of deep transformation.[11] Today we are hearing increasingly more about political parties being dominated by features of a marketing party model. Such a party sees market-defined expectations and needs as its main point of reference. The market itself comprises many different segments of the electorate, which do not share one ideology.[12] Modernization of the election campaign is thus multidimensional and applies to all its participants. In addition, it is global in nature and multi-directional.

The transfer of innovation takes place at a transnational and even at a transcontinental level. However, this flow is shaped internally and innovations often grow out of the internal change taking place within a political system. Probably the most influential model in election campaign evolution developed in the USA.

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[8] H.M. Kepplinger: *Demontaż polityki w społeczeństwie informacyjnym*. Kraków 2007, p. 132.

[9] D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini: *Americanization*…, p. 29–31.

[10] D.G. Lilleker, J. Lees-Marshment: *Introduction: Rethinking Political Party Behavior*. In: *Political Marketing, A Comparative Perspective*. Eds. D.G. Lilleker, J. Lees-Marshment. Manchaster–New York 2005, p. 3.

[11] Changes to the Western European party system were first described by O. Kirchhemier: *The Transformation of the Western European Party System*. In: *Political Parties and Political Development*. Eds. J. LaPalombara, M. Weiner. Princeton, N.J. 1966, p. 177–200.

[12] D.G. Lilleker, J. Lees-Marshment: *Introduction*…, p. 1ff.

This is a result of the country's high speed of media process evolution, the long history and the frequency of democratic elections as well as its political and cultural specificity.[13] Studies confirm the existence of Americanization, highlighting the areas which do not undergo homogenization, the obstacles that slow down the process or even ones which reverse innovation. Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in their comparative analysis of American and British campaign communication, stress the differences in the functioning of information media.[14] The diffusion of American standards can take different forms: direct imitation, selective import and adoption of US practices, or adapting these practices and their inclusion in the already existing tools.

Among the most important endogenous factors limiting, only sometimes preventing, modernization, is cultural diversity and institutional variables, inter alia the model of government, party system, electoral system, but most importantly regulations concerning campaign financing and the possibility of broadcasting paid TV commercials.

In summary, modernization, due to its global nature, mainly defines the convergence of the behaviour of political entities in political competition. Fritz and Gunda Plasser favour the concept of hybridization, which involves linking different approaches and techniques deriving from cultural and institutional factors.[15]

One of the aspects of modernization is the professionalization of election campaigns.[16] Attention here is focused on the behaviour of competing parties (candidates), whereas media organizations (journalists) and the voters, are disregarded. Pippa Norris in her reference to the popular classification of David Farrel's campaign evolution,[17] defines professionalization as a continuous process of transition from a premodernist, through a modernist to a postmodernist stage of electioneering.[18] In this perspective, the concepts and practices initiated

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[13] Cf. T. Płudowski: *Komunikacja polityczna w amerykańskich kampaniach wyborczych*. Warszawa 2008, p. 38ff.; M. Mazur: *Marketing polityczny. Studium porównawcze prezydenckich kampanii wyborczych w USA i Polsce*. Warszawa 2002, p. 51–52.

[14] J.G. Blumler, M. Gurevitch: *"Americanization" Reconsidered: U.K. – U.S. Campaign Communication Comparisions Cross Time*. In: *Mediated Politics. Communication in the Future Democracy*. Eds. W.L. Bennet, R.M. Entman: Cambridge 2005, p. 400.

[15] F. Plasser, G. Plasser: *Global Political Campaigning…*, p. 348.

[16] It is difficult to set a framework for election campaigns, especially in light of the popular permanent campaign concept. We assume it to be a period of most intense activity by a party/politicians aiming to win votes.

[17] D.M. Farrel: *Campaign Strategies and Tactics*. In: *Comparing Democracies. Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*. Eds. L. LeDuc, R.G. Niemi, P. Norris. Thousand Oaks–London–New Dehli 1996, p. 171. A detailed analysis of this model in Polish literature can be found in R. Wiszniewski: *Marketing wyborczy*. Warszawa–Wrocław 2000, p. 101ff.

[18] P. Norris: *A Virtous Circle: Political Communication in Post Industrial Democracies*. New York 2000, as cited in: F. Plasser, G. Plasser: *Global Political Campaigning…*, p. 241.

and disseminated in the USA are most akin to the postmodernist model and as such, through the development of media and through marketing revolution, are the main contributor in setting global trends and determining the homogenization of election campaigns. The differences in campaign styles are of secondary importance and do not conflict with the general marketing-oriented, mediatized behavioural formula.

Professionalization trends in the 2008 American campaign

The presidential campaign of 2008 was characteristic of the American style of campaign communication.[19] Its most important features included:
– campaign mediatization,
– a marketing-oriented approach to the campaign,
– personalization of the election offer,
– negativism in the campaign.

The mediatization of the election campaign is revealed in two areas. Firstly, the mass media is treated as a vital tool to mobilize the electorate. Secondly, it is a reference to media relations practices, whose objective is the strategic management of information produced by candidates, media monitoring, exertion of impact on the media agenda by creating pseudo-events, and also the achievement of the desired interpretation of events and political information (media spinning).[20]

In 2008, major changes occurred in the American election campaign environment due to the rise of the Internet as a political medium. Even though the number of Internet users in the USA was higher than in any other country, the use of this channel of communication has significantly increased over the recent years. 75% of Americans declare that they have access to the Internet. 55% have a broadband connection.[21] For the first time in election history, the Internet became the second most popular source of information about the presidential

[19] Por. F. Plasser, G. Plasser: *Global Political Campaigning…*, p. 83ff.; W. Shultz: *Komunikacja polityczna. Koncepcje teoretyczne i wyniki badań empirycznych na temat mediów masowych w polityce*. Kraków 2006, p. 141–142.

[20] The Democrat's success in this area is partly expressed by the fact that most newspapers declared their support for Obama: 234 newspapers (a total of 21 million copies), for J. McCain 135 newspapers (7 million copies sold). In 2004, the main candidates received the support of almost an equal number of newspapers. Source: "Polityka" 2008, No. 45

[21] The number of broadband connection users rose from 42% in 2005 to 47% in 2007. Source: *55% of adult Americans have home broadband connections*. Pew Internet and & American Life Project. [http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2008/55-of-adult-Americans-have--home-broadband-connections.aspx (15.04.2009)].

campaign, only giving way to television and overtaking the press (see Table 1).

Table 1

The main source of information about the presidential campaign (%)

Source	1996	2000	2004	2007 (December)
Television	73	68	68	60
Press	15	15	15	12
Internet	1	4	6	15
Radio	8	8	7	8

Source: Author's own work based on: *Internet's Broader Role in Campaign 2008. Social Networking and Online Videos Off.* The Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press [http://people-press.org/report/384/; (23.04.2009)].

Nearly half of all Americans point to the Internet, email and mobile phone as the main sources of information about the events taking place in the 2008 presidential campaign. Internet was said to have been used for this purpose by 40% of those surveyed. Nearly every fifth person surveyed declares that he/she checks information about the election once a week, 6% do so every day. Young people are most prone to use the Internet.[22]

The Internet intensified the flow of information[23] and probably lead to increased electoral participation by involving the voters more. Many voters spontaneously (or under the influence of campaign staffs) actively joined the campaign, contributing to it in through their own marketing activity, sharing their emotions with others, joining various support groups and by convincing the undecided to their opinions. Nearly 1 in 5 Internet users took part in the political debate online, sharing their reflections, comments, using blogs or social networking sites (Chart 1).

[22] The largest increase of network users has been identified among young people between 18 and 29 years of age. In December 2007, 46% of them indicated the Internet as the main or second source of information about the presidential campaign, which, compared with 2004, meant an increase of 25%. The popularity of television among young people fell – in December 2007, 60% said it was the first or second source of information about the election campaign, and compared with 2004 it signified a decrease of 15%. In 2004 newspapers were important for 30% of young people. This figure fell in 2007 by 6%. Based on: *Internet's Broader Role in Campaign 2008. Social Networking and Online Videos Off.* The Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press [http://people-press.org/report/384/ (23.04.2009)].

[23] However the main information provider did not change. The most popular presidential campaign information websites were the sites of the traditional US television stations i.e.: CNBC, CNN and news services provided by Yahoo and Google search engines. T. Płudowski stresses that "the Internet did not marginalize journalists nor traditional media too much by handing over the baton to the political actors [...] The biggest revolution in online communication involved a change in the channel of communication and its form. The dominant broadcaster stayed the same. T. Płudowski: *Komunikacja…*, p. 162–163.

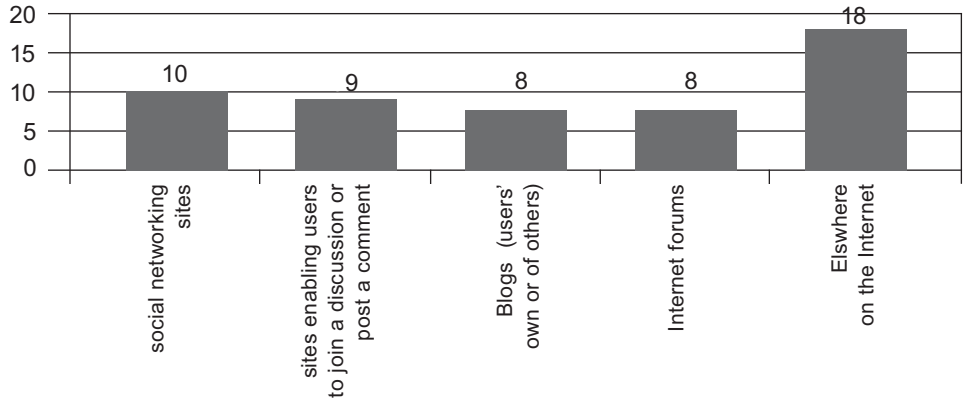

Chart 1. Places with the most comments about the 2008 presidential campaign

Source: The Pew Internet & American Life Project PostElection Survey, November–December 2008.

The psychological power of the Internet is best proven by the fact that 28% of Internet users said that it made them feel more involved in the ongoing campaign, and 22% said that if it had not been for the Internet, they would not have become so involved in the election in the first place.[24] Perhaps it is due to this involvement, which gathered millions of voters, that the movement not only did not cease to exist as soon as the election was over, but remained and continued to develop. There are increasingly more social networks, with more and more users, new video clips are created, new applications for mobile phones are developed.

Professionalization follows a logic, which is characterized by a shift in the point of gravity in communication strategy from labour-intensive forms of mobilization (the so-called traditional campaign) towards capital-intensive forms (mainly television advertising). As a result, the costs of the subsequent election campaigns are reaching record levels. In the 2008 election, the candidates for president and for Congress as well as groups of interest spent more than USD 5.3 bln on their campaigns, which is 1.1 bln more than four years earlier. The total spending of only the two main candidates for president exceeded the USD 1 bln mark (Barack Obama – USD 744.9 million , John McCain – USD 346.6 million).[25] In the course of the primaries, the Democrat resigned from state funding, and avoided subjection to the campaign funding limit.[26] As in previ-

[24] *The Internet and the 2008 election*. The Pew Internet and & American Life Project [http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2008/The-internet-and-the-2008-election.aspx (15.04.2009)].

[25] Source: *Federal Election Commision*.

[26] This fact gave rise to the question whether this may be the first sign that presidential candidates will no longer seek state funding in the future. For the second time in history, major

ous campaigns, the major part of the funding went on TV advertising. Before the election in 2004, a total of 3 million spots were broadcast, which makes it over 1 million more than in the previous campaign.[27] Given the increase in the cost of the presidential campaign in 2008, it can be assumed that yet another increase in the intensity and scale of election campaign activity has occurred.[28] The unique nature of the TV campaign is shown by a 28-minute spot presenting the biography of Obama, which was aired October 29, 2008 at the same time on seven television networks in prime time.

In 2008, the leading candidates of the presidential election were very proficient in their use of political marketing techniques. In terms of marketing, the premises of relationship marketing seem to be most appropriate for describing American politics. Its main assumption is that the notion of transaction in marketing is replaced by the concept of exchange, and politicians constantly move towards creating, managing and developing long-term relationships through achieving mutual benefits and building trust.[29]

In the primary phase of the election strategies of the major rivals in 2008, recreated on the basis of an analysis of television advertising, political platforms and television debates, were based on the delivery of image campaigns with particular emphasis on the personal dimension. A study of the electoral motives justifies the validity of personalizing an election campaign. The respondents, asked why they support the Republican or Democrat, first of all pointed to motives relating to the candidate's person (see Table 2). However, in another survey, in which the respondents were asked what motives, i.e. issues or personal qualities, made them choose either of the candidates, 58% of the respondents pointed to the first category, whereas 39% to the latter.[30] The difference results from the methodology used. In a Gallup poll, the respondents answered open

party representatives chose not to take advantage of funding in the 2008 primaries, a trend nobody questioned. Opinions, however, concerning subsidies in the primary phase are divided. Opponents of the new campaign financing model point to the exceptional nature of the Democrat's campaign: a conducive environment, its uniqueness, very balanced competition for nomination and celebrity status before the campaign

[27] Wisconsin Advertising Project [http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/ edu/wiscad (3.06.2009)].

[28] Only partial data is available. Comparing television advertising expenditure from 28 September to 4 October, 2008, the two major presidential candidates and their parties spent a total of USD 28 million; four years earlier in the same period this sum amounted to 18 million dollars. The scale of the number of spots broadcast in the presidential election is to some extent reflected in the number of McCain's campaign spot broadcasts – in September there was an average of approx. 2.5 thousand spots per day, except for a few days after the announcement of the suspension of the campaign, when the number of spots dropped to approx. 600 broadcasts. By 4 October the Democrat aired more than 50,000 spots more than the senator from Arizona. Source: *Wisconsin Advertising Project*.

[29] S. Henneberg: *Understanding Political Marketing*. In: *The Idea of Political Marketing*. Eds. N.J. O'Shaughnessy, S. Hanneberg. London 2002, pp. 102–103.

[30] Source: *National Election Exit Poll* [www.cnnpolitics.com.].

questions in their own words, which made their answers probably more honest and spontaneous.

Table 2

Election motives on the eve of the 2008 presidential election (%)

Motive (seven motives most frequently mentioned in the sample)	All respondents	Declaring to vote for Obama	Declaring to vote for McCain
I want change/a fresh approach	20	35	2
I agree with his values/ideas (without details)	17	17	18
The best candidate for this position	14	16	11
Experienced/qualified	10	2	20
I do not like the rival	8	6	10
Economy/his plans for the economy	7	8	6
I have always supported the party	7	7	7

Source: Authors' own work based on a Gallup poll (telephone survey conducted by the Gallup Institute on 27-30 October 2008 on a sample of 2,021 adult Americans) [www.gallup.com].

Politicians tried to use all the resources, identified by research, and the resources found in the environment, to achieve their aims. Barack Obama found himself in a privileged position, especially after the first signs of the financial and economic crisis, and also because of the negative associations with the administration of the Republican George Bush.[31]

Personal issues dominated debate in TV advertisements. The Republicans, in particular, exploited the differences in image between the two candidates (see Table 3).[32]

[31] Public opinion rated G.W. Bush's term in office worse than that of R. Nixon. Over 85% of Americans, on the eve of the elections, believed that their country is on the wrong track. Source: [www.realclearpolitics.com (4.06.2009)].

[32] A content analysis was conducted on television spots aired during the general elections (from 28 August until the end of the campaign), taking into account 40 of the Democrat's spots and 50 of the Republican's. The analysis was functional in nature. Category description: personal appeal – the essence of the spot (in the sense of time and the content covered) comes down to personal characteristics; platform appeal – the essence of the spot (in the sense of time and the content covered) is dominated by substantive issues (political program, regardless of the degree of detail); mixed appeal (in the sense of time and the content covered) – it is difficult to define the essence of the spot (in the sense of time and the content covered), the message includes personal and political messages; positive tone – the main purpose of the communication is to present the candidate's advantages; negative tone – the main purpose of the communication is to attack the rival (including his program); mixed tone – the candidate's advantages are demonstrated and the rival is attacked at the same time.

Barack Obama presented himself as a calm and balanced candidate for president. He presented himself as a neutral politician, capable of finding something in common with all the social groups. He understood their problems, especially those of the middle class, and was able to respond to them. He often emphasized his American roots. His credibility was built on the contrast with McCain. He presented his opponent as an untrustworthy person, whose statements are mutually exclusive. He emphasized the lobbying activities of the Republican's inner circle. He attacked him for supporting big business ("favours new tax cuts for corporations, but almost nothing for the middle class"), he made fun of his ignorance in handling computers ("He doesn't know how to use a computer, can't send an e-mail").

John McCain built on his political experience, life experience[33] and leadership qualities (his main campaign slogans were: "Experience and leadership," "Leadership without paying new taxes," "Country first"). He also presented himself as an independent politician, a maverick. He spent most of his time, however, criticizing Obama – attacking his credibility, moral values and moral indeciseviness.

Table 3

The content of television campaign spots in the primary phase of the election (%)

Candidates	Image (dimensions) – appeal			Tone of appeal		
	personal	platform-based	mixed	positive	negative	mixed
Barack Obama	52.5	32.5	15	40	35	25
John McCain	48	32	20	32	60	8

Source: Authors' own work based on an analysis of television spot content.

In terms of their electoral programs, the candidates devoted most of their time to economic issues. Opinion polls clearly indicated that the economy (crisis) became the most important of all the issues raised in the campaign in the primary phase of the presidential election (see Table 4). The respondents of the National Election Exit Poll indicated the following issues as the most important in the campaign: economy (63%), Iraq (10%), health care (9%), terrorism (9%), energy policy (8%). The more a voter was worried about the economic crisis, the more likely he was to vote for the Democrat.[34]

[33] McCain during the campaign repeatedly referred to his experiences in captivity during the Vietnam war.

[34] Source: *National Election Exit Poll* [www.cnnpolitics.com (4.06.2009)].

Table 4

Evaluation of public opinion about the importance of issues raised during the presidential campaign. Five top-rated problems (%)

Issue	Extremely important	Very important	A little/not important
Economy	55	40	4
Federal budget deficit	44	38	18
Terrorism	42	38	20
Energy (including natural gas prices)	41	44	15
Situation in Iraq	41	40	18

Source: Authors own work based on a Gallup poll [www.gallup.com]. Telephone survey made on 23-26 October 2008 on a sample of 1,010 adult Americans.

Obama in his campaign spots mainly raised issues concerning the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and increasing U.S. energy independence. Quite often, he also talked about universal health care and education. He criticised his opponent for continuing "the same old politics" of George Bush and the economic errors he made. Indicators of the deepening economic crisis were often presented side-by-side next to McCain's recent statement: "the fundamentals of our economy are strong," pointing to the Republican's lack of competence in this area.

The Senator from Arizona primarily advocated the idea of tax reduction and criticized Obama's tax program. His vision of tackling the crisis was very general ("We can grow our economy, cut tax, make America stronger"). He also emphasized the need for the United States to sever its dependence on oil supplies from the Middle East. McCain also devoted some of his time to foreign affairs, education, immigration and financing the army.

Analyses show that the tone of both of the politicians' spots was, in the gross part, negative. The Republican attacked his rival more often (60% of all his appearances, Obama – 35%). Similar conclusions were drawn by Wisconsin Advertising Project researchers – from 4 June to 4 October, 47% of McCain's spots were qualified as negative (they completely focused on Obama), 26% – as positive (completely focused on his own characteristics or proposals), and 27% were of a mixed nature. In this time, 39% of all of the Democrat's ads had a positive tone to them (they only referred to Obama's characteristics or his program), 35% targeted the Republican, and 25% were both positive and negative.[35] An analysis of all of the spots up to 4 October

[35] Source: *Wisconsin Advertising Project* [http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/edu/wiscad (7.06. 2009)].

shows that 73% of McCain's spots and 61% of Obama's spots were negative. In light of the above considerations, negativity in American campaigns is displaying an upward trend, since in 2004 at the same moment into the campaign, 64% of Bush's and 34% of Kerry's comments had negative connotations.[36]

An analysis of the process of professionalization in 2008 in the USA points to two areas where changes were most pronounced. These two areas are targeting and positioning of the electoral offer (shaping of the candidate's image). Both trends are particularly visible in the innovative ways the Internet is used as a tool in political marketing.

Changes in the quality and scale of targeting activities mainly focus on using a more differentiated, targeted formula in reaching the voters and delivering the campaign. For this reason, the constant mediatization of campaigns is accompanied with the development of direct and quasi-direct forms of marketing. In 2008 there was large-scale use of telemarketing, telephone calls via the Internet, emails sent to voters, door-to-door campaign, or organizing meetings with voters mostly based on the media events format. A record number of over 1 million volunteers worked for the Democrat.

Targeting in the campaign was characterized by greater precision thanks to a more detailed socio-demographic analysis, a tendency to choose smaller target groups, a rise in the number of new campaign communication categories, which were customized under a greater number of variables within the profiles of different voter groups. The US campaign environment is becoming less and less predictable, which further raises the importance of targeting activities, including the necessity of reaching those groups of voters, who so far seemed to be unconvinceable. The number of so-called "swing states" increased. There was a significant change in the level of party identification among the Republicans and fluctuations in the group of independents.[37] Of the 9 states, in which the Democrats succeeded (after their defeat in 2004), four of them for more than

[36] Source: ibid. The picture of 2004 is, however, obscured by the fact that a considerable number of negative ads was aired by the Democratic National Committee, whereas in 2008 a big portion of all the television airings in the country was endorsed by Barack Obama.

[37] In a Gallup poll taken on the eve of the 2008 election, among the likely voters, 39% of the respondents declared themselves as Democrats, 31% – as independent voters, 29% as Republicans.

In the same period four years earlier, these proportions were respectively: 37%, 24%, 39%. Source: [www.gallup.com (7.06.2009)]. In the *National Election Exit Poll* in 2008 39% of the respondents defined themselves as Democrats, 29% – as independent voters, 32% – as Republicans. In the previous elections, the same poll identified 37% of respondents as Democrats, 26% as independents, and 37% as Republicans. Source: *National Election Exit Poll* [www.cnnpolitics.com (8.06.2009)].

fifty years voted for the Republicans: Colorado (9),[38] Indiana (11), Virginia (13), North Carolina (15).[39]

The Democrat's success can be attributed to the improvement and increased efficiency of targeting activity. First of all, Obama conducted a more intensive campaign than the Republican in those states, which four years earlier had voted for George W. Bush. Secondly, Obama defeated his rival financially. In some "swing states", Obama spent four-times more money than McCain. In most of the 15 states, where both candidates advertised themselves on TV, Obama allocated more resources than McCain.[40] In the end, Obama's campaign showed greater efficiency in reaching American voters.[41] In the last weeks of the campaign, 34% of all the voters said they came in direct contact (in person, by email, telephone, snail-mail or otherwise) with Obama's campaign message and 28% with McCain's message. A study of the candidates' supporters showed an even bigger difference – 46% of potential Obama voters declared they came into contact with his campaign, whereas in the case of potential McCain voters, this was only 30%. The senator from Illinois reached 53% of people from the so-called "purple states" (undecided states[42]), whereas McCain – 44%. Obama was also very successful among voters under the age of 30 – as much as 40% of them reported they had come into contact with his campaign, whereas only 20% with McCain's campaign. The largest disparity occurred in the group of African-Americans (this however was no surprise in the face of the absolute domination of Obama in this category). Here, Obama's message reached 45% of this population, whereas McCain's – 12%. The success of Obama's targeting contributed to some extent to his victories in several categories (see Table 5).

Another professionalization trend was visible in the intensification of the activity of the different candidates for president, who aimed to display values, standards and behaviours, which are characteristic of pop culture. Politicians' images are more and more frequently shaped to emphasise features, which have so far been reserved for pop culture star (celebrities, who are famous for being famous).[43]

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[38] The figures in brackets indicate the number of electoral votes by each of the enumerated states.

[39] Remaing „regaind" states (in comparison to the 2005 election) were: Nevada (5), New Mexico (5), Iowa (7), Ohio (20), and Florida (27).

[40] Source: *Wisconsin Advertising Project* [http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/ edu/wiscad (9.06.2009)].

[41] Based on a Gallup poll [www.gallup.com (7.06.2009)]. The study was carried out by calling 2014 respondents on 27-28 October, 2008.

[42] The following states were included in the poll: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin.

[43] See D. Piontek: *Mediatyzacja polityki w tzw. mediach miękkich wiadomości. Polityczni celebryci jako nowy element komunikowania politycznego*. Paper delivered at a conference. Title: „Mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych", Uniwersytet Śląski, Wisła, 25–27.09.2006.

Table 5

Results of presidential elections in the United States
in selected socio-demographic categories in 2004 and 2008 (%)

Category	2008 election		2004 election	
	B. Obama	J. McCain	G.W. Bush	J. Kerry
Voters under 30	66	32	45	54
First-time voters	69	30	46	53
Women	56	43	48	53
Men	49	48	55	44
African-Americans	95	4	11	88
Latinos	67	31	44	53
White voters	43	55	44	53

Source: Authors' own work based on the National Election Exit Poll [www.cnnpolitics.com].

By working with the media, political celebrities willingly reveal information about their own private life and organize pseudo-events, which have no direct connection with politics. The main motive behind these events is the desire to attract the attention of commercial media, and to broaden the electorate with voters, who are less interested in politics. In the 2008 campaign, for the first time in history, was the issue of stardom so spectacularly raised in public debate. The Republican tried to discredit his rival by comparing him to a pop star.[44] An interesting indicator of this tendency is the participation of the candidates in shows and granting interviews usually combined with photo shoots mostly for women's entertainment magazines. For example, since 2000, John McCain took part in more than 30 TV shows.[45] Another manifestation of their celebritidom is how they try to directly penetrate into the world of pop culture and into mass culture's works and songs. In 2005, the Republican played in an episode of a fairly popular Hollywood comedy,[46] whereas the Democrat became the hero of an extremely popular song performed in the year of the election, sung by a Latin beauty soon hailed "Obama girl."[47] For a few weeks, the status of political

[44] In one of his spots he compared the Democrat to Paris Hilton and Britney Spears. Quotation: "Obama is the biggest celebrity in the world, but is he ready to lead?"

[45] He appeared 8 times in "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," 12 times is "Late Show with David Letterman," 10 times in "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," 3 times in "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." Source: [imdb.com (4.06.2009)].

[46] *Wedding Crashers* directed by David Dibkin.

[47] By election day, *Obama Girl* the music video had been watched on the Internet by almost 10 million people, today this number reached 14 million views (as of 19 April, 2009). In addition, the song was an inspiration for gadget producers who made t-shirts, mugs or posters with the image of the candidate with a wheedling beautiful actress. Candidates increasingly more often become the protagonists of the various songs, and their images were printed on millions of gadgets.

celebrity was granted by the media the Republican candidate for vice-president. Thanks to an element of surprise and the controversy associated with her candidacy, she achieved an enormous level of popularity in the media.[48]

Probably the most fateful change in election campaign practice initiated in 2008 was the use of the Internet.

The Internet revolution in the 2008 campaign

The potential of the Internet in American campaigns was recognized in the year 2000[49] and in 2004,[50] as well as during elections in other countries. However, before 2008, the World Wide Web did not play any significant role in election campaigns. Interest in websites containing basic information about candidates, their programmes, advertising spots, speeches and photos of politicians, had already been observed earlier. Banner ads, emails and videos were also used in election campaigns. Marketing activity on the Internet, as we can see, was nothing new. However, in 2008, the role of the Internet grew tremendously. Out of the most dynamic changes associated with the use of the Internet in the 2008 election, four issues need highlighting:

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[48] During the Republican Party Convention, she came up in 60% of all political information items (acc. The Pew Research Centre). Her speech at the Convention was viewed by 37.2 million TV viewers. As a comparison: the final of *American Idol* attracted an audience of 31.7 million. Source: E. Schor: *States of Confusion*. "The Guardian", 15 September 2008 [guardian.co.uk (8.06.2009)].

[49] During the Bush-Gore campaign, over 20% of voters visiting the candidates' official websites were undecided, actively seeking information to help them make a decision. In the Bush-Kerry campaign, the official websites of the candidates were opened three times more often than in previous presidential elections. Source: M. Kolczyński: *Strategie komunikowania politycznego*. Katowice 2007, p. 360.

[50] In the presidential election campaign in 2004, 37% of adult Americans used the Internet to obtain current information on the candidates' activities. The Internet was used to hold political discussions or engage in electoral activities. 18% of voters indicated the Internet as a vital source of information about the presidential campaign.

Slightly more than half of all Internet users (52%) obtained current information about the campaign from the Internet. One-third of all Internet users (35%) were involved in the presidential elections by sending emails (they mostly exchanged jokes about each of the candidates), 11% got involved directly in the campaign by making small donations or volunteering.

More than half of the people (52%), who got their information from the Internet, claimed that the information contained therein helped them make a decision.

Among them, every fourth person (23%) was convinced that it was the Internet which encouraged them to vote. As cited in: *The Internet and the 2004 Election*. The Pew Internet and & American Life Project [http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2005/The-internet-and--the-2004-election.aspx (15.04.2009)].

– the scale in which the Internet was used,
– unconventionality on the use of the Internet – previously known solutions were used alongside new tools (e.g. politicians in computer games);
– launching of a video campaign,
– campaigns on social networking sites.

The 2008 US election campaign was the first campaign in history which made such extensive use of the Internet. Sean P. Aune, one of the leading journalists of the mashable.com, the social media guide, identified 65 different official web sites, which are a source of information about the presidential campaign. Among them: websites of candidates, profiles on the most popular social networking sites, pages with polls and pre-election forecasts, YouTube channels, blogs.[51] The election campaign staff, especially that of the Democrat, tried to reach almost every voter over the Internet by trying to raise interest and involve him/her in the campaign. Candidate profiles were created on the websites of national and sexual minorities, and on theme-based, music or professional websites. The Obama campaign staff gathered a database containing emails of several million Internet users, who were interested in being kept up-to-date with the development of the campaign. Millions of people also signed-up as friends on the candidates' social networking profile (see Table 7), on Obama's YouTube channel 1,800 videos were published, which were subscribed by 30 thousand users.[52]

This is how innovative marketing tools, such as websites, email and video materials were used in the 2008 campaign. The website of the winner of the presidential election used a very unconventional way to reach its voters. It attracted and still attracts millions of Obama's supporters.[53] The official website of Barack Obama [www.barackobama.com] was very well developed and refined in the smallest detail not only with the intention to win voters, but also to raise funds and gather ideas on how to run the campaign. Many areas inside the web-

[51] See more in [http://mashable.com/2008/11/03/election-day/ (23.04.2009)].

[52] John McCain's YouTube channel posted a total of 320 videos, which were subscribed by 3 thousand users. Data as of November 2008.

[53] The official website of John McCain [www.johnmccain.com] is very traditional in its structure and posted content. It gives the impression of an extremely pragmatic website.

It lacks any social networking or entertainment items. Instead, what is clearly visible, are tangible campaign slogans, political programs, plans to revitalise the US job market, health care system. It also contains official polls and predictions. One of the key components intended to activate potential voters is the Republican's own, up-to-date blog, where Internet users can post their own comments.

The site also featured electoral spots, speeches and official photos. In the last days of the campaign, there was an increase in the number of messages attacking the rival.

For a long time after the elections, McCain's page had a letter posted thanking all his supporters for voting for him. Currently, McCain's photo is displayed on the website with an option to donate money.

Obama's site still operates and is constantly updated.

site bore the inscription "Obama everywhere," which very literally gave away how the website was structured.[54]

The website featured a blog, which was updated daily by new entries, photos and videos. The readers of the blog were not only observers – they shared their stories and commented on the materials being posted. A few hundred comments could appear in one day. Readers often interacted with each other, talking about social and political issues or by sharing their experiences about the campaign. The website also featured Barack TV, which featured professional productions about the candidate (his campaign) – events, speeches, family stories, and the stories of ordinary people talking about their jobs and their lives.

The website helped reach cell phone and iPhone users. By signing up to "Join Obama Mobile," the cell phone user received current information in text message form about the most important events of the campaign.[55] In addition, there was a special iPhone application which provided current information about the location of Obama's nearest electoral office and about upcoming campaign events. Users could also create their own lists of contacts, which were automatically sorted by the states which saw the fiercest battles for the Democrat's votes.

Obama's official website played a significant role in the financing of the campaign. On the one hand, it was possible to very simply donate any sum of money, on the other – you could open your own profile to raise funds for the election campaign yourself. By setting up an individual portal, the user predicted upfront what amount he could gather, and then invited his friends and family to support the campaign. This public declaration – uncoerced and individually made – was a kind of psychological guarantee to raise both funds and find more supporters.[56] Donations and participation in the plan was presented through a specially designed "barometer," which showed progress in accomplishing the plan. A ranking of people collecting donations was an additional incentive.

The Internet activity of the web page developers very clearly made the distinction between US, i.e. Obama supporters, and THEM, i.e. the opponents

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[54] The subject of the page existed everywhere – on Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Digg, Twitter, Eventful, BlackPlanet, AsianAve, My Batanga, Faithbase, Eons, Glee, MiGente, DNC Partybuilder. The user was redirected to each of these portals from the official website.

[55] Text messages sent via cell phones during the 2008 campaign, were an important and spontaneous channel of election information transfer. Close to half of those voting for Obama declared this to be the way they sent information associated with the presidential election. Such a method for information sharing was practiced by less than a third of McCain's supporters. On election day, 8% of the electorate shared their emotions with their loved ones via text message and every fourth person in this group was under 29. Source: *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*. The Pew Internet and & American Life Project [http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/6--The-Internets-Role-in-Campaign-2008.aspx?r=1 (15.04.2009 r.)].

[56] In accordance with the rule of consequence, after making a choice you should keep to your word. In this way you retain a sense of being honest and consistent. R. Cialdini: *Wywieranie wpływu na ludzi. Teoria i praktyka*. Przeł. B. Wojciszke. Gdańsk 2007.

– McCain's supporters. A specially designed e-mail virus served to neutralise anonymous messages containing information that undermined the patriotism of the next president. A petition addressed to Obama, which asked them to send in emails which could help convince the undecided, was created. The website also featured ready-made conversation scenarios, which served to convince undecided voters to cast their vote for Barack Obama.

Obama's website was refined in the smallest detail. The website made every effort not to bore its potential user as it was very intuitive and made using all its available options very simple and easy. Each tab opened several others which further led to subsequent pages. Searching through all the pages consumed a lot of time, since many of them tempted the user to get involved somehow by e.g. watching a movie, checking friends' websites, reading petitions, joining a social networking website, listening to the latest campaign clip with the participation of famous stars etc. Obama's campaign staff gave potential voters the opportunity to download election posters, movies, advertisement spots, logos, songs, pictures,[57] get involved in discussions on Internet forums and join social groups, creating thus an enormous network of supporters and sympathizers.

The professionalism of political marketing also depended on precise targeting – i.e. an individual approach to potential voters. The potential voter was made to feel unique from the moment of accessing the website. The user had to register, enter his/her state, town, zip code and was even prompted to set up an individual profile. Emails sent to Obama's supporters were signed only with Obama's first name, which also contributed to a feeling of closeness between the president and the electorate. During discussions on Internet forums, users often spoke about Barack, and not Obama, the senator, the Democrat or candidate for president.

A special role in the 2008 campaign can be attributed to electronic mail.[58] McCain's and Obama's pages contained email addresses of the respective candidates and information about the possibility to email either candidate. Voters could also register on the official websites of the candidates. Campaign updates or advertising materials were then sent to the email address left by the user (e-mail electioneering). Obama's staff had amassed over 13 million email addresses in their database.[59] Among the email users, 48% of Obama's and 38%

[57] On Obama's website, the photographs were not presented, however, in the traditional way, but as a slide show. We could easily pause the show to take a closer look at a picture which caught our attention. A "Share this" button allowed us to send a link to our friends and thus spread the Democrat's image.

[58] Use of email in 2008 was the dominant activity of adult Internet users in the United States (74.2%; this value increased by 5.2% in relation to 2007). According to: *MRI's Fall 2008 and Fall 2007 Survey of the American Consumer* [http://www.mediamark.com/PDF/MRIPR_112008_InternetActivities.pdf (10.05.2009)].

[59] For comparison, four years earlier, John Kerry amassed 3 million email addresses,

of McCain's supporters received messages sent directly by the electoral staff of their candidates.[60]

Candidates for the office of president also made perfect use of other commonly known marketing techniques. Extensive and effective use was made of search engine positioning. Positioning was a way to use current events to encourage Internet users to visit the official websites of either Obama or McCain.[61] SEM (Search Engine Marketing) was used by the election staff to protect their candidates' image.[62] For a certain period of time into the campaign, after entering "Barack Obama" into a search engine, a link which read "Obama for president? Why not find out more about McCain" redirected the user to his webpage. The link was one of the best positioned links on the Internet at that time…

Barack Obama became the first candidate in presidential election history who advertised himself in video games. Such a solution provided him the opportunity of increasing his chances of winning younger voters (mainly aged between 18 and 34).[63] No later than in January of 2007, a group called "Obama for President" formed in the game "Second Life," which organized a virtual music festival, supporting the black politician on his historical road to presidency. The Democratic nominee bought billboards in 9 popular games of Electronic Arts – a giant in the computer games market.[64] The productions were available

whereas the former Governor of Vermont Howard Dean had a list of 600 thousand addresses. As cited in: J. Antonio Vargas: *Obama raised half a billion online*. "Washington Post", 20 October 2008 [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html (7.06.2009)].

[60] *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*. The Pew Internet and & American Life Project. [http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/6-The-Internets-Role-in-Campaign-2008.aspx?r=1 (15.04.2009)].

[61] As an example, after the bankruptcy of Lehman Bros., after entering the phrase "Lehman Bankrupt" into Google's search engine, the sponsored links list on the right contained a link that encouraged those worried about the US market to visit the site of Barack Obama and find out about his plans to heal the economy. This was back when the word "Lehman" was receiving record amounts of hits in Google statistics.

The United States was in 4th place as a country; 7 US cities were in the top ten. As cited in: [http://www.google.com/trends?q=lehman (4.04.2009)].

[62] As an example, after Sarah Palin's comment appeared in the press, in which she claimed that Barack Obama had links with the terrorist William Ayers, the reaction of the Democrat's staff was immediate. After typing a few keywords into the search engine ("Obama", "Ayers", "terrorist") a link to the site FightTheSmears appeared which slammed all the rumours that had appeared in this respect.

The link was so constructed that you did not have to enter the website to find out that the information was actually untrue (the phrase "Obama-Ayers--Myth" appeared).

[63] The image of the Democrat appeared in 18 Electronic Arts games. The Republican did not embark upon such a means of promotion.

[64] Madden 09, NBA Live 08, Burnout Paradise, Nascar 09, Need For Speed Carbon, Need For Speed Pro Street, NFL on Tour, NHL 09 and Skate. Apart from the official computer games, which promoted Obama, the president's fans also created their own games.

only in 10 states, where it was possible to vote before 4 November and in the so-called "swing states."[65]

Video files posted on the Internet enjoyed a high level of interest in the 2008 campaign.[66] One quarter of Americans declare they watched election-themed video content – speeches and interviews with the candidates, advertising spots, debates. This number tripled compared to 2004. The most numerous group in this category were young people under the age of 30. Online video content enjoyed the least interest among the oldest Americans, however, even among them, 7% saw at least one clip (Table 6).

Table 6

Popularity of video materials per age group

Online videos watched during the campaign	Total	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–64	+65
Candidate's speeches	13	22	17	13	10	5
Interviews with candidates	13	23	18	11	9	3
Campaign-related advertising materials	12	25	9	10	10	4
Debates between the candidates	12	20	16	10	9	2
At least one of the above	24	41	28	20	21	7

Retrieved from: *Internet's Broader Role In Campaign 2008. Social Networking and Online Videos Off.* The Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press [http://people-press.org/report/384/; (23 April 2009)].

Research demonstrates that people who watch videos on the Internet seem more engaged in the campaign than those who get their information from other sources. About 30% of voters declare that Internet video materials allowed them to keep up-to-date with the events of the presidential campaign. 75% of them claim that this particular type of message made them feel closer to the ongoing campaign events.[67] Activity on YouTube played an important role in develop-

One of the most popular examples was Super Obama World which both in name and strategy was similar to Super Mario Bros. Instead of coins, Obama collected American flags. The game is available at: http://superobamaworld.com/ (15.04.2009).

[65] *The online battles for president*. BBC News, 15 October, 2008 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7671626.stm (15.04.2009)].

[66] The opportunity to post videos on the Internet is taken advantage of in various ways. Firstly, advertisement videos can be posted to promote a candidate.

Secondly, archival materials of debates, television appearances, which have already been presented in other media, can be published, and thanks to the Internet, they can be repeatedly played over again or viewed at a different time than they were presented on TV. Thirdly, the Internet can be a tool used for live streaming of debates or conventions.

[67] In October 2008, a Visual Networking Index survey was conducted to evaluate the influence of watching Internet video content on the involvement of Americans in politics. 62% of those surveyed indicated the Internet as a source of up-to-date information about the ongoing election campaign. Only TV scored higher (82%).

ing this trend.[68] Politicians posted their electoral spots there and made special appeals to Internet users.[69] Many supporters of both candidates also posted their own videos. This fact leads one to reflect on the role of campaign staff in endorsing these kinds of activities. It is highly likely that some of those videos – despite the apparent features of amateur production – have been professionally prepared by the campaign staff or have at least been developed based on their inspiration. In this particular case, we are dealing with a new, manipulative and rather ethically questionable form of political marketing.

Viral marketing activity has been a major success, especially for the Democrat.[70]

The phenomenon involved Internet users sending out links to videos, photos, videos, distributing interesting information via Internet and encouraging others to join as "friends" in social networks. Using the potential of the Internet on such a mass scale allowed the campaign staff of Barack Obama to conduct intense electoral activities in parallel in 50 states.

Use of social networks (Facebook,[71] MySpace) in the 2008 campaign has by no doubt been a novelty. On the one hand, the candidates set up their accounts

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Interestingly enough, Democrats and Republicans demonstrated different behaviours when searching for interesting videos – Obama's supporters more often used social networking sites, standard sites and regular information websites, while McCain's supporters used Internet search engines more often. Supporters of the Democratic Party proved to be more involved. As cited in: *Cisco Visual Networking Index Pulse Survey: Online Video and Political Engagement Highlights, Visual Networking Index*. [http://www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/collateral/ns341/ns525/ns537/ns705/ns827/ES_WP.html (15.04.2009)].

[68] This is an open website, founded in 2005, which lets you post video clips, movies, small productions, and also insert the materials posted there on your MySpace, Facebook or similar profiles. It is advertised under the slogan "Broadcast Yourself!" and is becoming increasingly more popular. Ryan Junee, the Platform's manager, noted on his blog that 20 hours of new video content is posted every minute. This number has tripled in the past two years [http://www.youtube.com/blog?month=5&year=2009 (30.05.2009)].

[69] Just before the end of the election campaign, YouTube removed McCain's official videos. They were removed upon the request of those companies, which claimed a violation of the copyright law governing the productions posted by the Republican's campaign staff. The claim referred in particular to those fragments which were taken from TV newsmagazines.

McCain's staff filed an official complaint. However, YouTube has the obligation to verify the legality of the files posted, and if a claim is not justified, YouTube has 10-14 days to repost the files. This complaint processing period could have proved to be a major hurdle for the McCain staff to overcome especially during the final and most important battles during the election campaign.

[70] This is a specific type of marketing activity, aiming to inspire the voters to become more active. The purpose of this inspiration is the spontaneous distribution by the recipients of information related to the subject of the marketing campaign. The underlying building block for this type of activity is the fact that people trust their family and friends. As a result, information passed on in this way is more reliable.

[71] Barack Obama hired Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook, to support him in his online campaign activity.

on social networking sites.[72] Even before the primary part of the campaign, in early 2008, one in ten Americans under 30 added one of the candidates as friends to their profiles.[73] This way the Internet users could make contact with other sympathisers, download photos, spots, applications or other material proposed by the campaign staff. Barack Obama set up profiles on less relevant portals as well. Their reach was not wide, but altogether they formed a significantly extended long tail of the social web. AsianAve and MyBatanga are social websites aimed specifically at the largest immigrant communities – Asians and Hispanics. Obama's presence was also noticed on baby boomers generation and sexual minority websites. The Democrat was active on Digg, a site which is used to assess and share information posted on the Internet. Another website where Obama was active was LinkedIn, the world's largest career networking website. Obama turned out to be more effective in attracting followers on most of the major social network sites[74] (Table 7).

Table 7

The number of declared supporters of Barack Obama and John McCain on MySpace and Facebook

Site	Candidate	
	Barack Obama	John McCain
MySpace	840 thousand "friends"	218 thousand "friends"
Facebook	2,5 million "friends"	630 thousand "friends"

Retrieved from: Authors' own work. Data from after the election campaign – November 2008.

On the other hand, potential voters used their own profiles in the election campaign, supporting thus the campaign staff; one in five Americans has an account in one of the existing social networking sites. These sites proved to be a great place for potential voters to release their creative potential. They were created by their authors from start to finish – from the name, address, through posted video footage, photos, comments, all the way to the political reflections they expressed. They were some of the most popular sites on the Web, which

[72] The social networking site My.BarackObama.com, which the user was redirected to from the Democrat's official website, showed the most involvement. The user could set up his/her own account, open a blog, post photos or videos, search for different information or form local groups. The site also featured an interesting option allowing users to reach undecided voters from the neighbourhood, in order to convince them to cast their votes in the presidential election in favour of Barack Obama.

[73] *Internet's Broader Role In Campaign 2008. Social Networking and Online Videos Off.* The Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press [http://people-press.org/report/384/ (23.04.2009 r.)].

[74] "The Washington Post" called Barack Obama the king of social networks. See: [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2007/10/06/barack_obama_social_networking.html (7.06.2009)].

hosted political discourse (see: Chart 1). Social networking sites connected friends, but above all, a candidate's supporters, which allowed the sympathisers to mutually reaffirm themselves in their support through online discussion. Obama's supporters were much more active in this respect (see: Chart 2), which is probably because the Democrat was more popular among the youngest of the voters.

In conclusion, the Internet played a major role in the election campaign of 2008, especially in the campaign strategy of Barack Obama. The change was revolutionary, the quality of the methods and techniques employed was improved. All this served four purposes:

1. Reaching young voters. Every third person who sent politically-themed content during the election campaign via the Internet, was under 25, and more than half – under 35.[75] Dynamic growth was seen among young people in their treatment of the Internet as a source of election-related information. The campaign staff focussed their innovative marketing solutions on this group in particular – making use of social networking accounts, text messages, iPhone applications, computer games, blogs (see: Table 8). Some of the solutions employed were used according to the concept of relationship marketing and served to build long-term loyalty with regard to the candidate or party.

Table 8

Online activity of adult Americans who used the Internet for political purposes (i.e. purposes relating to the presidential campaign) in 2008 – broken down into youth-specific activity and general activity (%)

Age group	18–29	30–49	50–64	+65
Online users of political content	72	65	51	22
Online activity, which involved all age groups				
Watching online political videos	67	62	54	40
Acquiring and sharing news about politics or the elections	44	44	41	47
Online activity dominated by young people				
Political involvement through social networks	49	22	7	2
Sharing personal reflections and comments related to the presidential campaign	40	21	17	9
Subscribing to content (such as registering to receive e-mails with up-to-date campaign information)	32	21	19	15

Retrieved from: *The Pew Internet &American Life Project Post-Election Survey*, November–December 2008

[75] *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*. The Pew Internet and & American Life Project. [http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/6-The-Internets-Role-in-Campaign-2008.aspx?r=1 (8.06.2009)].

2. Mobilization of supporters and voters (see: Chart 2).[76] The refined tools used by the candidates on the Internet effectively encouraged potential voters to be active – not only on the Internet, but also in the real world (e.g. by organizing meetings with voters). The Democrat nominee managed to create a mobilized group of supporters, who were engaged and ready to share their ideas, to solidarize and to be active in various fields, drawing more and more sympathisers in the process. Identification with this movement was already a sort of declaration to vote for Obama. In keeping with the "foot-in-the-door" rule, voters willingly engaged in small projects, which were easy and fun, and contributed immensely to the campaign's key objective, i.e. casting a vote in the presidential election.[77]

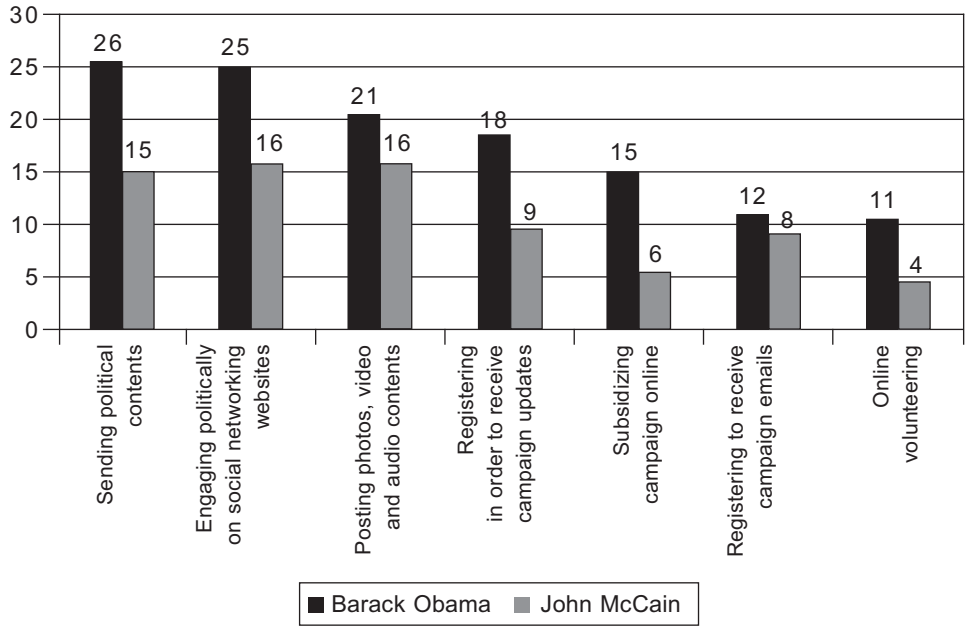

Chart 2. Electoral online activity of John McCain's and Barack Obama's supporters

Retrieved from: *The Pew Internet &American Life Project Post-Election Survey*, November–December 2008.

3. Fundraising. Voters could donate any amount of money for the cam-

[76] There were more Internet users among John McCain's and the Republican Party's supporters that among supporters of Barack Obama and the Democrats (83% vs. 76%). This is due to the fact that McCain's supporters have wider access to education and earn more money, which are essential predictors in determining Internet access potential. Despite this, Obama's supporters were more involved in online political activity.

[77] For more information about the "foot-in-the-door" mechanism, see: R. Cialdini: *Wywieranie wpływu…*

paign very simply and quickly. Small donations, which most of the Internet users could afford, turned out to be the most effective. 6% of all Americans donated money for the campaign over the Internet. In 2004 it was 2%.[78] Over 3 million donators and 6.5 million dollars donated over the Internet ultimately generated a total of more than 500 million USD on Barack Obama's account. 6 million of all the transactions made were equal to or less than 100 USD. The average online donation transferred to Obama's account was 80 USD. Statistically, one person made more than 1 donation.[79]

4. Monitoring public opinion. The interactivity of the Internet has created the means to directly monitor the response of potential voters to campaign staff activity, and also to measure the moods of the audience receiving political content. The staff could respond almost instantaneously by e.g. calling off an action on the basis of the feedback contained in comments to video materials, based on blogger's reflections or discussions on forums. It is also an additional source of inspiration for political organizations and improves the process of diagnosing the needs and requirements of the electorate.

Conclusion

Professionalisation of the election campaign, treated as one of the aspects of modernization, is characterized by a convergence and standardization of practices and concepts used by political organizations.

This process is to a large degree determined by American innovations, which are adapted to suit local institutional and cultural conditions.

An analysis of the process of professionalization of the presidential campaign in the USA in 2008 confirms the continuation of the previously identified trends, whose common denominator is mediatization and political marketing. This process mostly involved the intensification of activity and improvement of effectiveness in reaching potential, pre-selected groups of voters (*targeting*),[80] as

[78] *The Internet and the 2008 election.* The Pew Internet and & American Life Project. [http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2008/The-internet-and-the-2008-election.aspx (23.04.2009)].

[79] J. Antonio Vargas: *Obama raised half a billion online.* "Washington Post", 20 October 2008 [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html: (23.04.2009)].

[80] The increasing intensity of targeting activities (also via the Internet) can be seen as a contributor to better turnout. In 2008, 131.2 million people cast their vote, i.e. approx. 9 million more than in the previous election. A significantly higher turnout reported among African-

well as improved shaping of the candidate's image (pop-culture trend in positioning).

Most innovative of all was the use of new media, especially the potential of the Internet. *Online* activity is responsible for a significant stimulation of the flow of information about the election campaign (social networking and YouTube in particular) and a greater involvement of the youngest voters, which contributed to more effective fundraising and greater mobilization of the electorate.

The American 2008 elections also confirmed that the Internet has the potential of establishing and sustaining the relationship between the political organization and voters in the long run (e.g. B. Obama's supporters movement). This is an important and interesting aspect of professionalization. On the one hand it fits well into the increasingly more popular relationship marketing concept, and on the other, it is in contradiction to the social changes taking place, which are characterized by a retreat from various forms of political activity (the decline of party loyalty or society's distancing itself from politics).

Americans – 13% compared to 11% in 2004 and 10% in 2000. Source: *National Election Exit Poll* [www.cnnpolitics.com (8.06.2009)].