

# BARACK OBAMA'S 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND ELECTORAL STRATEGIES ENHANCEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKING

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## ملخص

تسبب النمط الانتخابي المعتمد من لدن باراك أوباما، في مردود فعل العديد من وسائل الإعلام في عام 2008، التي انقسمت بين مؤيد ومعارض ليفسح المجال لنقاش جاد حول نميز استراتيجيات النواصل السياسي. إن استخدام الشبكة الاجتماعية للاتصال يعكس إحدى الاستراتيجيات الرئيسة التي اعتمدها المرشح الديمقراطي. طبقت هذه الاستراتيجية من خلال تنفيذها من طرف مجموعة كبيرة من الناشطين الذين عملوا من خلال وسائل الإعلام وإدارتها من قبل خبراء الاتصالات والمنظمين في هذا المجال الذي قام بتحليله هذا المقال. كما يهدف هذا المقال الى تحليل ظاهرة شبكات الاتصال الاجتماعي وتفسير مساهمتها الحقيقية في ظهور حركة اجتماعية. ويولي المقال أيضا اهتماما للهدف الأساسي الذي تم تعريفه عن طريق مصالح انتخابية، مع مراعاة الممارسات الخطائية لأوباما خلال حملته الانتخابية والسياسات المتعلقة بالاتصالات، التي أنشئت من خلال أدوات مبتكرة لتكنولوجيا

المعلومات المساهمة في وجود استخدام الشبكة الاجتماعية للاتصال التي ميزت  
بدورها حملة أوباما الانتخابية لرئاسات 2008.

### ***Abstract***

The particular electoral style adopted by Barack Obama in 2008 engendered many media reactions giving place to antagonism that split between supporters and opponents and triggered a serious debate on the uniqueness of political communication strategies. Reliance on social networking reflects one of the key strategies adopted by the Democratic candidate. This strategy is embodied in the formation and functioning of an army of volunteers and activists working through the media and its management by communicating organizers and experts in the field under scrutiny. This paper aims to analyze the phenomenon of social networking and evaluate its actual contribution to the emergence of a social movement without neglecting the essential objective which is interpreted by electoral gains. This paper also considers the discursive practices of the applicant and its communication policy implemented through political slogans and tools as initiators which, in turn, generated the promotion of social networking in the Obama campaign of 2008 and rendered it exceptional.

**Keywords:** Barack Obama, campaign strategies, digital technology, new media, social networks.

## ***Introduction***

The popularity of social media seems to be potentially expanding in the United States. Recognizing its impact, Barack Obama did not miss the opportunity to tap into new social media devices to promote his 2008 electoral campaign. In this regard Barack Obama's presidential election campaign generated endless comments and launched serious debates about its organization and strategies of political communication. Indeed, for the first time in American political history, a presidential candidate heavily exploited the Internet to transpose his campaign and used the Web as a primary device for mobilizing human and financial resources. This novel approach of both political debate in society and public space where it has taken shape will profoundly mark the US election practices and the relationship between government and citizens in future American campaigns. The present paper contributes to discussing Obama's use of social networking<sup>1</sup> that certainly had a tremendous effect on his 2008 campaign and scrutinizing the development and implementation of his direct action strategies mainly that of social mobilization.

## **How “social networking” harnesses social mobilization**

Obama's 2008 campaign would endure an unexpected and uneasy challenge: First, to get Americans interested in politics by encouraging them to be part of the political debate, and second, to vote. However, if the campaign produced such enthusiasm and large participation of Americans, it is because its objective was to appropriate the discourse and the characteristics of social movement rather than to stick to the traditional presidential electoral practice. Not only was this affiliation to the social movement deliberately reflected by the media consultants and the candidate himself to overcome Americans' apathy to the political scene but also carried out an electoral strategy that paid off to make of it an antidote to a political disinterest.

The social networking strategy is to engage in political process and communicate with electors. The networking channel essentially includes the anonymous citizens, their mutual contact and their mobilization for the candidate with communication agencies which organize the social movement of change. This bottom-up-approach

allows the voice of average Americans to be taken into account in the political process. In this case, the networking strategy adopted by presidential candidate Barack Obama was manifestly characterized by the ability to motivate people into participating in the public policy process and by providing them with the tools to be effective when they were engaged.

The fundamental nature of mobilization theory postulates that “increased access to political information increases political participation within the cognitive and behavioral contexts. This promulgates the idea that increased awareness leads to more discussion and analysis which makes mobilization more effective” (Niven qtd in Gunathilake 4). Embracing an organizational model similar to strategies for a social movement mobilization allowed Barack Obama who was himself a former community organizer “to capture the youth vote like no other president before him” (Neal 254). In addition, Obama stressed the change of the political leader’s task to better reflect his role of community organizer when he asked in an interview with a Chicago newspaper, “What if a politician were to see his job as that of an organizer, as part teacher and part advocate, one who does not sell voters short but who educates them about the real choices before them?” (Atlas 101).

The idea of gearing and empowering “social mobilization” through “social networks” cannot be refuted. This puts into perspective a discourse which uses tactics similar to those operating in social movements: the promise of social change, the discourse of redemption and hope for a better society. It was on this preferred meaning that this discourse easily and widely drew its legitimacy on broader cultural references based on moral authority to pose as heir to the values transmitted by the popularity of the 1960s social movements with particular reference to Martin Luther King’s civil rights and Robert Kennedy’s 1968 presidential candidate. The legacy of these two political leaders is a constant in Barack Obama’s speech “A More Perfect Union” which was given in Philadelphia as a push to be the 2008 Democratic Party’s presidential nomination (Schonfeld 19). Just like King’s speech of 1963 “I Have a Dream,” Obama’s speech raised issues of racial tensions and inequality, and white privilege in the United States. Such issues were the lifeblood of the speech that King had delivered during the chaotic and tumultuous times of the civil rights era of the 1960’s. Obama followed King’s path whose essence

had made it possible for any individual to be in such a high position of power when “I Have a Dream” tipped the scales for the implementation of the Civil Rights Movement (Schonfeld 19).

At this stage Obama’s speech reveals his containing side of various political myths of American society. These myths are materialized by the online social network which allows the candidate to establish his position as both a political leader and a common man. This “common man” since the Andrew Jackson era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup> has often determined a candidate’s credibility in US presidential elections. Thus, the Internet contributes considerably to alter the hierarchic relations between individuals and equally abolish intermediaries in their communication. In his 2008 presidential campaign Barack Obama managed to communicate directly with his activists who enhanced his role as a new leader and shaped his image of the average citizen in particular through his Facebook profile. The social network was therefore employed as a booster for civic and activist implications in Barack Obama’s presidential campaign.

On the other side, the social movement was initiated by a strategy of collective action that resulted in a convergence between the candidate’s discourse and the social change he embodied. It also seems interesting to demonstrate how citizen mobilization, the ultimate stage of the campaign, was managed by a judicious combination of community organizations like Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), private Web firms such as Blue State Digital<sup>3</sup> (BSD) and social networks of which Facebook and MySpace are good samples that largely paved Obama’s way to winning the White House.

Traditional media has always been the best tool for presidential campaigns and often deciding factor for many voters. In the last forty years, the majority of candidates in US presidential elections largely exploited and handled more or less skillfully the media as it is illustrated by the first televised presidential debate that was held on September 26, 1960, between “the handsome, charismatic John F. Kennedy, and the seating, shifty-looking Richard Nixon” (“The Best Presidential Debate Moments”) or Bill Clinton, the first candidate in a presidential election to address his supporters through the Net.

According to a 7 November 2008 *New York Times* article, among the several ways that Barack Obama’s election as president reflected

that of John F. Kennedy is his adoption of a potential media device that would forever change politics. If John Kennedy preferred television as medium, Barack Obama would opt for the Internet because “were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president. Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not have been the nominee,” commented *The Huffington Post* editor in chief Arianna Huffington (qtd. in Miller). If communicative channels such as email and website remain powerful, for Obama social media would be the most effective to mobilize volunteers and reach young voters (Smith 12). However, during the 2008 presidential campaign, this type of media attracted all the attention as it would dominate both political and cultural areas. This is explained by a change in strategy on the part of Obama vis-à-vis the media and how they were exploited by his predecessors. In fact, the communication strategy adopted by Obama was based on an indifference displayed towards the major traditional media and on the maximum use of new technologies as methods of instantaneous communication and interactive websites like blogs, videos projected on the Web and ‘texting’ which were regularly sent to his supporters and sympathizers.

### **Barack Obama redesigning electoral campaigns through social media**

Obama’s social media campaign was only the beginning of how he would gear the power of this tool to positively transform government and politics. The Internet allowed voters to get connected not only with the campaign but with each other. The campaign adopted technology to engage those who failed to participate in prior presidential campaigns. Enforcing Obama’s vision, Carolyn Baumgarten illustrates well the concept under scrutiny:

Social media has evolved as popular way of staying connected, voicing opinions, reaching out to others, and above all, developing both new and existing relationships....Notably, contact through social media is less expensive than traditional media, and may foster more mutually beneficial relationship as well. (5)

Certainly, the Obama campaign primarily invested shared Internet links which were directed to more traditional media. The videos posted on Youtube were first records from other more traditional media such as television that showed the candidate addressing his new supporters and the Democratic Convention in August 2008. But Obama quickly understood the value of sharing networks such as Youtube and Myspace to talk directly to supporters or reveal his campaign strategies in the manner of the video <sup>5</sup> which was Uploaded on 16 January 2008 and entitled "My Plans for 2008". The video shows a presidential candidate directly addressing Americans and explaining that his campaign symbolized the change and progress that Americans had so desperately been waiting for. He then mentioned the social networking and its importance to the mobilization for a future social movement he intended to construct. In sign of the central role of the Internet on electoral politics, Barack Obama announced that he was launching an exploratory committee for a run for the Democratic nomination for presidency. What is conspicuous is how he made the announcement, not in a press conference or call to media but in a video posted on his website.

It was an appropriate locus perhaps, since Obama underlined in his announcement video that: "Years ago, as a community organizer in Chicago, I learned that meaningful change always begins at the grassroots, and that engaged citizens working together can accomplish extraordinary things"(Price 33). Through this simple statement, Obama plainly described the strategy of his campaign that focused on participation at the individual level and social networking inspired from methods of community organization. By definition, the social networking then is methodologically a set of specific relationships (collaboration, support, advice, control or influence) between an infinite set of actors.

It appears that this explanation validates the main feature of social network on the Internet since the virtual allows an infinite number of resources, thereby confirming its democratization. Envisaged in a traditional way (a private club for example), if social network requires a social position, professional collaboration or even membership on the Internet, it will be a matter of a simple click. Social, cultural or geographical barriers are totally ignored. Political commitment is facilitated and participation in democratic debate is made easy.

Obama's communicators seized the opportunity shaped by the considerable development of social networks like Facebook that counted over 20 million American users in 2007 (Associated Press). Obama's campaign media consultants were in contact with private companies that were specialized in political marketing on the Internet in the image of the company Blue State Digital (BSD) headed by the expert president campaign Joe Rospars. He had already a positive experience through the creation of a blog – Blogforamerica - to campaign for Howard Dean, the Democratic presidential candidate in 2004. This blog had tremendously helped increase the number of Dean's supporters and even then had attracted a plethora of comments on the campaign strategy that would materialize as a future social networking platform.

Campaign web communicators had therefore a previous experience of the Internet mobilizing potential which they would set up in 2007 by creating a personal Facebook page for Barack Obama<sup>6</sup>. In less than a month, more than a million Internet users logged on Obama's page where they discovered hyperlinks to his campaign site. These hyperlinks were either directed to the key campaign site - Mybarackobama.com or to other sites such as LinkedIn, MySpace, iTunes, Flickr and Youtube where the candidate presented most of his speeches on the social character of the campaign (Smith). The generational attribute of this type of political strategy was clearly intended to curry favor with a target audience: young, major users of these social networks and the Internet generally. The campaign quickly used Obama as a consumer product trend (which came in T-shirts, mugs, pins and stickers that could be purchased online through the site of the candidate) but also as an icon of modern times that the favorite youth programs snapped up. One of the episodes of *The Simpsons*' series posted on Youtube for his 2008 campaign is a good illustration. The episode shows Homer Simpson, the main character, opposing voting machines that are designed to block Obama<sup>6</sup> (Vasquez-Parra).

Barack Obama entrusted the entire sharing social network management and social network strategy on the Internet (including Mybarackobama.com) to youth that included co-founder Chris Hughes of Facebook and Joe Rospars "the brilliant mastermind of the Obama digital strategy [and] key to Obama's internet drive that took America by storm in 2008, raising millions of dollars along the way"



(Pilkington). This stratagem was reinforced by a socio-cultural dimension that provided American youth the social virtues. A candidate's youth, his supporters and his campaign can only work to his advantage. These components tend to symbolize the dynamism, entrepreneurship and vitality of the candidate who sees in this circumstance his image enhanced by popularity in connection with this particular cultural paradigm.

Republican candidate John McCain found himself in an uncomfortable situation because of his age and his modest implication in the social networking. When Obama surpassed the one million friends on Facebook and saw parallel groups supporting his cause such as "Students for Obama", "Asian-Americans for Obama", "Women for Obama" totaling almost 750,000 Internet users in addition to the webpage dedicated to him, McCain had only a few thousand friends on his personal page Facebook and recognized his limited experience with the use of new communication technologies<sup>7</sup>(Vasquez-Parra):

However, if support groups were increasing across the country in favor of the Democratic candidate, they often operated independently. Supporters did not have the same concerns, interests, or motivations in defending the Democratic candidate. Social networking strategy was then implemented to bring all the Internet users to a common concern: the mobilization for the vote in favor of the candidate by simplifying the networking of all those campaigners who sometimes participated for the first time in a political campaign. The strategy operated on the official website of the candidate Mybarackobama.com that became a meeting point and a forum space for all campaigners who posted local events, shared videos on the candidate, and left support messages. More importantly, the site created a new communication strategy that had already been a little time experienced throughout Dean's site in 2004. It would serve as an electoral mobilization and a database for campaigners.

Thus, by registering on Barack Obama's official website, campaigners were encouraged to leave their email address and postal code. By using the two data, the computer software of the site provided for this purpose sent a list of 40 persons to contact Democrat supporters in their district. The information gathered by the virtual campaigner was then transmitted to the database site that recorded all

people mobilized for the campaign. These data allowed communicators to send texting asking for donations, reminding people to vote, or submitting a multitude of e-mails informing them of upcoming rallies in favor of the Democratic candidate. 1.2 billion emails would be sent to all the campaigners during that period. In autumn 2008, the Obama team thus had a database containing details of over 13 million campaigners and supporters (Vargas). The campaign then gave rise to micro-campaigns that extended across the country and developed through social networking with large autonomy.

Campaign organizers empowerment is a process that refers to Obama's years as a community organizer who often invoked it. His wife Michelle revealed on a Youtube video in February 2008 that she met him when he was committed on the streets of Chicago as a social organizer. The transposition of these techniques learned "on the ground" is not innocent: community organizing with new Internet technologies has engendered a new model of mobilization. Composed of different devices, the social media provide a basis for the emergence of communicative form where members can be both information consumers and producers. Social media organize and coordinate communication in an easier, faster and more efficient way. Their emergence as a mode of communication constitutes an important innovation. As a challenger, today this set of social networks assumes the role which is supposed to be performed solely by traditional communication channels. To illustrate, Hana Noor Al-Deen and John Hendrick consider Obama's campaign of 2008 "unique in that it became the first national campaign in which traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers were overshadowed by new media technologies and the Internet" (183). There is even a heated debate on whether social media are seriously undermining the existence of traditional media. Their dynamic development and their use in election campaigns in the USA mirror the impact of this growing phenomenon. At the political level, social networks are the major attraction in US elections for candidates who have progressively integrated these communication tools in their campaign strategies.

The growth of social networks is not without political implications. It is manifest that they are given more priority in election periods. However, it is not surprising that politicians regularly use these tools

to keep a permanent contact with their supporters. The best example is the US presidential campaign of 2008, which has largely stressed the idea of closeness to the user. The positive result achieved by Obama's online campaign increased social media's political popularity. This campaign was highly characterized by the digitization of the media through the Internet in general and social networks in particular. It has clearly marked a turning point in modern political communication because for the first time, the Internet and social networks have been regularly placed at the center of the campaign strategy of the candidates.

Obama's adopted paradigm provides a showcase for social mobilization that is to say the mobilization of individuals at the various social levels. However, the model emphatically asserts its belonging to individuals whose real assigned role is questioned. The used discourse already underlies the strategy of social networking. This politics from the bottom strategy that allows community organizing brings individuals together from the same neighborhood around the same cause. In this framework the leader's position becomes crucial because it is he who will assume the role of a mediator and more importantly a mobilizer within the social movement.

One of the most interesting illustrations in community organizing is that of actions which are undertaken by an organizer to help the residents of a poor neighborhood to enforce their rights. This method of mobilization has obviously considerable influence on the strategy of social mobilization as it was applied during the Obama campaign but also influences American activism through agencies of community organization. The role of the organizer is to act in favor of collective advantages without overlooking his interests. He thus assumes the role of a "providential" man who has in his hands the power to act.

Obama's ideological support for his presidential campaign has the merit of being straightforward. However, juxtaposition of the social and activist world on the political scene, shows a new focus in the traditional presidential campaign as it was practiced over the last forty years (with the exception of Robert Kennedy who attempted the same type of layer) . This rank-and-file commitment is all outward appearances because mobilization strategies are planned in advance by agencies of community organization or as in the present case by

Internet communicators who have worked through these agencies such as Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) based in New Orleans and that no longer exists today (Vasquez-Parra). However, the constant reference to the common public as all of these individuals who like the social movement have mobilized themselves around one cause, has always transpired unambiguously. On the other hand, Joe Trippi<sup>8</sup> defines the inside of Barack Obama's community field operation that has altered the way political campaigns are run:

They have taken the bottom-up campaign and absolutely perfected it. It's light-years ahead of where we were four years ago. They'll have 100,000 people in a state who have signed up on their Web site and put in their zip code. Now, paid organizers can get in touch with people at the precinct level and help them build the organization bottom up. That's never happened before. It never was possible before. (qtd. in Lasser 248)

In truth, the campaign owed much to the symbol the community represented and to the speech of the social movement it led.

The Harvard Professor of government and sociology Theda Skocpol who is an authority on social mobilization in the United States, reports that the ambiguity between communication strategy and social movement is a symptom of modern times. In her 2003 book, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civil Life*, she regrets that in the sixties, massive membership in the rank-and-file social movements and semi-private organizations, had seriously declined to be almost entirely replaced by lobby groups directed by professional staff. This ambiguity works in favor of Obama because the community allows activists to believe that they are themselves agents of change. They get out of their partisan role to become engines of social progress. So the campaign succeeded in transcending politics, symbol of power and interests to achieve other social spheres including that which was semantically associated with the collective good. In developing an overall collective action framework for this campaign, political activists and leaders assigned

meaning to the campaign to mobilize members and gain support from society (Benford 470). But for Peter Dreier, Professor of politics at Occidental College in Los Angeles, the originality of this campaign lies precisely in the fact that it borrowed a number of attributes from the social movement that could be simulated because many unions and advocacy groups joined it on the basis of a real social movement image:

Compared with other political operations, Obama's campaign has embodied many of the characteristics of a social movement- a redemptive calling for a better society, coupling individual and social transformation. This is due not only to Obama's rhetorical style but also to his campaign's enlistment of hundreds of seasoned organizers from unions, community groups, churches, peace and environmental groups. They, in turn, have mobilized thousands of volunteers, many of them neophytes in electoral politics, into tightly knit, highly motivated and efficient teams. (388)

The Obama presidential campaign succeeded in inaugurating a new space of expression where the social movement could take place (Castells). This strategy therefore provides a collective action framework for the campaign where even before exploiting all possibilities of mobilization the Internet can offer, a speech specific to social movements is produced around powerful symbols of protest experience.

Thus, the repeatedly appearing posters on the Internet in the form of Facebook profile pictures, virtual images or photoramas in clips posted on Youtube become a rallying sign, a symbol of a cause to defend. Besides, one of these posters designed by a Los Angeles street artist, Shepard Fairey, won a great success. Applying artistic techniques already used in the posters of the great American social movements in the sixties, he literally took the imagery of past iconic figures and then arranged them side by side with those of modern day figures. He did this with the Barack Obama Hope poster, placing it alongside those titled "Panther Power" which depicts activists like Malcolm X and Angela Davis.

However, Fairey's ideas of the 60s are shaped from the perspective of one who cannot avoid transiting through the past (Tordella-Williams). The poster shows Obama painted in red, blue and white above a significantly unifying slogan: "Hope". This poster that displays a particular artistic technique adapted to the street: the *stencil technique*, is similar to that used by the student movement of the sixties initiated by groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). This technique was used by many activists who would not hesitate to apply it on t-shirts or signs they customized and broadcast on social networking sites. The poster in the stencil where Obama's head is seen below a slogan: "Believe" became a discursive symbol of social movement in action.

This similarity between the Obama presidential campaign and the social movement of the sixties is accentuated in the framework of propinquity between the candidate to the White House and the civil rights leader Martin Luther King. When displaying his Facebook profile, Obama cited a single sentence under the heading "favorite quotations": "The arc of the moral universe is long goal but it bends towards justice" quoted from the last speech of Martin Luther King in 1968. Similarly, in his speech "A More Perfect Union" given in Philadelphia on 18 March 2008, Obama considered his campaign an extension of the civil rights movement and of the struggle against slavery: "This was one of the tasks that we set forth at the beginning of our presidential campaign, to continue the long march of those who came before us. A march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring, more prosperous America." This "heritage" is legitimate because the Obama campaign reflects a broader movement that can be associated with struggling for the civil rights launched by Rosa Parks in 1955: "The inheritance and successes of the 1960's civil rights movement extends to today's politicians, Barack Obama included" (Painter 21).

Barack Obama also owes much to the legacy of the Kennedy brothers and particularly to that of Robert Kennedy. Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" also made reference to concepts already put forward by Robert Kennedy in particular the desire to transcend the socio-ethnic divisions in order to avoid the polarization of the races. Moreover, the emphasis on both social change and the possibility of a better future was at the heart of the Kennedy campaign in 1968. He declared at the University of Kansas where he was invited to talk on March 18, 1968: "I think we here in this country, with the unselfish

spirit that exists in the United States of America, I think we can do better here also” (qtd in “Remarks of Robert F. Kennedy”).

“We can do better in this country” is quoted by Barack Obama in an important number of his speeches and particularly in the slogan that marked his campaign: “Yes We Can”. Jerry Kellman, Obama’s former employer while still working as a community organizer in Chicago even commented in the conservative magazine *National Review* issued on 30 June 2008 that Barack Obama was born “ten years too late” because “he had always been very inspired by the civil rights movement.” In this regard, Obama was surrounded by important figures of the civil rights movement as Marshall Ganz, a former member of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a top field organizer for Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers union in the sixties and who helped the mobilization of volunteers during Obama’s campaign (Castells 387). If Barack Obama largely succeeded in his 2008 historic bid for the White House, he would owe a great debt to Ganz’s passion for such narratives - and for the way this 69 graying, experienced veteran, organizing and leadership lecturer at Harvard University’s JFK School of Government taught Obama’s top field organizers to weave thousands of individual volunteers’ stories into a social movement. Although Ganz had no official role in the Obama campaign, when key Obama organizers faced a problem, they sought advice from him because he “really believes in empowering people and teaching them how to become community organizers” (Martelle).

The primary campaign played a few bad tricks to Barack Obama on this issue because Hillary Clinton too stressed her close relationship with several social movement activists of the sixties including Bill Ayers of the Weather Underground, an American radical left faction with a Marxist inspiration. Nevertheless, Reverend Jeremiah Wright from Trinity United Church of Christ (TUCC), who was also linked to the struggle for civil rights and famous for his remarks sometimes considered anti-American, was the most controversial character of the campaign.

These criticisms in the form of informal speeches of his opponents on the Internet played against the Democratic nominee. The videos posted on Youtube that paced the 2008 campaign as never before and all the more so once posted on the Internet, were set on progressive or

conservative blog sites and then by all media. The large and small missteps were ultimately used in negative ads to discredit one candidate or the other.

### *Conclusion*

Critics certainly strove in controversy that Obama would have to pay the price of his Internet strategy as it was particularly associated with the social networking. Yet As he worked through he could simply return to and consult the community and allow his “friends” to express their views from an individual perspective through a permanent connection. This full-function dependence on social networking certainly had a key role in Obama’s immeasurable campaign success. It created and maintained permanent and solid connections to make electors an inseparable part of his campaign philosophy. Consequently, every connection counted – starting with volunteers who were turned into activists for the campaign and ending with prospective rank and file as sympathizers and loyal electors. Obama’s remarkable victory in 2008 proved that social networking would be a vital factor in any future political campaign in the United States.

The “Obama effect” aroused a serious political curiosity from pundits and scholars whose voices remained divided until the recently held presidential elections where the incumbent was convinced more than ever that social networking was the beating heart of political campaigns. It is eventually sound to recognize that there have been digitally advanced ways in using social networking as a reliable strategy to promote politics. Every presidential cycle sets new standards for the use of social networking to connect with supporters. Barack Obama was fully aware when he weighed social networking as a crucial vehicle for the success of his political business. In this context social networking as one of the effective actors has merely become intertwined with electoral campaigns.

The social networking “Obamamania” has already extended its tentacles beyond US boundaries. It will continue its effect even on those who pretend to resist it. There is no campaign in 2012 that did not try to build a social network around it.



### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Social networking is the practice of expanding the number of one's business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals. While social networking has gone on almost as long as societies themselves have existed, the unparalleled potential of the Internet to promote such connections is only now being fully recognized and exploited, through Web-based groups established for that purpose. <<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-networking>>.

<sup>2</sup> Jackson was elected by the "common man", western farmers and eastern workers and Jackson viewed himself as their spokesmen. <<http://histclo.com/country/us/hist/19/jack/ush19-jack.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> New media agency that develops and executes multi-platform digital marketing and online engagement campaigns for nonprofit and advocacy organizations, political candidates and causes, and brands and businesses. Its work inspires and mobilizes people, increases revenue, and cements lasting support and loyalty. <<http://www.bluestatedigital.com/>>.

<sup>4</sup> "A More Perfect Union" 18 March 2008. Youtube. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU)>.

<sup>5</sup> "My Plans for 2008", 16 January 2008. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5h95s0OuEg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5h95s0OuEg)>.

<sup>6</sup> See <[www.mybarackobama.com](http://www.mybarackobama.com),  
[www.facebook.com/barackobama](http://www.facebook.com/barackobama),  
<http://twitter.com/BARACKOBAMA>>.

<sup>7</sup> On this point see John A. Hendricks and Robert E. Denton, Jr. *Communicator in Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*. Lexington Books, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Joe Trippi is widely recognized as one of America's leading and most influential political strategists. In 2004, as the National

Campaign Manager for Howard Dean's presidential campaign, Trippi pioneered the use of online technology to organize what became the largest grassroots movement in presidential politics. <[http://joetrippi.com/blog/?page\\_id=1374](http://joetrippi.com/blog/?page_id=1374)>.

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