

# Campaign Communication and Political Marketing

Philippe J. Maarek

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

3105 25 139

# Birth and rise of political marketing in the United States

There can be no doubt that the genesis of modern political marketing is entirely rooted in the history of political communication in the United States. Owing, mainly, to the early development of mass media and later the Internet, the United States was the first country to experiment with modern political communication techniques, and then apply them systematically. These methods have since been imitated throughout the entire world, western democracies being the first to adopt them, as they are quick to share new improvements in media systems.<sup>1</sup>

Though the intent of this book is by no means to trace the history of political marketing across the globe, we will nevertheless devote this preliminary chapter to a brief overview of its development in the United States, where it all began.

US domination of modern political marketing was quickly established. Within less than a decade, between the presidential elections of 1952 and 1960, it became an incontrovertible practice, the recent years confirming its significant expansion. But this rapid growth owes nothing to chance. We will first demonstrate that it was fostered by several characteristics inherent to the political information system in the United States before examining the main growth stages of modern American political marketing from infancy (1952/1960), through the formative years (1964/76), to today's relative "maturity."

## 1.1 The grounds for development of modern political marketing in the United States

Three main factors explain the early development of political marketing in the US: its electoral system, its tradition of "political public relations," and the rapid expansion of modern media.

### 1.1.1 The particular nature of the electoral system

One of the main causes of the fast growth of political marketing in the United States certainly has to do with the system of primaries in the early stages of presidential election campaigns.

The two major political parties that have shared the favors of American voters since the nineteenth century choose their candidates during their party conventions, the delegates of which are not selected solely by regular party supporters (few in number, except in election years). There are two ways of appointing delegates, depending on the rules that apply in a given state:

- During caucuses, meetings of the local political party members or sympathizers. In the past, these gatherings received little media attention, since they were a relatively small-scale event.
- During the primaries, in existence in some states since 1903, which are virtually early elections. Traditionally, the first primary takes place in mid-February in the small New England state of New Hampshire, thus giving its inhabitants a vastly disproportionate influence in the country's political agenda. Some of these primaries, including the one in New Hampshire, are "open," meaning that any registered voter may vote for the candidate of his choice, despite the voter's stated party preference, while in the other "closed" primaries, ballots must be cast only within the voters' registered political preference.<sup>2</sup>

By its very nature, the primaries system encourages the consumption of immense amounts of political information:

- First, on a quantitative level, given that the primaries system duplicates each electoral campaign, the primaries campaign sometimes lasts longer than the actual campaign for the seat. For instance, the presidential primaries run from January to June every four years, whereas the actual campaign starts only mid-July, after the appointment of the candidates by their party convention, and runs until the first Tuesday in November.
- Second, on a qualitative level, since to be designated as party candidate, politicians must not only obtain the endorsement of a few followers, but must undertake a full-scale campaign among their party's sympathizers to persuade them to tick their name on the primary ballot, rather than another member of their own party, with whom they are bound to share many of the same opinions. This kind of campaign therefore paradoxically requires a much greater public relations and political communication effort from a qualitative standpoint than the actual campaign to come: it is considerably more difficult to convince voters to choose one candidate over another who expresses similar political ideas than it is to convince them not to vote for a politician from an opposition party, in which case arguments can easily be based on ideological differences.

The influence of the mix of "open" and "closed" primaries carries some weight, particularly when no party candidate clearly emerges from the start, and may also endanger the candidate more or less tacitly endorsed by party officials. For instance, in 1992, initially an obscure outsider alongside his seasoned Democratic opponents, Bill Clinton slowly rose above them through the primaries trail to become the Democratic candidate.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, among the Republicans, John McCain's first attempt to run for president in 2000 was initially aided by some "open" primaries, in which he outbalanced a more traditionally positioned George W. Bush: more than one Democrat sympathizer was then able to cast his vote for him!<sup>4</sup>

This basic fact alone explains the over-consumption of political information in the United States, and also the speed with which new political marketing methods are adopted. This over-consumption has continued to rise from year to year due to the increasing number of primary elections throughout the country. During the 1970s, several states decided to ingratiate themselves with the media coverage that goes with holding a primary election, rather than to hold a simple caucus. In 1976 only 29 states held primaries and/or caucuses, whereas 40 were held in 1992 and now 63 in 2008 including 38 primaries! Today, the primaries system had been implemented in most states, with very few exceptions.<sup>5</sup> The most influential of the caucuses takes place in Iowa, mainly because it occurs traditionally at the beginning of the electoral year, before the New Hampshire primary, and also because not only regular activists, but also sympathizers, may take part in it.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, it must be noted that the focus on primaries and caucuses has annoyed many states which are now trying to dispute the chronological precedence of the Iowa Caucus and the New Hampshire Primary. To continue to be first, for instance, the New Hampshire primaries had to be moved forward to January 27 in 2004 and even to January 8 in 2008! The rush to organize primaries – or caucuses – as early as possible certainly changes the balance of the contest: with such an accelerated process, the gradual emergence of "outsiders" over several months has become less and less easy to achieve.

### 1.1.2 The tradition of elections for all public offices

As soon as the United States came into existence, when it broke away from British colonial rule, it became routine to hold elections for most major public offices: from the local sheriff, mayor or judge, to the president. Although a relatively new country, the United States was forced relatively early on to practice what might be called political communication: the obligation to use a minimum of public relations methods applied to politics in order to be chosen for any elected office. A strong executive branch, with the president elected by universal suffrage (although a two-step process), enhanced this tendency, because it created both a bond and an obligation to campaign.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the nineteenth century, as soon as railroad tracks were laid across the country, potential presidents got on board trains to meet



their voters. Who does not recall Abraham Lincoln's famous speeches delivered from the rear platform of the campaign train, scenes reconstructed in John Ford's famous movie *Young Mister Lincoln*?

By the same token, the use of radio for political communication increased rapidly in the twentieth century. The first regular radio stations were founded in 1920, and as early as 1924, John W. Davis and Calvin Coolidge bought airtime in order to broadcast their speeches. The first political spots as we know them today appeared as early as 1928, sponsored by the Republican Party, while Democrat Governor and Senator Huey Long made extensive use of radio speeches as early as 1924.<sup>7</sup> President Roosevelt's well-known radio "Fireside Chats" were a natural part of this tradition of political PR: since he was directly elected by the citizens, he felt he owed them regular accounts of his acts, reaching an audience of more than 60 million listeners in the 1940s. But he was also concerned with measuring their efficiency and Roosevelt himself was the first president to commission public opinion polls on a regular basis to assess the evolution of his popularity.

This tradition of widespread political communication formed a very fertile ground for the development of modern political marketing in the United States. The over-consumption of political information in there is in fact partly a result of the increase in the number of primaries for local elections: already in 1917, primaries had been held for either local or national elections in all the states of the union but four. Nowadays, in many states, primaries are organized for the election of state governors and mayors of major cities, New York City being a case in point. These factors further increase opportunities for political marketing to develop: in 2010 the American Political Consultants Association had no fewer than 1,331 members, not counting those that were unaffiliated.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.3 The early development of modern media in the United States

The third element that fostered the expansion of modern political marketing was the rapid growth of modern media in the United States with regard to all the other democratic countries. In 1952, there was already a television set in nearly 40% of American homes. This figure rose to 60% in the northeastern states. In France, by comparison, the figure of half a million sets was not reached until 1957 (about 4%).

A related factor is the large degree of freedom in commercial advertising in all American media, a freedom that political marketing has always exploited to its advantage. This explains why the growth of American political marketing has always paralleled the evolution of the broadcast media, and particularly its use of commercial spots. Most other countries in the world, including the major democracies, heavily regulate political advertising, or even forbid it, which in turn has delayed the political use of audiovisual methods.

The same phenomenon occurred in the 1990s with the fast growth of Internet use in the United States, way before its expansion around the world. The Internet burst

into the US presidential campaign in 1996 and its share of political communication has never ceased to grow.

## 1.2 The main stages in the evolution of political marketing in the United States

We will review these stages with special emphasis on the successive presidential elections. Of course, political marketing is not limited to them, as we have already mentioned, and more than one innovation first took place in local elections in one state or another. But the fact is that only when new methods of political communication are used during presidential elections, with their incomparable media visibility, do they really become a permanent addition to the tools of the trade.

We will also take a keener look at the use of audiovisual media, namely television, by the political parties, because these media are the most representative tools of modern American political marketing. Naturally, the evolution of political marketing in the United States is not limited to audiovisual media. For instance, direct marketing by mail was also used for the first time in the United States as early as 1952, when a mailing campaign was organized in order to help choose which issues Eisenhower's campaign should focus on. When appropriate, we shall therefore also mention other innovations in political marketing in the United States, with a particular emphasis on the Internet in recent years.

### 1.2.1 Infancy: 1952–1960

#### 1.2.1.1 1952: Instant success for Eisenhower and Nixon

The 1952 presidential election marks the start of modern political marketing in the United States. For the first time, the two main parties earmarked a special budget for political communication. To support General Eisenhower's candidacy, the Republicans went so far as to enlist the services of the public relations firm BBDO (Batten, Barton, Durstin, and Osborne). They also hired one of the pioneers of audiovisual commercial marketing, Thomas Rosser Reeves Jr., at the time an employee of the Ted Bates Agency.

Access to television broadcasting at the time meant that politicians had to "buy back" television shows: United States media regulations allow politicians to preempt television time on any network, at any moment, the sole obligation being adequate financial compensation for the producers of the show which had been scheduled to be broadcast.

Both parties put together several long television broadcasts during which their candidates either addressed voters at length, or debated with other politicians who more or less cleverly played up the candidate's image. But Reeves' influence on the Republican campaign was essential: at his request, around 30 commercials were designed, identical in style to ones for consumer goods, a fact that at the time spurred



more than one jab at Eisenhower as a pure product of merchandising. These short, twenty-second tailor-made spots, entitled *Eisenhower answers America*, showed one or two ordinary citizens asking the General a question, of course carefully prepared beforehand by the future president's advisor, showing him at his best, often answered by humorously sidestepping the question. These spots were aired among the usual group of commercials, before or in the midst of the most popular television programs, which thus allowed a much broader target to be reached than the far fewer number of viewers interested in political newscasts and programs.<sup>9</sup> In this way, according to Reeves, the candidates could benefit, at no extra expense, from the efforts made by the television networks to increase their audience. Also for the first time, Reeves directly influenced the substance of political discourse, imposing on "Ike" a simplification of his message and a change in its very substance.

As to simplification, while working for Ted Bates, Reeves had been one of the first to promote the "Unique Selling Proposition" (USP) for consumer products. Transferring this method to the presidential campaign, he requested that Eisenhower never develop more than one category of arguments in any given speech, press conference or television appearance.

And as to changes in substance, for the first time, several public opinion polls were commissioned to decide on the issues that would be developed in the spots. One poll, to which we will return later, even tried to correlate differences in voter behavior with geographical factors (this was another first, since it was done through direct mail).

Eisenhower was also required to change his very physical appearance, with the idea that he should try to conceal his age. He was also asked to use only notes for his speeches, and not the fully written texts that had been drawn up for him that he would simply read in front of the cameras.

While the Republican Party's use of modern marketing was right on target from the start, the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson, was hindered by a series of errors in judgment and spells of bad luck, which meant that his television campaign broadcasts were confined to night-owls. His advisors thought that quantity was preferable over quality and calculated that, rather than investing in a limited number of (more expensive) television shows on prime time, it was better to count on regularity and quantity: they booked half-hour shows twice a week, broadcast between half past ten and eleven in the evening. Bad luck came into play when Stevenson's excellent acceptance speech during the Democratic Convention, broadcast live by the major networks, was only watched by the same late-night audience. Prior to his speech, the whole first part of the program was devoted to the state-by-state vote of all the Democratic delegates, all of whom took their time, in order to remain longer on their constituency's television screens!

The presidential elections of 1952 will also go down in the history of modern political communication as the first time when ... animals were used. Vice-presidential candidate Richard Nixon was publicly accused of having received a large quantity and variety of gifts while holding elected office. He appeared on television and gave the now famous address in which, "looking the viewers in the eye," he admitted

having once, but only once, accepted a gift: a puppy that his 6-year-old daughter had immediately loved and christened "Checkers," and that, "regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it." The so-called "Checkers Speech" reached nearly 50% of the television sets then in American homes, thereby paving the way to the vice-presidency for Nixon.

#### *1.2.1.2 1956: triumph of the political commercial*

On the basis of the experience gained in the previous campaign, the communication consultants of the two main parties decided to abandon the practice of half-hour television broadcasts for the presidential campaign of 1956. Instead, they made massive use of short advertising spots, strategically broadcast as close as possible to the most popular television shows as previously advocated by Reeves.

That year, 1956, was also the year of the first so-called negative commercials. Just as in ordinary commercial advertising practices, the Democrats' marketing consultants (Norman, Craig, and Kummel) suggested presenting the opponent (Eisenhower, who was running for a second term) in a negative light. Their technique was elementary: to use spots from Eisenhower's 1952 television campaign. Whenever the General made specific promises, they simply added a voice-over that whispered "How's that, General?" before demonstrating that he had not kept his promise during his term. This negative campaign is still known today under this very name: "How's that, General?"

#### *1.2.1.3 1960, or the birth of the decisive debate*

The campaign that led John Fitzgerald Kennedy to the presidency is a model one. From the start, Kennedy had the insight to enlist the help of two brilliant public relations consultants, Pierre Salinger, who managed relations with the printed press, and Leonard Reinsch, who took care of television. It seems that Kennedy himself was the first major political figure willing to undergo intensive media training to learn how to act in front of the television cameras and this was a considerable asset during the famous televised debates with Richard Nixon.<sup>10</sup>

Because of these debates, 1960 is generally considered as the birth of modern political communication. At the time, a very narrow difference in voter intentions separated the candidates. Nixon agreed to the idea of holding a series of four televised debates with Kennedy, thinking that he would easily come out victorious, since he was much more experienced than his opponent (although his consultants had advised him that Kennedy, less well-known, probably stood to gain more).<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Nixon performed poorly in the first debate. He did not stand up to the comparison with his younger adversary: the latter's ease was obvious to the viewers. In truth, it was not Richard Nixon's luckiest day: he was suffering from a knee inflammation, had a fever, and was physically worn down, which was quite perceptible on the screen, in contrast to the young and sun-tanned Kennedy. Nixon's make-up was also deficient, making the vice-president look as if he had neglected to shave and the sharper lenses of the new cameras on the set were not to his advantage on that point. To add to his uneasiness, the studio was apparently too warm for a man who was



already running a temperature, and Nixon was caught perspiring and wiping his forehead, quite a demeaning image for the audience.<sup>12</sup>

Part of his uneasiness also derived from an error in judgment: believing that the audience would increase from one debate to the next, he had agreed to dedicate the first one to topics he was least fond of, keeping his favorite, foreign policy, for the last broadcast. But he was quite mistaken. It was estimated that about 70 to 75 million people watched the first debate, a figure that was never to be matched: the audience grew smaller and smaller, most of the citizens being satisfied with their first impression for the duration of the campaign.

Since Nixon missed the presidency by fewer than 100,000 votes, a ridiculously narrow margin on the scale of the United States, the first debate has generally been considered the reason for his defeat. Even if the real influence of this debate was never really assessed, it is likely to have contributed in part the minimal difference in scores between the two leaders.

That explains why the televised debate between the main candidates on the eve of election day has taken on a mythical value in the eyes of political PR specialists as well as in those of political leaders throughout the world. Since the Nixon-Kennedy debate, this televised debate has been considered the most important stage of the electoral campaign in most of the world's democracies.

One must finally note that one innovation of the 1960 Kennedy campaign in was the production of the first political commercials intended for ethnic minorities of his country, one of these being the Hispanics.

The 1960 presidential campaign thus marks the end of the infancy of modern political marketing in the United States. In 1948, Harry Truman was still proud of having been in direct contact with 15 to 20 million voters in his presidential campaign, having attended some 356 public meetings, and having traveled 31,000 miles and shaken 500,000 hands within three months. His campaign is the last one that did not rely on modern political marketing. In the eight years, between 1952 and 1960, political PR had discovered television and had invented its two main tools: the political commercial and the decisive debate.

### 1.2.2 Adolescence: 1964–1976

In these years American political marketing experienced its period of adolescence, a time in which it explored the full range of techniques at its disposal, but also their limitations.

#### 1.2.2.1 1964: the first stumbling block: the "Daisy Spot"

In the the presidential election that year, Lyndon B. Johnson, who had stepped into the presidency after Kennedy's assassination, stood against Senator Barry Goldwater, a very conservative Republican. At a time when the United States was becoming entrenched in Vietnam and the Cold War was at its height, Goldwater made it clear that he was in favor of the systematic use of tactical nuclear weapons whenever the military thought it wise.

Advertising specialist Tony Schwartz, hired to help Johnson's public relations team, designed a very elaborate television spot which became famous overnight, known as the *Daisy Spot*. It showed a little girl peacefully plucking the petals from a daisy, counting from one to nine. Just as she reaches the number ten, we see a close-up of her eye, and hear a booming voice through a loudspeaker. The voice now counts down: "Ten, nine, eight, seven ..." At the end of the countdown, we hear, and see, the reflection of an atomic explosion in the little girl's eye, who naturally seems terrified, and we hear a voice-over saying: "These are the stakes – to make a world in which all God's children can live ... or to go into the dark. We must love each other or we must die." This is followed by: "Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home."

The spot was only broadcast once, on September 7, just before the famous CBS prime time show *Monday Night at the Movies*, and immediately gave rise to so many phone calls that the White House switchboard was jammed. The Republicans, starting with Goldwater himself, complained that Johnson had exceeded the limits of the "normal" negative spot. The *Daisy Spot* was never broadcast again. The Democrats claimed that it would not be shown anymore, realizing, in fact, that they overstepped the boundaries of fair play. But they had also achieved their goal: the image of Barry Goldwater with his finger on the button was once and for all instilled in the American public, starting with the some 50 million viewers who had seen the *Daisy Spot* (press commentaries of course also conveyed the idea to many more). Goldwater was never to recover.

Unlike the 1960 campaign, the 1964 presidential election did not resume the practice of the decisive televised debate between the two candidates. Johnson thought, probably rightfully so, that he stood more to lose than to gain in such a debate, because he was somehow in the same position as Nixon in 1960: elected only as vice-president, and serving as interim president but not elected as such, he was in fact competing for the presidency on the front line for the first time.

#### 1.2.2.2 1968, or the invention of the close-up

No decisive televised debates took place in the 1968 or 1972 campaigns either: one might surmise that candidate (then incumbent president) Richard Nixon did not want to play this dangerous game again.

The 1968 election gave televised political communication an opportunity to explore the entire scope of its possibilities, thanks to Richard Nixon's close relationship with a young 27-year-old television producer, Roger Ailes, the future chairman of *Fox News*. Ailes was able to convince Nixon to take a natural pose in front of the camera and to agree to be filmed in close-up, in short, to accept the hints which still today enhance the popularity of today's television stars. All television directors know that close-ups suit the television screen much better than the wide- angled shots used for cinema.

Incidentally, it was later revealed that many of the Nixon ads had been deliberately designed not to show the candidate they were campaigning for: the appeal of the commercials was deemed stronger using his voice alone.<sup>13</sup>



### 1.2.2.3 1972: alliance of text and image

One of Senator George McGovern's spots in his campaign against Nixon in 1972 was especially striking: a long speech giving apparently objective figures on inflation over the four preceding years with an emphasis on the state of the American economy was read by a voice-over as it appeared on screen. The rise in the cost of many basic household products that all American housewives buy in their neighborhood supermarkets were stigmatized, with the forceful conclusion: "Can you afford four more years of Mr. Nixon?"

This adaptation for television of a technique, invented in the 1960s by French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard for filming text, demonstrated forcefully that a spot can be effective, even if it conveys fairly complex statistics.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.2.2.4 1976: televised political communication comes of age

Modern American political communication completed its initiation stage in that year for two main reasons:

- the practice of decisive televised debates was revived and has endured since then;
- the remaining restrictions on political advertising were removed.

Two televised spots broadcast during the 1976 campaign illustrate the latter point, marking the end of adolescence for televised political communication.

First, a spot for Ronald Reagan, then candidate for the Republican Party nomination, innovated by portraying the candidate with the same style of images as those that the viewers grant the greatest credibility: the news. Reagan's public relations team staged one of his public appearances using the same technique employed to film the nightly news report: the camera was placed directly on the set and technical defects were voluntarily inserted. In short, it was a very good imitation of what can be seen on television every day when the news is broadcast. The spot was naturally programmed immediately before or after the evening news to maintain the confusion.

Second, a spot made for Malcolm Wallop, Republican candidate for the Senate in Wyoming, a state where the rodeo is popular, marks this coming of age by the use of theoretically less credible images: television commercials. The would-be-senator was shot leading a stampede on a white horse, imitating in the style of the famous "Marlboro Man" commercials.<sup>15</sup>

Televised political marketing had thus come full circle: by imitating the most credible images shot for television, and even those viewers knew to be contrived, political advertising had reached adulthood.

But in 1976 American televised political communication came of age in another way. For the first time since the famous Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960, decisive debates between the two main candidates were held in formats and frequencies which are mostly still used today. Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter met three times before the cameras. Handicapped by his position of "interim president," since he had replaced elected vice-president Spiro Agnew, forced to resign because of a financial

scandal, Gerald Ford felt that he had to agree to participate in some decisive debates, which did not turn out to his advantage. Republicans and Democrats also even staged a debate for the first time between the two candidates for the office of vice-president, Bob Dole and Walter Mondale: recent events had shown clearly that vice-presidents could step into the foreground much faster and much more frequently than generally thought.

### 1.2.3 Adulthood: political communication and campaigning in the United States since the 1980s

Six main characteristics that have marked the recent years may be observed in the current stage of the evolution of political communication in the United States, a stage we will consider as being the "adulthood" of modern campaigning:

- a still dominant application of the "Unique Selling Proposition" principle leading to the greatest possible simplification of campaign themes;
- a still prevailing part played by television, but at greater costs and with some new "trends";
- the overall increase in the cost of campaigns, leading to greater fundraising needs;
- legal loopholes are allowing a rather more and more aggressive campaign tone;
- the integration of new media particularly the Internet, in campaigns, as soon as they were even hesitatingly regarded as fit to use;
- the recently increased personalization of campaigns, enhanced by the introduction of "storytelling" in modern campaigns.

#### 1.2.3.1 A recurrent simplification of campaign themes

Modern political marketing owes of course much of its achievement to Ronald Reagan's two successful campaigns for the White House. Political communication specialists consider both campaigns as the victory of the Unique Selling Proposition.<sup>16</sup> The candidate was portrayed as having a very clear and simple conservative profile with a very sparse political platform: reduce taxes and federal government intervention, except for defense, where the budget was increased. Many political communication experts also made sarcastic remarks regarding the fact that, for the first time in history, a national political figure hired Hollywood gagmen to write jokes for the future president.<sup>17</sup> Computerized help for campaign themes was also tested for Ronald Reagan campaigns in order to determine which policy could be chosen during this simplification process.

The same decision to reduce campaign themes and to simplify the campaigns in order to facilitate their understanding by the "average" citizen marked most of the following campaigns. Both of Bill Clinton's victorious bids for the presidency, in 1992 and 1996, similarly applied USP principles and were orchestrated using a single



word, “*economy*.”<sup>18</sup> As for George Bush, his pattern of systematically implying in 2000 that he did not belong to the “Washington politicians” clique may be likened to a clever USP – all the more so as he managed to keep it credible in spite of being the son of a recent president, and hence far from being as distant from the “Washington politicians” as he claimed.

Finally, the 2008 campaign can be considered as another triumph of the USP. Barack Obama’s winning streak in that year was also placed under the sign of a USP quite cut down to size: the superb slogan “Yes we can” is probably one of the best campaign themes ever devised from a USP standpoint. On the other hand, his opponent, John McCain merely managed to confuse voters, by choosing Sarah Palin as his running mate, whose political opinions were very different from his own, in order to soften-up the opposition of the most conservative segment of the Republican electorate.

### 1.2.3.2 Television domination and its new “trends”

Television is now so common in North American political communication that it has become its principal medium: since 1980, nearly half the federal campaign funds allocated to presidential candidates have been spent on television airtime. Its supremacy is still uncontested, and it remains the prime medium sought by politicians, through three main kinds of broadcasts: debates, commercials, and talk shows.

**1.2.3.2.1 Debates** Since 1976, the practice of the decisive debate has been maintained systematically, though the frequency of debates and their format has varied slightly depending on the agreements made between candidates. Debates among vice-presidential candidates have also grown popular, as proven by the exceptionally high audience figures for the debate between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin, which attracted more than 70 million viewers.<sup>19</sup> As can be seen in Table 1.1, the 1976 format now seems to be becoming a permanent fixture, with three debates between the presidential candidates, and one between the vice-presidential candidates in 2000, 2004, and 2008. It should be noted that in many elections for state governors or municipal elections, televised debates on local television stations are also now frequent.

A new addition to the debates was Bill Clinton’s initiative to organize the second 1992 debate in the form of a town hall meeting, with “representatives” of the people asking the two candidates questions directly. Quite at ease on the set, Clinton easily gave an excellent performance opposite George Bush, Sr., and literally managed to steal the floor from Bob Dole in the following 1996 town hall meeting debate, squeezing himself on the images behind Dole to blur his appearances on camera without the latter even noticing that he was played on like a second category actor on stage with a veteran.

While no debate seems to have had as much alleged influence as the famous first televised debate between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960, debates continue to be a cornerstone of campaigns. They throw politicians’ potential weaknesses dangerously into the spotlight, which can sometimes be damaging. It happened in 1980, when

**Table 1.1** Presidential debates in the United States

| <i>Election</i> | <i>Number of presidential debates</i>  | <i>Number of vice-presidential debates</i>                 |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 1960            | Four debates between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy   | None   |
| 1976            | Three debates between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter   | One debate between Bob Dole and Walter Mondale             |
| 1980            | One debate between Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, One debate between Ronald Reagan and John B. Anderson (*) | None   |
| 1984            | Two debates between Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale   | One debate between George H.W. Bush and Geraldine Ferraro  |
| 1988            | Two debates between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis   | One debate between Dan Quayle and Lloyd Bentsen            |
| 1992            | Three debates between George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot  | One debate between Dan Quayle, Al Gore and James Stockdale |
| 1996            | Two debates between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole  | One debate between Al Gore and Jack Kemp                   |
| 2000            | Three debates between Al Gore and George W. Bush   | One debate between Joe Lieberman and Dick Cheney           |
| 2004            | Three debates between George W. Bush and John Kerry  | One debate between Dick Cheney and John Edwards            |
| 2008            | Three debates between John McCain and Barack Obama   | One debate between Sarah Palin and Joe Biden               |

(\*) Three debates between Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and John B. Anderson were scheduled and another one between vice-presidential candidates Walter Mondale, George H.W. Bush, and Patrick Joseph Lucey. But only the two debates mentioned could take place because Reagan and Carter did not reach an agreement on Anderson’s and Lucey’s attendance.

Source: Commission on Presidential Debates – <http://www.debates.org/pages/history.html> (last accessed December 2, 2010)

incumbent President Jimmy Carter said absent-mindedly that he would consult his 13-year-old daughter, Amy, before deciding on what the most critical political issues were, an astonishing method for a world leader. It happened again when Al Gore looked too aggressive and rather like an unsympathetic “technician” of politics in his first debate with George Bush, Jr. in 2000.

**1.2.3.2.2 Political commercials** Political commercials remain one of the major tools of political communication. Nowadays, parties and politicians do not hesitate to broadcast new spots practically every day during the final stages of their campaigns, now with special versions for Internet viewers, particularly during the 2008 presidential election.

Last-minute spots are now even hastily produced in the final days of the contests to help ailing campaigns. For instance, a few days before its anticipated loss in the



2006 mid-term elections, the Republican Party thus tried a desperate last-ditch effort by devising and airing a spot mimicking the famous *Daisy Spot*, still present in many memories. Osama Bin Laden and his fellow terrorists were seen threatening the United States. In the background was the sound of a ticking time bomb that finally exploded in a similar way to the 1965 *Daisy Spot* atomic bomb.<sup>20</sup>

**1.2.3.2.3 Talk shows** It should be noted that politicians are increasingly attempting to “humanize” their campaigns by accepting invitations to appear in talk shows and similar television programs not primarily dedicated to politics. They are, therefore, following in Bill Clinton’s footsteps. The former president famously played the saxophone on the popular *Arsenio Hall Show* during his 1992 campaign. Barack Obama scored a few points against John McCain, so to speak, when he was able to demonstrate his dancing skills on the *Ellen DeGeneres Show*, a performance incidentally later repeated by his wife. The most far-fetched campaign, in that regard, was Arnold Schwarzenegger’s first bid for the state governorship of California in 2003, when he refused to take part in most political programs or to honor requests for political interviews, even starting a new sort of trend among politicians by announcing his candidacy on the *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno.

In short, aside from the now inescapable debates leading up to the presidential elections, advertising spots (at great cost) and participation in talk shows (and the like) have been a strong component of politicians’ televised political communication in recent years: they have changed the way they use television, but it still remains the dominant medium.

#### 1.2.3.3 Rising campaign costs and the increased need for fundraising

The enormous number of political spots during campaigns does raise some ethical issues, since wealth now virtually appears to be a sufficient criterion to qualify as a politician. After the lavish campaign spending done by Nelson Rockefeller, an heir to the famous oil magnate but who also had true political stature in terms of leadership, 1982 marked a turning point. A complete unknown, Lewis Lehrman, who also happened to be a millionaire, secured the Republican nomination in the primaries for the governorship of New York state by virtue of his campaign spending, and he came very close to winning the election. He paved the way for other followers, since the Supreme Court decided in its *Buckley v. Valeo* ruling that in order to protect freedom of speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution, unlimited spending was legal as long as the candidate could afford it. The court ruled that only candidates requesting a partial refund from the state for some of their campaign expenditures were obliged to limit their spending to a certain amount.<sup>21</sup> This decision cleared the way for the likes of Ross Perot in the 1992 presidential election. Many keen observers were not surprised: sooner or later, some billionaire for whom cash was no object was bound to make a bid for the presidency. The same kind of spending occurs for all kinds of US elections: media mogul Michael Bloomberg was elected mayor of New York City in 2001 while spending US\$73 million of his personal wealth and

more than 66 million to be re-elected in 2005, figures comparable to the amounts spent by Ross Perot on a nationwide presidential campaign.<sup>22</sup>

The cost of campaigning for presidential elections has thus kept growing despite the limitation on private funding when candidates do not reject federal help. Bill Clinton and George Bush spent a combined total of US\$155.2 million during the 1992 presidential election. This figure climbed to US\$696 million for John Kerry and George W. Bush in 2004. The amount was even much higher for the 2008 campaign, with US\$742 million raised by Barack Obama alone, and an all-time high of about US\$700 million was spent by all the candidates and the interest groups that took part in the campaign just for television ads.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the money spent on election campaigns in the United States is not likely to diminish. A brand-new Supreme Court ruling on January 21, 2010, the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, has reversed the former jurisprudence banning corporations from using their own money to help a candidate during campaigns, arguing that the First Amendment to the US Constitution guarantees free speech (only direct help to the candidates remains forbidden). Almost unlimited corporate spending is now possible, as long as they campaign for the candidates but not directly giving money to them. This somewhat controversial decision came in opposition to the attempts by Congress and the Federal Election Commission to limit campaign expenditure.<sup>24</sup> Attempts by some members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to mellow the effects of the Supreme Court decision by imposing publicity on most of the donations have failed: a “Disclose Act” adopted on June 24 2010 by the House of Representatives has been rejected twice in the following months by a Republican filibustering in the Senate.

This has made fundraising a considerable hindrance for campaigning politicians, sometimes setting unexpected divisions between candidates. The 2008 presidential campaign thus saw Barack Obama easily top donations, and he even disappointed some of his supporters when he decided to reject federal funding for the actual 2008 presidential campaign (not the primaries), since he wanted to be able to spend all the funding he had managed to collect without limitation, a first among major candidates in the 30 years that the electoral federal funding system has been in existence.<sup>25</sup> He was then able to spend most of the huge amount of funding he had raised, which already reached US\$600 million in mid-October 2008<sup>26</sup> – not counting the funds directly raised by the Democratic Party. In the meantime, fundraising by his Republican opponent John McCain kept lagging behind, to the extent that he spent US\$100 million less than Barack Obama for the fall presidential run.<sup>27</sup> As for Hillary Clinton, his unlucky opponent in the Democratic primaries, she finished her run with a debt of US\$20 million, including a personal debt of US\$11.4 million, and had to seek help from Barack Obama’s campaign as well as to do more fundraising just to be able to recover financially.<sup>28</sup>

#### 1.2.3.4 Legal loopholes and increasing aggressiveness of campaigns

Two legal dispositions theoretically meant to protect freedom of political speech in line with the First Amendment of the US Constitution – Section 315 of the Communication Act, 1934 and article 527 of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act,



2002 – have given campaigns considerable leeway, leading to the use and abuse of this freedom and heightening campaign aggressiveness in recent years.

#### 1.2.3.4.1 The consequences of Section 315 of the *Communication Act, 1934*

Section 315 of the Communication Act, 1934<sup>29</sup> has been mainly used to free negative political spots from any control: it grants them complete freedom without any possible censorship or liability for the spots themselves or for the TV channel broadcasting them. When the fierceness of the “*Daisy Spot*” provoked a nationwide scandal in the 1960s, some had thought that it would remain a rather isolated event. They were proved wrong, and the American media’s tendency to probe into the smallest details of the private life of politicians has made it even worse.

“Low blows” have grown more common than ever, particularly since President Carter’s ruthless campaign, despite his incumbency, against his opponent for the Democratic Party nomination. Just before the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primaries, a spot programmed in those states concluded with a voice-over saying “President Carter – he tells you the truth,” a clear allusion to the well-known car accident that involved Edward Kennedy in Chappaquiddick, in which his passenger was killed (Senator Kennedy was, at the time, the most serious contender for nomination among the Democrats).<sup>30</sup>

The George H.W. Bush campaigns of 1988 and 1992 were equally ruthless, relying on vehement negative spots. Some 1988 spots hinting that as former Massachusetts governor, Michael Dukakis had been environmentally irresponsible seriously damaged his image, though it has since been established that the shoreline strewn with alleged radioactive garbage shown in the spots had nothing to do with Dukakis’s actions.<sup>31</sup> Even more damaging was the so-called “Willie Horton” spot which attacked Dukakis for a furlough given to a convict who then committed another crime – while Dukakis had been simply applying a furlough program established by his Republican predecessor and who furthermore was far from the only governor granting furloughs to convicts who then committed another crime. In 1992, the same aggressiveness characterized President Bush’s campaign while he was still in office: many of his spots and some of his speeches clearly suggested, this time to no avail, that his opponent, Bill Clinton, had been disloyal to his country as a young man, since he had managed to avoid serving in Vietnam and that he had probably cheated on his wife, and also that he might have been a drug addict in his youth.<sup>32</sup>

The harsh tone of the 2000 presidential election, this time mainly from the George W. Bush campaign side, was made even more memorable by an apparent experiment of inserting subliminal images in one of his negative commercials criticizing Al Gore, his Democratic adversary. Visually playing on words, a shot showing “Democrats” in boldface type was followed by another one showing “Bureaucrats,” but an intermediary image nearly invisible to conscious perception only flashed “rats” in bold capital letters.<sup>33</sup>

Though the 2002 legislation tried to limit negativity in campaign spots by having candidates stand by their ads with a short statement, usually at the end, it has not prevented them from continuing with strong attack ads, even during the primaries:

some of Hillary Clinton ads were so harsh that it might be one of the reasons she did not become Barack Obama’s running mate during the 2008 convention, contrary to what is usually expected from such close second running primary candidates.<sup>34</sup>

The only limit for negative spots seems to be the abuse of images of politicians themselves when they are used without their consent. For instance, during the 2008 presidential election, one of the spots aired by John McCain’s Campaign had to be quickly withdrawn when Hillary Clinton threatened to go to court. This spot, *Passed Over*, indeed pinpointed the fact that Barack Obama had not asked her to become his running mate, by showing some of her public attacks on him during the primaries campaign.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, John McCain’s campaign was not very fortuitous when its *Celebrity* spot backfired on him. He was attempting to mock Obama’s celebrity and good ratings as being stronger abroad than at home, and similar to those of entertainment and chat show stars, but one of the latter, Paris Hilton, was so angry that her image was used in a political context without her consent that she retaliated, so to speak, with a spot critical of McCain, while Hilton’s parents, the hotel chain owners, were at a loss, since McCain had negatively used their daughter’s image whereas they had supported him.

#### 1.2.3.4.2 The consequences of Article 527 of the *Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, 2002*

The new campaign regulations introduced by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, 2002 were intended to avoid unhealthy fundraising and spending. On the contrary, it has increased the harshness of political campaigns in an unexpected way. While this reform, endorsing some previous judiciary precedents, limits the amount individuals can donate to candidates and political parties, it authorizes any grouping of citizens to use any form of political communication they see fit during the campaigns in order to put their views on the political and public agenda. The law only requests that these groups be independent from parties and candidates, and notably do not overtly call citizens to cast their vote for the candidate they favor. The idea was of course that the American citizen could then put pressure on the competing politicians during the campaigns by forcing them to acknowledge the political ideas they were trying to promote.

But the “527 Groups,” thus nicknamed after the so-numbered article of the United States Tax Code authorizing them, soon found another *raison d’être* than simply lobbying to advocate new specific policy stands. During the 2004 presidential campaigns, many quickly understood that even if the law indeed forbade them from speaking favorably about candidates, it did not prevent them from speaking unfavorably against them without running the risk of making the candidate they supported look too aggressive, since they were not formally linked to him.

The “527 Groups” supporting George W. Bush in 2004 immediately understood this unexpected side effect and leaped at the occasion: they engaged in a very vicious series of negative spots against his Democratic opponent, John Kerry. His honesty, and the very fact that he had been injured during a heroic action during the Vietnam War were loudly contested, and he never fully recovered from these attacks, his later rebuttals not fully recovering the lost ground. In fact, the Bush-Kerry run is seen by



Table 1.2 Geographical penetration of the Internet, 2000–2008

| World Regions               | World Internet usage and population statistics |                                 |                               |                               |                           |                       |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
|                             | Population<br>(2008 Est.)                      | Internet<br>Users Dec. 31, 2000 | Internet<br>Users Latest Data | Penetration<br>(% Population) | Users Growth<br>2000–2008 | Users<br>(% of Table) |
| Africa                      | 975,330,899                                    | 4,514,400                       | 54,171,500                    | 5.6 %                         | 1,100.0 %                 | 3.4 %                 |
| Asia                        | 3,780,819,792                                  | 114,304,000                     | 657,170,816                   | 17.4 %                        | 474.9 %                   | 41.2 %                |
| Europe                      | 803,903,540                                    | 105,096,093                     | 393,373,398                   | 48.9 %                        | 274.3 %                   | 24.6 %                |
| Middle East                 | 196,767,614                                    | 3,284,800                       | 45,861,346                    | 23.3 %                        | 1,296.2 %                 | 2.9 %                 |
| North America               | 337,572,949                                    | 108,096,800                     | 251,290,489                   | 74.4 %                        | 132.5 %                   | 15.7 %                |
| Latin America/<br>Caribbean | 581,249,892                                    | 18,068,919                      | 173,619,140                   | 29.9 %                        | 860.9 %                   | 10.9 %                |
| Oceania /<br>Australia      | 34,384,384                                     | 7,620,480                       | 20,783,419                    | 60.4 %                        | 172.7 %                   | 1.3 %                 |
| World total                 | 6,710,029,070                                  | 360,985,492                     | 1,596,270,108                 | 23.8 %                        | 342.2 %                   | 100.0 %               |

Notes: (i) Internet Usage and World Population Statistics are for March 31, 2009. (ii) Click on each world region name for detailed regional usage information. (iii) Demographic (Population) numbers are based on data from the US Census Bureau. (iv) Internet usage information comes from data published by Nielsen Online, by the International Telecommunications Union, by GfK, local Regulators and other reliable sources. (v) For definitions, disclaimer, and navigation help, please refer to the Site Surfing Guide. (vi) Information in this site may be cited, giving the due credit to [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com). Copyright © 2001–2009, Mimiwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved worldwide. Source: March 2009, <http://www.internetworldstats.com> (last accessed December 2, 2010)

many observers as the most negative since the 1960s.<sup>36</sup> Altogether, no less than US\$100 million is estimated to have been spent by the “527 groups” clearly supporting George W. Bush during the campaign.<sup>37</sup> At the time, the most important group, *America Coming Together*, raised US\$79.8 million!<sup>38</sup>

Lastly, one might fear that the 2010 “*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*” Supreme Court ruling will lead to similar effects, since corporations taking part in political campaigns – without any direct link to the candidates, as for the 527 Groups – will also have much more leeway than the candidates themselves in attack and negative spots and propaganda.

### 1.2.3.5 Early integration of the Internet and new media in campaigns

Since the 1950s, North American consultants specialized in campaigns and political communication have always tried to employ all kinds of media to aid them in their task. The same has happened for the Internet. And here again, they have somehow unwillingly set the rules for the whole world, since the Internet began in the United States and grew there first and much faster than anywhere, soon providing a new audience for political communication (see Table 1.2).

It is not surprising then to discover that as early as 1996, and then again in 2000, all the US presidential candidates have put out a web site, even if the actual impact on voters was unclear and quite uncertain.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, it is only with the 2004 presidential election that the Internet started to be acknowledged as influential force in the campaigning process. In 2003, some months before the first primaries, Howard Dean, a little-known Democratic politician, outgoing governor of the rather small state of Vermont, was able to benefit from a clever Internet petitioning campaign and a bold use of networking web sites such as *Meetup.com*, which was quite successful. To that effect, for the first time, he systematically exploited growing possibilities offered by the Internet to achieve true interactivity. He was the first major politician to develop what is known today as a *blog*, an interactive web site, which was judiciously used in conjunction with his flagship Internet web site. The Internet also unexpectedly helped him raise a considerable funding for his campaign. Of course, Howard Dean was not able to capitalize immediately in 2004 on the good results of his preparatory Internet campaign, but it propelled him and turned him into a major American politician: it very quickly propelled him to the helm of the Democratic Party as Chair of the Democratic National Committee, a position he held until Obama came to power. At the same time, the huge amount of money he managed to raise through the Internet decisively established the medium as one of the new channels of political fundraising.<sup>40</sup>

Also helped by the leeway given to political communication’s use of the Internet by a 2006 ruling of the Federal Elections Commission,<sup>41</sup> Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign went one step further, exploiting the extension of its possibilities. He created a “profile,” an account, on most of the brand-new Internet social networks, from *Facebook* and *Twitter* to *YouTube* and *MySpace*, thus building up a considerable following.<sup>42</sup> His team was also very efficient in building up a positive rumor effect on the network, following the Howard Dean model of multiplying blogs. He was helped



to that effect by no less than Chris Hughes, the co-founder of *Facebook* and Joe Rospars, a member of Howard Dean's 2003/2004 campaign staff, the latter acting as new media director. Although the electoral effect of this vast investment on the Internet cannot be directly measured, the high number of web surfers who connected to his various Internet actions obviously had non-negligible effects: around 1.5 million accounts were opened on his campaign web site, he got nearly 3.2 million "supporters" on *Facebook*, and nearly one million "friends" on *MySpace*.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, a rather strong hint as to the effectiveness of Barack Obama's Internet campaign is provided by the fact that he was able to collect an unexpectedly high level of funds through this medium for his campaign, as we have already mentioned.

Here, in fact, the globalization of political marketing methods definitely played a part in this decision to bank on the new possibilities opened by the Internet. It is well known that some Democratic and Republican representatives had been following closely the 2007 French presidential campaign, in which both of the main competitors, Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal and future President Nicolas Sarkozy, made extensive use of the Internet in a manner similar to the one initiated by Howard Dean. Ségolène Royal's team notably imitated Dean's brilliant idea of imposing a candidacy by Internet blogging and petitioning, thus winning by surprise the Socialist primaries, with the help of a series of blogs intertwined with a main one, *Désirs d'Avenir*. On Sarkozy's side, the first French political spam was sent out to more than 1.5 million unwilling recipients, and later, his Web-TV, NSTV.com, received quite a respectable audience during the actual campaign.

#### 1.2.3.6 The recent increase of personalization of campaigns: "storytelling" in modern campaigns

American politicians have had a longstanding tradition of associating their household to their campaigns: Mamie Eisenhower and Jackie Kennedy had set a clear trend there, and even the Nixon family dog, Checkers, was part of the 1952 campaign, as already mentioned.

But a new turning point of the personalization of political communication was reached with Barack Obama's 2008 successful presidential campaign. In his case, very thorough image-building helped him considerably by somehow establishing a parallel between his own personal life and not less than the history of the United States. While his racial and partly foreign origin might have been seen as negative factor, he successfully used them to appear as a symbol of the building of America. In telling the story of his personal life, from his Kenyan father to his white grandmother who raised him in Hawaii, he brought personalization to a new level, "storytelling": fictionalizing the campaign by personalizing a kind of modern hero of History. This image-building started right from the very beginning of his political life with the first book he wrote, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, which was published in 1995 when he became the first African-American to preside over the *Harvard Law Review* and began his political career. A new edition of the book was published in 2004, right after his famous keynote address at the Democratic Convention which gave him momentum for the next presidential race.

In 2006, a second book, taking its title from the 2004 Convention speech, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, put the final touches to this image-building campaign a few months before Barack Obama announced that he would be a candidate in 2008. The book was one of the year's bestsellers and remained in the front shelves all year long.

Here again, the parallel between Barack Obama's 2008 campaign and Nicolas Sarkozy's victory a year before is quite interesting, clearly showing that political marketing has now generalized this new trend of personalizing campaigns to the point of having the politician's image being built-up as a fictional role model. In a similar way, Sarkozy regularly repeated during his campaign how proud he was to be able to be a candidate to the presidency of France when he was only a second generation migrant of Hungarian descent, and later also managed to put his marital distress in a positive light by explaining in his first campaign speech that it had helped him gain a better understanding of life and newly acquired wisdom befitting a man who was to lead the country.<sup>44</sup>

\*\*\*

Devised and implemented first in the United States, modern political marketing techniques have been widely imported by most of the world's democracies. Three factors determine how quickly the techniques have taken root:

- The development of "mass" and "new" media, from television to the Internet, in the different parts of the world: countries in which means of mass communication expanded rapidly, such as the United Kingdom and France, have logically been the first to import modern means of political marketing.
- The extent to which political communication is subject to government regulation, especially during election campaigns: for instance, in some countries, such as France, where there is no question as to the strength of its democracy, stringent regulations forbid any form of political commercials sponsored by political parties or leaders on television and radio channels (both publicly and privately owned). This has for years been partly compensated by the excessive use of political posters on huge billboards in the country's city streets and on roadsides.<sup>45</sup>
- the country's level of development: curiously, this last limitation is not always significant: many not-so-rich democracies, such as most of those in Latin America, use many of the modern political communication techniques, and campaigns in many European countries look quite pale in comparison.

Incidentally, the lowest common denominator of nearly all democratic countries might well be the practice of the decisive televised debate between the main candidates for major office, usually the presidency, in countries which are republics, or parliamentary elections in countries where the head of government is the prime minister, as head of the parliamentary majority, like in the United Kingdom. In both hemispheres,



it is now by far the most important step of any political campaign for election, and the example set by Kennedy and Nixon in 1960 remains fresh in the minds of politicians and political marketing specialists around the world 50 years later.

### Notes

- 1 More detail on the globalization of media systems and its consequences can be found in the extensive comparative research done in 18 countries by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini 2004.
- 2 The system is in fact even more complex: for instance, some states allow voters to write in the name of a politician who is not officially a candidate for nomination. This is known as a “write-in” ballot.
- 3 Bill Clinton’s race to win the 1992 primaries has even been the direct inspiration for a popular novel, *Primary Colors: A Novel of Politics* (Joe Klein – initially as “anonymous,” Random House, 1996), which in 1998 Hollywood made into a movie with John Travolta as leading actor (*Primary Colors*, by director Mike Nichols).
- 4 For instance, in Michigan, on February 22, McCain got about 80% of the Democratic votes and Bush 67% of the Republican voters, a typical case of “cross-over” allowed by an open primary (see <http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/news/aa022100a.htm> (last accessed December 2, 2010)).
- 5 Some American political scientists also explain this increase by the weakening of party organization in the period between elections: neither party has ever maintained a very strong structure on a permanent basis, and the number of permanent activists is continuing to fall.
- 6 For more details on the US election system, see Dave Leip’s well-documented Atlas of US Presidential Elections, <http://www.uselectionatlas.org/> (last accessed December 2, 2010).
- 7 See K.H. Jamieson 1996.
- 8 From the AAPC web site, <http://www.theaapc.org/> (last accessed December 2, 2010).
- 9 These spots were produced in the same way as regular commercials: alleged “citizens” of the United States were in fact little-known hired actors and tourists deemed representative of “average” Americans; shot after shot was taken with them to try and assess who was most able to be shown questioning Eisenhower who had already filmed all his answers to them in a few hours, without even knowing to whom he would be answering.
- 10 Kennedy is also the first politician who publicly admitted that he did not write his speeches himself, but was aided by a speechwriter (Ted Sorensen).
- 11 The first formal political debate on radio for US presidential elections apparently took place on May 17, 1948, between Thomas Dewey and Harold Stassen during the Republican primaries. Though this broadcast got a wide audience, it did not seem to have influenced the final result of the primaries and did not leave such a lasting memory as the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate (see Minow and Lamay 2008).
- 12 For more detail, see for instance Diamond and Bates 1984; Schroeder 2000; Minow and Lamay 2008.
- 13 See Joe McGinnis, *Selling of the President 1968*, Penguin reprint, 1988.
- 14 Twenty years later, Bill Clinton’s 1992 campaign extended the process by adding “footnotes” to some spots in order to try and reinforce their content exactly as an academic would do in a book.

- 15 A scene from Sidney Lumet’s *Power* is a direct take-off on this spot, ridiculing the candidate who is shown falling off his horse because he does not know how to ride.
- 16 For further detail on the USP, see Chapter 2.
- 17 Ronald Reagan was also probably the first president of the United States who kept one of those gagmen on the White House staff payroll.
- 18 Bill Clinton’s two main communication advisors during the 1992 campaign, George Stephanopoulos and James Carville, notoriously kept sending him messages before his main meetings with a bluntly phrased cue, “It’s the economy, stupid” (see the Chris Hegedus and Arthur Pennebaker 1993 documentary on the campaign, *The War Room*).
- 19 From “Audience USA”, <http://www.audiencesusa.com/80-archive-10-2008.html> (last accessed December 2, 2010).
- 20 The title of the spot *The Stakes*, was even taken from the beginning of the *Daisy Spot* voiceover.
- 21 See Lynda Lee Kaid, “Political advertising,” in Nimmo and Sanders 1981.
- 22 *New York Daily News*, December 9, 2003 and November 9, 2005.
- 23 See Lynda Lee Kaid in Denton 2009 and M. Currinder in Nelson 2010.
- 24 The decision was taken with a very narrow 5-4 majority, with a huge 90 pages of dissenting opinion by Justice John Paul Stevens, joined by his three other dissenting colleagues. President Barack Obama even declared publicly three days after the 5-4 court decision was announced that “[this] ruling strikes at our democracy itself” (see for instance, *The New York Times*, January 24, 2010, *USA Today*, January 25, 2010, etc.).
- 25 The “*Federal Election Campaign Act*” (FECA) of 1971, started in fact to be considerably amended in 1974 and in the following years, encompassing the consequences of the Watergate scandal in order to try and redeem US politics. Most of the current legislation can be found on the Federal Election Commission web site at <http://www.fec.gov/law/law.shtml> (last accessed December 2, 2010).
- 26 *The New York Times*, October 19, 2008.
- 27 See Lynda Lee Kaid in Denton 2009.
- 28 See <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aPKtsGLZmHZM> (last accessed December 2, 2010); also M. Currinder in Nelson 2010.
- 29 With the arrival of the first TV broadcasts, it replaced Section 315 of the previous Radio Act 1927, which was similar.
- 30 A second spot along the same idea was also aired.
- 31 See for instance K.H. Jamieson, (1996) and Paul F. Boller, Jr. 2004.
- 32 George Bush went so far as to insult Bill Clinton, calling him a “clown,” for instance, toward the end of the campaign, when he was trying to make a comeback on his opponent, who was still leading in the polls. During the same 1992 campaign, some sort of investigation was even commissioned by some of Bush’s partisans, seeking to prove that Clinton had tried to abandon his American citizenship to escape the draft.
- 33 Questioned by journalists, Alex Castellanos, the Republican consultant behind the spot, denied any specific intention while admitting that the insertion of the word “Rats” was “a visual drum beat ... [trying] to get [people] interested and involved.” (*ABC News*, September 12, 2000).
- 34 See for instance her Wisconsin primaries ad, accusing Barack Obama of deliberately refusing to hold public debates with her, or the beginning of March attack on alleged inactivity of a Senate Commission on Afghanistan Barack Obama had been chairing, etc.



- 35 “You never hear the specifics,” “We still don’t have a lot of answers about Senator Obama”(about the Roscoe scandal) etc., were two of Hillary Clinton’s soundbites in the *Passed over* spot. The same method, incidentally, was used in Ronald Reagan’s winning campaign against Jimmy Carter in 1980, when he aired negative spots taken from Ted Kennedy’s attacks on Carter during the Democratic primaries.
- 36 See for instance Geer 2006.
- 37 See Lynda Lee Kaid in Denton 2009; altogether, the top five 527 Groups allegedly spent nearly US\$170 million during the 2004 campaign, according to N.T. Kasniunas and M.J. Rozell (in Semiatin 2008). The spending was much lower for the 2008 presidential campaign, part of the reason probably being that artificially spontaneous anonymous ads were now shown on *YouTube*, when formerly, only costly ads showed on paid airtime on “traditional” television were possible.
- 38 Source: <http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtes.php?level=C&cycle=2004> (last accessed December 2, 2010).
- 39 For more detail, see Chapter 7.
- 40 He allegedly raised more than US\$3 million in a single week (in Benoit 2007).
- 41 See Chapter 7; the FEC ruling may also be found in Appendix 2.
- 42 One of the main initial 2008 primaries candidates, Democratic Senator John Edwards, was also rather active on Internet social networks, for instance also creating a *Twitter* profile.
- 43 See Denton 2009.
- 44 “I have changed” (“J’ai changé”) was the peak of the January 14, 2007 meeting speech, in order to convince his audience – and the French voters – that he was no longer the rather agitated Interior Minister always keen to appear before TV cameras, but a more sedate and experienced person. For more on “storytelling,” see Salmon 2007.
- 45 A law passed in France in early 1990 further restricts the possible uses of political posters as well as any campaign advertising medium within three months preceding election day.

## Part II

# The foundations of modern political marketing

As we stated at the start of the present work, political marketing can be defined as a genuine policy of political communication, a global strategy involving the design, rationalization and conveyance of political communication. We shall trace its main stages in Chapter 2 and examine in Chapter 3 the soil in which it takes root: the means of analysis and information.