THE USE OF NEW MEDIA BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2008 NATIONAL ELECTION

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1 INTRODUCTION

Newly available Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as the Internet and mobile phones, offer opportunities for political parties to develop new information relationships with the electorate as well as with their MPs, party members and internal staff members. For example, ICTs can be used for information exchange in multiple (media) forms with a variety of people and independent of time and location; targeted information provision to specific user groups (narrowcasting) or even personalised information provision to individuals; and interaction with the electorate asynchronous or in real time (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Chappelet & Kilchenmann, 2005; Hill, 2009). Further possibilities to make use of ICTs are to predict voting behaviour (e.g. via instant polls), or, even more negatively, to quickly spread rumours, incidents or negative statements, which may lead to an uncontrollable influence on political image or opinion development (Sunstein, 2001).

These new ICT-enabled opportunities for political parties to develop or maintain relationships are increasingly acknowledged. Nowadays, many political parties around the world have their own website for reaching out to potential voters or establishing more efficient relationships with internal staff members or MPs, for example. Moreover, as demonstrated by the use of ICTs in election campaigning in the USA for example, an upcoming election may further increase the uptake and use of newly available electronic means by political parties, such as video-sharing, blogs, instant messaging or SMS (Short Messaging Services) (Owen & Davis, 2008; Ward, Owen, Davis, & Taras, 2008).

With the uptake and use of ICTs by political parties, important questions emerge regarding the implications for systemic relationships between political parties and society. Generally in academic literature, the following three theoretical assumptions of the impact of ICTs on the democratic system can be distinguished (e.g. Boogers & Voerman, 2005):

1. An optimistic 'Mobilisation' or 'empowerment' thesis: the use of ICTs would support the empowerment of political parties and individuals and, with that, enhance democratic participation;

2. A pessimistic 'Reinforcement' thesis: the use of ICTs would lead to the reinforcement of existing power balances and existing forms and patterns of public participation ("politics as usual'); and

3.   Amplification thesis: effects of the use of ICTs depend on the context in which ICTs are used and will intensify political-cultural characteristics of the democratic system (e.g. amplification of the Mixed Member Proportional electoral system in New Zealand).

These perspectives raise important empirical research questions about the uptake and use of ICTs by political parties in New Zealand during national elections, and their implications. So far, there appears to be a lack of empirical knowledge about the uptake and use of ICTs by New Zealand political parties for election campaigning. Moreover, New Zealand only recently had a national election in November 2008, immediately after the presidential elections in the USA.

The overall purpose of this research project has been to undertake an empirical, exploratory study into how political parties in New Zealand make use of ICTs in and around the 2008 national election campaign, and their implications. The following research questions have been explored:

How, in what form, and to what extent did political parties in New Zealand make use of ICTs during the 2008 national election? How can the use, and non-use, of ICTs be understood and explained?

What are the implications of the uptake and use of ICTs by New Zealand political parties for their external relationships with voters?

What recommendations can be made regarding the use of ICTs by New Zealand political parties for election campaigning?

This report has been organised as follows. In the next section, we review available academic literature in the field of the uptake and use of ICTs by political parties for election campaigning. In Section 3, we describe our research methodology. The empirical findings and analysis of these findings are presented in section 4. And finally, in section 5, we present conclusions and recommendations.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS, DEFINITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS OF 'E-CAMPAIGNING'

Elections, especially at the national level, are a major event for a democracy, as governments are born as a result of securing enough votes cast by legitimate voters (The Hansard Society, 2005; The National Conference on Citizenship, 2006). Election campaigning by political parties and candidates therefore is a critical activity during an election period, and essentially is seen as a form of advocacy, propaganda, or marketing for the purpose of vote maximisation (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Hill, 2009; Stanyer, 2005; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

Given the fact that the essence of election campaigning is around delivering campaign messages to voters, the use of media not only has become critical to political parties and candidates but also inseparable from the election campaigning process. Some politicians are well known for their strategic use of available media in their political campaigns: for example, former US President Franklin D Roosevelt was renowned for his strategic use of the radio to promote his political proposals amongst the American general public in order to promote his proposals; and former US President John F Kennedy became famous for his use of the television in political campaigns (Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

Traditionally, media for election campaigning include the television, newspaper, radio, billboards and printed material, such as pamphlets and letters (Anstead & Chadwick 2008; Ward, Owen, et al. 2008). Recently however, a new form of election campaigning started to emerge, which is characterised by, but not limited to, the adoption and use of the Internet and its related applications (Bimber, 2001b). This new form of election campaigning is often referred to as "e-Campaigning" (e.g. Bentivegna 2008). While a clear definition of "e-Campaigning" is lacking – some scholars use interchangeable terms like "Internet campaigning" or "online campaigning" (e.g. Gibson & Rommele, 2005; Gibson, Ward, & Lusoli, 2003; Westcott, 2007), others simply refer to "a new form or era of election campaigning" (Bimber, 2001b; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008) – an important commonality of these varying terms is the role that ICTs play in election campaigning. For the purpose of this report, taking into account recent ICT developments in society and their potential uptake in election campaigning activities, we define "e-Campaigning" as *the adoption and utilisation*

of ICTs, such as the Internet and mobile phones, by political parties or candidates in election campaigns for the purpose of vote maximisation". This definition not only allows us to draw on studies of this emerging form of election campaigning, but also to explore the adoption and use of ICTs other than the Internet and its related applications, which might be used by political parties and candidates in election campaigning activities nowadays.

The earliest documented case of e-Campaigning is the US presidential election in 1992, when Bill Clinton deployed a website containing basic information of his candidacy (Gibson, et al., 2003; Owen & Davis, 2008). Although Clinton's website at the time was static and basic, it started to draw both public and academic attention to the concept of e-Campaigning. Today, given the exponential growth rate of the Internet and its diffusion on a global scale, e-Campaigning has evolved from a mere equivalent to an information kiosk in cyber space, a vehicle facilitating campaign activities as a supplement to, and overcoming barriers in, traditional ways and forms of election campaigning. Recently, the most notable example of e-Campaigning has been provided by US presidential candidate Barack Obama during the 2008 US presidential elections. Worldwide, the elected president of the United States has been acknowledged for his "masterful" use of the Internet and other ICTs to deliver and reinforce his campaign message "Yes, we can" during both the primary and final presidential election campaigns (Hill 2009; Scherer & Owning 2009; Straw & Browne, 2009; Tumulty, 2007).

2.2 SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON INCENTIVES FOR e-CAMPAIGNING

In general, as stated earlier, the ultimate goal of election campaigns in a democracy is vote maximisation. Within this broad goal, scholars point at varying perspectives on incentives for e-Campaigning by political parties and candidates (e.g. Boas, 2008; Gibson, et al., 2003; Grant, 2005; Hill, 2009; Ward, Lusoli, & Gibson, 2006). Across academic studies the following common perspectives can be distinguished: interactivity, permanency, pluralism, and cost effectiveness. Each of these perspectives will be further explained below.

2.2.1 INTERACTIVITY

Political parties' and candidates' interaction with voters is a salient aspect of election campaigns, as it is widely believed that voters, especially the undecided ones, are more likely to cast their votes to the party or candidate whom they feel closely connected with (Boas,

2008; Gibson, et al., 2003; Hill, 2009; Stanyer, 2005). This attempt to develop connections with voters explains why political parties organise various events in different locations during an election period. However, due to various constraints, such as time, resources and geographical location, it is impossible for political parties and candidates to interact with all prospective voters (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Hill, 2009).

Given a high level of Internet diffusion in most democracies and the ability to facilitate interaction between connected individuals, adopting the Internet for election campaigning purposes also creates an opportunity for political parties and candidates to capture a wider group of voters and establish online communication with voters overcoming barriers in physical interaction. Generally speaking, there are two forms of online interaction: synchronous and asynchronous interactions (Chappelet & Kilchenmann 2005). Synchronous interaction allows parties and candidates to interact in real time with voters. Instant messaging or online conferencing, either audio or video, are typical examples of synchronous interactions enabled by Internet-related applications. Asynchronous interaction, on the other hand, allows delayed interaction between both sides, which means either party can choose to interact in accordance with their own time schedule. Emails, blogs, online bulletin boards and forums on a campaign website for discussion or feedback are all typical examples of asynchronous interaction. It is worth noting that in the current context, the Internet technology and related applications not only facilitate interactive communication between parties/candidates and voters, but also among voters. Chen, Gibson, and Geiselhart (2006) observed another form of interactivity between parties and voters in e-Campaigning activities: some political parties' websites provide online applications, such as debt or tax-cut calculators, to allow voters to interact with proposed policy in those domains.

Based on their post 2004 election study in the USA, Park and Perry (2008) find that in general, e-Campaigning strongly correlates with increased interactivity between parties and voters, or amongst voters. This research finding points towards increased political engagement in society, which is further demonstrated by research findings suggesting that voters who interact with election campaign websites (e.g. retrieving campaign information, signing up for campaign emails, participating in activities on campaign websites) are more likely to vote than others.

Despite the importance of interactivity in election campaigning and the Internet's ability to facilitate interactive communication, many political parties and candidates are still cautious in deciding on the level of interactivity to be allowed on their campaign websites. This has to do with their fears of 'opening the gate' for attacks from their opponents (Coleman, 2001; Ward, et al., 2006). As a result, the Internet has not been fully exploited yet when it comes to increasing interactivity in election campaigns.

2.2.2 PERMANENCY

Permanency is another incentive identified for adopting e-Campaigning. According to Ward et al. (2006), compared with information provision via traditional media, such as the newspaper, television or radio, the internet and related applications allow political parties and candidates to establish '24/7', permanent campaign presence. Furthermore, the speed of using ICTs allows political parties and candidates to promptly respond to events and to deal with attacks from opponents almost instantaneously (Hill 2009; Ward et al., 2006).

2.2.3 PLURALISM

In several countries around the world, such as the USA, UK and Australia, national elections are usually the competition between two large political parties. This situation is also referred to as a "two-horse race", because only the two large parties have a realistic chance of winning the elections and becoming the next government (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008). As a result, coverage via traditional media mainly focuses on the two large parties. Although there are small parties in these countries, their exposure in traditional media is much less compared to their larger counterparts and is usually at the mercy of traditional media presenters (Hill, 2009; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). As a result, the gap in public exposure between large parties and small parties is continuously widening.

As Ward, Owen, et al., (2008) emphasise, each political party, irrespective of its size, represents a voice and opinions from a societal segment. From a democracy point of view it is important therefore to foster political pluralism and to provide small parties with an equal opportunity to have their perspectives heard by the general public. To small parties, the Internet not only serves as a cost effective platform for campaigning, but more importantly a platform which is independent from traditional media biases and where they can advocate their policies and viewpoints to the general public. Research conducted in the UK shows that,

small parties usually exhibit a more positive and open attitude towards e-Campaigning compared to their larger counterparts: small parties believe that e-Campaigning has given them a fairer chance to be "seen" and "heard" by the public (Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008).

2.2.4 COST EFFECTIVENESS

Nationally and internationally, most election campaigns face substantial financial pressures to cover various costs incurred during the elections. The majority of these costs usually are related to advertising and broadcasting campaign messages through various traditional media to increase public exposure of the party and its candidates (Grant, 2005; Schmitt, 2009; USA Today, 2004). Generally, the costs of campaigning tend to increase with each election (Grant 2005). For example, the campaign costs of the 2001 UK General Election involved £26.7 Million GBP (Grant, 2005); the campaign costs of the 2004 US Presidential Election were at least US $4 billion (USA Today, 2004) and the costs of the recent 2008 US Presidential elections at least US $5.3 billion (Schmitt 2009). These cost pressures are more severe for small parties, or, in the USA, for the presidential candidates as they are expected to bear most of their campaign costs of their campaigns (Grant, 2005; Maisel & Buckley, 2004).

Sources of financial pressures can be internal or external, creating incentives for parties and candidates to curb the spending during election campaigns. Internally, as election campaign budgets are constrained, political parties must find alternative cost effective campaigning means to avoid financial overheads. Externally, the ever-increasing spending on election campaigns attracts criticism for being excessive from the public because in most democracies election campaigns are partially funded by taxpayers' money (Grant, 2005).

As a result, political parties try to make use of volunteers as well as more cost effective media, such as the Internet, to broadcast their campaign advertisements and political messages (Chen, et al., 2006; Hill, 2009). Political parties acknowledge the Internet as a cost-effective medium for the following four reasons (Gibson, 2004; Hill, 2009; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008): firstly, the Internet has a high penetration rate globally, especially in the developed world and amongst youth; secondly, the costs of Internet access are relatively low in most developed countries; thirdly, the Internet and its related applications allow campaign materials to be represented in various formats, such as text, picture, audio, video, or a

combination of these formats; and finally, the cost of producing materials online is relatively low and the cost of duplicating materials online is nearly zero. Joe Trippi, a US election campaign strategist for presidential candidates in both the 2004 and 2008 US Presidential Elections, argues that Internet advertising is not only cheaper but also more effective than advertising through other media (Hill, 2009). While it is difficult to provide clear-cut figures on exactly how much cost savings can be achieved from Internet advertising, Trippi substantiates his claim by using an example of political advertising during the 2008 US presidential elections, when a total of 1800 videos were published on YouTube by Obama's official campaign teams. These videos were watched 110 million times involving 14.5 million hours of 'broadcasting time'. To purchase the equivalent hours on US broadcast TV would have cost the Obama team approximately US $47 million, compared to very modest costs involved with Internet advertising.

It is worth noting that although e-Campaigning might be a cost-effective means, its associated hidden costs should not be ignored. According to Ward, Owen, et al. (2008), the ongoing costs of website maintenance by dedicated staff and/or upgrading to a more professional, sophisticated website can be quite substantial, especially on a longer term.

2.3 MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN E-CAMPAIGNING

In general, the following e-Campaigning activities by political parties and candidates are distinguished (e.g. Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Bimber, 2001a; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Kluver, 2008; Owen, 2006; Ward, Gibson, & Lusoli, 2008): information provision; blogging; support mobilisation; customised campaign to voters; fund raising; and targeted campaigns to opponents. These activities are not mutually exclusive. We will further describe each of these activities below.

2.3.1 INFORMATION PROVISION

Although e-Campaigning today has departed from being a mere equivalent to a cyber information kiosk, using the Internet as a platform to provide up-to-date, consistent campaign information still remains a fundamental activity in e-Campaigning across the globe (Gibson, 2004; Gibson, et al., 2003).

Various studies in which the content of political parties' websites has been analysed point out that information provision in e-Campaigning activities has become more comprehensive. Typically, the web content involves the history, key values and principles of a political party; a series of party policy proposals or key priorities; biographies and photos of party candidates; contact information, such as a physical mail and an email address; a list of campaign events; an archive of press releases and campaign news; links to other relevant websites (e.g. individual candidates); election and voting information; downloadable campaign material, such as computer wallpapers and pamphlets; key speeches in text, audio or video formats; and information for donations or volunteering activities (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Boas, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008).

Based on quantitative research findings, Bimber (2001a) argues that information provision is a critical activity in e-Campaigning with a positive impact on democracy: an increase of information provision efforts by political parties usually leads to enhanced political awareness and public exposure. This may then lead to further opportunities for political engagement and better informed citizens. Moreover, several studies demonstrate that voters who use the Internet for gathering political information, are more likely to vote compared to others who do not (The Pew Research Center, 2008a; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). Boas (2008) particularly stresses the fact that information provision is a very common activity in e-Campaigning. Often, the web content used in e-Campaigning activities also can be found in offline campaign material. As a result, hardly any innovation or creativity in information provision needs to be expected in this activity (Boas 2008).

2.3.2 BLOGGING

Blogging is another widely observed activity in e-Campaigning (Kluver, 2008; Owen & Davis, 2008; Small, Taras, & Danchuk, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). A blog can be described as an online journal entry; most blogging applications enable an asynchronous interaction (e.g. posting comments or feedback) between the author, in this case the political party, and the readers, the general public. Usually, the objective for a political party to use a blog is to disseminate ideas with an ultimate aim to reinforce opinions in society or to mobilise people (Boas, 2008; Owen & Davis, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). As a result, most political blogs are issue-focused and rather short.

Two types of blogging are reported in the literature. The first one and the most common type of blogs in election campaigns, is a 'text-only' blog (e.g. Boas, 2008; Chappelet & Kilchenmann, 2005; Owen & Davis, 2008). A second type of blogging uses photos or videos instead of text (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Boas, 2008). It is worth noting that this second type of blogging is strongly dependent on the availability of Internet bandwidth. In some cases, (registered) visitors of the political party's blog are allowed to post comments; however, the majority of blogs involves one-way communication, mainly due to the fear of attracting attacks from opponents or their supporters (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008). It is worth noting that in some democracies blogging has not gained much interest of political parties in election campaigning (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Boas, 2008). Moreover, several studies find that people enjoy reading political blogs, especially during elections; however, these people show a stronger preference for blogs written by political activists or commentators, instead of political parties (Chen et al., 2006; The Pew Research Center, 2008a).

2.3.3 SUPPORT MOBILISATION

To a political party, achieving a victory in an election is largely dependent on consistent support of voters (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Owen & Davis, 2008; Scherer & Owning, 2009; Stanyer, 2005; Tumulty, 2007). However, in the current environment, soliciting and increasing voters' support during an election campaign has become somewhat challenging, as the traditional proactive role of supporters has changed into a passive role (Owen & Davis, 2008). This passive role especially emerged with the introduction of the television as a major instrument for political campaigning. Moreover, the time voters spend on supporting a political party has declined. Another challenging issue faced by political parties in election campaigning is reaching out to and getting support from young voters below the age of 30 (The Pew Research Center, 2008b). As Ward, Owen, et al. (2008) point out, young voters are the least likely to vote on Election Day. They are also the least interested in conventional politics.

Internet technology and its related applications allow political parties to alleviate these pressing challenges in relation to voters' support during election campaigns by facilitating support mobilisation. For instance, active involvement and participation of voters in the election campaign is highly sought after by political parties as these participants can further expand existing support networks of political parties by inviting their family members or

friends to become an active supporter and, ultimately, to cast their votes for the political party concerned on Election Day (Owen & Davis, 2008). Internet technology is perceived as a useful tool to facilitate voters support. For example, Internet technology allows voters to demonstrate their support to the party in various forms including joining a mailing list or online registering in order to receive campaign newsletters; making online donations; registering for becoming a volunteer; participating in online campaign events; online collaborating with other supporters; participating in online political discussions; and forwarding online available campaign information to family members and friends.

Furthermore, research demonstrates that Internet-enabled political engagement is attractive to young voters, also compared to their political engagement in the offline world (The Pew Research Center, 2008b; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008). For example, research findings show that 40% of young voters until the age of 30 look for campaign news on the Internet, compared to 16% of voters aged between 30 and 49 years, and 7% in the age of 50 or above (The Pew Research Center 2008b).

2.3.4 CUSTOMISED CAMPAIGNS TO VOTERS

Research findings suggest that election campaigning essentially is a form of advocacy, marketing or propaganda and that effective campaigning therefore is about knowing who the audience is and delivering messages that are tailored to the needs and wants of this audience – in this case the voters (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Hill, 2009; Stanyer, 2005). However, the challenge for political parties is that voters have their own needs, and any given issue advocated by a political party has varied significance to them. The limitation of using traditional media in election campaigning, such as the television or radio, is the "one-size-fits-all" approach: that is, political parties cannot tailor their campaigns to the needs and desires of individual voters. However, the Internet offers the possibility of customization in election campaigning, such as targeting at young voters.

2.3.5 FUND RAISING

In general, election campaigns consume a considerable amount of financial resources. This is particularly the case in the US, where primary and presidential elections are described as "money burning elections" (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Hill, 2009; Tumulty, 2007). As a result, political parties need to gather enough financial resources in order to finance their

election campaign. Recently, especially during the 2004 and 2008 US Presidential Elections, the Internet successfully has demonstrated its value to political parties to be used as a fund raising tool.

2.3.6 TARGETING CAMPAIGN TO OPPONENTS

The Internet not only can assist political parties in enhancing their own public exposure, it also has the potential to be used as a means to attack opponents in the elections. An interesting example can be found in the USA, in an election race for the Virginia State Senate seat (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008). George Allen was a candidate in the race representing the US Republican party and expected to retain the seat comfortably. Yet, only a few months before the election, Allen was caught in a video clip in which he made a racist comment about an election campaign worker for his Democratic opponent. This video clip was uploaded to YouTube, a social networking and multi-media sharing site, and subsequently viewed by many people, including news media representatives. The video generated much criticism and public allegations against Allen for being a racist, which finally led to Allen losing the election.

2.4 EXAMPLES OF e-CAMPAIGNING IN THE 2008 US ELECTION

Internationally, the 2008 US presidential elections, and especially the election campaigning of US Presidential candidate Barack Obama, are acknowledged as a prime example of how ICTs can be used innovatively in election campaigning activities (e.g. Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Baston, 2008; Meyer, 2009; Stirland, 2008; Straw & Browne, 2009). Clustered around the e-Campaigning categories introduced above, the following examples of innovative e-Campaigning activities could be observed during the 2008 US presidential elections (e.g. Hill, 2009; Tumulty, 2007):

Support Mobilisation: a strong feature of Obama's e-Campaigning activities is his ability to use the Internet for mobilising support. At the early stage of his campaign, based on knowledge that most young American voters are frequently visiting social networking sites like MySpace, YouTube or Facebook, Obama arranged to have a virtual presence across these social networking sites, targeting his e-Campaigning activities at issues of particular interest to young American voters. Moreover, Obama made a music video together with a

popular musical band in the USA, the Black Eyed Peas. This video contained Obama's campaign message and was published on YouTube (Hill, 2009).

Obama mobilised support among voters in other age groups by using the networking capabilities of the Internet to build a large virtual community of support. Members of this virtual community were encouraged to organise campaign events in both online and offline environments, and to recruit new members to this community. Furthermore, Obama used a combination of Internet and SMS messages via mobile phones to remind his supporters to vote at Election Day, together with their friends and family members. For instance, on the day of the election, voters who had signed up for Obama's SMS alerts, received at least three text messages, urging them to cast their vote for Obama (Hill, 2009).

Customised Campaigns to Voters: in his e-Campaigning activities targeted at young American voters, Obama invited well-known public figures to his social networking sites to endorse Obama's candidacy, focusing on the issue of most concern to young Americans, namely the war against Iraq (Hill, 2009; Straw & Browne, 2009). In general, Obama's campaign team made use of what they refer to as 'online behavioural targeting', i.e. the characteristics of website visitors, to target online campaign advertisements: when a prospective voter visited Obama's official campaign website, the website would scan cookies[1] available on the person's computer. These cookies provide insights into the visitor's online behaviour, such as whether the person has visited the website of Obama's opponent. Online artificial intelligence tools were used to analyse patterns in the visitor's online behaviour, on the basis of which a decision could be made about which campaign advertisement to send to this particular individual. As Hill (2009, p.11) puts it, this technique not only allowed Obama to "formulate an advertising campaign for each individual voter, but also to segment his supporters, crafting different methods of communication for each group."

Fund Raising: Obama also used the Internet as a sophisticated fund raising tool, collecting about USD$750 million, with the majority of the fund coming from small contributions (Hill, 2009). In so-doing Obama's campaign team used various creative strategies, such as organising an online draw for those who had donated at least USD$5, with an opportunity for donors to win a dinner for five people together with Obama.

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[1] A cookie is a small text file recording the web sites and web pages visited by the user of that computer

Targeting Campaigns to Opponents: During the election period, in order to convince American voters that the credibility of his opponent was questionable because of changing policy statements on the war against Iraq, the campaign team of US Presidential candidate John McCain utilised a new automated online tracking service called 'Versionista' to spider Obama's campaign website and track precise word changes, in some cases as frequently as every hour (Stirland, 2008). As shown in Figure 2.1, the paragraphs highlighted in pink were the words deleted from Obama's campaign site and those in green were the words inserted. These highlighted changes were used to demonstrate Obama's changing position with regard to the Bush administration's policy on the war in Iraq. For example, on 11 July 2008, the following statement could be found on Obama's website: "at great cost, our troops have helped reduce violence in some areas of Iraq, but even those reductions do not get us below the unsustainable levels of violence of mid-2006" (Sirland, 2008, para.11). In about three days time, this statement was replaced by the following words: "Our troops have heroically helped reduce civilian casualties in Iraq to early 2006 levels. This is a testament to our military's hard work, improved counterinsurgency tactics, and enormous sacrifice by our troops and military families" (Stirland, 2008, para. 12). These recorded changes formed an important factual basis on which McCain and his supporters tried to attack Obama's credibility.

Figure 2.1: The changes in Obama's stance on war in Iraq spidered by McCain (Stirland, 2008)

2.5 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF E-CAMPAIGNING

Some academic literature suggest that the use of ICTs in democratic processes, such as political campaigning, may have fundamental implications for relationships between political representatives and the general public (e.g. Smith, 1998; van de Donk & Tops, 1995). For example, some scholars suggest that new ICT-supported forms of election campaigning will renew civic engagement and public participation, particularly amongst young people, resulting in a more democratic and better-informed society (e.g. Owen, 2006). Others point out that political parties may perceive the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, as an opportunity to strengthen their own position in society, due to the fact that they can directly communicate with people and, with that, bypass traditional media (e.g. Smith, 1998). In addition, political parties could use ICTs to offer tailored information provision to specific target groups ("narrowcasting") (Boogers & Voermans 2005). However, some authors consider this latter opportunity as a negative development, pointing at the possibility of increased fragmentation in information provision of political parties and, consequently, developments of restricted relationship management with 'like-minded' people and decreasing democratic debate in which conflicting perspectives are presented and being discussed (e.g. Sunstein 2001).

However, several research initiatives in this area have found that the impact of the use of ICTs in election campaigning is limited so far. According to these research findings, restricted impact of ICT-supported political campaigning activities is evident by the lack of greater public interest in political parties' e-Campaigning (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008). Moreover, political parties appear to see the Internet as a low-cost extension of their campaign advertising, supplementing a range of other activities (Smith, 1998). For example, in his research on the use of ICTs by political parties in the UK, Smith found that, while political parties have been encouraged to take advantage of new ICTs, take-up is limited through the scarcity of resources and the skills necessary to use the technology.

Some scholars hold the view that the impact of using ICTs in election campaigning should not be considered as a single or autonomous outcome, but that the outcome depends on the context in which ICT-supported election campaigning takes place (Boogers & Voerman, 2005). Agre (2002) for instance points at how specific characteristics of the US political system can be observed in the use of the Internet for e-Campaigning ("Amplification"). In

general, the following three theoretical assumptions of the impact of ICTs on the democratic system can be distinguished (e.g. Boogers & Voerman, 2005):

1. An optimistic 'Mobilisation' or 'empowerment' thesis: the use of ICTs would support the empowerment of political parties and individuals and, with that, enhance democratic participation;

2. A pessimistic 'Reinforcement' thesis: the use of ICTs would lead to the reinforcement of existing power balances and existing forms and patterns of public participation ("politics as usual'); and

3. Amplification thesis: effects of the use of ICTs depend on the context in which ICTs are used and will intensify political-cultural characteristics of the democratic system (e.g. amplification of the Mixed Member Proportional electoral system in New Zealand).

2.6 *TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS*

Gibson et al. (2003) stress that web content analysis is critical to the study of e-Campaigning, as it forms a source of empirical, objective evidence how political parties communicate with a wider public, such as voters and the media. This is confirmed by a survey of recent studies on e-Campaigning as shown in Appendix A. It is worth noting that some studies refer to web content analysis as 'web features analysis' (e.g. Chen, et al., 2006); however, essentially, they all focus on the same issue: the assessment of what is available on political parties' websites from an objective point of view.

2.6.1 STUDIES FEATURING WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS IN THE LITERATURE

In general, there are two major ways of conducting a web content analysis – one is guided by a framework (Chen, et al., 2006; Gibson, et al., 2003; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Schweitzer, 2008; The Bivings Group, 2006; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008), while the other is not (e.g. Boas, 2008; Kluver, 2008; Small, et al., 2008; Voerman & Boogers, 2008).

Generally, a web content analysis is conducted according to aspects defined in the research. Typically, these aspects are related to aims and activities of e-Campaigning. In general, the following aspects are distinguished: "information provision" (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Boas, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008; Gibson, et al., 2003; D. T. Hill, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; The Bivings Group, 2006; Voerman & Boogers, 2008); "interactivity" (e.g. Bentivegna,

2008; Gibson, et al., 2003; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; Schweitzer, 2008; Small, et al., 2008; Ward, Owen, et al., 2008); "support mobilisation" (e.g. Boas, 2008; Owen & Davis, 2008); and "resource generation" (e.g. Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Ward, Gibson, et al., 2008). In addition to these aspects, some researchers also include analytical aspects which are not directly associated with the aims and activities of e-Campaigning, such as the format in which the web content is delivered – text only or multimedia (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Chen, et al., 2006; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2007; The Bivings Group, 2006); content accessibility (e.g. Hooghe & Vissers, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2007); and content navigatibility (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Hooghe & Vissers, 2008).

So far however, although the importance of web content analysis for research on e-Campaigning is evident in the academic literature, we can observe variation and inconsistency across analytical frameworks available, even in studies conducted by the same authors. There are two possible explanations for these discrepancies in website content analysis.

First of all, scholars use different terminology in defining a similar aspect for their web content analysis. For instance, the aspect of "mobilisation" used in some studies (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Boas, 2008; Ward et al., 2006) is referred to as "participation" in other studies (e.g. Gibson et al., 2003). Moreover, an aspect, such as "information provision", may involve a wide variety of content elements. As a result, content elements could be clustered under different aspects. An example would be a blog as a content element which could be respectively located under the aspect of "information provision" or "interactivity". Also, an e-Campaigning activity can be used for more than one purpose, which may lead to further confusion in the analysis and clustering of web content elements.

Secondly, the nature of web content analysis is evolutionary and contextual. This is a result of changes in the adoption and use of ICTs in e-Campaigning activities employed within a specific institutional context, as well as across time. For example, for e-Campaigning activities in countries like the US and the UK, where the adoption and use of ICTs in e-Campaigning is relatively advanced, a web content analysis tends to include a wider array of aspects compared to countries like Indonesia and Spain, where the adoption and use of ICTs in e-Campaigning is less developed and often restricted to information provision (e.g. Dader, 2008; D. T. Hill, 2008).

A possible way to overcome these problems in e-Campaigning research is to make use of qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus group meetings, in order to better understand the content offered through campaigning websites.

2.6.2 THE WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK USED IN THIS STUDY

On the basis of an academic literature review, especially considering the presented shortcomings of existing web content analysis frameworks, we decided to develop our own web content analysis framework in order to empirically explore e-Campaigning activities of political parties in the 2008 national election in New Zealand. In so-doing we did not include the possibility of scoring political parties' websites on the basis of the web content analysis, as some researchers have done so far (e.g. Chen et al. 2006). We used the following two arguments for not using scoring criteria in our web content analysis framework. Firstly, in research projects in which website content has been scored, the deployed scoring criteria and their outcomes appear to be questionable from an e-Campaigning substance point of view. For example, Chen et al. (2006) scored the content of political parties' websites in an election period in Australia, based on a criterion of the number of paragraphs presented under a specific web content element: according to the authors, the more paragraphs a content element involves the higher the score. Consequently, we did not consider available scoring criteria to be informative for our research needs. Secondly, the main purpose of this study is to empirically explore the current landscape of e-Campaigning by political parties in New Zealand, without the availability of earlier empirical research in this area. As a result, a comparison of scores with earlier empirical findings is not an option at this stage. In addition, a cross-party comparison of scores did not help us in answering our research questions.

We first defined the analytical aspects of our web content analysis framework on the basis of an academic literature review in the broad field of e-Campaigning. Subsequently, we operationalised each aspect into web content elements, again based on available literature. The following nine aspects and related content elements are included in our web content analysis framework (see also Figure 2.2 for an overview of the web content analysis framework used in this study):

Information Provision: This aspect refers to content aimed at providing information about a political party, party candidates, and the election campaign more in general. Under this aspect information is provided in a *static* format. The content elements included under this

aspect are: party information, such as the history of the party, the principles the party stands for, and key personnel of the party; candidate biographies, such as background details and constituency of political candidates; an archive of press releases; key policies; an archive of the campaign trail; a list of campaigning events; an archive of political speeches; static blogs (i.e. blogs not permitting visitor comments); contact information of the party office; contact information of the party leader; contact information of party candidates; links to candidates' own websites if there are any; and links to other websites with content on the political party or the party leader.

Interactivity: This aspect is related to content that allows interactivity between the party and website visitors, and/or amongst website visitors. The content elements included under this aspect are: email the party leader; email a party candidate; email the party office; online chat; online opinion polls that are either initiated by the political party or by website visitors; online surveys; online form for website visitors to register a petition; interactive forms for website visitors to provide feedback about the party's policies; online discussion forums; interactive calendar of campaign events; interactive blogs (i.e. blogs where comments are permitted); and web applications allowing website visitors to interact with policies that the party champions.

Support Mobilisation: The fundamental purpose of support mobilisation is to encourage supporters to be actively involved in campaign events, to invite supporters' friends and relatives to be part of the election campaigns, and, ultimately, for supporters to turn up on Election Day and cast their vote to the political party (candidate). The content elements related to this aspect include: sign up to updates or newsletters about campaign events in electronic or physical format; links to supporter groups; links for inviting others to participate in campaign events; links to forward campaign materials to others; links to download campaign materials; and links to electoral information, such as voter registration, election date and voting locations.

Targeted Campaigning: This aspect is associated with content that targets at a specific group of voters, and content targeting at opponents in the election. The related content elements are: content dedicated to a specific segment of voters or targeted at an individual visitor; and content targeted at opponents' policies or opponents in general.

Resource Generation: Generated resources during an election period include financial and human resources. The associated content elements are: information about making donations; forms for making donations online or offline; online merchandise; forms for becoming a party member; and forms for becoming a volunteer.

Multimedia: This aspect assesses the format other than text, in which web content is delivered. The related content elements are: photo galleries; audio content; and video live stream.

Accessibility: This aspect assesses accessibility of the web content from the perspectives of Internet bandwidth and multiple languages. Content elements related to this aspect include: text only option for the whole site without multimedia content; viewing options for website visitors with disabilities, such as visual impairment; and content offered in more than one language or by means of a translation tool.

Navigatibility: The ease of web content navigation. Associated content elements include navigation tips; search engines; and a site map.

Maintenance: This aspect looks at the maintenance and (regular) updating of website content, judged by the timestamp on the website.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements
Information Provision	
	Party information
	Candidate biography
	Press releases archive
	Key policy statements
	Campaign trail archive
	Campaign speeches archive
	Blog without comments permitted
	Contact information about the party
	Contact information about the party leader
	Contact information about party candidates
	Links to candidates' own websites
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites
	List of campaign events

Interactivity	
	Email party leader
	Email candidates belonging to the party
	Email party office
	Online chat
	Online opinion polls
	Online surveys
	Online form to register petition
	Means to provide feedback online
	Online discussion forums
	Interactive calendar of campaign events
	Blogs with visitor comments permitted
	Web applications to interact with policies
Support Mobilisation	
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters
	Links to supporter groups
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events
	Links to forward campaign materials to others
	Links to download campaign materials
	Links to electoral information
Targeted Campaigning	
	Targeting specific voter segments
	Targeting opponents
Resource Generation	
	Donation
	Merchandise
	Form to become a party member
	Form to become a volunteer
Multimedia	
	Images
	Audio content
	Video content
Accessbility	
	Text only option (for the whole site)
	Option for visitors with disability
	Multi-lingual content
Navigation	
	Navigation tips
	Search engine
	Site map/index
Maintenance	
	Daily content update

Figure 2.2: Web content analysis framework in this study

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Acknowledging a lack of empirical knowledge on e-Campaigning developments and activities in New Zealand, we used a qualitative case study research method to empirically explore e-Campaigning activities of political parties during the 2008 national election in New Zealand. Multiple case studies were conducted in this research, each case exploring the e-Campaigning activities of a New Zealand political party in the 2008 national election, their underlying strategy, and potential limitations to e-Campaigning for the political party concerned. The eight New Zealand parliamentary parties before the 2008 general election, namely National Party, Labour Party, Green Party, New Zealand First, ACT New Zealand, Maori Party, Progressive, and United Future, were the samples of our research; the unit of analysis was the political party organisation.

An academic literature review was conducted in order to construct an analytical framework for exploring and analysing the case studies identified in this study. In addition, we reviewed contributions published and/or presented (e.g. speeches of party leaders) around the 2008 national election in New Zealand.

The case study research was conducted in two phases: firstly, a web content analysis was done for each case study to explore the forms and ways of e-Campaigning; secondly, a series of semi-structured interviews was held with political party campaign managers, campaign strategists, and webmasters, to further explore the underlying strategy of e-Campaigning activities, as well as potential barriers to the adoption and use of e-Campaigning. All eight political parties were invited to participate in the second phase of the research. The National Party, Labour Party, ACT New Zealand, Maori Party, and United Future, agreed to participation in research interviews.

3.1.1. WEB CONTENT ANALYSIS

We used the content from available election campaign websites of political parties as the primary source of empirical data in our web content analysis. Data was collected on a daily basis between 12 September 2008 and 8 November 2008, the day of the national election.

As the start date for our data collection we used the date of the official announcement of the national election by Helen Clark, the New Zealand Prime Minister at the time.

The data has been analysed with the framework presented in Section 2.6.2. Used as a heuristic tool, the framework enabled us to both explore forms and ways of e-Campaigning and understand this complex phenomenon in a structured and informed manner.

3.1.2. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In the second phase of our research, five political parties agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews focused at the strategy of, as well as potential barriers to, e-campaigning. Interview participants were campaign managers, campaign strategists, or webmasters, with direct involvement in the 2008 national election campaign. Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that the participants not only provided insights related to pre-defined themes but also suggested further sources of corroboratory evidence (Yin, 1994). Pre-defined themes covered in the interviews focused on the e-Campaigning strategy of political parties on the basis of insights derived from the web content analysis.

4 CASE STUDY DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

This section describes and analyses e-Campaigning activities of eight political parties during the 2008 national election in New Zealand and provides a further understanding of the underlying strategies and limitations to e-Campaigning for five of those eight political parties, namely National Party, Labour Party, ACT New Zealand, Maori Party and United Future. Before presenting the case study descriptions and analysis we provide a short introduction of the New Zealand electoral system as contextual information to the research data presented in this section.

4.1 THE NEW ZEALAND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

According to Elections New Zealand (n.d.), since 1996, the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system is used for national elections in New Zealand. This system operates on the principle that the total number of party members in an elected body is required to mirror the overall proportion of votes received. Essentially, a voter casts two votes: one for a local body representative (electorate vote) and the other for a political party (party vote). The local body representative is selected using the First Past the Post method while the makeup of the House of Representatives is determined by the party vote. There is no requirement of casting the two votes for the same political party. This enables voters to elect a local candidate while additionally voting for the political party of their choice.

To gain list seats, a political party must earn a certain percentage of the total party vote. The threshold in New Zealand is 5%. Once this threshold is reached, parties are entitled to their share of the nominally 120 seats in the House of Representatives. This entitlement is also held by political parties with one or more electorate seats. The number of electorate MPs is calculated using three steps: The South Island of New Zealand has a fixed quote of 16 seats; The number of seats for the North Island and the number of special reserved seats for Maori are calculated in proportion to the seats available for the South Island; and the North Island and Maori seats are determined by the number of citizens on the respective general or Maori electoral rolls[2].

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[2] In the New Zealand electoral system, Maori have their own electoral roll. People who identify as Maori may either enrol on this special electoral roll or the general electoral roll.

4.2   THE NATIONAL PARTY'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.2.1   BACKGROUND OF THE NATIONAL PARTY

Formed in 1936 as a result of a merger between the United Party and the Reform Party, the National Party (referred to as "National" hereafter in this report) is the political party with the largest membership in New Zealand, and has been so for many decades. The party's political stance is positioned as centre-right. Before the 2008 national election, National held 48 seats in the New Zealand House of Representatives, making it the largest opposition party since the 2002 National elections. During the time of opposition in Parliament, National has seen several changes of leadership. Since 2006 the leader of National is John Key, who first entered New Zealand politics in 2002 as an elected MP.

4.2.2   GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

In 2005, the then leader of National Don Brash led an initiative "The Digital Strategy for the National Party" to envisage the party's use of ICTs, particularly the Internet, in order to engage the general public in new ways. An important topic area under this digital strategy was election campaigning. National continued this initiative during the 2008 national election. National's communication strategy for e-Campaigning in the 2008 national election was to be modern and contemporary but at the same time daring and adventurous. National not only focused on securing traditional support from the party loyalists but also reaching out to young voters under the age of 30. In order to achieve this, the party's e-Campaigning activities were aimed at communicating National's policies to the general public, and at the same time offering a fun and less conventional experience to people when visiting National's website. This experience was perceived to be critical for engaging young voters who were expected to consider election campaigning to be conventional, dull and boring. In general, National's 2008 e-Campaigning strategy was aimed at achieving a good balance between formality and informality. In so-doing campaign staff members perceived the need to not just move offline campaigning content to their web space but to develop new forms and ways of providing content to the general public.

In developing National's e-Campaigning strategy, a significant mission was to "market" the relatively new and unknown party leader, John Key, to voters. Key formally entered New Zealand politics in 2002 and became the leader of the National Party in 2006. It was

important for National to familiarise the public with Key in both professional and personal ways: staff indicated that voters were not only interested in National's policies, but also in the person who might become the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Campaign staff was aware of e-Campaigning developments and activities in other countries, such as Canada, Australia, the UK, France, Germany and particularly the USA. They had spent some time identifying e-Campaigning developments where they could learn from. However, although they saw the value of researching e-Campaigning developments in other countries, they considered it rather difficult to pinpoint to a specific e-Campaigning event which they then could adopt. In their view this had to do with three main factors: systemic conditions and relationships varied from one democratic system to another; the social and cultural context of e-Campaigning varied significantly between countries; and the exponential rate of the development of ICTs, particularly the Internet, meant that an e-Campaigning strategy considered "unique" a year ago, quickly could become omnipresent. In considering these three factors, campaign staff members acknowledged that, instead of trying to copy specific e-Campaigning events from other countries, it was more important to adopt the strategic philosophy behind various international e-Campaigning successes (e.g. aggressiveness).

Furthermore, staff members emphasised that being serious about e-Campaigning also meant taking required human resources into account. Although budgetary constraints prevented the party from outsourcing their e-Campaign to professional experts (similar to e-Campaigning practice in the USA), campaign staff understood the importance of recruiting a few key specialists in this area of e-Campaigning, such as a web master and web editor. These experts were employed on a permanent basis, so that the party's e-Campaign would demonstrate a high degree of professionalism and sophistication throughout the election period. Moreover, frequent communication between e-Campaigning staff and those staff members involved in 'general' election campaigning could ensure that the two campaigning strategies were aligned.

Initially, the party considered developing a website specifically for the 2008 national election campaign. This idea was dropped primarily because of a lack of time, financial and human resources. Instead, the party decided to use the existing official party website (www.national.org.nz) as the main platform for their e-Campaign. A comprehensive picture of the home page of National's campaigning website is presented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2:
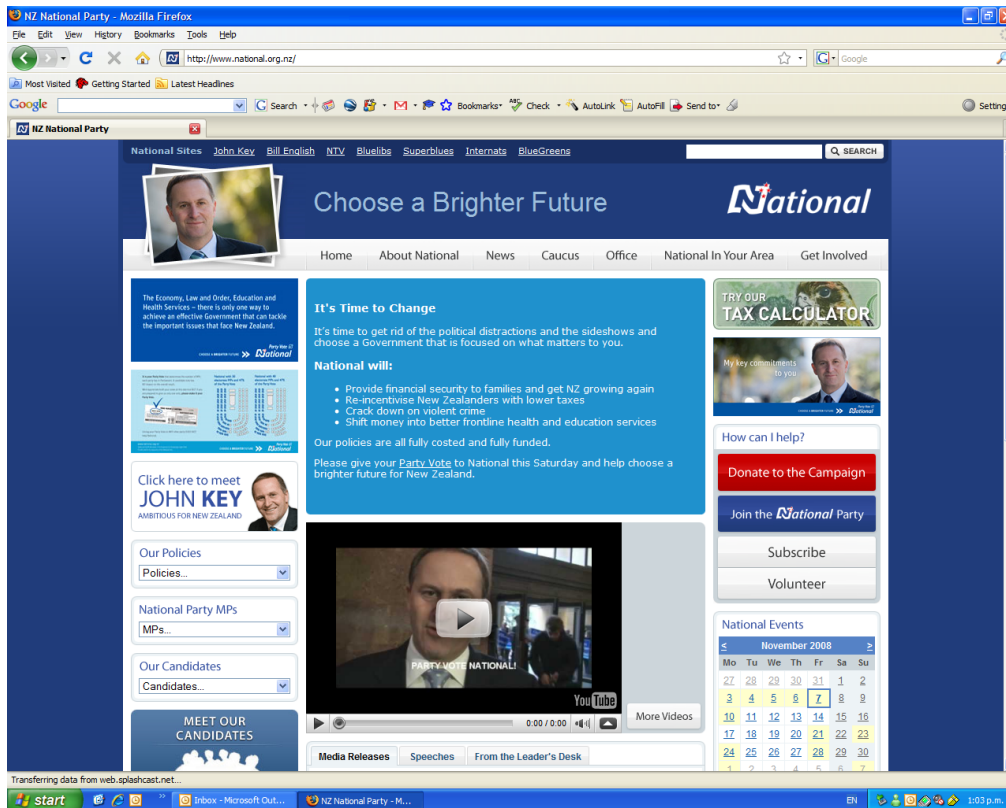
Figure 4.1: The home page of National's official e-Campaigning website (Part. 1)

Figure 4.2: The home page of National's official e-Campaigning website (Part. 2)

During the election period, National's campaigning website was "content rich", with content presented in multiple formats: text, images, video and audio. The base colour of the website was National's colour blue. The top of each web page featured photos of the leader, the campaign slogan "Choose a Brighter Future", and the party logo. A static frame was used for each web page and included the following items: a list of other National websites; information about the party, its caucus, head office, and local office; information about the party leader, MPs, and candidates; electoral information; the party's presence on social networking sites Facebook and YouTube; a link to view some of the web content in Chinese language; a link to register for regular news updates; an online calculator offering the website visitor an opportunity to interactively explore National's proposed tax policies; links for making donations, becoming a party member, subscribing to the campaign, and becoming a volunteer; an interactive calendar presenting campaign events; a video blog of the party leader ("John Key TV"); and a link to a dedicated 'log in' page for party members.

4.2.3   WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

National's website provided a wide array of comprehensive information to visitors (see also an overview of the content analysis in Figure 4.6). Information was placed under sections with an intuitive name, allowing visitors to retrieve the required information with ease. For instance, visitors were able to search a list of comprehensive policy statements, with each policy statement organised under a related portfolio (e.g. Art and Culture, Broadcasting, Defence and Security, Environment). A policy statement usually was released by the National representative responsible for the portfolio. For example, policies, such as emission trading, new energy technology and climate change, were filed under the "Environment" portfolio and released by Dr. Nick Smith, the person associated with that portfolio.

In general, media releases via the website were policy-oriented, either related to the policies championed by the party or attacking the policies of the party's main opponent, Labour. Similar to the release of policy statements, each media release was filed according to its related portfolio and was managed by the party member associated with the portfolio. Other examples of information provided through the website were an archive of speeches by different party members and a list of blogs called "Key Notes" provided by the party leader. These Key Notes were primarily aimed at further promoting National's proposed policies; in some occasions, they targeted at a confrontation with Labour's policies. The

party leader's blogs were text-based and permission for posting comments by visitors was disabled. The reason for not permitting visitors to post comments was two-fold. First, if visitors would have been permitted to post comments they naturally would have expected a timely and, more importantly, an authentic response from the originator of the blog John Key. Given the hectic schedule of the party leader, it would have been impossible for him to personally respond to each comment promptly. Secondly, permitting visitors' comments on the party's website would have required a dedicated staff member to moderate the website to prevent undesired attacks from opponents or their supporters. This resource was not an option due to a tight campaign budget. Given these two reasons and the fact that the main purpose of John Key's blogs was to promote policies instead of soliciting input for policy formation, the campaign team decided to present the blogs in a static format.

Campaign staff pointed out that, in their view, the majority of people would visit National's website to seek information about the party's policies and viewpoints. Moreover, information provision via a centralised source was perceived as beneficial to the party and to voters. The party for instance was given a direct opportunity to communicate to the general public (e.g. without any bias in communication). Also, it allowed the party to be more independent and proactive during the election period: for instance, the party had the opportunity to release the latest information to the general public and to news media at the same time, instead of relying on the traditional news media to speak for the party, which might not be free from any bias. To voters, a centralised source of information provision offered an opportunity to gain a more holistic picture of the National party, without any distortions. Also, a centralised source provided a way for voters to communicate with the party directly. As a result, voters were more informed when making their voting decision.

Staff members commented that most of the information provided via the website, such as candidate information, policy statements and press releases, was not uniquely related to National's e-Campaigning activities and was also offered through other media channels. To the party, the main benefit of providing information on a centralised website was not so much about exclusiveness of information provision, but especially about timely delivery of content.

Interactivity

In order to achieve the e-Campaigning objective of reaching out to young voters, the campaign team acknowledged the importance of providing interactive features on the website. According to our web content analysis (see Figure 4.6), the party's website exhibited a fair amount of content elements belonging to the aspect of "interactivity". More specifically, a clickable link was provided for visitors to email the party leader, party candidates, and the party office; visitors were encouraged to send feedback to the party by clicking an email link (although there was no specific mention about the kind of feedback the party solicited); and an interactive calendar was presented which not only highlighted major campaign events in a given month but also allowed visitors to filter campaign events based on their personal criteria, such as date or region (see Figure 4.3):

Figure 4.3: National's interactive calendar with criteria filters
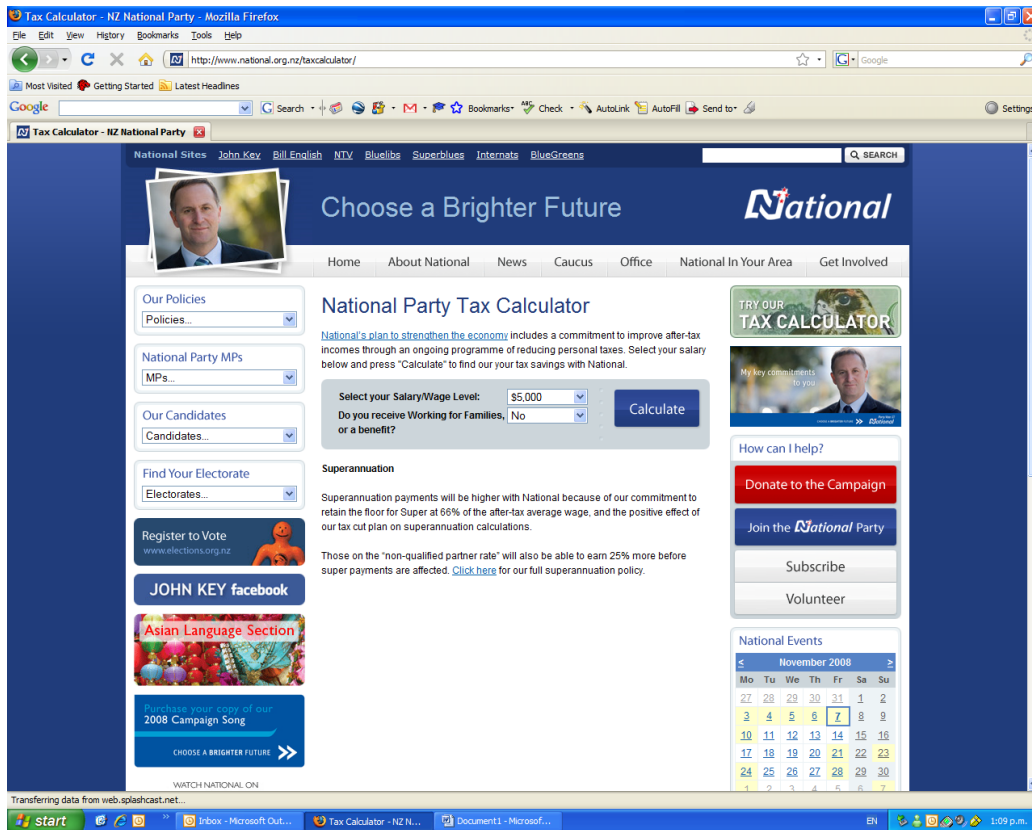
Figure 4.4: National's online interactive tax calculator

Another interactive content element on the website was a web application called "Tax Calculator" allowing visitors to find out implications of National's individual tax policy for their personal circumstances (see Figure 4.4).

Campaign staff pointed out that, although interactivity was emphasised as an important aspect in the 2008 e-Campaign, it was implemented from the perspective of a visitors' ability to personalise party information, such as the interactive calendar and the tax calculator, and not from the perspective of a visitors' ability to socialise or interact with the party in order to generate input for policy formation for example. Therefore, interactive content elements, such as online chat, online opinion polls, online surveys, online petitions or online discussion forums, were absent on the party's website. Campaign staff members did not think that lacking this kind of interactive features would dampen a visitor's enthusiasm or experience of online engagement with the party: voters in general would understand the nature of election campaigning, with political parties "pushing" policies which usually had been finalised before the elections. Initially, staff had considered an idea allowing voters to interact with the party leader and key party members through online video conferencing. This idea was dropped because of the concern of lacking a critical mass of users.

Support Mobilisation

On the basis of our web content analysis (see Figure 4.6) we may observe that support mobilisation was a prominent activity in National's e-Campaign. For example, visitors were encouraged to click on a link to receive almost daily newsletters from the party or the party leader. National's website also provided a link to supporters for forwarding campaign news to others. However, a link for supporters to invite others to participate in campaigning events was absent due to a concern about being seen as a party that distributes spam. Moreover, National took a new approach in offering downloadable campaign materials on the website. In the 2005 national election, National offered website visitors the opportunity to download the digital version of its highly-publicised campaign billboards. In the 2008 national election, although election billboards were still used for campaigning, the party chose a different downloadable campaign material for its supporters: a campaign theme song with the party's election slogan "Choose A Brighter Future" as the song title. A campaign staff member explained that this was an area where the party wanted to distinguish between offline and online campaigning: besides campaign materials which could be used in both offline and online environments, National wanted to tap into the potential of e-Campaigning, with low (if any) cost of duplicating and distributing digital materials. Yet, to download the campaign song was not free of charge: a small charge to cover the cost of making the song was asked from supporters.

It was also understood that the party particularly sought support from voters to cast a vote for National on Election Day. Consequently, several content elements were focused on providing information to the electorate, such as an online link for voter registration, information about the various constituencies across the country, and information about the party's local offices.

Although support mobilisation was strongly emphasised in National's e-Campaign, campaign staff acknowledged that this e-Campaigning area was still premature and far from optimal, also compared to the potential of the Internet and the creativity displayed in e-Campaigning activities of US presidential candidate Obama. However, two important factors were taken into consideration. Firstly, electorate politics in New Zealand were quite different compared to the USA. Secondly, e-Campaigning is a maturing process: it involves substantial learning investments in order to align the potential of technologies with the unique social and cultural context of a democratic system.

Targeted Campaigning

This activity involves two different aspects: election campaigning targeted at specific segments of voters and election campaigning targeted at opponents. Both aspects can be observed in National's e-Campaign.

In order to target election campaign activities at specific segments of voters, National first decided on targeting at two distinctive voter segments: namely voters who are 60 years of age or above, and legitimate voters living or staying overseas at the time of the elections. For each segment, a link to a dedicated webpage was provided on the party website. For instance, for those of 60 years of age or above, the content of the webpage called "Superblues" focused on specific policy issues of concern to this particular voter segment, such as crime and health care, also via a series of newsletters on behalf of the party leader. Visitors to the Superblue's webpage could register for this community of voters online and with no charge. They also could send an electronic postcard from the webpage to others. Similar to Superblues, a dedicated webpage was set up for so-called "Internats" to especially urge overseas supporters of National to register and cast their vote on Election Day. The dedicated webpage featured "Invite potential Internats" to allow existing members to invite likeminded legitimate voters and expand the community, and "Find an Internat" to foster connections with other members of this online community. The webpage also provided a link to "Kiwiblog", an online personal blog authored by a supporter of National.

Specific targeting at opponents happened in quite subtle ways. Occasionally, targeting at opponents could be observed in the party's media releases or the party leader's blog. The targeted opponent usually was the Labour party and especially some of its main policies on the economy and taxation. Campaign staff pointed out that, although the party wanted to run an aggressive e-Campaign, it also wanted the e-Campaign to be positive and stay away from smear-campaigning.

Resource Generation

In order to generate campaign resources, National's e-Campaigning activities focused on donation, becoming a party member and becoming a volunteer. Each of these activities could be done by filling in an online form. An online donation could be made through a deduction from the donor's credit card. Donors could choose the amount they wished to donate to up to NZD $1,000, in accordance with New Zealand electoral laws. A dedicated

'Donation' webpage also offered information on existing regulations with regard to financial donations to a political party; donors were required to acknowledge these regulations by checking boxes under "Legal Compliance" on the donation's online form. Moreover, the Donation webpage featured an online video clip in which the party leader expressed his gratitude to donors and stated that each donation would contribute to the shared objectives of John Key and National becoming the Prime Minister and the governing party of New Zealand, respectively. During the 2008 election period, National received a higher amount of online donations than during the previous elections. Campaign staff indicated that the party is satisfied with the amount of online donations raised during the 2008 national election. Staff member further commented that, while it is intriguing to see increasing amount of donations being raised by US presidential candidates, it is hard for any political party in New Zealand to achieve a similar result, at least in the foreseeable future. This has to do with the fact that, although the number of online donations is increasing, it is not yet common to make online donations to support a political party in New Zealand: the tradition of political parties soliciting donations offline is still dominant and is unlikely to shift rapidly.

Multimedia

National has made good use of the wide array of formats available for e-Campaigning activities. For instance, the website contained a large amount of images depicting the party leader as well as key party members in the campaign trail and provided a link to the party's Flicker account where visitors could view further images grouped under different themes, such as "Campaign Trail" and "John at Kindercare". Moreover, National made significant use of video clips. Besides offering web pages with video clips that could be played directly, such as the use of video on the Donation page, the party website hosted a link to a dedicated website called "NTV" (National TV), which was a centralised hub of video clips of individual key party members organised on the basis of their names (see Figure 4.5). NTV visitors had access to a wide variety of video clips, ranging from the party member's debates in Parliament to campaigning events like visiting schools or talking to workers.

In general, the use of multimedia in e-Campaigning was seen as important, as experiences of participating in an election campaign could be enhanced, also against the conventional view that election campaigns are boring and dull, and a "common touch" could be offered, especially around the goal of familiarising the public with the "new" party leader. However, campaign staff also acknowledged that the heavy use of multimedia in e-Campaigning could

cause a situation in which visitors with restricted Internet access (e.g. dial-up access) would be turned away. This explains the party's decision to create a dedicated website for hosting video clips.
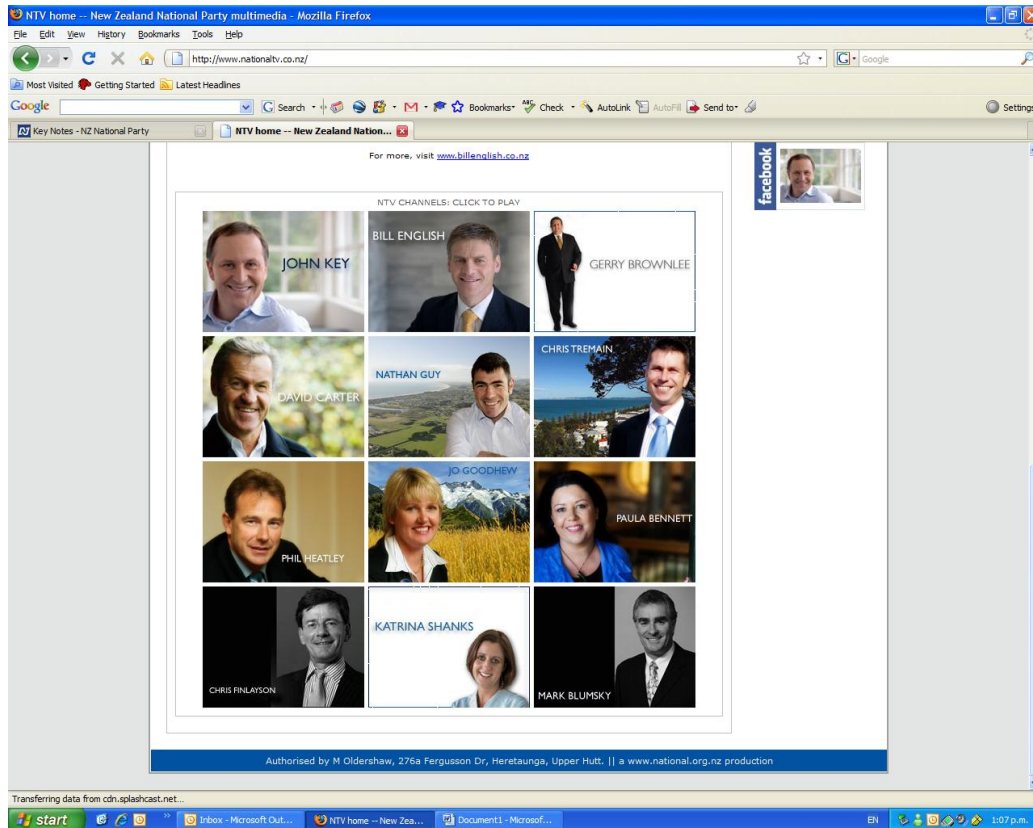
Figure 4.5: National's NTV

Accessibility

National's website particularly addressed this aspect from a language point of view, by providing a Chinese language version of the party's background and some key policy statements in recognition of the growing population of Asian voters in New Zealand. Interestingly, the website did not provide an option to view content in Maori, an official language in New Zealand. Options for viewing the website in text only format to address the needs of visitors with slow Internet access or visitors with disabilities, were absent due to limited time and human resources.

Navigation

National's website offered a search option allowing visitors to locate specific content on the basis of one or more keywords. In general, this search function worked quite well with the search results usually of relevance to the provided keywords. However, some common

navigation content elements were absent, such as navigation tips and advice for website visitors and a site map displaying the overall structure of the website.

Maintenance

National's website was updated on a daily basis and sometimes even several times a day. Frequently updated areas were media releases, policy statements, speeches, the party leader's blog, and images and video clips depicting the election campaign. Staff members explained that, while there was no specific rule regarding the frequency of updating website content, the release of content on the website was synchronised with the presentation of similar messages in other media (e.g. television, radio, newspapers).

Aspects of the content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	√
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	√
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	√
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	√
	List of campaign events	√
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	√
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	√
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	

	Web applications to interact with policies	√
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	√
	Links to download campaign materials	√
	Links to electoral information	√
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	√
	Targeting opponents	√
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√
	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	√
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Option for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	√ (Partial)
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	√

Figure 4.6: Summary of the content analysis for National's website

4.3 THE LABOUR PARTY'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.3.1 BACKGROUND OF THE LABOUR PARTY

Established in 1916, the Labour Party (referred to as "Labour" hereafter in this report) is the political party with the longest history in New Zealand. The party's political stance can be described as being centre-left and social-liberal.

Until the 2008 national election, Labour was the largest political party in the New Zealand House of Representatives (50 seats). Labour, together with coalition partners, had led the New Zealand government since 1999. The party leader was Helen Clark, who first entered Parliament as an elected Labour MP in 1981. She became the party leader in 1993 and Prime Minister in 1999. In the 2008 national election, Clark led the Labour party to seek a fourth term in government.

4.3.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

Compared to previous election campaigns in which the party had solely focused on offline campaigning activities, Labour wanted to explore opportunities for e-Campaigning activities during the 2008 national election. This idea emerged in 2007, approximately a year before the 2008 national election took place. As a result, the party sent campaign staff to the USA to observe Obama's e-Campaign in the US presidential elections and identify areas that could be adopted in developing Labour's e-Campaigning strategy.

Campaign staff who had visited the USA, indicated that, while it was fascinating to witness how Obama made use of innovative e-Campaigning opportunities, it was difficult to adopt these e-Campaigning opportunities in the New Zealand context, due to financial, technological and legal constraints. A good illustration of these three constraints was Obama's use of ICTs for support mobilisation. During the US presidential elections, Obama's campaign staff utilised state of the art technology for data mining in order to construct profiles about potential supporters of Obama. Each profile consisted of a potential supporter's personal data and location data, such as name, occupation and residential address. Each individual profile could then be presented on a digital map, which helped the campaign team in organising 'door-knocking' activities in the physical world. After completion and confirmation of this map it was transferred to mobile devices (e.g. smart

phones with GPS functionalities) of campaign staff and volunteers who participated in the door-knocking. After having approached a potential supporter, door-knocking staff would send an update through their mobile devices to the campaign team. This offered the campaign team the possibility to track the status of door-knocking in each region and therefore to reduce the chance of approaching the same person. While this integration of offline and online support mobilisation worked well in Obama's campaign, it was hard to adopt in the New Zealand context because it required a significant level of financial and technological resources not available to a political party in New Zealand. Furthermore, constructing profiles of voters and sharing those profiles for campaigning purposes could lead to breaching the New Zealand Privacy Act.

After evaluating observations of the Obama campaign, Labour decided to develop its own e-Campaigning strategy including the creation of a website dedicated to the 2008 national election (www.labour08.co.nz). The party felt that it was not ideal to utilise the existing official party website (www.labour.org.nz) as the platform for e-Campaigning. This had to do with the fact that the official party website already contained a lot of information about the party and its candidates: adding further information unique to the election campaign (e.g. policy statements, media releases and campaign events) would lead to a website overloaded with information, making it difficult for visitors to navigate. A risk was perceived of turning visitors away and, with that, destroying the effectiveness and efficiency of Labour's e-Campaign.

As the strategy of deploying a separate website for e-Campaigning had been implemented not long before the official announcement of the national election was made and with a shortage of staff dedicated to e-Campaigning, Labour's e-Campaigning website for the 2008 national election went live before the site was fully completed. For this reason, early in the election period, a number of web pages were still "under construction". To tackle this issue, Labour's campaign team decided to temporarily place information and updates related to the 2008 national election on both the official party website sponsored by the New Zealand Parliamentary Service and the e-Campaigning website until the latter became fully functional. Staff members pointed out that this situation may have created unnecessary confusion to voters.

Although Labour's existing official party website was briefly used as an alternative platform for e-Campaigning, it was not part of the party's e-Campaigning strategy. The party considered www.labour08.co.nz as its official e-Campaigning website. Therefore, the web content analysis for Labour in this report is based on its dedicated e-Campaigning website. A complete picture of Labour's e-Campaigning website is presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8.
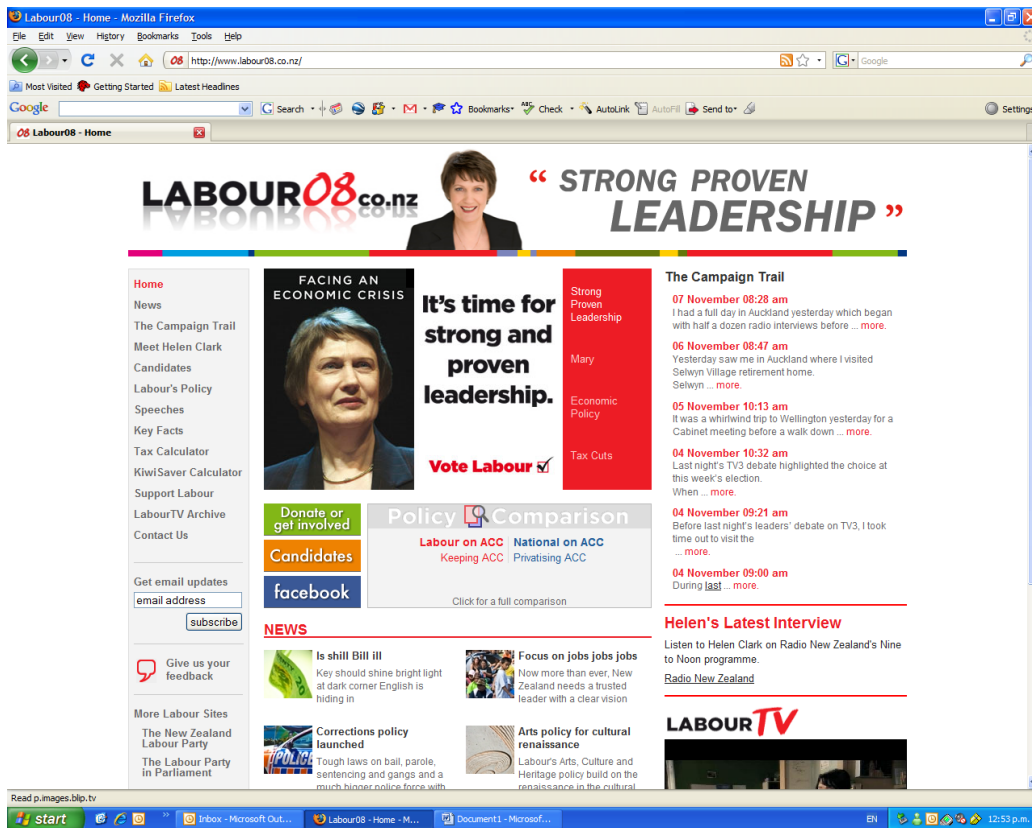
Figure 4.7: The home page of Labour's official e-Campaigning website (Part.1)

Figure 4.8: The home page of Labour's official e-Campaigning website (Part.2)

Labour's e-Campaigning website was "content rich" and included a wide array of formats, such as text, images, audio and video. The party colour red was a dominant feature on the website, together with a photo of Helen Clark and a quote from the party leader "Strong Proven Leadership". This gave an impression to visitors that the party's e-Campaign was strongly focused on party leader and Prime Minister in office Helen Clark.

4.3.3 WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

Providing information to voters was considered a critical aspect of Labour's 2008 e-Campaign. Campaign staff pointed out that, whilst the nature of campaigning is about sending out messages to voters so that they could be informed when casting their vote on Election Day, engaging voters in election campaigning had become quite different compared to the past. The majority of voters did not spend a lot of their personal time on political parties' election campaigns any longer. When they do engage with election campaigns, they are often selective and mainly focus on matters that interest or concern them, or on policies championed by a particular political party. A challenging e-Campaigning development therefore was that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find out the time each visitor spends on retrieving and reading information on the party website. Consequently, it is problematic to decide on the level of information to provide in order to satisfy voters with varied interest levels in engagement with the party's e-Campaign. It was believed that, while providing information is critical in election campaigning, too much information provision is just as poor as no information provision; hence the decision for a dedicated e-Campaigning website. The main aim of information provision was to provide information related to the party's election campaign to the media and to voters in a timely fashion.

In general, Labour's e-Campaigning website covered most content elements in our web content analysis framework. For instance, the information on the website was organised around themes; a list of Labour's policy statements could be found on the website; each policy statement was organised under a specific portfolio, such as Agriculture, Climate Change, Economy or Education; being the largest political party in New Zealand, the coverage of policy statements was broad and each statement was presented comprehensively; and a list of speeches made by key party members, particularly the leader, was provided in text format on the "Speeches" webpage, with a short summary and release date attached to each entry on the list. Moreover, the website offered a "News" page

including an archive of news releases organised in reversed chronological order and with a short description.

Events that occurred during the party's campaign trail were covered on "The Campaign Trail" page. This campaign trail page particularly focused on the party leader through a blog called "Helen's diary". The coverage of the party's campaign trail was wide, ranging from the party leader's visits to voters, to the party's appearance on television or radio. The party leader's blog was a static, one-way form of communication, not allowing visitors to post their comments. Campaign staff explained that the main purpose of the blog was for Clark to share her thoughts with the voters. Given her demanding personal schedule, it would not have been feasible for Clark to attend to each reader's comment with a personal response. Furthermore, a dedicated webpage "Meet Helen Clark" had been created for visitors to find out about Clark's background; highlights of her political career; and key principles and values she held. This dedicated webpage also suggests that Labour's 2008 e-Campaign was leader-oriented.

Labour candidates in the 2008 national election and their electorates were listed on a dedicated "Labour's 2008 Candidates" webpage. Visitors were able to click on a candidate to gather further information about the candidate, including contact information. If a candidate was a current MP, contact information about the candidate's office in the local electorate was also provided. Another information provision example is a link to the party's official presence on Facebook via the home page of Labour's e-Campaigning website.

Although Labour provided a wide variety of campaign information on its dedicated e-Campaigning website, information about the party, such as the party's history and key principles the party stands for, was absent. Campaign staff explained that this was a deliberate choice: when a voter visits a political party website during an election period, the visitor already has some degree of knowledge about the party and is more interested in the party's policies. Consequently, party information was not considered to be of high interest to voters during the election. This demonstrates what Labour's strategy of information provision encapsulated – to provide campaign information that was of high relevance and interest to voters.

Interactivity

Interactivity in Labour's 2008 e-Campaign could be mainly observed in the area of the party's policies. For example, the party provided online calculators for voters to interact with the party's policies on personal tax (see Figure 4.9) and superannuation ("KiwiSaver") and find out policy implications on a personal level.
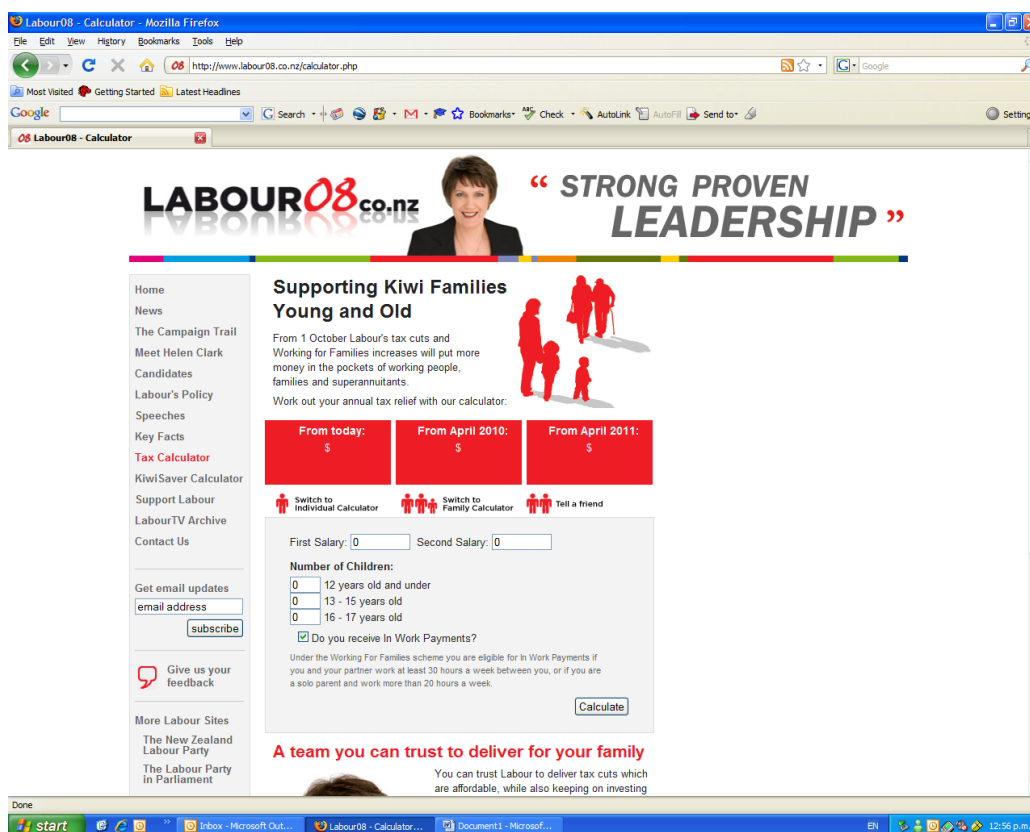
Figure 4.9: Labour's online tax calculator

Another example is the adoption of Web 2.0 technology to allow voters to interact with policies on the basis of keywords, tags, or popularity. More specifically, each party policy had tagged keywords (e.g. Productivity, At-risk young people, responding to the international downturn). When a policy was frequently viewed, the text size of its associated keywords/tags would increase (see Figure 4.10). Moreover, visitors were able to interact with Labour representatives by sending an email to the party leader, candidates belonging to the party, or to the party's main office. The party's e-Campaigning website also encouraged visitors to provide feedback through email, although the party did not specify what sort of feedback it sought.
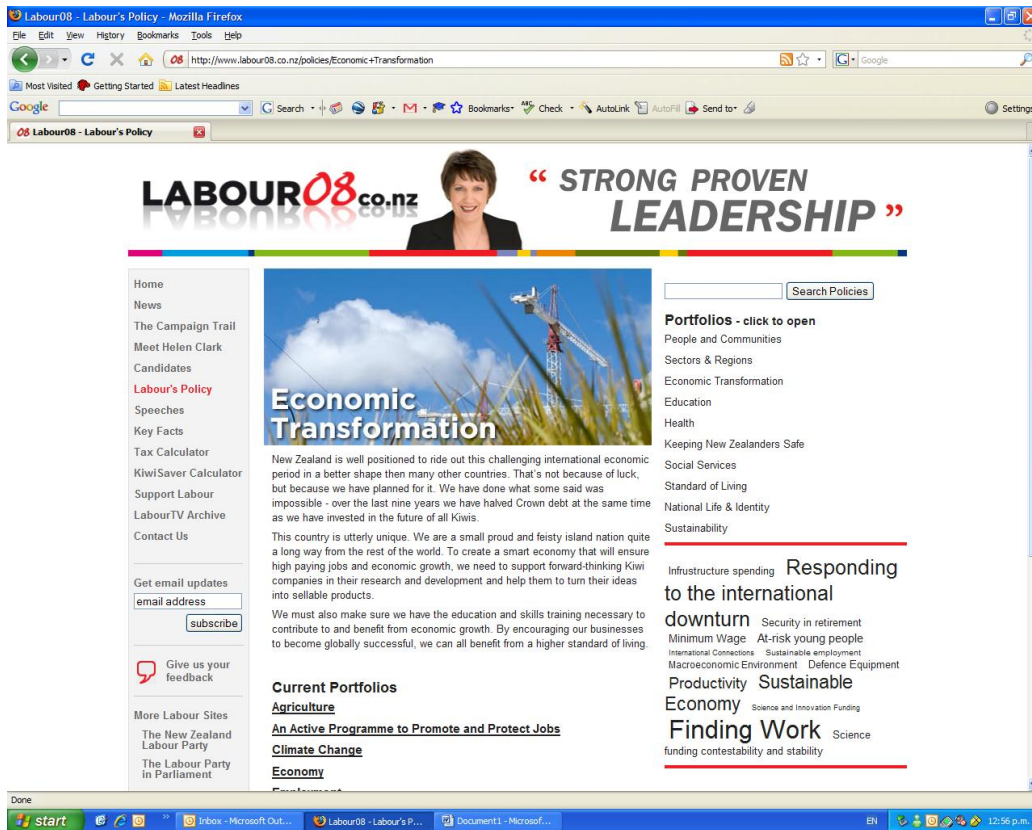
Figure 4.10: Labour's use of Web 2.0 technology to allow visitors to interact with its policies

Labour's e-Campaigning website lacked features that enabled visitors to interact with the party or other website visitors through online chat, online opinion polls, online surveys or online petitions, for instance: the primary focus of the party's e-Campaign was information provision. At the same time, party supporters created their own websites which served as online communities for the "like-minded" to interact or socialise with each other. Also, in general, opinion polls and surveys had never been a strong focus in New Zealand political parties' election campaigning; polls and surveys were mostly conducted by the media. In summary, despite some aspects of interactivity having a presence in Labour's e-Campaign, communication was mainly one-way.

Support Mobilisation

Although this aspect was not a primary focus in Labour's e-Campaign related areas could be observed on the party's website. For instance, visitors could sign up to receive updates or newsletters from Labour's website. Moreover, a link to information on the elections, including voter registration, was provided on the website. The e-Campaigning website did not provide a list of campaigning events so that Labour supporters could participate; instead, the website indicated that if voters were interested in being involved in campaign events,

they could use the phone number or email address provided on the website to get in touch with their own local branch of Labour's campaign team.

Targeted Campaigning

Labour particularly used targeted campaigning activities focused on Labour's major rival National, and National party leader John Key. For instance, Labour's e-Campaigning website hosted video clips of several Labour campaign advertisements broadcasted on New Zealand television, in which the credibility of John Key was questioned. For example, one advertisement portrayed a mother from a working family expressing her doubts over John Key's credibility and ability to lead the country in the looming economic crisis. Another example was advertisements referred to as "John Key Doubletalk" pointing out John Key's u-turns on varying policies. Furthermore, a dedicated web page called "Key Facts" presented doubts over the credibility of the National party leader by comparing and contrasting John Key's changing position on a variety of policy issues, such as civil unions, the war in Iraq, climate change, or working for families (see Figure 4.11). These policy changes were substantiated by providing videos of John Key making revised policy statements and supporting articles from political journalists. The webpage also provided a feature allowing visitors to forward particular video clips of John Key to others. Further targeting activities on National and the National party leader John Key could be observed in Helen Clark's blog entries through the use of emotive words and a dedicated section on the e-Campaigning site called "Policy Comparison", where visitors were able to compare several policies (e.g. ACC, KiwiSaver) between Labour and National.

The reason for Labour's targeted campaigning activities at National was to "encourage you [the voters] to use this information to judge for yourself whether John Key has the values and ability needed to lead New Zealand" (e-Campaigning website). However, Labour's targeted campaign at National apparently has not been well-received. At a post-election conference, a Labour party representative admitted that the targeted campaigns at National had backfired on the party, as many voters, including Labour party supporters, had felt that Labour's targeted campaigns were too negative.

During the election period, campaigns targeted at a specific voter segment could not be observed on Labour's e-Campaigning website.

Figure 4.11: Labour's targeted campaign at National's party leader

Resource Generation

The party's e-Campaign focused on two areas of resource generation, donations and human resources through volunteering. In the area of donations, website visitors could complete an online form to make financial donations of up to NZD $1,000 using their credit card. The website also provided a link to advice on making financial donations via other channels (e.g. regular mail, telephone or online banking). Furthermore, Labour used the website to invite visitors to become a volunteer and provide support with varying Labour campaign activities (e.g. delivering pamphlets, data entry, hosting a house meeting for a Labour candidate).

Multimedia

Although the majority of content on Labour's e-Campaigning website was delivered in text, the use of multimedia for content delivery was evident. More specifically, almost all web pages within Labour's website contained images. Another example was a dedicated webpage called "LabourTV Archive" consisting of various video clips ranging from Labour's television advertisements to interviews with Helen Clark.

Accessibility

None of the content elements specified in our analytical framework were addressed on Labour's e-Campaigning website.

Navigation

Labour's website did not offer navigation tips or a site map to assist website navigation. However, the lack of these features was largely compensated by the well-structured content. The website provided a search engine which was limited to searching Labour policy statements on the basis of keywords.

Maintenance

Labour's e-Campaigning website was updated on a daily basis and sometimes even more frequently. Frequently updated areas included news releases, policy statements, Helen Clark's blog, speeches and video clips. Campaign staff indicated that while there was no rule specified in terms of regularly updating the website content, the release of content on the website was usually in sync with the release of party related information via other media (e.g. television, radio, newspapers).

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	√
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	√
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	√
	List of campaign events	
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√

	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	√
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	
	Web applications to interact with policies	√
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	
	Links to download campaign materials	
	Links to electoral information	√
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	√
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√
	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	
	Form to become a volunteer	√
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	**√ (Partial)**
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	√

Figure 4.12: Summary of the content analysis for Labour's e-Campaigning website

4.4 THE GREEN PARTY'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.4.1 BACKGROUND OF THE GREEN PARTY OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (referred to as "the Greens" hereafter in this report) became an independent New Zealand political party in 1997. Before 1997, the Greens were a co-founder of Alliance, a left-wing political party which failed to secure at least 5% of the party vote or an electorate seat in the 2002 national election and therefore exited New Zealand Parliament. The Greens originated from the Values Party which was established in 1972 and considered to be the world's first environmentalist party at the national level.

The Greens' political stance can be described as left-wing and environmentalist. The party's primary focus is on issues associated with sustainability of the environment. Furthermore, the party fosters issues and policies related to ecological economics, progressive social policies, participatory democracy and non-violence.

During the 2008 national election, the party was co-led by Janette Fitzsimons and Russell Norman and had 6 seats in the New Zealand House of Representatives.

4.4.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

As a small political party in New Zealand, the Greens claim to face stronger resource constraints than the two major parties Labour and National. As a result, the party's general strategy for the 2008 election campaign focused on closer collaboration with supporters, both nationally and internationally. Given the party's fundamental principles and values on sustainability of the environment, the party favoured a "greener" election campaign: a campaign that would consume less environmental resources and produce less waste. Consequently, e-Campaigning was perceived as a useful campaigning means. For example, an important objective for the Greens' e-Campaign in the 2008 national election was to centralise the party's off-line campaigning materials and offer them online. The Greens utilised their existing official party website (www.greens.org.nz) as the platform for its e-Campaigning activities during the 2008 national election. The home page of the Green Party's official website is presented in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13: The home page of the Green Party's e-Campaigning website

The party colour green was the basic colour scheme of the e-Campaigning website. Another notable area is the 'minimalist' content structure of the Greens' home page, which formed a stark contrast to the content rich home page structure adopted by other political parties: instead of offering a large variety of content elements, the party's home page showed only the main segments within the website, such as party-related blogs, social networking sites where the party had a presence, downloads, events, and an online shop. A large part of the party's home page displayed the Greens' campaign billboard, featuring a girl in a natural environment together with the party's campaign message: "Vote for me". It is worth mentioning that this billboard has received several international awards for the simple yet strong campaign message it sends.

4.4.3 WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

The Greens' e-Campaign was strongly focused on information provision. For instance, website visitors could find detailed information about the party, individual candidates and how to contact party representatives on a dedicated "about us" webpage; information

related to the party's history, its origins and key principles and values: and information on the Greens' achievements in Parliament, including the Emission Trading Scheme, the "Buy Kiwi Made" programme, and New Zealand's first energy efficiency legislation and waste reduction legislation. Moreover, emphasising the importance of casting the party vote to the Greens on the day of the national election, the website featured a section "Why should you give a damn" where the importance for the Greens of getting the voter's party vote was explained.

Although the party was strongly associated with issues in the field of environmentalism, policies championed by the party focused on a wide range of issues. The Greens' policies covered nearly 50 unique areas which were sorted alphabetically on the website. Visitors could click on each policy area to view detailed information about a particular policy. The website also provided an archive of press releases and a list of speeches by party representatives, both sorted in reverse chronological order. Moreover, website visitors could find information related to the campaign trail and a list of campaign events. It is worth noting that the website also provided information resources to the media. Those resources encompassed a picture for each candidate or party leader, and the party logo. All media resources were provided in both web and print sizes.

Interactivity

On the basis of the web content analysis framework applied in this report we can observe that the Greens made substantial use of interactive content elements on their website. More specifically, visitors could click on links in order to send an email to the party's head office, the party leaders, or to most party candidates. Website visitors could also send feedback to the party in a similar way, though it was not apparent how the feedback would be dealt with. Furthermore, visitors could explore campaign events happening in their local region. Another interesting interactive feature on the Greens' website was the option to filter speeches made available on the website; visitors could filter speeches on the basis of author name and/or topic area. Furthermore, two web blogs were hosted on the Greens' website: a web blog called "g.blog", a community of 'green voices' authored by party supporters (see Figure 4.14), and a web blog called "frogblog", a political blog from the Greens (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.14: G.blog on the Greens' e-Campaigning website
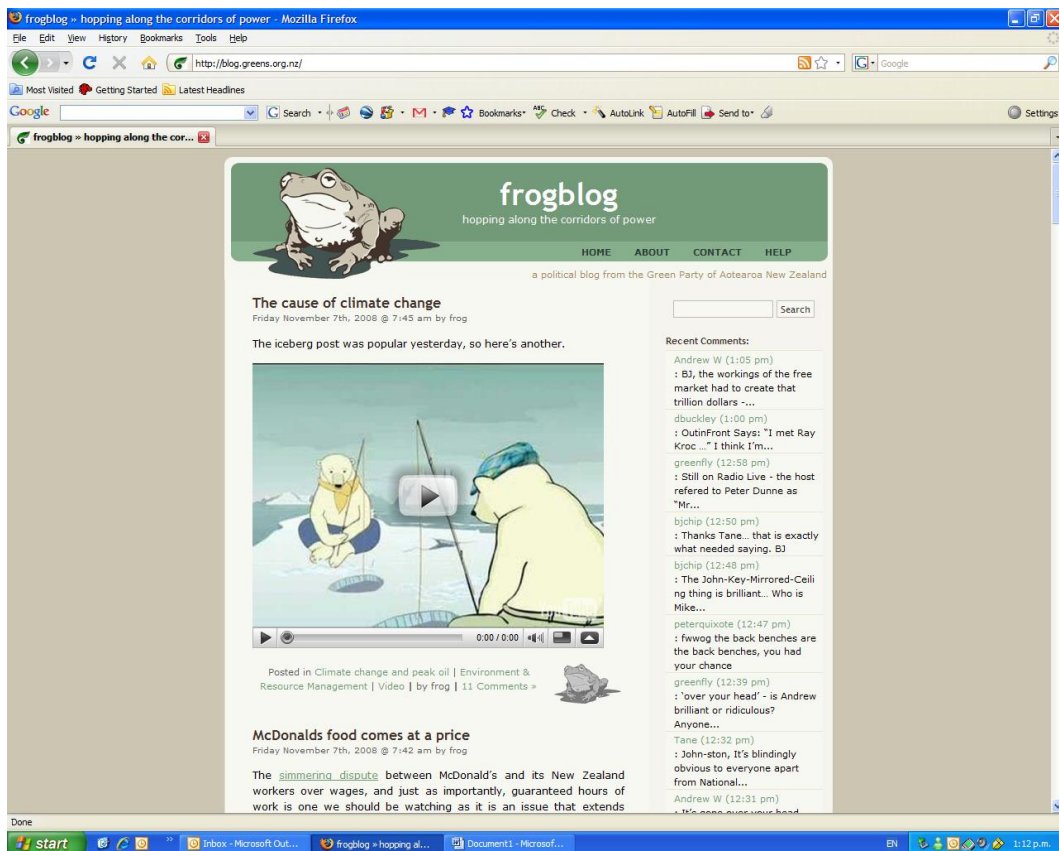
Figure 4.15: Frogblog on the Greens' e-Campaigning website

Although the topics discussed on both web blogs were varied, entries on frogblog were focused on presenting the party's political view points and those on g.blog were presenting personal and emotive political perspectives, such as a decision about employee redundancy made by a New Zealand bank under the entry title "Scumbags" (see Figure 4.14). Both web blogs permitted visitors to post comments; additionally, visitors were offered information related to censorship and privacy around the posting and management of comments. G.blog featured a number of Web 2.0 technologies to allow visitors to interact with the blog. For example, RSS technology was utilised to allow visitors to sign up and receive news feeds once a new blog entry was made or a new comment was made to a blog entry. Each entry on the blog was assigned with keywords/tags, allowing the blog readers to locate entries on the blog with greater ease, including on the basis of the popularity of a blog entry.

The Greens' e-Campaigning website did not feature online chat, online opinion polls, online surveys, online user-initiated petitions, or online discussion forums.

Support Mobilisation

The Greens' e-Campaign strongly focused at support mobilisation. A dedicated web page called "Support us" presented an overview of the Greens' approaches to mobilising active support of voters. For instance, voters could sign up online for three different options of receiving electronic "alerts" from the party: an alert when a user-specified policy issue and related press releases had been posted or updated on the party website; an alert when a user-specified topic and related press releases had been posted or updated on the party website; or an alert after a general update of the website.

Furthermore, urging supporters to be vocal of the Greens' values and principles in public, the website provided various campaign materials online for supporters to download and publicly display, including an electronic version of the party's campaign billboards, campaign leaflets, campaign media advertisements, and web banners featuring the party's logo and its campaign message "Vote for me". Moreover, promoting collaboration with party supporters during the election campaign, a feature on the website allowed supporters to create their own campaign billboards for the party and share these campaign billboards online with other supporters. The party's website also provided a list of links to national and international supporter groups and hosted a video clip in which the party leaders express the importance to the Greens of each party vote. In addition, the party encouraged supporters

to click on a link and enrol as a voter online, and cast their vote, particularly the party vote, to the Greens on Election Day.

Targeted Campaigning

During the election period, campaign activities targeted at specific voter segments or political opponents could not be observed on the Greens' website. Although some blog entries on g.blog mentioned other political parties or their MPs, however this was not considered as a targeted campaign activity from the Greens, as this blog was authored by party supporters and not by the party itself.

Resource Generation

The Greens' e-Campaign particularly focused on generating human and financial resources. Visitors could complete an online form to become a member of the party or a volunteer to assist with the party's offline campaign activities, and they could complete an online form to make financial donations of up to NZD $1,000 to the party. The website also provided other means for making financial donations, such as via online banking and printing a form provided on the website and sending the completed form through physical mail. Moreover, the party aimed to generate financial resources through the "Green Shop", an online merchandise shop accessible through the Greens' website (see Figure 4.16). Visitors could make online purchases of a range of products endorsed with the Greens' party logo and campaign message, including t-shirts, badges, bags, bike gear, stickers, and recipe books. The online merchandise shop not only alleviated financial resource constraints faced by the party, it also contributed to achieving support mobilisation, as the large majority of products for sale were endorsed with the Greens' party logo and campaign message.

Multimedia

Although text was the main form of content presentation on the Greens' website, the use of multimedia for content delivery was evident. For instance, the website presented the Greens' campaign trail via a collection of images, and images were used in presenting policy statements and the online shop. Moreover, visitors could download audio files related to the party's campaign, such as speeches, to play on their personal devices. As noted, the website also hosted several video clips.

Figure 4.16: The Greens' online shop - Green Shop

Accessibility

None of the content elements specified in our analytical framework were addressed on the Greens' website.

Navigation

Although content on the Greens' website generally was well-structured, the website provided a site map allowing visitors to become familiar with the content structure and locate specific content with greater ease. In addition, a search engine was provided to allow visitors to locate website content on the basis of keywords.

Maintenance

The Greens' e-Campaigning website was updated on at least a daily basis. Frequently updated areas included news releases, policy statements, web blogs and speeches.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	√
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	√
	List of campaign events	√
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	√
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	√
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	√
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	√
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	√
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	√
	Links to download campaign materials	√
	Links to electoral information	√
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√

	Merchandise	√
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	√
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	√
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	√
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	√

Figure 4.17: Summary of the content analysis for the Greens' website

4.5 NEW ZEALAND FIRST'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.5.1 BACKGROUND OF NEW ZEALAND FIRST

Founded in 1993, New Zealand First is a political party founded by Winston Peters following his resignation from the National Party. This party has been in the New Zealand House of Representatives from the year of its establishment until the 2008 national election. Moreover, New Zealand First has been a coalition party in both National-led and Labour-led governments. Before the 2008 national election, New Zealand First was the largest small party in the New Zealand House of Representatives holding 7 seats. Peters, who first entered Parliament as an elected National MP in 1978, is also the party leader.

The political ideology of New Zealand First is considered to be associated with nationalism and conservatism. The main focus of New Zealand First's policies is on senior citizens' benefits and the reduction of immigrants to New Zealand.

4.5.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

Although the party had a website dedicated to the 2008 election campaign (www.winstonpeters.com), e-Campaigning did not feature strongly in the party's overall campaign strategy. Moreover, the party's campaign efforts mainly focused on, and were led by, the party leader. A main challenge faced by the party during the election period was the potential damage associated with controversies over Peters' payment for legal services and party donations, as reported in the New Zealand news media. As these controversies emerged close to the 2008 national election, they were regularly targeted by political opponents and by the news media during the election. For example, despite the fact that Peters was cleared by the New Zealand Serious Fraud Office two days before the announcement of the 2008 national election, National openly excluded any possibility of establishing a coalition with New Zealand First, if National would win the elections. As a result of this potentially very damaging situation for New Zealand First, substantial campaign efforts focused on restoring the public image of Peters.

Figure 4.18 presents the home page of New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website, www.winstonpeters.com. Visitors of the official New Zealand First existing official party

website, www.nzfirst.org.nz, who were not aware of the party's e-Campaigning website, were redirected from the party website (see Figure 4.19).
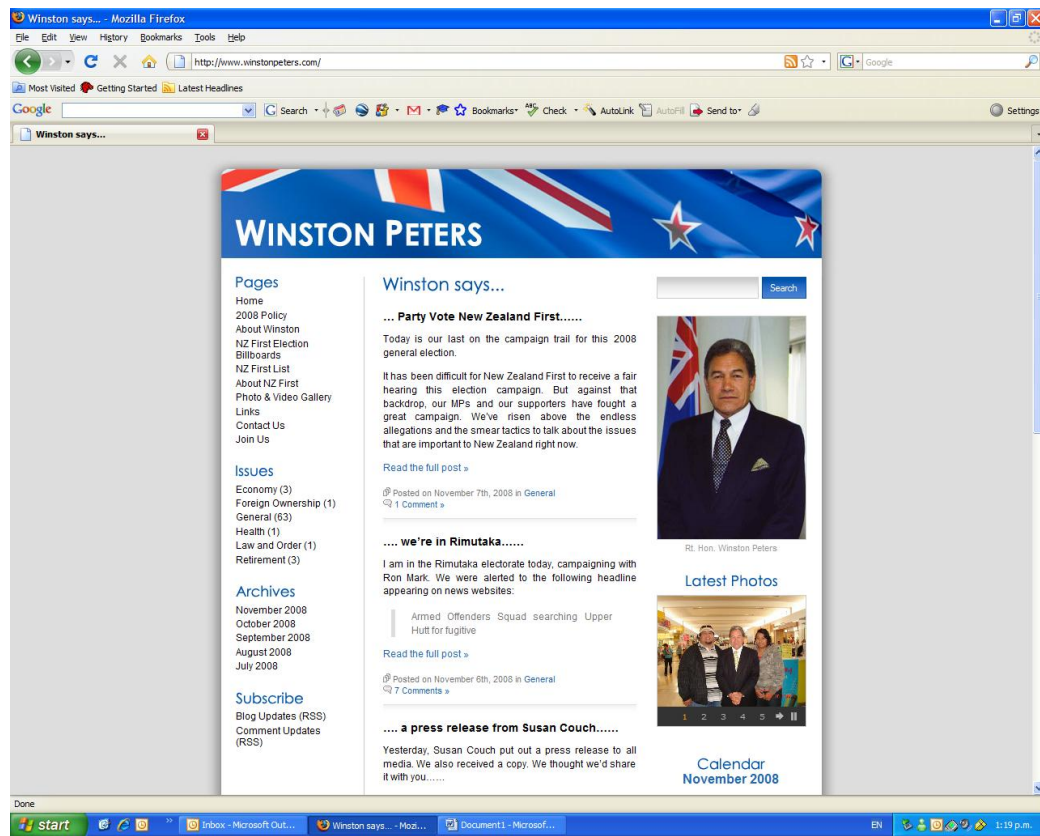
Figure 4.18: The home page of New Zealand First's official e-Campaigning website
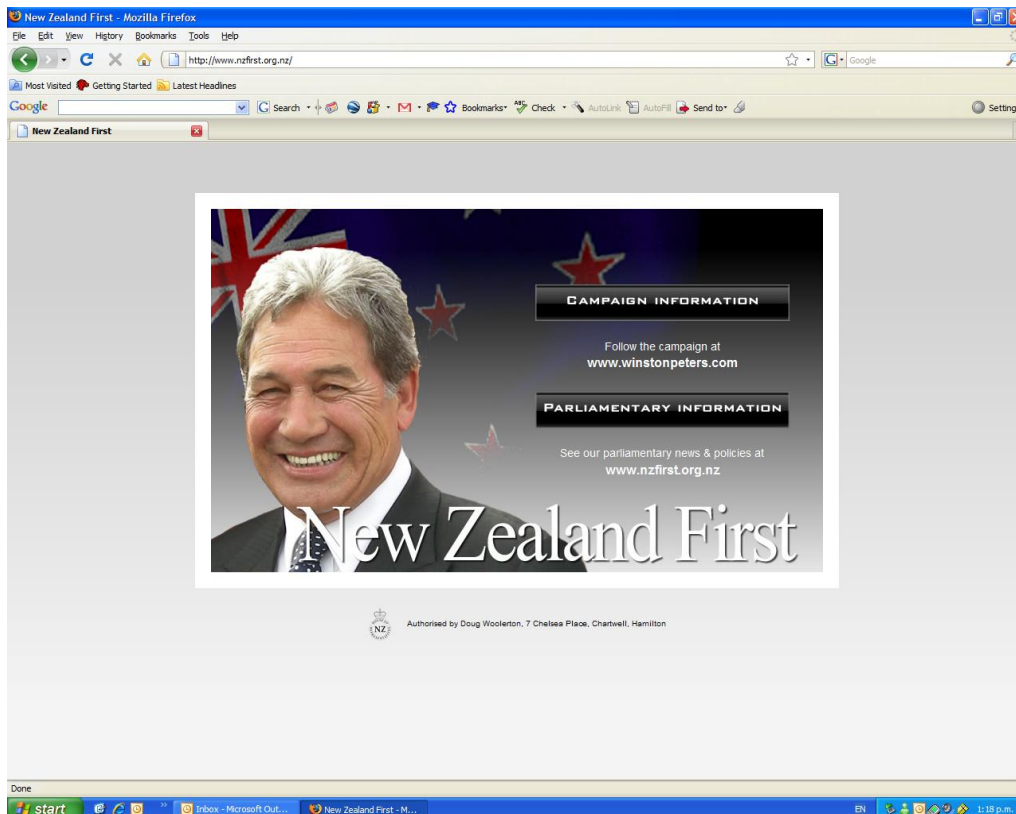
Figure 4.19: The home page of New Zealand First's parliamentary website

4.5.3   GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website primarily focused on its leader, Winston Peters. This was evident from various content elements presented on the home page, such as the prominent position of the party leader's name and Peters' blog "Winston says…". The strong emphasis on Peters in the New Zealand First's e-Campaign reflected the party's overall election campaign strategy of being leader-led and leader-focused.

4.5.4   WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website provided a reasonable level of information to visitors. More specifically, visitors could retrieve a rather detailed description of the party history and the principles and values held by the party. A dedicated web page to party leader Winston Peters outlined the ministerial positions he held under the Labour-led government before the 2008 national election, highlighted his personal background, his achievements as a politician, and his personal hobbies, and provided his contact details. Furthermore, the e-Campaigning website listed party candidates, their profiles and their contact details. A

calendar presented on the website allowed visitors to browse the party's campaign events. Website visitors also could find links to the official party website sponsored by the Parliamentary Service, and to the party's presence on YouTube. If visitors wanted to retrieve information about the party's policies, they were directed to the official party website. As New Zealand First is a small party, coverage of its policies was restricted. The party's policies mainly focused on law and order, the economy and senior citizens.

Rather surprisingly, the party's e-Campaigning website lacked information related to press releases, the campaign trail, or speeches made by the party leader or party candidates. This may be explained by the fact that e-Campaigning was not perceived to be a key component of New Zealand First's 2008 election campaigning strategy.

Interactivity

On the basis of our content analysis framework New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website could be assessed as 'static' rather then interactive. That said, a few interactive content elements could be observed. For instance, visitors were able to contact the party, the party leader, and party candidates via email, by clicking on the links provided. The e-Campaigning website also provided an interactive blog authored by Peters, allowing visitors to post and read comments. Peters used this blog to share his campaigning experiences as well as his views on different topics, ranging from politics to articles from the news media. Entries on the blog were sorted in reverse chronological order. A number of blog entries attracted readers' comments. We observed that there was no information given in relation to censorship or privacy protection for those who wanted to comment on a blog entry. Also, it was not evident that the blog author, Peters, personally attended to each comment with a response.

Support Mobilisation

New Zealand First's e-Campaign did not make significant use of support mobilisation activities. Activities in this area were limited to subscribing to receive updates via RSS feeds, when a new blog entry was made or a comment was made to a blog entry, and to downloading electronic versions of the party's election billboards.

Targeted Campaigning

It is not evident from New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website that the party targeted e-Campaigning activities at particular segments of voters or political rivals.

Resource Generation

On the basis of our web content analysis framework we can conclude that resource generation was not a main activity in New Zealand First's e-Campaign. Activities in this area were limited to encouraging visitors to become a party member. Website visitors wanting to become a party member could do so by completing an online form.

Multimedia

The content on New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website was primarily delivered in text. Images were used on the website, mostly to show Peters' offline interactions with voters. As noted, the website provided a link to a YouTube site where visitors could access video clips ranging from the party' campaign message to Peters' debates in Parliament.

Accessibility

None of the content elements specified in our analytical framework were addressed on the New Zealand First e-Campaigning website.

Navigation

A search engine was provided allowing visitors to search the content on New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website on the basis of keywords. The website however lacked navigation tips and a site map to assist visitors' navigation. That said, given the situation that the content structure of the party's e-Campaigning website was not complex, the lack of these features should not have hindered visitors in browsing the website.

Maintenance

New Zealand First's e-Campaigning website was updated on almost a daily basis. The content element most frequently updated was the party leader's blog.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	
	Campaign speeches archive	
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	√
	List of campaign events	√
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	√
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	
	Links to download campaign materials	√
	Links to electoral information	
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	
Resource Generation		
	Donation	

	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	

Figure 4.20: Summary of the content analysis for the New Zealand First e-Campaigning website

4.6   ACT NEW ZEALAND'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.6.1   BACKGROUND OF ACT NEW ZEALAND

Originated from the Association of Consumers and Taxpayers, ACT New Zealand (referred to as "Act" hereafter in this report) is a political party founded in 1994. The party's political position can be described as being related to classical liberalism and fostering individual freedom and responsibility.

Act was a small party in the House of Representatives holding two seats before the 2008 national election. Rodney Hide is the party leader. He first entered the House as a list MP and became the party leader in 2004.

4.6.2   GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

A campaign staff member pointed out that, as a small party, Act faced strong election campaigning constraints in terms of human, financial, and technical resources. As a result, the party could not afford the luxury of recruiting paid staff dedicated to different campaigning capacities, such as a campaign adviser or a campaign manager. Instead it became common for party candidates as well as the party leader to perform various campaigning tasks, ranging from operational to managerial, with occasional assistance from volunteers.

For a long time, Act has recognised the potential of e-Campaigning and the party leader has been known for using web blogs during election campaigns in the past. However, due to resource constraints the party's investment in e-Campaigning was rather limited. Act's general strategy for the 2008 e-Campaign was to utilise the party's existing official website (www.act.org.nz) as the platform for its e-Campaign in order to mainly provide centralised campaigning information to the general public, including the media; although Act was keen to explore more avenues for e-Campaigning activities during the 2008 national election, it lacked the resources to do so.

Act believed that the primary goal of the majority of website visitors was to gather information, particularly on policies proposed by the party. Consequently, Act decided to devote its limited resources for e-Campaigning to information provision instead of trying to

do too many things with too few resources. A campaign staff member pointed out that web blogs written by party candidates had attracted a sizeable number of readers; however, as these blogs originally were published on different websites, it might have been difficult to attract new readers as visitors might not have wanted to spend too much time searching for these blogs. In response to this issue, part of the party's e-Campaigning strategy was to centralise these blogs on the Act's e-Campaigning website.

Figure 4.21 exhibits the home page of Act's e-Campaigning website. The party's website is content rich with yellow and blue, the official party colours, dominating the website's colour scheme. Within the site each web page featured a banner including the party logo, a picture of the party leader and deputy leader, the New Zealand national flag, and the campaign message "Be the Difference – Act Now". Above the banner was a timer, counting down to the 2008 national election.
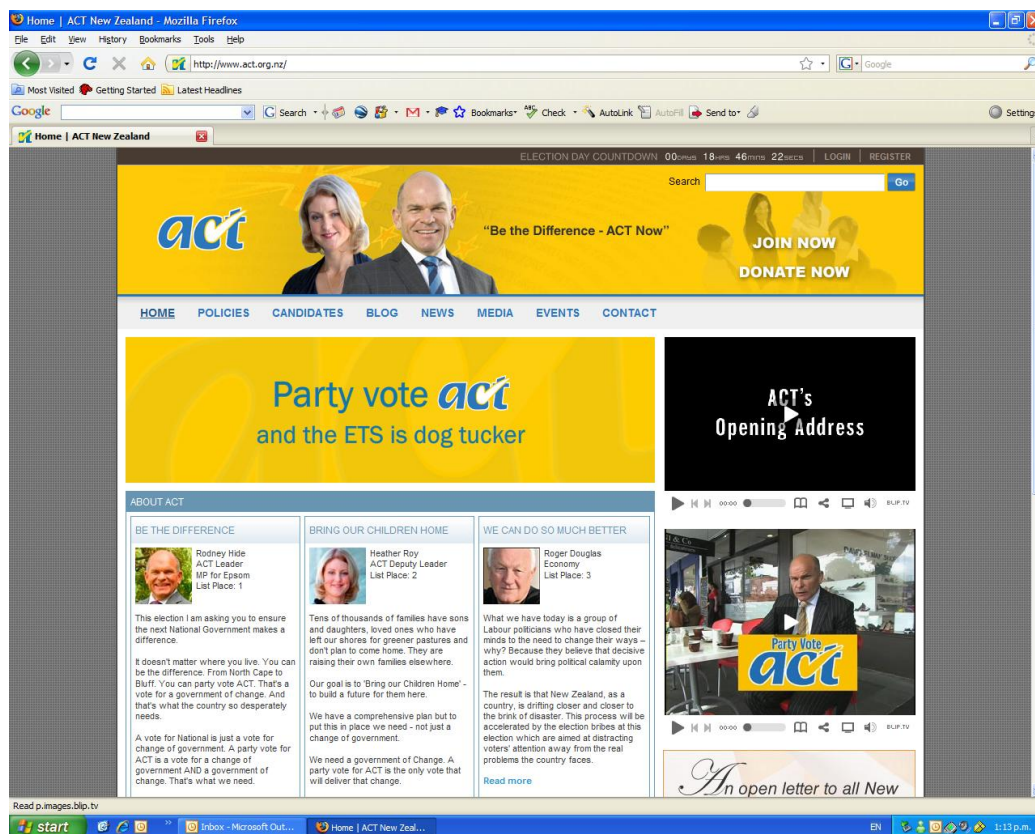
Figure 4.21: The home page of Act's official e-Campaigning website

4.6.3 WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

Campaign information provided via Act's website was quite comprehensive. This reflects the party's strategic emphasis on information provision in their e-Campaign. Each party candidate, including the party leader, had a profile, highlighting the candidate's background, political career and political ambitions. On the party's home page visitors could gather information about Act, such as the party history, principles and values, and political achievements. The website also provided contact information for the party's head office, the party leader, and party candidates. Policies proposed by Act could be found on a dedicated "Policies" webpage. Despite being a small party, the coverage of Act's policies was quite broad, such as accident compensation, climate change, families at risk, government asset ownership, and local government. Policy statements were sorted alphabetically with each statement having a summary outlining activities and benefits for the proposed policy and a link to read the statement in full. An archive of media releases sorted in reversed chronological order could be found on a dedicated "Media" page. The website also offered a list of the party's offline campaign events.

Voters could also find Act's banner, open letter, and video clips urging voters to cast their vote, particularly the party vote to the party on Election Day.

Rather surprisingly, the website lacked information related to the party's campaign trail or party speeches. A campaign staff member explained that party candidates shared their experiences during the campaign trail on their web blogs; consequently, creating a section on the website specifically for the campaign trail was considered to be a duplication of efforts. The absence of campaign speeches was a result of the lack of staffing resources.

Interactivity

This aspect is not particularly addressed in Act's 2008 e-Campaign. The most notable area related to interactivity are the web blogs authored by Act candidates, which permitted comments posted by readers. Each party candidate had a blog on the party's website. Visitors could choose to view all blog entries, or blog entries authored by a particular candidate. Party candidates shared varying topics with visitors, who were offered to make comments to any blog entry. Readers also were provided with an option to not reveal their identity when their comments were posted on the website. It is worth noting that some

personal information about readers posting comments was collected via the website, such as their name and email address. However, information was available to explain about the protection of personal information submitted to the website. The website also allowed the use of some HTML tags to personalise the composition of comments to blog entries, such as using italics and inserting images. The blog entries attracted a number of comments, with the content of some comments reflecting a high level of engagement considering the length and the use of multiple information sources to justify or substantiate a particular statement. Furthermore, readers responded to blog entries as well as to comments on blog entries from others, usually in a positive and constructive way. It was unclear however whether each comment was subject to moderation. It is understood that each reader comment had been read by party representatives; however, due to time constraints, blog authors were unable to personally attend to each comment.

Support Mobilisation

The level of support mobilisation in Act's e-Campaign was considered to be basic. More specifically, visitors were encouraged to sign up for receiving newsletters or website updates, and to register as a voter. The website featured an open letter from the party leader, a banner, and video clips of the party leader, all aimed at urging visitors to cast their vote, particularly the party vote, to Act on Election Day.

Targeted Campaigning

Targeted campaigning activities at particular voter segments could not be observed on Act's website. However, activities targeted at political opponents, particularly at Labour MPs, were evident. For instance, several media releases targeted policies and ministers from the Labour-led government, with some items making reference to the controversies related to the New Zealand First party leader. A New Zealand First party representative related the party's inability to enter Parliament as a result of the 2008 national election to Act's targeted campaigning at New Zealand First.

Resource Generation

Due to severe resource constraints, the party was keen to explore avenues to generate election campaigning resources, both online and offline. This was confirmed by our analysis of Act's e-Campaigning activities. More specifically, the party encouraged visitors to join the party or register as a volunteer to assist the party's election campaign. Act particularly

focused its online resource generation activities at soliciting financial donations. Website visitors could make a financial donation of up to NZD $1000 online. Moreover, the party's website provided a detailed statement articulating its adherence to the New Zealand Electoral Finance Act which governs financial donations to a political party.

Multimedia

Although the majority of content on Act's website was delivered in text format, the use of multimedia for content delivery via the website was obvious. Images were used in some blog entries depicting the party's campaign trail. Moreover, Act created a dedicated website, www.actmedia.co.nz, which served as an online hub for campaigning videos. As shown in Figure 4.22, visitors could choose a video clip available on Act's online hub on the basis of the party candidate featured in the clip. Themes covered in party-related video clips were varied, ranging from a social visit to voters, to a policy statement. Visitors of the online hub could also view results of some online polls conducted by New Zealand news media. For example, results of an online poll after a televised debate between the leaders of the smaller political parties suggested that Act's party leader was the most impressive in the debate.
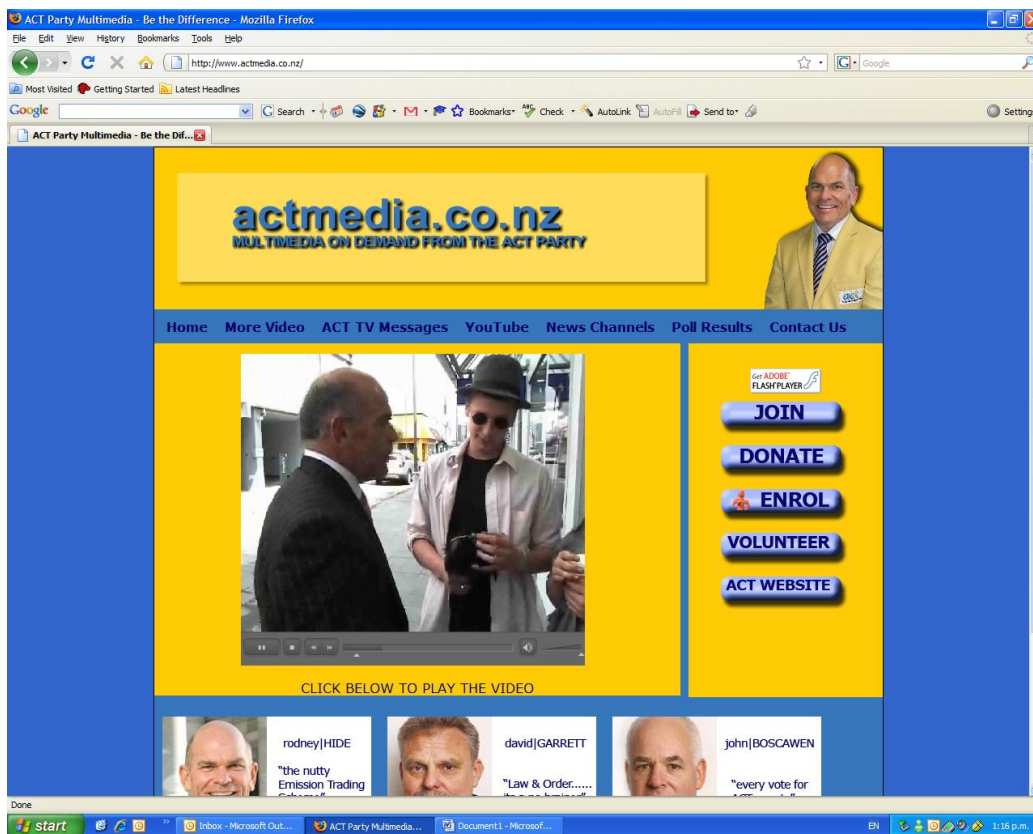
Figure 4.22: Act's online hub of campaigning videos

Accessibility

Act's website hosted a Chinese version of some of the party policy statements. A campaign staff member indicated that delivering the web content in alternative languages was not actually part of the e-Campaigning strategy. The option of viewing some policy statements in Chinese was an idea from a party candidate of Chinese descent. The party candidate believed that given the growing population of New Zealand voters who regularly use Chinese, delivering content in that language could give the party a competitive edge. It was not clear whether the Chinese content had been validated against the English content to ensure consistency and thereby avoiding the possibility of visitors being "lost in translation".

Navigation

A search engine was offered on the party website, allowing visitors to search content on the website on the basis of keywords. Features of navigation assistance, such as navigation tips or a site map, were absent. That said, potentially negative impacts associated with lacking navigation assistance were not considered to be significant given that the content on the website was well-structured.

Maintenance

Content offered on Act's website was updated on at least a daily basis. Although the party did not have rules regarding the frequency of updating web content, it was expected that the website would function as the first resource for the latest campaign information from the party to the general public, including the media.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	
	Campaign speeches archive	
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√

	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	
	List of campaign events	√
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	√
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	
	Links to download campaign materials	
	Links to electoral information	√
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	√
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√
	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	√
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	√ Partial
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	

	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	√

Figure 4.23: Summary of the content analysis for the New Zealand First e-Campaigning website

4.7 MAORI PARTY'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.7.1 BACKGROUND OF THE MAORI PARTY

The Maori Party was formed in 2004, after one of its co-founders resigned from the Labour Party. The party positions itself as a political vocalist for the rights and interests of Maori. Because of the unique situation in New Zealand's electoral system, a proportion of seats in the House of Representatives are reserved for Maori MPs to ensure Maori representation. These Maori seats are the main political target for the Maori party. Consequently, legitimate voters for the Maori seats are the party's primary target audience in the election campaign.

The Maori Party is co-led by Tariana Turia and Pita Sharples. Turia first entered the House of Representatives in 1996 as a list MP for the Labour Party; Sharples first entered the House in 2005 as an elected MP for the Maori seats. Before the 2008 national election, the Maori Party held four of the seven available Maori seats.

4.7.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

In the 2008 election campaign, the Maori Party was mainly interested in support mobilisation campaign activities. The reason for this was that the party was determined to win all available Maori seats in the 2008 national election. In order to achieve this, the party needed to mobilise the support from legitimate voters: more specifically, eligible voters first needed to be registered under the Maori roll and, subsequently, would need to cast their vote to Maori party candidate on Election Day. The challenge faced by the party was that, despite a slight increase of the number of voters registered under the Maori roll, the turn-out of legitimate voters for the Maori seats in the last national election was far from satisfactory. The main goal of the Maori Party's 2008 e-Campaign therefore was to promote support mobilisation activities.

Prior to the official announcement of the 2008 national election, the party had decided to utilise the existing official party website (www.maoriparty.org) as the main platform for their e-Campaign. This website was not redesigned yet for the party's 2008 e-Campaign when the person responsible for the party's website passed away. At that time, the party did not have immediate human resources available to take over the responsibilities of the deceased staff

member. Consequently, the new design for the 2008 e-Campaigning was not launched until after the start of the election period.

The Maori party's e-Campaign was not confined to the use of the Internet; it also incorporated the use of mobile phones. Campaign staff pointed out that, generally Maori are less active on the Internet compared to other ethnicities in New Zealand. However, most Maori actively use their mobile phone in daily life, particularly the text messaging feature. Consequently, the Maori Party decided to utilise text messaging via mobile phones for support mobilisation in the party's e-Campaign. In so-doing, the party constructed a list of mobile phone numbers of eligible voters for the Maori seats and uploaded this list to a third-party website. The party then could send text messages to mobile phone numbers on this website free of charge.

Figure 4.24 exhibits the home page of the Maori Party's website sponsored by the New Zealand Parliamentary Service and redesigned for the party's 2008 election campaign.

Figure 4.24: The home page of the Maori Party's official e-Campaigning website

The Maori party website used the party colours, black and red, as the basic colours of its colour scheme. The top of each web page within the site featured the party logo and the founding party principle: "our people are our greatest wealth". The home page displayed an image presenting two Maori performing a Hongi (a traditional Maori greeting), and pictures of the party president and the two party leaders. A significant portion of the home page was dedicated to a banner featuring all party candidates for the Maori seats and a message urging to vote for the party.

4.7.3   WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

Despite the fact that the party aimed to focus on support mobilisation in the e-Campaign, the party website demonstrated significant activities in the area of information provision. For instance, the website provided a detailed description of the party history, the organisational structure of the party, the origins and meanings of the party logo, and the party's achievements in the House of Representatives. Visitors also could find a detailed profile for each party candidate who was elected in the 2005 national election, and a link to "Party News". Upon clicking the link, visitors were redirected to Google's news page displaying the search results for the keyword "Maori Party"; the party website itself did not provide a list of news releases. Moreover, visitors could find key policies championed by the party, which were all focused on Maori rights and interests (e.g. Maori entitlements of natural resources, Maori business). Items on this policy list were sorted according to the party's political priorities. The website also included a "Speeches" page, where speeches made by party candidates could be offered in text format to website visitors, and contact information on the party, party leaders and party candidates. It is worth noting that, during the election campaign period, only one speech made by Sharples, the party co-leader, was made available via the website. Another observation was that, despite the party's encouragement via text messaging of supporter participation in campaign events (see also 'support mobilisation' below), the website did not offer a list of campaign events.

Interactivity

In general, the Maori Party's website was static with little interactivity offered to visitors. The only interactive feature provided on the website was the ability to compose and send e-mail messages addressed to the party, party leaders, or party candidates. Campaign staff

explained that the party was still learning how to use Internet technology in election campaigning.

Support Mobilisation

Although party representatives regularly mentioned support mobilisation as the main aim in their e-Campaign, our web content analysis findings did not support this objective. We observed that support mobilisation via the party website was confined to encouraging visitors to sign up on line in order to receive electronic newsletters, and selling Maori party branded products via an online shop (see also 'resource generation' below). In addition, text messages were sent to voters during the election period, aimed at reminding party supporters to enrol as a voter under the Maori roll; reminding supporters of current and forthcoming offline campaign events; encouraging voters to participate in campaign events; and reminding supporters of casting their vote to the party on Election Day.

Party representatives further indicated that support mobilisation activities displayed in Obama's 2008 e-Campaign were seen as tremendously inspiring. The party was keen to explore what could be learned from this experience and potentially adopted in the next national election.

Targeted Campaigning

The Maori party made use of the party's website as well as text messaging via mobile phones in order to specifically target at its intended campaign audience of those who are eligible to vote for the Maori Seats. Campaigns targeted at political rivals were not observed. A party representative explained that the Maori party believed election campaigning to be about communication between the party and its people, the Maori voters. The party had no interest in any negative campaigning targeted at political rivals.

Resource Generation

The Maori Party's resource generation activities focused on using the party website for recruiting new party members and selling products with the Maori party logo via an online merchandise shop. The online shop could be accessed via a link on the party's website, which redirected website visitors to a third-party website. Visitors could purchase Maori party branded products ranging from clothing to music (see Figure 4.25). A party representative explained that the purpose of selling these products online was not to

generate financial resources, as the revenues did not go to the party, but to allow people to exhibit their support for the Maori party. Consequently, we may conclude that the purpose of selling Maori party branded products online is more aligned with support mobilisation as opposed to resource generation.

Figure 4.25: A website selling products endorsed with the Maori Party logo

Multimedia

The use of multimedia for content delivery on the Maori Party website was apparent. For instance, in addition to the use of images on the home page and in candidate profiles, the website provided a photo gallery depicting the campaign trail, and a speech in audio format which could be downloaded and played on personal music devices. The website also hosted a video gallery with three video clips featuring the party candidates discussing politics according to the video clip's caption. However, none of the video clips could be played on the commonly-used Internet browsers, such as Internet Explorer 6, Internet Explorer 7, Firefox 2, Firefox 3 or Safari 3.

Accessibility

None of the content elements specified in our analytical framework were addressed on the Maori Party's website. Moreover, although a few text fragments on the website were in Maori language, the website did not provide an option to deliver the content of the entire website in Maori.

Navigation

The Maori Party website lacked features of navigation assistance. More specifically, the website did not provide navigation tips, a site map or a search engine.

Maintenance

Content on the Maori party's website was not updated on a daily basis. We observed that the website content remained more or less the same during the election period.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	
	List of campaign events	
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	

	Means to provide feedback online	
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	
	Links to download campaign materials	
	Links to electoral information	
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	
Resource Generation		
	Donation	
	Merchandise	√
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	√
	Video content	√ (cannot be rendered on Internet browsers)
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	

Figure 4.26: Summary of the content analysis for the Maori Party's official website

4.8 PROGRESSIVE'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.8.1 BACKGROUND OF PROGRESSIVE

Progressive was founded in 2002 by Jim Anderton, due to his departure from Alliance, a left-wing political party whose existence in the House of Representatives ceased after the 2002 national election. Progressive first entered Parliament the same year as it was founded. The political stance of Progressive is perceived to be left-wing. The party is led by its founder, Anderton, who first entered the House in 1984 as an elected Labour MP. Before the 2008 national election, the party held one seat in the House of Representatives.

4.8.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

Figure 4.27 depicts the home page of Progressive's existing official website (www.progressive.org.nz). The party website made significant use of multimedia for content delivery. The homepage demonstrates the adoption of a minimalist design, similar to the design of the Greens' e-Campaigning website. A generous portion of the home page was dedicated to a slideshow of images with captions. Each image represented a key policy proposed by the party. For instance, the image of a child smiling and showing his teeth with a caption: "Dental care should be within everyone's reach. We will make it accessible and affordable" represented the party's policy of affordable dental care for all (see also Figure 4.27). Red was the dominant colour in the colour scheme of the party's website. The home page also featured the party's logo and images of the party leader.
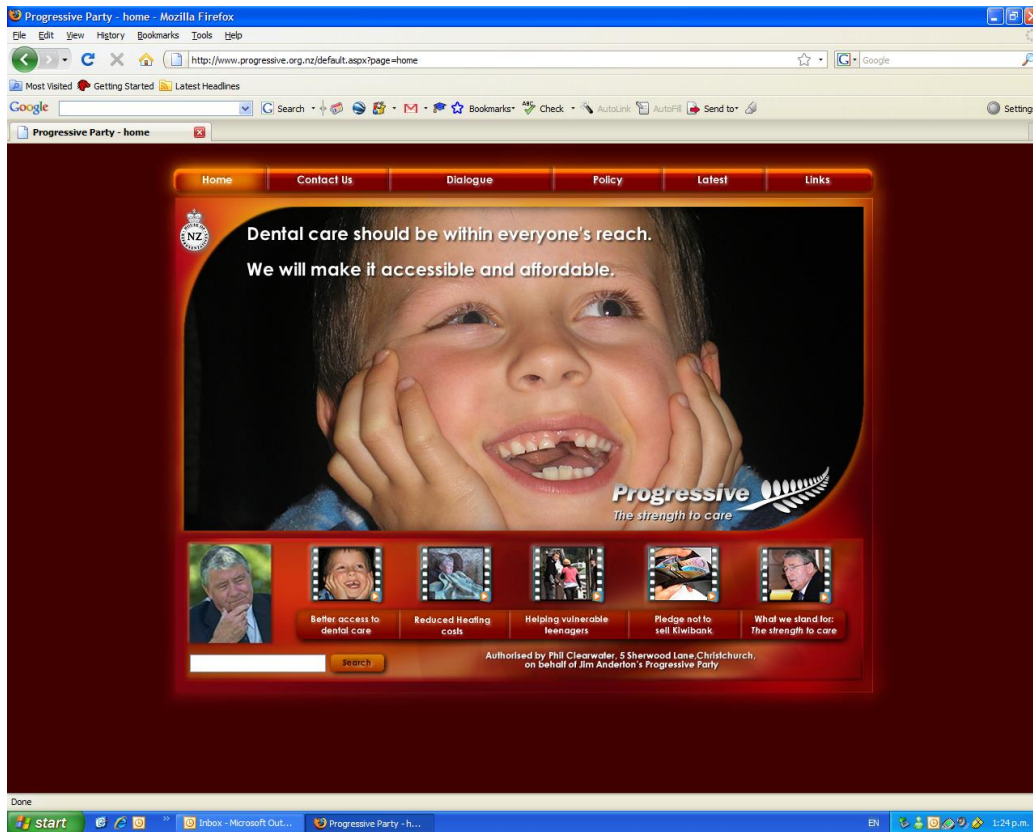
Figure 4.27: The home page of Progressive's official website

4.8.3 WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

Progressive's website provided a fair amount of static information. More specifically, the party provided a profile for each party candidate, highlighting a candidate's background, experience as a politician, and key roles within the party. The website combined media releases and speeches and put them in the "Latest" section. A list of policies proposed by Progressive was available on the "Policy" web page. Key Progressive policies, such as affordable dental care for all, paid annual leave, and winter power rebate, were placed at the top of the page, followed by a full list of policies proposed by the party. Each policy was described in detail. Despite being a small party with only one seat in Parliament, Progressive's policy coverage was rather wide, including broadband Internet, climate change, conservation and the environment, education, defence, disability, health, immigration, and senior citizens. The website also offered contact information of the party, and the party leader. Progressive's website lacked some common types of election campaigning information, such as an archive of the campaign trail, and a list of campaign events.

Interactivity

The Progressive website's level of interactivity was not significant judged by our content analysis framework. A notable interactive content element was the "Dialogue" facility. The party encouraged website visitors to use this facility to receive feedback from the general public. Visitors could click on a link to send their feedback to the party. According to the information on the website, so long as the feedback was inoffensive and constructive in nature, it would be published in the "Dialogue" section. We observed that the topics of the published feedback were diverse, ranging from policies proposed by other political parties to the leader's performance in a televised debate. Figure 4.28 presents the interactive facility "Dialogue" on Progressive's official website.
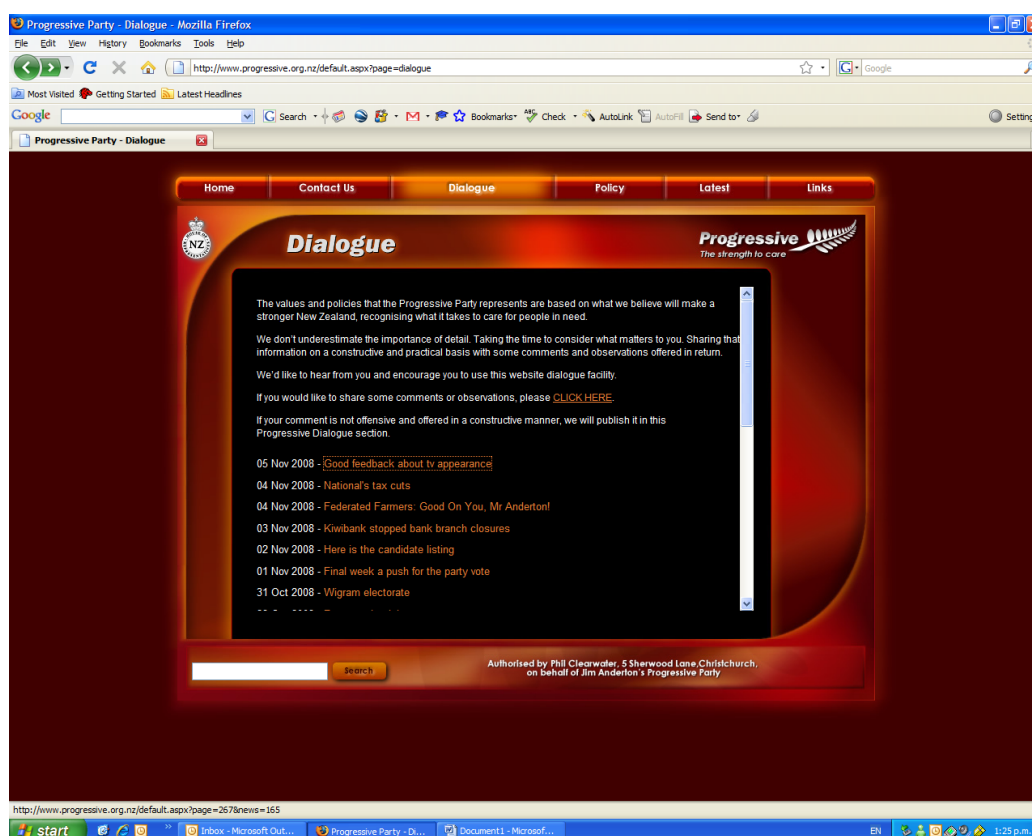
Figure 4.28: The interactive facility "Dialogue" on Progressive's official website

Support Mobilisation

This e-Campaigning activity area could not be observed on Progressive's website.

Targeted Campaigning

Campaigns targeted at particular voter segments were not apparent on Progressive's website. We did observe some web content targeting at political opponents. For example, a

few media releases and speeches were targeting policies proposed by Act New Zealand, or presenting speculations about the National Party selling Kiwi Bank, the only New Zealand owned bank, if the party was elected in government.

Resource Generation

Resource generation in Progressive's e-Campaign was confined to online donations. The website featured a video clip of the party leader asking for financial donations on behalf of the party.

Multimedia

The use of multimedia for content delivery was significant on Progressive's website. As mentioned, Progressive used a series of images to represent key policies of the party. The party's promotion of key policies was not confined to the use of images however; a video clip was provided for each key policy, articulating its rationale and significance.

Accessibility

None of the potential content elements for supporting accessibility was addressed on Progressive's official website.

Navigation

Progressive's website included a search engine that allows visitors to locate web content on the basis of keywords. The website did not provide navigation tips or a site map. However, given the web content was well-structured, concerns over lacking the aforementioned navigation assistance are considered minimal.

Maintenance

Daily maintenance of the content on Progressive's official website was not observed; however, the frequency of content maintenance was close to daily. Frequently updated areas included media releases, speeches, and comments from visitors.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	
	List of campaign events	
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	
	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	√
	Online discussion forums	
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	
	Links to download campaign materials	
	Links to electoral information	
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	√
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√

	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	
	Form to become a volunteer	
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	

Figure 4.29: Summary of the content analysis for Progressive's official website

4.9 UNITED FUTURE'S E-CAMPAIGN

4.9.1 BACKGROUND OF UNITED FUTURE

United Future was founded in 2000 as the result of a merger between two political parties, namely United New Zealand and Future New Zealand. The party's political position can be described as at the centre of the political spectre. Party leader Peter Dunne first entered the New Zealand House of Representatives as an elected Labour MP in 1984. During his political career, Dunne has served as a Cabinet minister under both Labour and National led governments. United Future is a small political party in the House. Before the 2008 national election, the party held three seats in the House of Representatives and was a coalition party in the Labour-led government.

4.9.2 GENERAL STRATEGY FOR THE 2008 E-CAMPAIGN

Representatives of United Future pointed out that e-Campaigning activities were not really a focus in the party's strategic plan for the 2008 election campaign. Consequently, the party did not have a specific strategy for e-Campaigning. In general, the target audience of the party's 2008 election campaign were middle income, urban-based New Zealand families. The party believed that the best way to communicate the party's campaign message to the target audience was through traditional campaigning, such as via community newspapers and community radios. Moreover, the party faced severe financial, human, and technical resource constraints, which justified the party's limited focus on e-Campaigning. In terms of an e-Campaigning approach, the party decided to put some off-line campaign material on the existing official party website (www.unitedfuture.org.nz) and keep the web content as up-to-date as possible. Due to the lack of resources, the party's official website was maintained by various party staff members and volunteers.

Figure 4.30 exhibits the home page of United Future's e-Campaigning website. The website used the party colours purple and green as the basic colour scheme. The top of each page within the website had the party's logo and a search box. A significant portion of the home page was used to display the party's election billboard featuring Dunne and the party's campaign message: "In these tough times [in reference to the global economic recession] you need someone in parliament who will put your needs ahead of party politics." The campaign message reflected the party's crave for pluralism. The rest of the content on the

home page consisted of the party's interactive pool, the latest press release from the party, a summary of policies proposed by the party and the latest blog entry. It is worth noting that the impression from the party's e-Campaigning website does not reflect the lack of focus on e-Campaigning as indicated by the party's representatives.
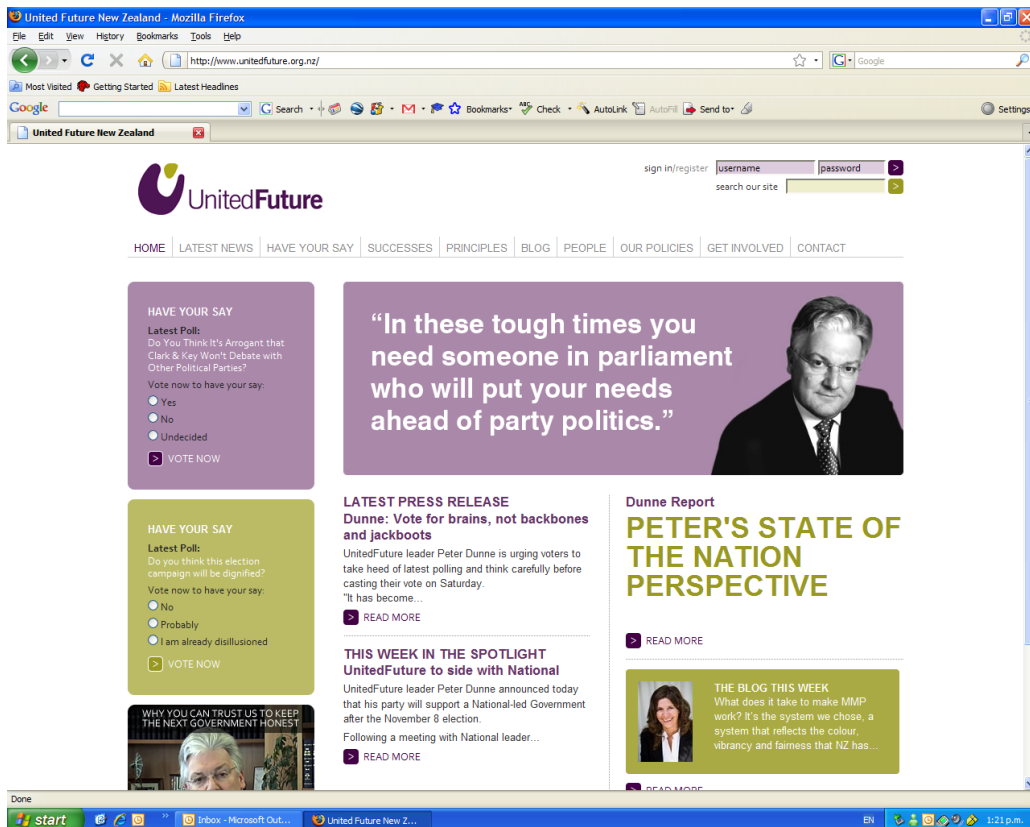
Figure 4.30: The home page of United Future's e-Campaigning website

4.9.3 WEB CONTENT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Information Provision

United Future's website provided a fair amount of information related to the 2008 election campaign. More specifically, the party provided a detailed statement of its mission and principles. The website also dedicated a page to outline the party's notable achievements. Furthermore, the party's website provided a profile for each party candidate, including the party leader; contact information on the party, the party leader, and party candidates; and an archive of press releases organised in reverse chronological order. We observed that the website did not provide a summary for each press release, which is in contrast to e-campaigning websites of most other New Zealand political parties. Speeches made by the

party candidate and particularly by party leader Dunne were available in text format in the section "In the Spotlight", and policies proposed by the party were made available online. Policies were organised according to their associated portfolios. Despite being a small party in the House, the coverage of United Future's proposed policies was reasonably broad, including policies on animal welfare; arts, culture and heritage; broadcasting; constitution; disability; civil defence; immigration; outdoor recreation and conservation, and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Some typical election campaigning information, such as information related to the campaign trail or a list of campaign events, was not available on the party's website.

Interactivity

During the interview, United Future representatives jokingly stated that as a result of the lack of focus on e-Campaigning, the party's e-Campaigning website was perhaps the most static and the least actively used amongst all political parties' 2008 e-Campaigning websites. Our web content analysis does not support this statement. United Future's e-Campaigning website incorporated a fair level of interactivity. The most notable areas were the party's online opinion polls, a web blog which permitted comments from visitors, and online discussion forums.

More specifically, United Future's website featured a section called "Have Your Say", which hosted a list of online opinion polls (see Figure 4.31). In order to probe website visitors views, questions included: "Do you think this election campaign will be dignified?" and "Does income splitting seem a good idea?" Each question was related to a brief description outlining the background of the question and showing the results thus far to visitors. Visitors could click on a link to cast their vote but also make further comments in relation to the poll questions. It is worth noting that while the party allowed any visitor to cast their vote in the poll, in order to make comments visitors had to have a registered account which was free of charge. However, visitors were not required to have a registered account in order to view comments from others.

Another interactive content element on the United Future website was a web blog which permitted visitors' comments. Web blogs were authored by the party leader, the party deputy leader, or the party president and allowed the creators to share their views on

various topics, ranging from policies proposed by the party to how to vote strategically under the MMP system. Besides having access to the blogs, visitors could sign up and receive updates via an RSS feed when a new blog entry was created or comments to a blog entry were made, email a blog entry to others, or post comments to a blog entry. It is worth noting that visitors were required to have a registered account in order to post comments to a blog entry, similar to commenting on the party's online opinion polls. Moreover, permitting readers' comments requires moderation: given the resource constrains of the party, responsibilities related to moderating comments were often shared between staff members and volunteers.

**Figure 4.31: United Future's online opinion polls - "Have Your Say"**

The online discussion forums offered on the United Future official website could be observed as an aggregation of visitors' comments to the party's online opinion polls and blog entries, as the scope of the online forums was restricted to these two areas. Again, a registered account on the website was required for posting comments on the discussion forums.

It is worth noting that the online opinion polls and blogs were not specifically set up for the party's 2008 e-Campaign: they existed before the 2008 national election. United Future representatives explained that this reflects the party's general interest to connect with its grassroots; this interest always has been existent and robust, before and after an election.

Support Mobilisation

United Future's e-Campaign activities in the area of support mobilisation were restricted to two areas. First, visitors could sign up to electronic newsletters or website content updates. Second, visitors could forward online campaign materials, such as policy statements, speeches, and blog entries, to others via email. The party website did not provide information related to campaign events. Party representatives indicated that organising and promoting campaign events had always been done offline, and the 2008 election campaign was no exception.

Targeted Campaigning

Campaigns targeted at particular voter segments were not observed on United Future's website. Although mentioning of other political parties or candidates were occasionally observed on the website, such as in Dunne's speeches, opinion polls, or blog entries, these were merely statements of fact rather than targeting political opponents.

Resource Generation

Two activities of resource generation could be observed on the United Future website. First, visitors could complete an online form if they wanted to make a financial donation. Second, the website offered the same online form for those who wanted to become a member of the party. Once the form was completed and sent to the party, a visitor would receive an email advising options of paying membership fees and other details in order to finalise the process of becoming a member of the party.

Multimedia

The use of multimedia for content delivery on the United Future website was evident. That said, the sophistication of using multimedia on the party's website was quite restricted. The use of images was mainly seen in web blogs and on the home page. These images were mainly for design purposes as opposed to campaigning purposes. The home page featured a

video clip of Dunne soliciting votes to him as a candidate, or to the party. This was the only video clip observed on the party's website.

Accessibility

None of the potential content elements for supporting accessibility was addressed on United Future's website. Given the fact that content on the website was mainly delivered in text, the impact of lacking a text-only option for content rendition is considered to be minimal.

Navigation

United Future's website provided a search engine, allowing visitors to locate content on the basis of keywords. There was no further assistance available for site navigation, such as navigation tips or a site map.

Maintenance

We did not observe that United Future's website was maintained and updated on a daily basis. However, party representatives explained that the goal of United Future's e-Campaign was to keep web content as up-to-date as possible.

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	Availability
Information Provision		
	Party information	√
	Candidate biography	√
	Press releases archive	√
	Key policy statements	√
	Campaign trail archive	
	Campaign speeches archive	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	
	Contact information about the party	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√
	Links to candidates' own websites	
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	
	List of campaign events	
Interactivity		
	Email party leader	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√

	Email party office	√
	Online chat	
	Online opinion polls	√
	Online surveys	
	Online form to register petition	
	Means to provide feedback online	
	Online discussion forums	√
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted	√
	Web applications to interact with policies	
Support Mobilisation		
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√
	Links to supporter groups	
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events	
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	√
	Links to download campaign materials	
	Links to electoral information	
Targeted Campaigning		
	Targeting specific voter segments	
	Targeting opponents	
Resource Generation		
	Donation	√
	Merchandise	
	Form to become a party member	√
	Form to become a volunteer	
Multimedia		
	Images	√
	Audio content	
	Video content	√
Accessibility		
	Text only option (for the whole site)	
	Options for visitors with disability	
	Multi-lingual content	
Navigation		
	Navigation tips	
	Search engine	√
	Site map/index	
Maintenance		
	Daily content update	

Figure 4.32: Summary of the content analysis for United Future's official website

4.10 Cross-Party Analysis of e-Campaigning during the 2008 national election

In light of the political party based descriptions and analysis of e-Campaigning in 4.2 until 4.9, this paragraph further explores cross-party characteristics, patterns and developments of e-Campaigning during the 2008 national election. A comparative, qualitative content analysis of individual party websites is presented in Appendix B.

4.10.1 The Adoption and Presence of e-Campaigning during the 2008 National Election

During the 2008 national election, all political parties under study had adopted the Internet and related applications in their election campaigns. Seven of the eight parties utilised their existing official website as their main e-Campaigning platform; Labour was the only party opting for a new dedicated e-Campaigning website. Moreover, except for United Future, seven parties decided to have a new web design specifically for their 2008 e-Campaign. Another observation is that six of the eight political parties under study had an official presence on social networking websites, such as Facebook and YouTube.

Although our definition of e-Campaigning is not confined to the Internet and includes the adoption of other ICTs, we only could observe the Maori Party making use of other ICTs for e-Campaigning, namely mobile phones for support mobilisation. Interestingly, all other parties during our interviews indicated that they had considered the idea of utilising text messaging as part of their e-Campaign; however this idea was not materialised due to concerns over associated costs, potential breaches of the New Zealand Privacy Act, or being seen as a spammer. As a participant put it, the costs of having a negative image are harder to recover than the financial costs of sending campaign messages to voters' mobile phones.

4.10.2 e-Campaigning Strategies during the 2008 National Election

All eight participating parties in the research claimed to have a strategy for using their websites for e-Campaigning. The strategy for e-Campaigning varied between those parties, so did the level of strategic detail. Some e-Campaigning strategies were rather abstract and lacked focus. For example, United Future's e-Campaigning strategy was to keep the web

content as up-to-date as possible. Some e-Campaigning strategies were more specific and detailed. For example, National's strategy for e-Campaigning aimed at enhancing the experience of website visitors by applying interactive features and exploring ways to familiarise the public with its relatively new party leader, who could potentially become the next Prime Minister after the election. Another example is the Green's e-Campaigning strategy of using different web blogs to establish and maintain a dialogue with the community of party supporters. An emerging theme regarding e-Campaigning strategies during the 2008 elections was that, whilst some e-Campaigning strategies were restricted to migrating existing offline campaign materials to the party's e-Campaigning website, others went beyond that by exploring new opportunities online, such as support mobilisation, resource generation, and targeted campaigning.

While political parties adopted different strategies for e-Campaigning via their own official e-Campaigning websites, their strategies for e-Campaigning on social networking websites, such as Facebook and YouTube, appeared to be almost identical. The rationale behind the use of social networking sites for political parties was two-fold. First of all, the use of social networking sites was driven by costs and maintenance: in general, social networking websites are free of charge and they themselves are responsible for providing and maintaining a technical platform. Secondly, the popularity and wide reach of these social networking sites, together with an alternative online space for offering campaign information, was attractive to political parties. As a respondent further explained to us:

> "Social networking sites such as Facebook are a completely different breed compared to a political party's website. People who visit a political party's website usually have a degree of engagement in the party's campaign, for example, they want to find out the latest news, policies etc. But the same cannot be said when it comes to social networking sites. People usually visit those sites to socialise, rather than engaging with political campaigns. There are two reasons we set up a page for our leader [of the party]: [First,] we don't want someone else set up a page [on Facebook] using our party or leader's name; [Second,] it gives us more public exposure. Some voters find it cool to have the leader of a political party they support on their friends list. To us, as a political party, being endorsed on voters' page gives us more exposure, which is a good thing."

In spite of parties having an e-Campaigning strategy during the 2008 national election, all parties agreed that the role of e-Campaigning is complementary to other, usually offline campaigning strategies and activities. According to various interviewees, political campaigning in New Zealand is quite different to that in the UK, the USA, or Australia. The most significant difference is that New Zealand is a small country: consequently, politicians visiting constituencies across the country for election campaigning is not as difficult compared to other large and more populated countries. Moreover, in-person communications are strongly preferred in the New Zealand culture, leading to a situation in which in-person interaction between voters and a political party, such as door-knocking, is perceived to be critical in election campaigning.

Although political parties participating in our research had developed e-Campaigning strategies, they all lacked ways and means to measure the uptake and effectiveness of their e-Campaigning activities. Some respondents admitted that they had not thought about measuring the effectiveness or success of their e-Campaign.

4.10.3 E-CAMPAIGNING ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2008 NATIONAL ELECTION

Information Provision

According to the available literature, information provision is the most common and often main activity in e-Campaigning (e.g. Gibson, 2004; Gibson & Ward, 2003). This is confirmed in our study: information provision was a major activity in e-Campaigning across the political parties under study. Variances in this activity between large and small parties are minimal if any. The most commonly used content elements in information provision were policy statements. All parties provided comprehensive policy statements on their websites, with the large parties exhibiting broader policy coverage, as expected. However, we also observed that the policy coverage of small parties was quite broad and, in most instances, went beyond the policy issues these parties usually would focus on (e.g. the Greens, Act). Most parties provided party information on their e-Campaigning websites, highlighting the party's history and organisational structure; some parties, such as the Greens, went as far as highlighting the party's key achievements in Parliament. Contact information about the party, party leader and party candidates was commonly seen on the parties' websites. All parties provided a profile for each party candidate on their website, highlighting a candidate's background and political experience, and the majority of websites contained an archive of press releases and speeches. However, only four parties provided a list of campaign events

on their website. Furthermore, the two large parties used static blogs to communicate to visitors, i.e. web blogs without visitors' comments permitted, compared to the small parties who used blogs which allowed visitors' comments (see also Interactivity, below). These blogs were generally succinct and mainly centred on policies and experience during the campaign trail.

Interactivity

Our research findings suggest that the level of interactivity on the e-Campaigning websites under study was not high. Large parties appeared to be even more conservative in offering interactive opportunities to visitors. This has also been found in other scholarly research (e.g. Chen et al., 2006; Stanyer, 2005; Ward et al., 2006). For the two large parties, interactivity in e-Campaigning was mainly confined to email exchange between visitors and the political party, party leader, or party candidates, as well as to a visitor's interaction with key party policies (e.g. the impact of taxation policy proposals for the visitor concerned). In contrast to the interactivity exhibited on the websites of the two major parties, small parties, such as the Greens, Act and United Future, appeared to be more open to interactions with the general public. Most notably, blogs permitting visitors' comments could only be observed on the websites of small parties. In addition, small party United Future was the only party that provided online opinion polls and online discussion forums. The research finding that small parties are more open toward interactions between the party and voters and/or amongst voters in e-Campaigning, is supported by other scholarly research (Stanyer 2005). The two large parties attributed the relatively low level of interactivity on their websites to two factors. First, the nature of election campaigning is that political parties push their policies <u>to</u> the general public, instead of designing policies <u>with</u> the general public during the elections. Secondly, during a campaign period, politicians generally have a hectic schedule and, as a consequence, are unable to attend to intensive online interactions. To manage expectations of the general public, the perception was that it is better to leave out interactive features. Small parties, on the other hand, were keener to use interactive features on their website, acknowledging that a higher level of interactivity would provide a better connection with the grassroots and, with that, potential supporters.

Support Mobilisation

During the 2008 national election, the political parties under study commonly mobilised voters' support by encouraging them to sign up to receive updates or news letters, and by

providing electoral information to visitors. The Greens were the only party providing links to supporter groups and inviting others to participate in the party's campaign events. Only three of the eight parties provided links to visitors to forward campaign materials to others or download campaign materials. The common downloadable campaign materials were election billboards, web banners or campaign songs. The Maori Party was the only party that confirmed the use of other ICTs besides the Internet for support mobilisation (i.e. mobile phones).

Targeted Campaigning

During the 2008 national election, National was the only party using targeted campaigns at specific voter segments. Four of the eight political party websites under study contained content targeted at political rivals. Such content was usually found in web blogs or speeches. Labour was the only party with a clear targeted campaign at its major political rival National.

Resource Generation

All parties interviewed noted resource constraints as a main barrier to the development and implementation of their e-Campaign. Small parties experienced more severe constraints compared to the larger parties. During the 2008 national election, all e-Campaigning websites under study provided resource generation activities, particularly targeted at generating financial and/or human resources. The Greens and the Maori Party were the only parties with an online shop on their e-Campaigning websites, through which they sold products, such as clothes and books, endorsed with the party logo.

Multimedia

All eight parties used multimedia for content delivery on their websites, including images and videos. Commonly, images were used to introduce the party leader and candidates, and to portray the campaign trail; videos were mainly used to depict the campaign trail or speeches. Some parties, such as National and Act, established a separate website for providing multimedia content to visitors. The Greens and the Maori Party are the only two parties that offered downloadable audio files to be played on personal devices.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an area which was mostly neglected by the political parties under study. National and Act were the only parties that provided some content in another language. No

party provided an accessibility option to, for instance, render the content on the entire website in text only for those with slow Internet access, or render the content in an accessible format for visitors with disabilities.

Navigation

The majority of the parties under study provided a search engine, allowing visitors to locate content with keywords. The Greens is the only party that provided a site map on its website. None of the parties provided navigation tips on their websites.

Maintenance

Four of the eight parties updated their web content at least on a daily basis. All parties interviewed indicated that there was no specific expectation of content maintenance; the general guideline was that as soon as the campaign information is released, it would be immediately available on the party's website.

4.10.4 IMPACT OF E-CAMPAIGNING DURING THE 2008 NATIONAL ELECTION

We did not observe any fundamental changes in the relationship between New Zealand political parties and voters as a result of the use of ICTs in election campaigning. Also, during our interviews, political parties themselves did not perceive any fundamental effects of their e-Campaigning activities on their relationship with voters. Moreover, as they did not measure or assess the effectiveness of e-Campaigning, political parties had little, if any, empirical knowledge about the impact of their e-Campaigning activities on voters.

In general, most parties seemed rather hesitant about exploring e-Campaigning beyond information provision activities. Party representatives commonly cited the New Zealand culture as an important reason. Face-to-face interaction and engagement had a long tradition in election campaigning in New Zealand and were considered symbolic for the New Zealand political culture: as New Zealand is a small country, it is less hard for a political party to engage with voters face-to-face. By comparison, engaging with voters online was perceived as a new and somewhat risky territory. Given time pressures and restricted resources for election campaigning, party representatives believed that a stronger focus on face-to-face engagement with voters was justified. One respondent saw the lack of critical mass from the general public in online engagement activities as the reason for political parties not to invest resources in increasing online participation.

Almost all parties indicated that their main goal with election campaigning, both traditionally and online, was to solicit votes, particularly those from swing voters. One participant was sceptical of this proclaimed impact of e-Campaigning on mobilising support from swing voters; the participant believed that swing voters prefer to engage with independent news media, either online or offline, during an election. In his view, the majority of visitors to a particular party's website were already party supporters. Put differently, in New Zealand, e-Campaigning would only lead to a 'mobilisation of the mobilised'.

Furthermore, several representatives of the political parties under study indicated that, although they considered e-Campaigning activities used in the 2008 US presidential elections inspiring and fascinating, the effect of the US e-Campaigning experience on their own e-Campaigning approach and activities was limited. Overall, three explanations were provided: the lack of state of the art technologies for political parties operating in the New Zealand context; fundamental differences between the USA and New Zealand with regard to political culture and electoral system; and because of the fact that the 2008 US presidential elections happened too close to the 2008 New Zealand national election, New Zealand political parties had to devote their restricted resources to their own campaigning instead of spending time and other scarce resources on observing and learning from the US e-Campaigning activities.

Considering these research findings, we may conclude that e-Campaigning during the 2008 national election has not led to major changes in the relationship between political parties and voters: to the extent that ICTs were used in the 2008 election campaign, "politics as usual", a reinforcement of existing forms of public participation, could be observed. This is in line with other scholarly research findings (e.g. Bentivegna, 2008; Gibson & McAllister, 2008). We also did not observe an amplification of political-cultural characteristics of the New Zealand electoral system in the use of e-Campaigning; except perhaps for the reproduction of traditional campaigning activities in the online environment. Moreover, Smith's (1998) research findings for UK political parties, where ICT take up was limited through the scarcity of financial and human resources, seem to be similar to our research findings for New Zealand political parties.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of our research we can conclude that all political parties under study adopted and used Internet-based e-Campaigning activities during the 2008 national election. The Maori Party was the only party that used mobile phones for e-Campaigning activities, in addition to the Internet. The role of e-Campaigning was considered as complementary to traditional campaigning. That is, traditional, off-line campaigning still dominated political parties' approach of election campaigning.

Parties had varying strategies for e-Campaigning, with some e-Campaigning strategies lacking focus and detail and others having clear goals. Consequently, political parties with an articulate strategy for e-Campaigning demonstrated the ability to manage their e-Campaigning in a structured and pragmatic way while others appeared to manage their e-Campaigning on an ad-hoc basis. Moreover, almost all political parties had an official presence on third-party social networking websites, such as YouTube and Facebook, and used a rather unpretentious strategy for e-Campaigning on these social networking websites: for instance, YouTube usually was merely treated as a virtual television station that enabled parties to broadcast campaign materials of their choice and free of charge; and Facebook was often used as an alternative one-way channel to increase public exposure. In general, compared with the use of social networking websites in the recent USA presidential elections for example, the use of social networking websites for e-Campaigning in the 2008 national election in New Zealand appeared to be primarily focused on "to be seen" and "to be heard", rather than "to engage".

Our web content analysis indicates that information provision was the primary activity of e-Campaigning during the 2008 national election. Furthermore, almost all parties demonstrated an interest in support mobilisation and resource generation activities. Variances in website interactivity between large and small political parties were significant, with large parties showing a preference for one-way interaction, while small parties utilised interactivity features for exchanges between the party and visitors as well as between visitors. It is worth noting that the aspect of accessibility was largely neglected by political parties in their e-Campaigning activities.

Voter engagement did not appear to be a priority for New Zealand political parties during the 2008 national election. This was particularly the case for the large parties whose interaction mostly was one-way – from party to visitors. A few small parties allowed visitors to their websites to provide comments on web blogs or discussion forums; yet, feedback from those parties on visitors' comments was not evident. Online support mobilisation and resource generation were evident across several e-Campaigning websites, yet they were undertaken in a standardised form, such as downloading campaign billboards or filling in online forms to become a party member or volunteer. A notable example of creative e-Campaigning in the 2008 New Zealand national election were the online stores offered by the Greens and the Maori Party.

In general, most e-Campaigning websites were maintained frequently. Large parties kept their web content updated at least on a daily basis; small parties, on the other hand, appeared to have difficulty in so-doing due to the lack of resources. Few e-Campaigning websites adopted Web 2.0 technologies; however, the purpose of adoption usually was to provide convenience in navigation, rather than using distinctive aspects of Web 2.0 technologies like content production or engagement enhancement.

In summary, e-Campaigning by political parties during the 2008 national election in New Zealand can be seen as delivering largely the same, traditional campaign materials via a new medium, such as the Internet. Exceptions to this rule appear to be provided by small political parties in New Zealand, rather than the large political parties. This is despite the fact that the Internet has the potential of enabling innovative and creative forms of campaigning, as was demonstrated in the 2008 US presidential elections, for example.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the analysis of e-Campaigning practices observed in the 2008 national election in New Zealand, the following recommendations can be made:

1.   The opportunities and barriers to e-Campaigning in New Zealand need to be better understood by political parties or candidates. Moreover, it is essential that political parties that would like to make use of e-Campaigning, gain an adequate understanding of what e-Campaigning might entail in addition to information

provision. For example, the analytical framework utilised in this research suggests that e-Campaigning consists of at least five types of activities and four different aspects. This could support a moving away from current one-way communication in e-Campaigning practice towards more interactive engagement with voters.

2. Learning from e-Campaigning developments in other countries will support a better understanding of the continuous evolution of e-Campaigning as well as enhance the possibility of an uptake of innovative e-Campaigning activities in the New Zealand context. The latter could be further supported by actively engaging voters in e-Campaigning design and activities, as demonstrated for example in the Obama e-Campaign.

3. Political parties should focus on developing an e-Campaigning strategy rather than on available technology. For example, the majority of parties we interviewed believed that, had they been able to afford "state of the art" technologies, their e-Campaign would have been much better. However, several parties did not give much consideration to their e-Campaigning strategy or had difficulty articulating their strategy for e-Campaigning. Moreover, political parties tended to assign responsibilities for strategising and operating their e-Campaign to webmasters. Technologies should be seen as an enabler of e-Campaigning, rather than a driver. A good example is the Obama campaign in which the same technologies are applied compared to the New Zealand campaign but with different uses, outcomes and effects.

4. More resources need to be provided to political parties in order to reap the potentials of e-Campaigning. Although the New Zealand Parliamentary Service turns out to be a major supporter of e-Campaigning developments in New Zealand, this support is not enough. Especially additional human and financial support are needed at the party level in order to enhance the uptake of e-Campaigning in New Zealand.

5. Political parties need to assess the effectiveness of their e-Campaigning activities and strategy. As mentioned, none of the parties interviewed had mechanisms in place for assessing their e-Campaigning activities, or had considered doing so. Yet, all interviewed political parties were determined to make improvements to their future e-Campaigns. Assessing the effectiveness of e-Campaigning not only allows the party to pragmatically pinpoint areas for future improvements, but also enables the party to take immediate action in terms of adjusting e-Campaigning activities or the strategy itself during the elections.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY OF RECENT STUDIES OF E-CAMPAIGNING

Author(s)	Year of Publication	Context of Analysis	Aspects of content analysis
Gibson, et al.	2003	A comparative study of e-campaigning in Australia, the UK, and the US	A framework is provided to analyse web content from two aspects: information provision; and participation.
Chen, et al.	2006	The 2004 national election in Australia	A framework is provided to analyse web content from 6 dimensions: candidate bio; policy info; electorate info; campaign diary/blog; voter registration; and polling locations.
The Bivings Group	2006	The 2006 Senatorial election in the US	A framework is provided to analyse web content from three aspects: baseline; multimedia; and advanced campaigns
Ward, et al.	2006	A comparative study of e-campaigning between Australia and the UK	The same framework in Gibson and McAllister's (2008) study.
Lilleker and Jackson	2007	A study of how Web 2.0 technologies are adopted by parties to communicate with the public at the time the article was being written	A list of Web 2.0 technologies is provided.
Bentivegna	2008	The national elections between 1996 - 2006 in Italy	A framework is provided to analyse the web content from five aspects: information provision; networking; participation/interactivity; campaigning; and multimedia/navigability.
Boas	2008	The 2005 presidential election in Chile	No framework for content analysis is provided. The author analyses the content of presidential candidates' web sites from five aspects: information delivery; levels of participation; means for communication with the public; and support mobilisation.

D. T. Hill	2008	The 2004 national election in Indonesia	No framework for content analysis is provided. The author mainly analyses candidates' web content from an aspect of information provision; that is, how much information was provided by different candidates.
Gibson and McAllister	2008	The 2004 national election in Australia	A framework for content analysis is provided, which examines parties/candidates' e-campaigning from five aspects: baseline; linkage; campaign information; traditional campaigning; and online campaigning.
Hooghe and Vissers	2008	The 2000 and 2006 national elections in Belgium	The authors analyse the web content from seven aspects: information provision; resource generation; interaction; campaigning; multimedia; and accessibility. A framework for each of the first five aspects is provided.
Kluver	2008	The 2005 presidential election in Singapore	No framework for content analysis is provided. The author mainly analyses blogs posted by different candidates on their official web sites and from which, draws inference regarding the level of online participation.
Owen and Davis	2008	The 2004 presidential election in the US	A frame work is provided to analyse the web content from two aspects: reinforcement and mobilisation.
Schweitzer	2008	The national elections between 2002 - 2005 in Germany	A framework is provided to analyse the web content from three aspects: information provision; interactivity; and sophistication.
Small, et al.	2008	The 2004 and 2006 federal elections in Canada	No framework for content analysis is provided. The authors mainly analyse the web content from an aspect of the level of interactivity in different parties' web sites.

Voerman and Boogers	2008	The 2002 and 2003 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands	No framework for content analysis is provided. The authors mainly analyse the web content from a perspective of the level of information provided online, which is similar to the approach in D. T. Hill's (2008) study.
Ward, Gibson, et al.	2008	The 2001 and 2005 national elections in the UK	A framework for content analysis is provided, which examines parties and candidates' e-campaigning from five aspects: information provision; resource generation; participation; e-campaigning; and networking.

APPENDIX B: COMBINED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ALL PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES' OFFICIAL E-CAMPAIGNING WEBSITE

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
Information Provision									
	Party information	√		√	√	√	√		√
	Candidate biography	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Press releases archive	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
	Key policy statements	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Campaign trail archive	√	√	√					
	Campaign speeches archive	√	√	√			√	√	√
	Blog without visitor comments permitted	√	√						

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
	Contact information about the party	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Contact information about the party leader	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Contact information about party candidates	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
	Links to candidates' own websites	√							
	Links to party's or party leader's official presence on other sites	√	√	√	√				
	List of campaign events	√		√	√	√			

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
Interactivity									
	Email party leader	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Email candidates belonging to the party	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
	Email party office	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Online chat								
	Online opinion polls								√
	Online surveys								
	Online form to register petition								
	Means to provide feedback online	√	√	√				√	
	Online discussion forums								√

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
	Interactive calendar of campaign events	√							
	Blogs with visitors comments permitted			√	√	√			√
	Web applications to interact with policies	√	√						
Support Mobilisation									
	Sign up to receive updates or newsletters	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
	Links to supporter groups			√					

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
	Links to invite others to participate in campaign events			√					
	Links to forward campaign materials to others	√		√					√
	Links to download campaign materials	√		√	√				
	Links to electoral information	√	√	√		√			
Targeted Campaigning									
	Targeting specific voter segments	√							
	Targeting opponents	√	√			√		√	

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
Resource Generation									
	Donation	√	√	√		√		√	√
	Merchandise			√			√		
	Form to become a party member	√		√	√	√	√		√
	Form to become a volunteer	√	√	√		√			
Multimedia									
	Images	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Audio content			√			√		
	Video content	√	√	√	√	√	√ (cannot render)	√	√
Accessibility									
	Text only option (for the whole site)								
	Option for visitors with disability								

Aspects of content analysis	Content elements	National	Labour	The Greens	New Zealand First	Act	The Maori Party	Progressive	United Future
	Multi-lingual content	√ (Partial)				√ (Partial)			
Navigation									
	Navigation tips								
	Search engine	√	√ (Partial)	√	√	√		√	√
	Site map/index			√					
Maintenance									
	Daily content update	√	√	√		√			