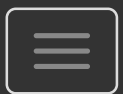


Sources and formats of campaign information on YouTube.

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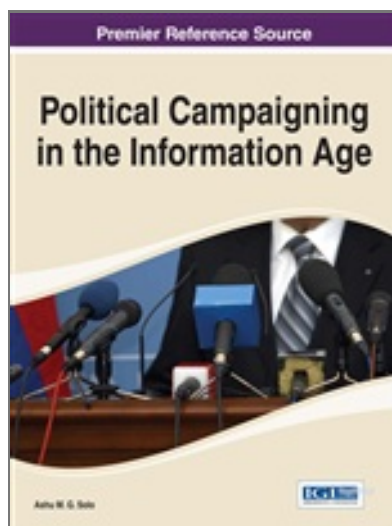


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## Sources and Formats of Campaign Information on YouTube

Robert Klotz (University of Southern Maine, USA)

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## Abstract

This chapter empirically, longitudinally, and systematically examines U.S. Senate campaign information on YouTube over three election cycles. The Internet broadcast yourself world of YouTube offers some sharp contrasts to the television broadcast world. Unlike on television, candidates and the traditional news media are being challenged by citizens in shaping their video presence on YouTube. Interest groups that leverage financial resources to force viewers to watch broadcast advertisements are marginalized on YouTube where accidental exposure is limited. While the broadcast world converges on a few video formats, YouTube campaign videos exhibit substantial diversity of format.

## Chapter Preview

Top

## Background

Election campaigns are a competition to convey a preferred message to potential voters. The major competitors are candidates, political parties, the news media, special interests, and citizens. These competitors convey their message in various formats in different media. Depending on the medium of communication, different competitors and messages are favored.

The broadcast world of political campaigns is probably most favorable to the traditional news media. Journalists working in the traditional news media have substantial discretion in assembling news stories about the campaign. Over time, broadcast journalists have done an increasing amount of the talking during campaign news stories (Patterson, 1993). The communication of journalists has come primarily at the expense of the candidates whose communication has been relegated to brief sound bites. Shanto Iyengar (2011) explains, “The most visible symptom of interpretive journalism is the disappearance of candidate speech

from the news cycle (p. 3). The length of the candidate sound bite on television news appears to be converging on about 8-15 seconds in a number of advanced democracies (Esser, 2008). In a meticulous study of four recent presidential elections in the United States, Grabe and Bucy (2009) find that the individual candidate sound bites on the national news are about eight seconds long while journalists talk over candidate images for about 23 seconds per story about the campaign. Scholarly studies consistently show that strategic and horse race frames are common in news stories about political campaigns (Flowers, Haynes, & Crispin, 2003).

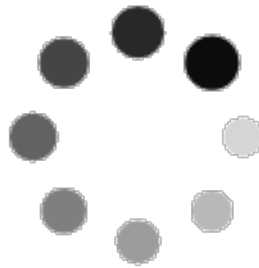
Traditional news media are also big winners in the broadcast world by selling campaign related advertisements on television and radio stations. Broadcast stations offer to sell scarce airtime to campaign participants who would like to convey their message through advertisements. Campaigns become profitable events for broadcast stations which find eager buyers of their advertising time. Local television stations routinely earn more ad revenue during election years, including 2010 when congressional campaign advertising gave stations a big lift during an economic slowdown (Steinberg, 2011).

Candidates also have significant advantages in the broadcast world. They are legally guaranteed the lowest advertising rates and can often raise the money to pay for them. As the subject of news stories, candidates build the name recognition that is key to election. Candidates can also shape the news coverage that they get in the free media. They can try to influence what the media talks about as a way of priming the importance of their preferred issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Candidates have also been successful in generating free media coverage from ad watch stories (Iyengar, 2011) about the campaign advertisements that they pay to run in the first place.

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