The Use of Viral Marketing in Politics:

A Case Study of the 2007 French Presidential Election

Bachelor's Thesis within business administration

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Jönköping   May 2009

Acknowledgement

Bachelor Thesis within Business Administration Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Management

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the implementation of viral marketing in Politics. We led a case study in order to discover how viral techniques were used to promote candidates running for the 2007 French election. The review of previous research provided learning about the use of new communication methods in electoral campaigns. Nevertheless, they are not specifically devoted to the viral marketing method. At present, theoretical models about this new phenomenon exist only for business sectors. Viral marketing is becoming of greater importance in the promotion of a candidate's brand image. It was interesting to discover how marketing techniques are transferred into the field of politics.

 Through our theoretical framework we analysed results from our interview with a webmaster who works for the Nicolas Sarkozy's political party. We explained the role of viral marketing in the communication strategy of politicians. Thanks to the focus group, we assessed the impact of viral marketing among French voters. The results show that it generates a word-of-mouth campaign about the candidate's personality which results in a political "Buzz". This high media coverage heavily influences the voters who are highly sensitive to image branding. However, the counterpart of using viral marketing is the lack of control that candidates maintain over their image. For example, the spreading of undesirable videos could harm their credibility. Finally, our study shows that modern politics is appealing for viral marketing in or-

der to shape the political leader's image, which constitutes a determinant factor to influence voters.

Table of contents

DEFINITIONS

Mass media   is **"**the various agents of mass communication and entertainment: newspapers, magazines and other publications, television, radio, the cinema, and the Internet. They rely on widespread literacy, increased leisure, and ready access by the public to receiving equipment" (McLean & McMillan, 2009).

Political Buzz   is "the sound heard in public when a lot of people are talking about the same political event or politician at the same time" (Cornfield, Carson & Kalls, 2005). The life cycle of a buzz is generally extremely short but its influence on public opinion is magnified by word of mouth. A buzz can shift the balance of forces arrayed in a political struggle and therefore affect its outcome.

Social network   is "a cluster of relatives, family, and neighbours to which an individual or family is connected. Such groupings often share the same values and goals" (Mayhew, 2004).

Spin doctors   are "the spokespeople employed to give a favorable interpretation of events to the media, especially on behalf of a political party" (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005).

UMP   (Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle, Union for the Presidential Majority) is "a centre right political movement in France, founded by Jacques Chirac following his victory in the Presidential elections of 2002. In 2004, the party elected Chirac's rival, Sarkozy, as its president. Sarkozy skilfully constructed his own power base within the party. This gave him a united platform from which to launch his successful bid for the presidency in 2007" (Palmowski, 2008).

Viral Marketing   is "a marketing strategy in which various unconventional techniques are used to generate word-of-mouth excitement about a product. Conventional media outlets may be deliberately avoided in order to create an air of mystery or exclusivity. It is a form of direct marketing in which a company encourages Internet users to forward its material in e-mails, usually by including jokes, games, or other entertaining features. The aim is that publicity for the company will spread in the manner of a computer virus, which is to say that it will spread to a very large audience very quickly" (Law, 2009).

WOM Word-of-mouth advertising is "the process in which the user of a product or service tells friends, family, neighbours and associates about its virtues, especially when this happens before an official media campaign has begun" (Law, 2009).

1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the background of the research area. The problem will be discussed and then it will lead the authors to define the purpose around four research questions. Finally, the delimitations of the topic will be announced.

Nowadays most politicians use marketing methods in order to shape their images. They try to communicate to their voters through direct and indirect ways. First, politicians use direct communication methods such as shaking hands and political meetings. Nevertheless, messages delivered by using this method reach only a limited audience. In order to increase the number of people who are exposed to their message, they use the indirect communication method. It consists of generating positive word-of-mouth that is mainly based on the distinctive characteristics of the politician's personality (Vedel & Michalska, 2007).

For a long time, the politicians competing for the French presidency have known how to surround themselves with multiple advisors, but also with marketing specialists. Indeed, politicians have become veritable brands and they appeal for "spin-doctors" to build their image. For example, the slogan of François Mitterrand's successful presidential campaign in 1981 was created by a famous publicist, Jacques Seguala ("Sarkozy, le pari du peuple", 2007).

With the emergence of mass media during the 60's in the USA, the priority for marketers and for politicians was to diffuse their ideas to as many people as possible. Nevertheless this method pushed politics to be turned into a media event and therefore created a rejection phenomenon because the receivers were not targeted in an efficient way. In addition, the cost of using these channels is especially high as the dramatic increase in communication campaign costs shows (Kaid & Davidson, 2002).

In the 90's the emergence of New Technologies of Information and Communication has provided new channels to spread marketing messages. Marketers and then politicians have progressively understood the interest to come back to a more focused media communication. In the business sector we have seen the emergence of viral marketing. According to Oxford university press (2006) viral marketing describes the word-of-mouth marketing of a product or service using the Internet.

The Hotmail free email service is one of the successful examples of viral marketing use. With an advertising budget of only $50,000, Hotmail attracted 12 million subscribers within its first 18 months, an unequalled record. This success can be linked to the free e-mail advertisement sent out and to the indirect personal endorsement of the sender. Indeed, subscribers to this service could only send emails with advertising messages extolling the virtues of Hotmail at the bottom of the email text (Skrob, 2005).

Marketers can influence this process in which the purchaser of a product or service tells friends, family, and neighbours to assess their advantages and disadvantages. Marketers have understood the advantages of using these tools to reach targeted receivers with a relative efficiency and also for a lower cost than traditional media. Rojevic and Perroud (2008) describe the Internet tools embraced in viral marketing:

• E-mail & Websites: E-mail is one of the most effective ways for viral marketing campaigns. Websites also reach millions of recipients in an effective way without high costs.

• Forums & Social Networking Sites: For years, forums have been constant in the internet, but in the last few years also social networks, like Facebook, have become more and more important in information sharing via the web. Interactivity between the participants is the main advantage of these tools.

• Internet Broadcasts and Podcasts: A big trend today for people looking to spread a message is to broadcast themselves via websites like YouTube. Podcasting with Apple products allow people to listen to them whenever and wherever they like.

Politicians have observed this phenomenon in the business sector and have progressively implemented viral marketing in order to solve their needs of targeted communication. Through e-marketing they aim to generate a positive Word-of-mouth to spread their ideas and to shape their images.

Garret Lo Porto, a viral marketing campaign consultant, said: "The Internet makes possible a whole new level of viral marketing, putting out targeted messages to a group of like-minded individuals and creating a snowball effect for political campaigns." In Western democracies, politics has entered a new area in which the use of marketing methods is the key-factor to win elections (Richards, 2004).

The French campaign in 2007 was especially long and the candidates benefited from intensive media coverage. The sequence of the campaign was heavily influenced by some famous events relayed by video spread on the Internet. A good illustration of this phenomenon is the political "Buzz" created about one of the Nicolas Sarkozy's speeches during the riots in the suburbs of Paris in the autumn of 2005. Sarkozy, who was minister of the interior, claimed his determination to act against insecurity with use of vulgar words: he said to residents who were touched by violence of the youth that he would "get rid of the scum of the suburbs" and that he would "flush out the city". The use of viral marketing methods by the UMP party pushed the video and its parodies to huge popularity. This heavily contributed to setting Sarkozy in the center of the French political debate at that time.

1.1   Problem discussion

In our preliminary research about political marketing we found several interesting theories dealing with the promotion of candidate image. We quickly noticed that political marketing was too broad for a bachelor thesis topic. Among the various methods embraced in the promotion of candidate image, we chose to focus ourselves on a trendy topic: the viral marketing in Politics. Indeed this phenomenon has taking a growing importance in the recent election all around the word and only few theories are devoted to the implementation of this marketing method in Politics.

According to Oxford University Press, Viral marketing is the process in which the buyer of a product or service tells friends, family, neighbours, and associates about its virtues, especially when this happens in advance of media advertising. This method is efficient because it creates interactivity and a strong incentive for purchasing behaviour.

The emergence of information technology by building new networks has increased tenfold the influence of word-of-mouth. According to Harris Interactive Annual RQ published in 2006 which illustrates the growing use of new media to find and diffuse information. For example, 59% of people forward information found on the Internet to colleagues, peers, family or friends. Also, 24% of people very frequently or frequently read a blog and interact with other people on the Internet which creates an electronic word-of-mouth.

Leskovec, Adamic and Huberman (2007) explain the mechanism of viral marketing in which networks, products and recommendations are the key elements. In an article entitled "The Dynamics of Viral Marketing" they show how this method can work with efficiency when the right combination of products, receiver and sender appears. This study provided some new insights which have general applicability to marketing strategies and to future models of the spread of viral information.

There is a lot of literature on viral marketing shows the opportunities to use viral marketing methods in order to spread messages in an efficient way. Nevertheless, few theories currently deal with viral marketing for electoral campaigns because the phenomenon is relatively new in politics. This paper will expand theoretical models from the business sector to politics. This paper will examine how the marketing methods in the business sector could be adapted in politics. Political communication has some specific requirements and methods of viral marketing which make it different from viral marketing done in the business sector. For example, when campaigners want to generate word-of-mouth about politicians they have to pay attention to the receptivity of their audience. According to a survey done by Harris Interactive, 15% of people actively provide information about politics whereas only 10% people actively seek it. So politics is a topic where some people share information even when others do not ask them to.

Marketing theories must be transferred to the political field by paying attention to specificities of the people involved in the word-of-mouth process. It will allow us to discover how campaigners could use viral marketing with efficiency.

We will also base our study on existing theories that could be related to our topic. Thus, we will use the research of Vedel and Michalska (2007) "Political Participation and the Internet: Evidence from the 2007 French Presidential Election." This study analyses how voters and political parties use Internet tools and we aim to expand this analysis on viral marketing aspects. These authors observed that web campaigning dramatically changed with the 2007 French presidential election. Some candidates, especially Sarkozy, intensively used video footage on their websites and presented their political platform and campaign in the form of TV stories. Politicians have re-discovered the power of moving images, which is the general way for politicians to be in contact with citizens. The use of viral marketing by campaign crews has pushed these videos to tremendous popularity and heavily contributed to creating political buzz ("Les Sarko Buzz", Decembre 2005).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how viral marketing is implemented in political communication.

1.3 Research questions

Four questions will structure our bachelor thesis:

1. What are the viral marketing principles in the business sector and its specifics for implementation in political campaigns?

2. How does viral marketing deliver new kinds of political messages efficiently?

3. How do campaign crews use viral marketing to create political "Buzz" to promote a candidate as a successful brand?

4. What could be the influence of viral marketing on the behaviour of French voters?

1.4 Perspective

In the collection of our empirical data we adopted both the perspective of voters and of political parties. First, we analyzed the political parties' web strategy by interviewing a UMP webmaster. Then, we collected data among a sample of French voters to explore their participation in the viral marketing process.

1.5   Delimitations

We chose France because that is the place where were experienced viral marketing as a new tool for political communication. Indeed most of French politicians are relatively modern in their way to lead campaign. The media coverage of the presidential campaign is especially significant and candidates have progressively included the new communication channels such as the Internet in their communication strategy. Vedel and Michalska (2007) notices that use of the Internet was spread in the 2007 French campaign as well as in the 2008 US elections. Some modern viral marketing methods were used in France and then implemented in the US election on a larger scale.

We led our focus group among young voters only because the youth is obviously much concerned with the use of new communication methods in Politics. Nevertheless, this sampling brought some limitations in the validity of our results. Our study is really focused on qualitative aspects and this constitutes a main limitation for a possible transferability to other countries.

2   Frame of Reference

We divided our frame of reference in two sections, "Theory" and "Previous Research" because we want to apply theories not previously used in the context of politics. First, we will study the literature dealing with the use of viral marketing in business sector. That will provide us with an interesting perspective about the conditions for successful implementation of viral marketing in Politics. Then, we will expose the previous research dealing with the new communications methods in politics.

2.1   Theory

2.1.1   The viral marketing phenomenon: Principles and Definitions

The term "viral marketing" was introduced by Tim Draper in 1996 when he described the marketing strategy of the free e-mail service Hotmail which consists of putting advertising messages in each e-mail sent: "Get your private, free e-mail from Hotmail at http://www.hotmail.com". Through this message the sender gives an implicit recommendation to use the Hotmail service, according to Kaikati and Kaikati (2004). Jurveston and Draper (2000) define viral marketing as "network-enhanced word of mouth." Frey (2002) compares viral marketing to a pathogenic agents which, with the aid a of a host cell, divides and multiplies.

Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) explain in the article "Stealth Marketing: How to Reach Consumers Surreptitiously" that viral marketing is simply "word of mouth" via a digital platform. It involves spreading the message via "Word-of-mouth" and ensuring that the receivers pass the message along to their acquaintances. Indeed, the consumer is the central transmitter of the message and the control of the advertiser is limited in this process. The strength of viral marketing lies in the credibility of the carrier of the virus and his willingness to share it with friends and acquaintances. This communication process is especially dynamic: it escalates and reaches viral dimensions.

Skrob (2005) distinguishes two main types of viral marketing depending of the level of consumer involvement in message transmission:

Active Viral Marketing corresponds to the traditional Word of mouth augmented by the power of on-line communication. The user is personally involved in the process of acquiring new customers and actively encourages friends and relatives to acquire this product and directs them to the company website. We saw on the forum beaute-test.com some women advised other to buy a cosmetic product of the brand Nivea. They emphasized on the efficiency of the soft cream by Nivea and claimed their satisfaction.

Frictionless Viral Marketing, in contrast to active viral marketing, it does not require active participation of the customer to advertise or spread information about a product. The product automatically transmits the promotional message to the recipient. Hotmail is an example of this type of marketing.

Skrob (2005) presents some aspects of the viral marketing concept and determines how the open source software TYPO3 could fulfil the criteria for being viral. We will adapt the analysis model presented in "Open Source and Viral Marketing" to special features of politics. Skrob (2005) mentions the key-elements for being viral:

- − The product must have a true value to the sender as well as the receiver. Uninteresting information is not passed on. The value of the product can be a service, a game, entertainment, greeting cards, monetary incentive, etc.

- − The service or product is free

- − The product is easily reproducible

- − The product or service is exclusively distributed over the Internet

- − The target group is in the introduction phase of the product and oblivious to competitors.

- − The primary focus of the user is directed to the site where the product or service is solely available.

- − The first people who spread the virus need to be carefully selected.

- − Care must be taken to concentrate on the target group and avoid being posted on undesirable Websites.

According to Skrob (2005) the probability to lead a successful campaign increases when more of the above mentioned elements are fulfilled. Even if politicians cannot be "sold" as a commercial good, a video of a political speech could fulfil some of the requirements for being viral.

2.1.2   A new efficient alternative advertising

Leskovec et al. (2007) explain that nowadays marketers have to cope with an increasing resistance of consumers to traditional forms of advertising such as TV or newspaper ads. Viral marketing is one the most efficient alternative strategies that marketers have recently experimented with. It exploits existing social networks by encouraging customers to share product information with their friends.

Hoffman and Novak (2000) noticed that customers act as advertisers by promoting a product through word-of-mouth in the viral marketing process. The authors clearly show how customer networks are used to transmit promotional messages thereby drastically lowering the costs of customer acquisition. The example of Hotmail demonstrates that expenditures per customer acquisition were practically nothing compared to traditional marketing methods.

Rosen (2000) mentions three reasons why viral marketing has become an important tool for marketers:

Targeting: Mass marketing has lost its effectiveness. A marketing campaign will be not efficient if advertisers just try to reach every possible customer on all the available channels. The most potential customer of the service, called the target group, should be defined in the early stages of the campaign. The viral marketing methods which use an Internet database can deliver advertising messages to the target group in a very affective way.

Receptivity: Consumers became less receptive to advertising on television and in mass mailings. Indeed, the consumer is assailed by advertising requests despite the face that he does not ask for them. As Kaikati (2004) said, viral marketing is word of mouth via a digital platform. And yet most of people ask for advice about the product being offered or the service when they make a purchase decision. That means that many people are using word-of-mouth to look for information and are especially receptive to messages which fall into the viral marketing category.

Trust: Customers mistrust information presented by companies. As we have seen previously, the strength of viral marketing lies in the credibility of the carrier of the virus. People trust their acquaintances and consumer advices to make a good purchase decision. By using viral marketing firms found a new way to restore trust in their brands. Rosen (2000) points out that the Internet has made the exchange of information between people faster and easier. The Internet user has the feeling that he selects received information. Word of mouth carries the buzz and opinion leaders who are perceived as hubs, effectively spread a growing buzz.

Bowman and Narayandas (2001) explain that in today's highly fragmented media landscape, generating positive word of mouth among consumers has become a very important tool for marketers and this is especially so in digital media. Traditional marketing methods generally do not reach their target audience with the same effectiveness as they did before. While mass media has been losing its influence, word of mouth has become an increasingly useful channel to share information in our society and is able to continue to grow fast (Keller and Berry, 2003). In order to cope with these changes, marketers have recently been aiming to take advantage of social networks to generate buzz.

2.1.3 Opportunities and conditions of implementation

2.1.3.1 The Dynamic of Viral Marketing

Leskovec et al. (2007) explain in "The Dynamics of Viral Marketing" the mechanism of viral marketing thanks to an analysis of a person-to-person recommendation network, consisting of 4 million people who made 16 million recommendations on half a million products. It gives heed to the mechanism of propagation of recommendation which is the pillar of the word of mouth process.

Subramani and Rajagopalan (2003) noted that advertiser should acquire a greater understanding of the contexts in which viral marketing strategy works and the characteristics of products and services for which it is most effective. Indeed an inappropriate use of viral marketing can be counterproductive by creating unfavourable attitudes towards products. Although word-of-mouth could be a powerful factor to influence purchasing decisions, it can be hard for advertisers to control it. Some services are perfectly suitable for viral marketing because the product can be observed or advertised as part of the communication such as Email services. Indeed Hotmail and Yahoo are easily adopted by consumers because every email sent through them contained an advertisement for the service and because they were free.

In order to study the diffusion of a product in the viral marketing process it was useful to examine the diffusion model of Bass (1969). This model predicts the number of people who will adopt a product over time. The spreading of a product mainly depends on the current proportion of the population who has already adopted it. The model describes an S-shaped curve (see appendix 1) that means adoption is slow at first, takes off exponentially (the buzz period) and flattens at the end. Nevertheless Barabasi and Bonabeau (2003) point out the difficulty to predict message diffusion due to the scale-free connectivity of the Internet. This means that the Internet channel is characterised by a domination of several large websites that are linked to a tremendous number of other website. Thus, the Yahoo website guides the users to several specialized website such as YouTube or CNN. The spread of messages on scale-free networks does not succeed or fail depending upon passing a critical threshold of receivers, as classical diffusion models predict.

Leskovec et al. (2007) show that some factors heavily influence the spreading of a product and the Bass model previously exposed seems to be unable to consider them. That is why these authors have also analysed the properties of the recommendation network in relation to viral marketing. Identifying successful recommendations is one of the key for a successful viral marketing campaign. Some recommendations are able to create a virtuous circle because they have some features (high number of purchase, high rating, and large range of comments). As customers continue forwarding recommendations, they contribute to the formation of cascades. In network-based epidemic models, we can found quite a little ex-

tremely highly-connected people who play a very important role through their power of re-commendation.

2.1.3.2 The Recommendation process

Leskovec et al. (2007) analyzes the link between effectiveness of recommendations and the number of recommendations coming from the same person. We can expect that a large number of exchanged recommendations is generally a sign of trust and influence, but a sender of too many recommendations can be perceived as a spammer. Nevertheless these highly-influential people should be identified and a challenge for marketers is to connect them in ways that encourage word-of-mouth message movement in Social Networks.

What are the characteristics that determine the success of recommendations for a product? Authors of "The Dynamics of Viral Marketing" observe that purchasing process that result from recommendations almost follows the usual 80-20 rule. In their experiment, authors notice that the top 20% of the products contribute to more than 60% of the sales. So advert-isers have to push their products in this category in order to spread their message to a large audience. Then their product will benefit from the virtuous circle of awareness.

Contrary to that traditional epidemic model claim, Huberman (2007) observes that the probability of infection decreases with repeated interaction. Marketers should consider that excessive incentives for customers to recommend products could create some unwanted ef-fects. Credibility of recommendations is weakened when a phenomenon of saturation hap-pens.

Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot and Scott (2007) have studied the role of the "opinion leaders" compared with moderate connected people. They notice that word-of-mouth influence is shared by many people and not only come from an elite, highly-connected few. Most people are moderately connected and are as willing as the highly connected to share mar-keting messages with others. Authors show us the relationship between consumer Social Networks and word-of-mouth effectiveness. They observe that influence is motivated by the basic human need to be helpful by giving advice, and that people share a common en-joyment in seeking out valuable information.

2.1.3.3 The Word of mouth influence on Voter's behaviour

According to De Bruyn and Lillien (2008) the key driver in viral marketing is the effect-iveness of unsolicited message that allows to create awareness and trigger interest and fi-nally generate product adoption. The paper "A multi-stage model of word-of-mouth influ-ence through viral marketing" describes how the word-of-mouth process influences con-sumers' current behaviours, particularly in a cluttered on-line environment. Authors devel-op a model to identify the role word-of-mouth plays during each stage of a viral marketing recipients' decision-making process, including the conditions that moderate such influence:

Awareness stage: The first decision faced by recipients is whether or not they will open the e-mail, read the comments about a product or watch a video in order to be aware of the message content. At this stage the significant factors influencing the customer' behaviour are the relevance of the subject line, the familiarity of the sender' name and the nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver.

Interest stage: At this stage recipients are aware of the purpose of the message and they may develop further interest in. People are willing to learn more about the message's purpose if it is well-designed and match their tastes.

Final decision: The recipient has now gathered sufficient information about the product and may decide to adopt the product by following a cost/benefit analysis of the offer.

2.2   Previous Research

2.2.1   Implementation of viral marketing in Politics

2.2.1.1   The "Photoshop for democracy"

Underwood, Garrett, Skladzinski, Gallagher, Vrabie and Smith (2008) explain in "New Media and the 2008 Campaign Season "that new media have come with the new Politics in which candidates are sold like brands. Through new channels, politicians tried to be part of the popular culture, where they can be built-up, commented, analyzed and re-disseminated without the planning and control that goes into messages more formally addressed for target audiences. The sentence "Photoshop for democracy" has been used to describe the phenomenon. Photoshop is a popular graphics software program that allows users to impact an existing image with potential for significant change in effect. In this instance, the metaphor refers to a popular tool that is used to assess candidates' image. Therefore, politicians and campaign crews have started to pay more attention to both the opportunities and threats associated with this form of new media brand repackaging.

A MORI poll in the 2001 election in UK showed that voters said that image of leaders was a greater determinant of voting behaviour than the parties' policies. According to Needham (2005) political parties are seeking to develop relationships with voters by orienting their appeal around a popular leader. This is particularly the case given a media environment that is increasingly focused on personality. A politician who shows his/her apparent conviction and an acute sensitivity to public opinion would success at identifying and promoting symbolic policies.

Needham (2005) shows how the candidate embodies the brand image of a party. That requires to establish the leader distinctive features in the voters' mind. Leaders try to associate their traits of personality with symbolic policies. For instance a candidate who exposes

his/her determination is more credible when he/she promise to take some courageous measures. It allows the voters to distinguish easily a candidate from another.

2.2.1.2 Influence of viral marketing in the 2007 Presidential election

Vedel and Michalska (2007) have studied the influence of the Internet on political participation during the 2007 French presidential election. They belong to Science-Po, a major center for Politics research in France. The authors ask some interesting question related to our topic: Has the Internet helped to pull more citizens into the campaign process? Has it intensified the process of electoral competition? The use of viral marketing could be seen as a tool for revitalizing Politics since that urge citizens to contribute to spread political message. Nevertheless this theory of Science-Po clearly shows that the Internet mostly reinforces established powers and existing levels of political engagement. The research examines the reliability of both theories about the Internet effect on Political participation: mobilization and normalization.

Candidates mainly use the Internet to replicate their offline model of campaigning. The Internet is still is a marketing tool underused by candidates who slowly change their mode of campaigning. Nevertheless, authors have observed that web campaigning has dramatically changed with the 2007 election. Some candidates, especially Sarkozy, have made an intensive use of video footage on their websites and presented their political platform and campaign in the form of TV stories. It gives him a modern image in order to become subject for discussion. Politicians have re-discovered the power of moving images which is the general way for politicians to be in contact with citizens. With the development of broadband connection and social network some videos have reached an amazing popularity. It is not new that TV images are the primary source of political information but this channel reaches a too broad and passive audience. In the process of viral marketing, the user is more autonomous and active in how they watch the image. Spreading videos is became a good way to attract citizens on the candidates websites regardless their interest in Politics.

The on-line campaign requires less financial resources than traditional political marketing methods such as TV spots and flyers but inequalities remain between the different parties challenging for the elections. The analysis demonstrates a gap in on-line performance between main and minor candidates that reflect inequalities of available resources.

Authors of the Science-Po Research center have studied the Web usage patterns among voters and they brought some interesting learning. The only ones who used to visit political website are people deeply interested in Politics On the other hand receiving and sharing videos of politicians is a very common habit for many people. This explains why social networks such as Facebook became a privileged channel for viral marketing in Politics. Because the internet is a very open place, people who have not necessarily the profile of

political activist may engage in some kind of political activity on-line. Indeed many people follow "Buzz" whatever is the field of discussion.

Now we will study how politicians are promoted through the three main channels used in viral marketing: Email & Website, Forums & Social Networks and Internet Broadcasts and Podcasts.

2.2.2   New forms of communication for modern Politics

2.2.2.1   Email-campaign and Websites of candidates

In the article "Candidate Campaign E-Mail Messages in the Presidential Election 2004"*,* Williams and Trammell (2005) analyze the e-mailing campaign strategies of the both candidates Bush and Kerry. Authors point out that E-mail messages allow candidates to directly contact voters in a very efficient way. Contrary to traditional forms of direct marketing such as political meetings, direct e-mailing is relatively cheap and allows to reach a large target audience. The study investigated issue coverage, message strategy, and interactivity. The findings indicate that e-mail messages are powerful instruments because they can be forwarded to a large number of non-subscribers. Direct e-mailing aims to create a viral effect and messages encouraged the original e-mail recipient to forward the content on to another, such as icons or fields that enable the user to "send this to a friend" or "forward this to your local media."

Politicians have progressively integrated e-mailing in their marketing strategies because they have to cope with the new habits of voters about political information. The proportion of citizens who cite the Internet as one of their main sources for campaign news rose from 3% in 1996, to 11% in 2000, and to 21% in 2004. The number of individuals who say they received any election news during the 2004 campaign election this year rose from 10% in 1996, to 30% in 2000, to 41% in 2004 (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2004). Results of the study of Williams and Trammell (2005) indicate that as key election events drew near, candidates increased the number of e-mail messages they sent. Direct address in the email messages occurred at a statistically significant higher level than expected. Candidates used e-mail messages for promotion more often than opponent attacks. The researchers point out that the interactivity that is afforded through the Internet is not merely a feature or a tool present within the medium but an overall environment that may be promoted.

2.2.2.2   Influence on Forums & Social Networking sites

For few years we noticed the arrival of Politics in social networks. Theses on-line discussion's places come as three main forms according to Marcoccia (2003):

Forums specialized in Politics (e.g. fr.soc.politique). In this case, people create their own topic according to their interest by writing their thought or point of view. The goal of political social network in the Internet is to generate a debate between readers: each one will try to answer to the message by proving the limitation of the reasoning or the opposite by expressing our agreement. People writing in forum are looking for a relationship. Indeed their goal is not to unburden themselves but to be in interaction with someone else in order to argue.

Newspapers website (e.g. lemonde.fr). They offer the possibility to share our opinion by commenting on articles or videos. According to Cornfield et al. (2005), surfers look for express themselves in newspaper websites: write a comment is a way to react to a government measure for instance.

Blogs is "basically a web site consisting of a collection of entries in reverse chronological order. It is more personal and informal than institutional web sites, more accessible to web roamers and searchers than email, more spontaneous than advertisements, and more open to discussion than video, audio, textual, and statistical files" (Cornfield et al., 2005)

Despite political forums are less numerous than other forum they receive three times more message per month than the average of non political groups (Marcoccia, 2003). This shows the importance for regulars to participate actively to the forum in order to prove themselves their involvement in political life. The author shows that the majority of people do not have preferences for a website. Actually they just "surf" in several forums in function of the topic while in political forum participant always keep watch on their favourite website, waiting for an interesting topic in which they can debate. It is possible to explain it according to a reinforcement of a sense of belonging to the French Politics (Marcoccia, 2003).

Marcoccia (2003) has analysed some profile people. Regular participants do not have the same profile in the three on-line social networks. He noticed that contrary to forums and blogs, newspapers websites readers are more well-informed about news which allows them to have a more accurate judgement. It results in comments made on newspapers websites fully detailed.

Marcoccia (2003) notices that in political forum discussion there are frequently some quotations spring from traditional media. This is a way to make the debate more interesting because everyone is able to accede to the concrete source. It allows to not doubt about the credibility of information.

2.2.2.3   The creation of political Buzz through broadcasting

Underwood et al. (2008) explain that JibJab Media is a firm example showing how new media techniques catch on and extend to formal advertising campaigns. The company created buzz during the 2004 Presidential campaign by serving up on its jibjab.com website

popular Bush and Kerry animated satire videos. It now features ads for corporations such as Pepsi and other major advertisers who use the same animated format to create successful viral marketing campaigns. This clearly shows that business sector and Politics call upon the same companies to promote their brand image.

As a public relations platform, the video sharing website "YouTube" has also become a campaign debate platform and a channel for Public Relations. In collaboration with CNN, for instance, YouTube hosted the Democratic Party's July 2007 debate in Charleston SC. The access CNN provided was significant, with coverage of the Democratic debate yielding an estimated 2.6 million viewers, including the highest viewership in history for a debate among adults 18-34. A Barack Obama's speech, remade into a music video by the Black Eyed Peas rock group, was co-released on YouTube with over 2 million hits within its first five days of release.

Yet the use of YouTube may also be a double-edged sword. YouTube is an unregulated medium and that is why candidates have a limited control over their own public images. The popular and embarrassing YouTube submissions in 2000 illustrated the risk brought by broadcasting. Indeed these submissions included Rudolph Giuliani "cross-dressing" and Hillary Clinton's off-key rendition of the National Anthem. The fact that candidates are not bound to endorse messages provides a potential slander platform for slander. This kind of events can not happen with a regulated medium, such as TV, mainstream print, and radio.

The strength of YouTube lies on the medium's drive for user flexibility. The candidates are able to spread political message through various ways. On the other hand it requires that they relinquish control over use of messages and images. Many parodies appear when a "Buzz" is generated among a video. There is a kind of built-in boldness and media courage associated with just the possibility of being subjected to this type of scrutiny. One indirect benefit is the ability to embed desired YouTube videos into web pages or to incorporate them as MySpace and Facebook page content.

3 Method

This chapter will explain the methodology chosen to conduct the research. It will justify the choice of a case study to fulfil the purpose. Then the data collection will be discussed by analyzing its trustworthiness and limitations.

3.1 Research approach

According to Saunders and Thornill (2003) the purpose of a study can be classified into three different purposes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In order to carry out our purpose we have chosen to lead an exploratory study.

An exploratory study is applied when the research problem is broad and not specifically defined and when it deals with a new phenomenon (Yin, 1994). This aims to formulate problem more precisely, clarify concepts, gathering explanations, gaining insights, eliminating impractical ideas and forming hypotheses. It can be formed using a literature search, surveying people with focus group as we plan to do, and case studies. Exploratory research may develop hypotheses but it does not seek to test them (Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991).

Our study will be primarily exploratory because we want to develop hypotheses about implementation of viral marketing in Politics. That is a new phenomenon requiring to be explored more precisely thanks to existing theories (Vedel & Michalska, 2007). Most of theses dealing with viral marketing explain models for business sector and few of them pay attention to a possible implementation in Politics.

3.2 Research perspective

Research design can be approached from two main perspectives, deductive and inductive. According to Sauderns and Thornill (2003) a research is deductive when it involves the testing of an existing or assumed theory. This approach would not fit our purpose exactly considering that we aim to lead an exploratory study. We will use existing theories about viral marketing but we do not aim to confirm their validity for the Politics context.

 As stated in the purpose section, this paper aims to explore the implementation of viral marketing in Politics through a case study of the French election. So we will collect and organize data in order to make conclusions. That fits better with the inductive approach in which the development of a theory results of the empirical data observation. Therefore we consider this study as mainly inductive even if we will be influenced by existing theories when we will conduct our case study.

3.3   Quantitative or Qualitative Research

In a quantitative research approach, the researcher collects and studies statistical data. This approach is especially suitable when the goal of the researcher is to gain a broad understanding in a problem. One must be able to draw conclusions on a more general base on the collected information and the conclusions must be presented in numbers (Yin, 1994). This kind a research studying viral marketing requires resources and method that we have not. In addition this approach could be inefficient to deal with a new phenomenon such as viral marketing in Politics.

In a qualitative research approach, the researcher collects and studies data that has to do with feelings, attitude and ideas. This type of study is used when we plan to get more detailed data. Data collected from qualitative approach are harder to present in numbers unlike a quantitative approach but it can better be described in words (Yin, 1994). This approach is more suitable for our purpose and research questions because we aim to better understand a new phenomenon. Even if we use some statistical data to understand the scope of the phenomenon we are focused on qualitative aspects. This will result in a deeper understanding of use of viral marketing through a case study about the French presidential campaign of 2007.

3.4   Case study

Yin (1994) explains that researcher can use many different ways to conduct data. Depending on the type of research questions, how much control the researcher has over behavioural events and how much the study focuses on contemporary events, the researcher can choose a strategy that includes experiment, survey, archival analysis, history or case study.

Relevant situations for different research strategies

Research strategy	Form of Research question	Requires control over behavioural events	Focuses on contemporary events
Experiment	how, why	Yes	Yes
Survey	who, what, where,	No	Yes
	how many,		
	how much		
Archival analysis	who, what, where,	No	Yes/No
	how many,		
	how much		
History	how, why	No	No
Case Study	how, why	No	Yes

Source: Yin (1994)

Because we use research questions built on "How" and "Why" and we deal with recent events with a qualitative approach we choose to lead a case study (see previous table). In addition a case study is especially suitable to explore a new phenomenon such as Viral marketing in Politics. We aim to understand how viral marketing is implemented in Politics that require to collect detailed data from our area of interest. So we will conduct a case study on the French web campaign for presidential election in 2007.

As previously mentioned in the delimitation part, we have chosen France for our case study because it is a very interesting place for the implementation of viral marketing. The collection of primary data was made easier thanks to that interviews were conducted in French, our native language. In addition, our group was especially able to understand the particular nature of the French presidential election since we have followed courses in Politics.

3.5   Data collection

Yin (1994) argued that case studies can be based on six different sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts.

Interview is one of the most important sources of case study information. Indeed this source of evidence presents some interesting characteristics for our study even if it requires a meticulous method to limit bias in answers. Strengths and weaknesses brought by interviews could be summarized in the chart below (Yin, 2003).

Table 3.2 Sources of evidence

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	*Stable:* can be reviewed	*Retrievability:* can be low
	repeatedly	*Biased selectivity:* if collection
	Unobtrusive: not created	is incomplete
	as a result of the case	*Reporting bias:* reflects bias
	Exact: contains exact	*of author*
	names, references, and	*Access:* may be deliberately
	details of an event	blocked
	Broad coverage: long	
	span of time, many events,	
	and many settings	
Interviews	*Targeted:* focuses,	Bias due to poorly constructed
	directly on case study topic	questionnaires
	Insightful: provides	Response bias
	perceived causel	Inaccuracies due to poor recall
	inferences	Reflexivity: interviewee gives
		what interviewer wants to hear

Source: Yin (2003)

3.5.1 Primary data collection

3.5.1.1 The design of the interview

We have interviewed a webmaster of the French conservative party, called Union for a popular majority (UMP). We got in touch with this person named Philippe Descoing thanks to our business school network. He currently works for the Danone Company as a web-marketer and that is why he has a large experience of viral marketing in business sector as in Politics. Thanks to this professional background he was able to answer to our questions about the similitude of communication methods between business sector and Politics. He has contributed to spread political "Buzz" on the current president Sarkozy and he allowed us to discover the concrete application of viral marketing strategies.

We led a focus interview with the webmaster in the UMP offices in Paris. This kind of interview is short and includes a certain set of questions (Appendix 1). Our interview compares the answers with already established facts but it may still remain open-ended. Indeed a high flexibility was required for this interview because our study is exploratory. We have collected his explanations about the web communication strategy throughout the race for presidential election in 2007. Thus we have analysed these data by paying attention to the campaign events recount in newspapers.

3.5.1.2 The design of the focus group

After having collected data from the sender point of view, webmaster of candidates, we have to collect information next to receivers of the political message, the French voters. Because our subject is mainly exploratory and qualitative we led a focus group interview. Focus group consists in a group interview in which several people can express their ideas about a topic with the intervention of a moderator. Saunders (2003) points out the important role of moderator who has to encourage participants to share their ideas in a constructive debate. In order to limit bias in responses we want to not ask too many questions. We would like to simply introduce topic for discussion and let a free debate appears.

Morgan (1997) said that the focus group method is a research technique that collects information through group interaction. Indeed this kind of interview provides direct and immediate evidence about similarities and differences in participants' opinions and experiences. That is why this way of collecting data allows to get information that might not have been achieved through individual interviews or surveys. The interaction between participants is a main lever to generate ideas. We have observed the method used by Vedel & Michalska (2007) to lead our focus group. They have led a study considering the web usage of French voters for political purposes (Appendix 4). Therefore some questions extracted from this article were suitable for our focus groups.

We will lead two focus group interviews with six French students each time. They are aged between 18 and 25 years are a main target for viral marketing. Most of students are highly connected and intensively use the new channels of communication such as social networks. So the French students are likely to be concerned with viral marketing methods about Politics. We want to discover their opinion about the new forms of communication used by candidates and how they were reached by viral marketing.

We have selected the students mainly considering their gender and their inclination to speak about Politics. We preferred to form mixed groups in order to get samples more representative of the population. In addition we wanted to have groups in which each respondent will be encouraged to give his/her opinion.

3.5.2 Secondary data collection

Through all along our study we have analysed political events and to increase our knowledge about the background of these events we referred to many newspapers. In order to limit bias and subjectivity we have paid attention to the sources selection. So, we mainly used "Le Monde", "Le Figaro" and "Libération" which are the reference for written press in France. The awareness of these newspapers gives them credibility in the treatment of information.

3.5.3 Trustworthiness and limitations of collected data

3.5.3.1 For the interview with the webmaster

The main challenge was to control the subjectivity of the UMP webmaster opinion. It clearly influenced on his vision of facts. Hopefully we were well documented about the topic we wanted to deal with: "Buzz" about the "riots of autumn 2005". We found in the investigative newspaper "Le Canard Enchainé" some of the information given by the webmaster during the interview (the Google Ad Words campaign, rent of e-mail addresses).

We led an interview with only one webmaster. Therefore we just collected the UMP point of view whereas it would have been preferable to get various opinions. It clearly limited the validity of the interview results. Nevertheless we noticed that the answers of Mr Descoing are mainly in agreement with the facts related in newspaper.

3.5.3.2 For the focus group with Young French voters

Yet there are some limitations of focus groups. The open-ended nature of responses obtained in focus groups often makes summarization and interpretation of results difficult. The interaction of respondents with one another and with the moderator may have two undesirable effects, firstly the responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which restricts the generalization of the results and secondly the results obtained in the focus group may be biased by opinion member (Stewart, Rook and Shamdasani, 2007). Indeed a debate concerning Politics could bring subjectivity due to the political engagement of participants

We asked only young students in higher education. These students benefit from a high level education. In addition they have an easier access to the Internet and therefore to a large range of information. It could allow them to get more political consciousness than average of population according to Vernette and Flores (2004). For this reason they were concerned by the viral marketing phenomenon and it was the key-point to select our participants.

We have chosen to organize two focus group interviews in order to collect more data on all the aspects we wanted to deal with. Despite that we asked questions to bring the conversation around three topics. First we have tried to discover how the participants used to get information about candidates during the 2007 election. Then we have asked them about their involvement in the "Buzz" phenomenon created around candidates. Finally we have assessed how young voters perceived the influence of the new communication methods.

The participants of the first focus group interview remain much focused on the influence of viral marketing. When a respondent mentioned the "Buzz" around Sarkozy and riots, the debate became lively. At this time of the discussion we have ask new questions to reorient-

ate the respondents to other themes. Therefore we noticed that whatever their interest in Politics, all the participants feel themselves concerned with the topic. The second focus group allowed us to get more data about the topics relatively abandoned by the first respondents group. We had prepared new question to better lead the discussion considering the sequence of the first interview.

4 Empirical Results

The empirical data part will present the results gathered through the UMP webmaster interview and the voter's opinion via the focus groups. It will provide interesting learning about the concrete strategy to implement viral marketing in politics. Then the authors will assess the influence of viral method among a sample of young voters.

4.1 Use of viral marketing in the web campaign of the UMP

We led an interview with a webmaster of the centre-right political party named UMP. It consisted in a dozen of open questions which aimed to understand the implementation of viral marketing in the French elections in 2007 (See Appendix 1). In order to expose a less subjective vision of the events we have used several newspapers providing information about the political context.

4.1.1 The UMP enters in the "Internet era"

Since 2005 the Internet entered widely in the media plan of some political parties in France. Mr Philippe Descoing, aged of 31, became militant of UMP in 2002 and has brought his experience of web marketer in the Danone Company. Thanks to a new generation of militants, the UMP party has intensified its web strategy since 2005 and has taken the lead over its competitors for on-line communication. The first effects of this strategy appear in 2005 with the huge "Buzz" created around Nicolas Sarkozy who was Minister of the interior during the "riots in suburbs". According to Mr Descoing these events signalled the beginning of the run for Presidency. Indeed Nicolas Sarkozy claimed at this period that "I use to think about Presidency everyday when I shave myself".

The UMP webmaster has shown us which methods were used to launch this political "Buzz" and how it contributes to establish Sarkozy in the French Politics. We will expose some concrete aspects of viral marketing implementation. We have analysed the collected data by completing them with facts related in articles extracted from two newspapers ("Le Monde" and "Le Figaro"). These events marked the beginning of the successful campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy who has mainly focused his communication on security and immigration issues.

### 4.1.2 The "Buzz" about the « riots of autumn 2005 »

The "riots of autumn 2005" started after the accidental death of two young men who were followed by the police in a substation. This tragic incident caused a violent reaction of gangs in the city of Villiers-le-Bel. In this suburb of Paris lived many disadvantaged people who come mainly from immigration. Many cars were burned and the Minister of

Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, came to reassure people of this suburb of Paris and showed his determination to act against violence. He claimed at inhabitants that he will "get ride suburbs of the scum" and "flush out the city". This sentence shocked the public opinion and generated a debate about the issue of insecurity.

At this period of 2005 the right government and the UMP party was unpopular and criticized for their management of economical and social issues. Nicolas Sarkozy who had a growing influence in the UMP wanted to draw the French public opinion to the security issue. Indeed it was already a main issue for people during the elections of 2002 and has heavily contributed to the success of the extreme right candidate at the first round of elections. Through his action in the minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to show to public opinion his ability to solve the issue of insecurity.

Mr Philippe Descoing explained to us how the UMP has been reactive to set a communication strategy on insecurity after these events in suburbs. At the beginning, the traditional media have not paid a large attention to the events of Villiers-le-Bel because they are unfortunately recurrent facts. In order to communicate the activism of Sarkozy the web crew of UMP has heavily contributed to create a political "Buzz" based on the video where the minister was rude, using words as "scum" and "flush the city".

First, an e-mailing campaign was launched to 800,000 persons. The communication goal was to set insecurity as a main issue for the French public opinion. That is why the UMP targeted the persons suffering from the insecurity situation in the suburbs. These voters belong mainly to the working classes and considered that they were neglected by politicians. Regarding these expectations, the UMP campaign crews had looking for e-mail database from marketing companies. As soon as the target was defined, these e-mails were sent to the rent addresses. The message included a link to the UMP website and showed Nicolas Sarkozy's action against insecurity. The web campaigners have also called upon the UMP militants networks and that was an efficient tool to communicate to the traditional voters of the right. According to Mr Descoing, half of the targeted persons opened the political e-mail whereas only 30% do it for and commercial advertisement. In addition the receiver was invited to click on a link to get additional information through weekly newspapers. Mr Descoing emphasized on efficiency of this campaign. For barely 40 000€, 200 000 persons visited the UMP website and 60% of them were unknown of the party database.
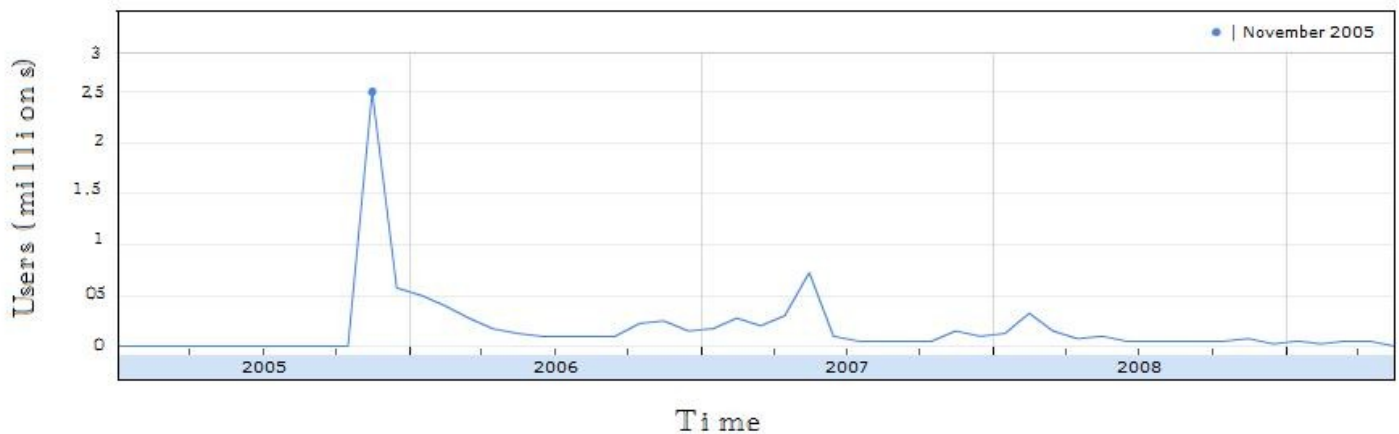
Number of Google requests for the words "Sarkozy and suburbs" over time

In addition of this e-mailing campaign, the party is fully entered in the period of political e-marketing through a Google Ad Words campaign. That consists in paying key-words among the search engine in order to spread a commercial link to UMP website when an Internet surfer made a request using some key-words. Thus the UMP bought the key-words "scum", "riots", "insecurity" and "suburbs" that reveal axis of the UMP communication. After one week of violence the "Buzz" around the video was huge (almost 450 000 viewers on YouTube) and in the same period the riots were spreading in many suburbs of Paris and in provincial towns.

4.1.3   The spreading of a political message through "Buzz"

Mr Philippe Descoing points out that the final target of the political message included in the video "Buzz" were the working classes and retired people. Indeed this part of the population constitutes a powerful electoral force which is especially concerned with insecurity issues. The use of the internet channel to target these people seems to be paradoxical because most of the people who watched videos on-line were aged between 15 and 25 years. In fact this communication strategy uses the strength of viral marketing: the "Buzz" created on the internet by young people urged the traditional media channels to spread it among a larger part of the population.

Infected by video "Buzz", the traditional Medias channels broadcast images of riots and alarmist situations that increased quickly the feeling of insecurity even among people who were not directly touched by this violence. The stature of Sarkozy as minister of Interior was established with a vigorous speech and some radical action to cope with violence (curfew in suburbs, send of security republican forces, and new legislation against gangs). The high media coverage of Sarkozy speech was perceived as a provocation for young people living in suburbs. This contributed to increase violent reactions as political observers noticed. ("Le Monde", November 2005) Many videos parodying Sarkozy speech were broadcast on-line and reached an important popularity among young people especially. In

fact this contributed to magnify the "Buzz" around Sarkozy's personality and establish him as a politician with a vigorously speech. Since these events one part of the youth have a deep resentment against Sarkozy but this part of population has a low electoral power. On the other hand the communication campaign had reached its goals according to Mr Philippe Descoing: Insecurity is become the main concern of French people ahead of economic issues (Ipsos survey, November 2005). Sarkozy' popularity heavily increased among working class and the voters of the extreme-right (Ipsos survey, November 2005). After these events Sarkozy confessed that he will be candidate for presidency and imposed himself in the center of the French political arena (Editorial of "Figaro", December 2005).

4.1.4   The influence of viral marketing in Politics

The UMP campaign crew would have followed the same strategy to promote Sarkozy's image until the election of May 2007. Mr Phillipe Descoing claims that viral marketing methods were not used to make competitors incredible. Nevertheless the journal "Le Canard Enchainé" revealed that many "blunders" of the socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal, were very quickly spread on-line thanks to the action of UMP militants. The journal "Libération" measured that Sarkozy benefited from broader and more positive media coverage than other candidates during the 2007 election.

The job of Mr Philippe Descoing consists in promoting the brand Danone trough e-marketing and he notices some similarities between business sector and political branding. The tools used to spread message are sometimes similar (Google Ad Words campaign, e-mailing). Mr Philippe Descoing makes us notice that he started to use social networks for promoting brand in 2007 for Danone as for the UMP. Nevertheless the voting act and purchasing act differ and the webmaster explains us that a key-difference was about the motivation. Thus the recommendation process presents some special features in Politics. For instance, it would be irrelevant to recommend to a friend to vote for a candidate. In the other hand most of people are willing to receive and share funny video where candidates are caricatured.

Creating "Buzz" allows to create brand awareness and establishes distinctive characteristics in the spirit of voter/consumer. It becomes especially necessary in Politics because most of citizens would not see the difference between the various political programs. Voters judge above all the candidate on his/her ability to embody France and therefore charisma is a main quality for a president.

4.2   The dynamic of viral marketing among voters

We have organized two focus group interviews around three main subjects for discussion. First, we have tried to discover how the participants used to get information about candidates during the 2007 election. Then we have asked them about their involvement in the

"Buzz" phenomenon created around candidates. Finally we have assessed how young voters perceived the influence of the new communication methods (See Appendix 2 and 3). The participants of the first focus group were Sylvain, Lara, Laure, Marion, Vivien and Mathieu; the second group embraced Paul, Guillaume, Gabriel, Solène, Julie and Medhi.

4.2.1   The use of media to look for information about candidates

The first learning from this focus group is a change in young voters' habits concerning the use of media. The participants made us notice that the traditional flyers presenting the electoral programme of candidates are not attractive. They preferred to get information through other channels such as television and the Internet. For example Gabriel explained us that he regularly watched TV news and sometimes political debates during the campaign in 2007. Lara confessed her preference for satiric programmes such as "Les Guignols de l'Info" in which puppets give a funny vision of politicians. As for Laure who has not a television, she likes watching on-line a programme named "Le Zapping". It consists in a mix of various extracts of television shows resulting in an offbeat vision of news and Politics. With "Le Zapping" six students of our sample discovered videos which created later a "Buzz" about Nicolas Sarkozy or Ségolène Royal.

The participants agreed on the fact that nowadays television and the Internet work together: lots of television shows extracts are broadcasted and shared on on-line platforms like YouTube or Facebook. When videos generate a "Buzz" on-line the prestigious TV news repeat and amplify the phenomenon. For Solène, Facebook home page is a good indicator of successful videos and how people perceive Politics. For example the latest days before the 2007 election there were many pseudo such as "Vive Ségolène" and "Votez Sarkozy". Nevertheless Lara thinks people pay too much attention to Facebook news. Guillaume watches frequently videos creating "Buzz" but according to him political speeches are often extracted from their context and he does not consider them seriously.

During our two focus groups, only one participant told us he has visited the website of a political party. Paul did it in order to know if the UMP had managed to create an interactive interface presenting their ideas. He was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the website design; however this had not really weighted in his voting decision. Indeed he prefers to read newspapers which remain the best channel for political information according to him.

A general conclusion regarding the discussion in our focus group is the link between interest of voters for Politic and the kind of media they use to get information. Indeed young voters who are moderately involved in Politics are willing to watch mainly satiric shows and would be especially reached by "Buzz". On the other hand voters who show more interest for news and Politics base their opinion above all on traditional channels.

4.2.2 The implication of voters in the "Buzz" phenomenon

The "Buzz" results from the word-of-mouth process in which a high number of persons comment and shares videos with acquaintances. Theories explain us that only a few people are deeply engaged in the recommendation process by giving frequently their political opinion. In our sample Sylvain was a good example of these highly "connected" persons: he watches many on-line television programmes and broadcast them on his Facebook profile. In addition he enjoys making comments which sustain politics as a subject for discussion and he claimed that "Facebook became a place for political debate"! Nevertheless most of focus group participants are not as active as Sylvain in the word-of-mouth process.

Among our twelve respondents only two were highly "connected", seven people were moderately "connected" that means they watch regularly videos but rarely comment them. The last three participants told us that they are generally not interested in this kind of video. Marion explained that she receives from friends many videos but she only watches some of them in order to be aware of the "trend" discussion topic. She selects them regarding to her friends' comments. Mathieu claimed he tried to remain out of the buzz phenomenon that "caricature politicians and harm to the quality of Politics" according to him. He prefers to pay attention to journalists' analysis and based his opinion on candidates' actions and political ideas. He even noticed that he feels himself engaged involuntary in "Buzz" because most of his friends talk about it.

Thanks to the focus group we noticed that one video can reach people with various profile. This fast phenomenon touches differently people in function of their affinity with Politics and their level of "connectivity". For instance some people discovered the riots of suburbs in autumn 2005 by the way of an on-line video in which Sarkozy made a vigorous speech. At the same time other people found out this video by traditional media channel because of its success on the Internet. Thus Guillaume was urged to see the video on YouTube after having heard of it on the radio.

4.2.3 The perception of viral marketing in Politics

In the course of the two focus group interviews, the theme of the viral marketing influence on the electoral campaign was spontaneously mentioned. The first sample of participants has especially pointed out the strength of image to establish candidate awareness. That is why most of respondents think that "Buzz" created around videos reflect some character traits of candidates. Vivien judges that Sarkozy appeared as a "restless" and "authoritarian" man because he was overexposed in media and wanted to cope with all the issues in the same time and by himself. Marion found that the socialist candidate Ségolène Royal looked "stupid" and "inexperienced" when she offered original ideas and "blundered" in her political speeches. In a less pleasant style, the extreme right candidate Le Pen launched a controversy when he made a revisionist speech. Among our twelve participants nine per-

sons agreed with the fact that Sarkozy has generally benefited from the "Buzz" phenomenon by imposing his preferred electoral theme and his personality. Sarkozy gave himself a statesman stature and showed his voluntarism even if it looks sometimes caricature.

As Julie noticed it, one main aspect of "Buzz" is its short-lived success which means media focus the public opinion only on the video without treating completely theme in question. Laure admitted that her vision of politicians is heavily influenced by these videos and she rarely tried to explore further the political issue. Sylvain considers "Buzz" video as a way to attract his attention on a topic and it prompts one part of the youth to discuss about elections event if they are not in principal interested in Politics. Guillaume, who is a political militant, watches videos because they are often funny but he thinks that people aware of in political issues cannot be deeply influenced by "this kind of pictures". According to him some categories of citizens with low level of education and/or uninterested in Politics would be particularly sensitive to the video's message. Most of our respondents agreed with this viewpoint and think it could influence voting decision process. Lara added that majority of voters distinguish with difficulty the special features of the various political programmes. In Lara's mind it is the reason why image would play an increasing role in the French presidential election.

Nevertheless most of participants consider the influence of viral marketing in context. Thus Medhi said that politicians use "Buzz" in order to focus attention of media on a chosen theme of campaign. He gave the example of Sarkozy who managed to launch discussion about the immigration issue. During a firm speech about illegal immigration the candidate of UMP claimed "La France, tu l'aimes ou tu la quittes" which means "France, you love it or you leave it". Then many videos were spread on-line in which Sarkozy was parodying as a fascist dictator! Solène noticed that critics of political opponents reinforced the "Buzz" and put Sarkozy in the center of media attention.

Paul assesses that "Buzz" on the Internet acts like a survey and allows politicians to know in what public opinion show interest. Trough this way they are able to adapt their communication. Mathieu noticed that Royal's campaign crews called "Désirs d'avenir" (Wishes for future) watched on-line discussion forum attentively. For example they detected the expectations of citizens concerning adaptation of democracy to the new technologies. This urged Ségolène Royal to make propositions to satisfy this demand. Thanks to this initiative she got many votes among the youth. According to Mathieu this modern approach of Politics contributed to transform a social phenomenon present on the Internet into a political alternative. Unfortunately the socialist party which remains too traditional in its way of doing Politics has not well supported this effort.

Sylvain considers some limitations for the implementation of viral marketing in the Politics. First, he found that French political parties had a weak Internet strategy in the 2007

campaign. Then he thinks that the "Buzz" phenomenon not really reaches old people who generally use only traditional media channels. For Guillaume the efficiency of viral methods is undoubtedly but he makes some critics about its ethic. He judges that some videos harm to image of politicians because they look like "circus freaks". This overexposure in media would not contribute to the quality of debate and candidates do not get a statesman stature by using such marketing methods.

5 Analysis

In the analysis part, the authors will connect data empirical findings with the theoretical framework. The analysis is organized in four stages which correspond to the research questions.

5.1 What are the viral marketing principles in business sector and its specificities for implementation in political campaigns?

5.1.1 Politics fulfil the criteria for being viral

Thanks to the collected data we have observed how Politics could fulfil some of the conditions expounded by Skrob (2005) for being viral:

- The product has a true value to the sender as well as the receiver. The value of political message spreading by viral marketing is not monetary. It depends mainly on the form in it is delivered. For a funny video the laugh is the main incentive to share it with acquaintances. On forum discussions, voters look mainly for interactivity and information that they may not find through traditional channel according to a participant of our focus group.

- The service is free. A main advantage of the Internet is the free access to a large range of information. As in our sample, most of voters prefer to use new channels due to they are attractive. Only three participants were attached to newspapers and think it would be better to pay in order to insure quality of information.

- The first persons who will spread the virus need to be carefully selected. Indeed the webmaster of UMP said that they targeted sympathizer of the UMP and people. This allows to get a good receptivity among voters who are more willing to share video or expose their political ideas.

- Care must be taken to concentrate message diffusion on the target group and avoid being posted on undesirable Websites. Despite candidates want to benefit from a media coverage as broad as possible they are also concerned with quality of the image given of course. The webmaster said that Nicolas Sarkozy wished to avoid to be exposed in tabloids. Four participants of the focus group confirm this fact by arguing that they have not appreciated that candidates look like "circus freaks".

5.1.2 An efficient alternative advertising for Politics

Leskovec et al. (2007) explained that nowadays marketers have to cope with an increasing resistance of consumers to traditional forms of advertising such as TV or newspaper ads. The voter behaviour towards politicians' communication can be described with the same words. Our interviews show that voters are increasingly sceptical towards information given in traditional political shows. They generally enjoy the satiric TV shows. Lara who mainly keeps up with the campaign news through "les Guignols de l'Info" illustrates this new attitude.

These changes in voters' behaviour could urge politicians to change their way of doing Politics. In order to shape their image candidates become likely to appeal for the three advantages of viral marketing expounded by Rosen (2000):

Targeting: Mr Descoing told us that political parties tried to adapt both the media channel and the design of political message to the specific features of voters. They still use mainly fly sheets and militants canvassing to promote their candidates among old people. In order to attract the youth the UMP is set in various social networks and spread video of Nicolas Sarkozy. During the "riots of autumn 2005" they rent e-mail base of inhabitants living in suburbs touched by insecurity issues.

Receptivity: Only few people ask for receiving political message and actively look for information. Nevertheless most of them are willing to open an e-mail or watch a video if it comes from a friend as the focus group shows it. According to Mr Descoing the receptivity for political message among voters is relatively high when it successfully fits the features of people. In the e-mailing campaign about the riots of autumn 2005, half of the targeted persons would have opened the political e-mail whereas only 30% do it for and commercial advertisement. The key-elements in this kind of word-of-mouth are the used media channel, the link existing between sender and receiver and the design of the message.

Trust: Voters have generally a limited trust in the politicians' speeches and they become progressively less receptive to the mass Medias news (Rosen, 2000). Viral marketing would be a good mean to overcome this mistrust. The Internet became a source of information for Politics as for other fields because many people, especially the young one, judge this channel reliable.

5.2   How does viral marketing deliver new kinds of political message efficiently?

5.2.1   Websites and Social networking sites

Vedel and Michalska (2008) noticed that all the candidates running for the 2007 elections have established a website for the campaigns. In addition voters can find a wide range of information in several websites, including special sections made by print media websites,

independent web platforms, research institutes or polling firms analysing the trend in the campaign. In our sample, the participants told us that they used to spend time on-line and most of them watch TV shows and read newspapers on-line. Three participants were already engaged in social networking sites devoted to Politics such as forum discussions. Their motivation was to give their feelings about the political meetings they attended. The main advantage would be the interactivity with other citizens. Three respondents visited the blogs of Sarkozy and Royal which could be seen as more informal channel. They found that blogs exposed another part of the candidate personality compared to others media. Only one participant had visited a presidential candidate website. It is interesting to notice that the respondents previously mentioned are the students more interested in Politics in our sample. The Science Po's study (see Appendix 4) shows that 19% of the whole French Internet users have already visited a political blogs. Among theses persons, we found mainly men (71%) and persons between 18-34 years old (41%). The most significant factor for visiting such blogs is the interest in politics (88%).

Vedel and Michalska (2008) have established a link between the behaviour on-line and the interest in Politics. Our empirical results seem to be in agreement with this approach. According to these authors the persons visiting forum discussion would be not much impressionable by rumours spread on-line. Indeed they are generally well-informed and have strong political convictions.

5.2.2   Broadcasting video

According to the focus group participants the spreading of video embodied the most obvious form of viral marketing in the 2007 French elections. They have spontaneously mentioned several videos about Sarkozy and Royal which reached a high popularity. Whatever was their interest in politics, all the participant said that some video "Buzz" broadcasted on YouTube had a strong influence on them. They had many discussions about immigration and insecurity issues after having watched the video showing a speech of Sarkozy or Royal. We can notice that generating discussions about some political issues was the goal of the web campaign led by the UMP according to Mr Descoing. In addition it contributed to set the candidate exposed in video in the center of political debate. According to the participant, the video contribute to set the candidate image but it would not heavily influence the vote for people who are deeply interested in politics. Therefore it appears likely that the influence of video would be stronger among the citizens who are not aware of the political realities. According to Vernette and Flores (2004) this is due to the power of image among an audience who has trouble to build its opinion due to lack of objective information.

Focus group showed that participants discovered the videos through various channels: social networking sites such as Facebook, the television shows or the newspaper websites. Underwood et al. (2008) claim that the strength of YouTube lies on the medium's drive for

user flexibility. Nevertheless authors pointed out the counterpart for using these viral methods for candidates. They have to relinquish control over use of messages and images. However control of image is usually a main concern for candidates running for elections. Therefore we wan assess that candidates have to balance between the benefits of media coverage and the control over image.

5.2.3   E-mailing campaigns

We will now pay attention to another tool of viral marketing: the e-mailing campaigns. Williams and Trammell (2005) have shown how US politicians integrated e-mailing campaigning in their communication strategy. The webmaster of UMP claims that the two main candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal used this tool too during the 2007 elections. A good illustration of using this technique is the e-mailing campaign launched by the UMP party during the "riots of autumn 2005". The communication goal was to set insecurity as a main issue for the French public opinion. That is why the UMP targeted the persons suffering from the insecurity situation in the suburbs. The message emphasized on the Nicolas Sarkozy's personality. That showed him as a politician who took courageous decisions. According to Williams and Trammell (2005) the goal of e-mailing is the promotion of a candidate and not attack against political opponents e-mailing. The French web campaigns seem to be similar to the 2007 US elections considering this aspect.

The UMP party has later used e-mailing again to bring the political discussion around to the topics that Sarkozy chose. According to Mr Descoing this technique has a relatively low-cost and reaches a large target audience contrary to traditional forms of political communication such as flyers and meetings. Compared with mass media such as TV and radio, the targeting of audience is precise and therefore the message can be design to fulfil the tastes of receivers.

5.3   How do campaign crews use viral marketing to create political "Buzz" to promote candidate as a successful brand?

5.3.1   The spreading of "Buzz" among voters

As Leskovec et al. (2007) it is hard to predict spreading of message by viral marketing and the UMP webmaster confirmed that it is also the case in politics field. Political parties cannot launch a "Buzz" about a topic in which people are not interested in. In business sector the spreading of a product mainly depends on the current proportion of the population who has already adopted it. About Politics field, a good interpretation of this theory could be

that only few politicians benefiting from a sufficient awareness are able to generate "Buzz".

We have previously exposed the theory of Barabasi and Bonabeau (2003) that pointed out the difficulty to predict message diffusion due to the scale-free connectivity of the Internet. The UMP webmaster confesses that launching a "Buzz" is impossible without getting the support of some famous political bloggers, newspaper websites or TV shows such as "le Zapping". These channels play a very important role through their power of recommendation and can push people to speak about "Buzz". The diffusion model describing an S-shaped curve can be applied for political "Buzz". That means adoption is slow at first with only a few "highly connected" elite. Then it may take off exponentially (the buzz period) when the mass media and "moderately connected people" speak about it. Finally it flattens at the end.

Our focus group has shown us that the on-line "Buzz" can move into the discussion of everyday life. This explains why people who are "few-connected" such as old people can be reached by "Buzz" starting on-line. Politics is a current topic for discussion in France even if only a minority of the population is deeply interested in. We may assess that traditional word-of-mouth takes over from the on-line "Buzz".

5.3.2   The viral marketing: a tool to set brand image of political leaders

A MORI poll in the 2001 election in UK showed that voters said that image of leaders was a greater determinant of voting behaviour than the parties' policies. According to Needham (2005) parties are seeking to develop relationships with voters by orienting their appeal around a popular leader. This is particularly the case given a media environment that is increasingly focused on personality. Politicians have to show his/her apparent conviction and an acute sensitivity to public opinion. By this way they would success at identifying and promoting symbolic policies.

Thus Nicolas Sarkozy has embodied the severity and determination about the insecurity issue according to Mr Descoing. He used a vigorous language to show that he take into account the problem of people suffering from insecurity. The illustration of this determination is the famous video that we have mentioned in empirical results. Sarkozy promised to inhabitants to cope with "the scum" and "flush the city". In order to materialize this promise, he took some symbolic measures during the riots of autumn 2005: the curfew in suburbs, a law against juvenile delinquency. Mr Descoing notices that the media coverage of these events was sometimes negative and the candidate Sarkozy became unpopular among a part of the youth. On another hand Ipsos survey (November 2005) showed that Nicolas Sarkozy gained credibility and popularity among working classes and old person. Then the other "Buzz" happening during the campaign reinforced the stature of Sarkozy despite critics.

The socialist candidate had also created "Buzz" with some speeches about the "democracy by and for citizens" but media judge severely theses "blunders". In fact ideas exposed in videos were too vague and it heavily contributed to reinforce the critics against Ségolène Royal. She was blamed for her lack of serious political manifesto and her inexperience (Vernette & Flores, 2004).

Therefore we can observe that viral marketing allows to generate media coverage. Nevertheless it could be counterproductive if the candidate fails to combine spreading of image with a good communication strategy.

5.4 What could be the influence of viral marketing on the behaviour of French voters?

5.4.1 The word-of-mouth influence on voters' behaviour through a multi-stage model

We aim now to adapt the multi-stage model of De Bruyn and Lillien (2008) to voter's behaviour. Our empirical results widely corroborated the theory of these authors. Thanks to this theoretical framework we can observe the word-of-mouth influence on voters belonging to our focus group. Those results in the multi-stage model exposed below:

Awareness stage: The first decision faced by recipients is whether or not they will open the e-mail, read the comments about a product or watch a video in order to be aware of the message content. At this stage the significant factors influencing the voter' behaviour are the design of the message and the nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Participants of our interviews told us they mainly look for funny videos when they surf on Facebook. At this phase the receptivity seem to be relatively high because it depends mainly on the level of "connectivity".

Interest stage: At this stage recipients are aware of the purpose of the message and they may develop further interest in. Concretely, they decide if they want to visit a party website, political blogs or read articles on newspaper websites. Nevertheless it is rarely the case for political message. Most of people can enjoy a video but do not look for more information about politicians or issues stated in the video. As our focus group show it, voters are willing to learn more about the message's purpose only if they are interested in Politics.

Final decision: This step differs significantly for the Politics field because it consists not in product adoption. Mr Descoing said that the final goal of viral marketing is to influence voter's perception about candidate. These stealth techniques could be especially efficient to influence vote of persons with a low-level of education and/or not interested in Politics according to some people asked. People with a low "political conscience" may choose their candidate on a limited image due to lack of information.

Thus the key driver in viral marketing in business sector as in Politics is the effectiveness of unsolicited message that creates awareness and triggers interest. We can conclude by arguing that voter behaviour mainly varies on use of media and political involvement.

5.4.2   The voters' involvement in word-of-mouth process

In Politics as for business sector marketers distinguish several categories of voters depending on their involvement in message transmission (Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot & Scott, 2007):

The "highly-connected" people: this active minority generates the largest part of comments and takes an important part in the spreading of the message. Leskovec et al. (2007) have shown that in network-based epidemic models, we can found quite a little extremely highly-connected people who play a very important role through their power of recommendation. Therefore it is not surprising that political parties use these "opinion leaders" to launch "Buzz". Mr Descoing pointed out that he has to act furtively in order to not discredit these persons among people who trust in. In our focus group Sylvain may be regarded as being an "opinion leader" because he plays an active role on Social networking sites. He is not fond of Politics but he frequently broadcast, share or comment videos of politicians. He generally did it because he found them funny. In this kind of word-of-mouth the sender is personally involved in the process of promoting/ harming a candidate's image and actively encourages friends and relatives to discover a political message and may direct them to the party Website. Whatever people support or not a candidate they contribute to establish them as a brand when they share or comment video embracing politicians image.

The "moderately-connected" people: they represent the majority of the Internet users and are generally the final target of viral methods. They are less active on-line than "highly-connected" people. That means they would not give many recommendations to acquaintances and are rarely at the origin of topic discussion. "Smith et al. (2007) argue that the word of mouth influence is shared by many people and not only come from highly-connected people. Indeed we noticed in our focus group that a majority of participants rarely broadcast and share video but they frequently contribute to the "Buzz" by commenting it.

So several degrees of involvement exist in viral marketing but we can consider as theory did it that a large base of voters is willing to exchange their ideas about Politics through various forms. According to Mr Descoing the UMP have to deal with the fact that its most potential voters are "slowly-connected" and they become aware of "Buzz" through traditional channels such as TV shows.

6   Conclusions

The section is presenting the conclusions of our study organised around the four research questions.

What are the viral marketing principles in the business sector and its specifics for implementation in political campaign?

Viral Marketing is a marketing strategy in which various unconventional techniques are used to generate word-of-mouth excitement about a product. Throughout our study we showed how these marketing techniques are successfully implemented by campaign crews. It appears likely that the strength of viral marketing lies in the ability of the message to spread like a virus. Indeed voters are usually willing to share message with friends and acquaintances. In the business sector, the sender is mainly motivated to recommend a product in order to help acquaintances. In the field of Politics the motivations depend mainly on the context of the message (funny video, link to a party website…) and the sender profile ("highly-connected" person, political militant).

How does viral marketing deliver new kinds of political messages efficiently?

As traditional media becomes less influential, politicians have utilised new communication tools provided by the Internet. This growing channel embraces various techniques allowing campaign crews to reach voters stealthily. E-mail campaigns are used to send political messages in order to prompt voters to visit the party website and get additional information about the candidate. This tool has three advantages: the targeting of voters; a low cost; and a rate of receptivity superior to advertising in business sector. Nowadays, blogs are also becoming imperative channels for candidates. Indeed this attractive interface contributes to bring an image that is more intimate to voters. Broadcasting video of political speeches is another means to generate interest among people regardless of their interest in Politics. Citizens are now able to watch, share and comment on video on-line. Through such technology politicians can create interactivity. This kind of message efficiently reaches the category of voters for which the candidate feels is the decisive demographic in the voting decision.

The 'buzz' created by the tools previously mentioned is the bases of a viral marketing campaign. Indeed the "virus" is spreading on platforms for discussion: forum and social networks. The political message proliferates across the Internet and everyday life discussion: it is the "Buzz" phenomenon.

How do campaign crews use viral marketing to create political "Buzz" to promote a candidate as a successful brand?

The interview of the UMP webmaster revealed clearly how the candidate Sarkozy hinged his communication around some political issues by using "Buzz". First, campaigners spread the video on platforms such as YouTube or social networks. Then they used e-mailing and Google Ad Words campaigns to attract public opinion and generate a sufficient word-of-mouth. When the "Buzz" reaches viral proportion, it infects mass media such as television, radio and newspaper, which continues to spread the political message. Theses channels touch other categories of people and the broad media coverage prompts them to watch the video "Buzz". This forms a virtuous circle which sustains the attention on the candidates' personality.

What could be the influence of viral marketing on the behaviour of French voters?

Theories provide the evidence that candidates should establish themselves as a brand in the voters' mind. This urges politicians to distinguish themselves through media image rather than political manifestos. Through videos the candidates are able to point out some features of their personality. For instance, Nicolas Sarkozy has shown his determination through video "Buzz". It heavily contributed in convincing voters about his ability to conduct a courageous reforms policy in France. It appears likely that some categories of voters are especially sensitive to image and so they constitute a priority target for viral marketing. The less the voter is informed about political reality the more the image broadcasted by viral marketing would influence their voting decision. Thus our case study brought new evidence that a link exists between the influence of viral marketing and the voters' profile.

In the process of viral marketing, the user is more autonomous and active in how they watch the image. People who are "highly connected" take a major part in the Word-of-mouth process by their power of recommendation. Through social networks for example, they will encourage the majority of Internet users, known as the "moderately connected", to watch video in their own time. With the expansion of the media coverage, even the "few connected" people who mainly find information in traditional media become aware of the "Buzz". Regarding our empirical results we conclude by arguing that the viral marketing phenomenon involves many people regardless of the kind of media they use.

7 Discussion

In this discussion part, the authors suggest some recommendations and interesting theories which can be relevant for future researches.

Viral marketing is only one of the various methods embraced in political marketing. In our preliminary research we found several interesting theories dealing with the promotion of candidate image. Thus Needham (2006) studied the relation between brand and political loyalty. This paper aims to demonstrate how the different marketing methods should be used in order to establish a sustainable candidate brand. In politics as in business sector marketers have to pay attention to hinge well television advertisements, e-mailing campaigns and meetings. It would be interesting to develop further theories about the role of viral marketing in the communication strategy of parties. Vedel and Michalska (2007) demonstrated that new communication methods such as viral marketing come mainly to reinforce the traditional way of campaigning. Thus Vernette and Flores (2004) remarked that Barack Obama has used e-mailing and advertisement in social networks to attract new kind of voters to huge political meetings. Then the TV news broadcast pictures of a young and intermixed crowd. Theses Obama's supporters embodied the new face of America.

We have led an exploratory study about the French election and therefore we have not emphasized on such methods because they were not implemented in France. The results of our thesis would be hardly transferable to other countries due to the special features of election in each country. In addition we did not aim to demonstrate theoretical models which would be valid everywhere. Nevertheless we can observe many similitudes between the US and French elections. Vernette and Flores (2004) claim that the Obama campaign crews have been inspired by the Sarkozy's communication strategy. Thus we can notice how the blog design of both candidates is similar. They aim to create interactivity between the candidates and the voters. We think that it would be suitable to lead a quantitative study about the viral marketing influence in order to make a systematic comparison of the different countries.

The MORI Excellence Model would allow to increase the value of future researches including more statistical data. Mortimore (2004) explained that this model was developed for companies in order to test their corporate image in a system "beyond customer satisfaction". It measures and demonstrates the relationship between trust, transaction and advocacy. The MORI Excellence Model questionnaire can be adapted to the political arena to give an indication of the strength of both the positive and negative word-of-mouth atmosphere surrounding the major parties. Thus we could apply this model to assess the influence of viral marketing in Politics.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1:

Questionnary for the interview with the webmaster Mr Philippe Descoing

What is your professional background? What is your path as a militant in the UMP party?

How long had the Danone group and the UMP party been using the techniques of viral marketing?

What are the similarities of using viral marketing between business sector and Politics?

Which techniques have you used for the "Buzz" about Sarkozy during the riots of autumn 2005?

How are voters targeted in e-mailing campaign? How is the political message designed?

Which are channels used to spread videos of "Buzz"?

Which role played the traditional media in the "Buzz" phenomenon?

How do you assess efficiency of these techniques? Is it as efficient in Politics as in the business sector?

What were your strategic goals with this kind of communication operation?

Did the parodies of video create negative media coverage?

What are the opportunities and risk to launch political "Buzz"?

9.2 Appendix 2:

First Focus group : Sylvain, Lara, Laure, Marion, Vivien and Mathieu

Which media have you used to find information about the 2007 presidential campaign?

Have you already visited a party website? A political blog? A forum discussion about politics?

Which is the most reliable media for you?

What is your behaviour on-line?

Have you already broadcasted, shared or commented videos exposing politicians? Why?

Through which channels did you became aware of political "Buzz"?

Have you discussed about political issues after a "Buzz"?

What could be the influence of "Buzz" phenomenon on candidates' image?

What could be the influence of "Buzz" phenomenon on voters' decision?

Do you think that some voters have been deeply influenced by video "Buzz"?

Second Focus group : Paul, Guillaume, Gabriel, Solène, Julie and Medhi

Which media have you used to find information about the 2007 presidential campaign?

Which kind of information are you looking when you watch television? The Internet? Newspapers?

Have you already visited a party website? A political blog? A forum discussion about politics?

Which is the most reliable media for you?

Have you already broadcasted, shared or commented videos exposing politicians? Why?

Through which channels did you became aware of political "Buzz"?

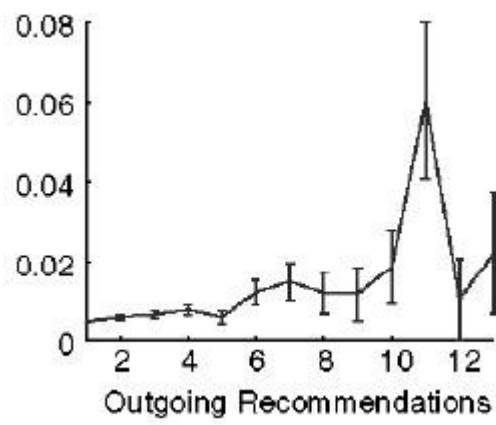Have you discussed about political issues after a "Buzz"?

What could be the influence of "Buzz" phenomenon on candidates' image?

What could be the influence of "Buzz" phenomenon on voters' decision?

How do you assess the efficiency of viral marketing?

Do you think that these methods improve the image of politics among the youth?

9.3 Appendix 3:

Evolution of recommendation drawing a S-shaped curve

9.4   Appendix 4:

Table 2: Socio-demographic and political profiles of internet users according to web usage (in %)

	Candidates web sites (17% of all)	Political blogs (19% of all)	Citizen discussion and publishing web sites (17% of all)	Local authorities web sites (79% of all)	Main stream media web sites (78% of all)	General population of Internet users over 18 yeas	General population of French voters
Gender (men)	69	71	75	53	54	53	48
Age groups							
18-24	16	20	17	18	19	18	11
25-34	18	21	21	22	25	25	19
35-49	23	25	25	35	32	33	28
50 and more	43	33	38	25	25	24	42
Education							
Lower than High School Final Exam	28	31	37	27	18	26	68
High School Final Exam	13	15	12	15	15	16	14
2 years of College and more	59	53	51	57	62	57	18
Social class/profession							
White collars	28	23	20	19	20	19	13
Intermediate professionals incl. teachers	17	15	18	21	22	21	19
Employees and blue collars	22	33	37	33	32	34	48
Not active	23	23	22	22	20	20	7
Interest in politics	93	88	84	64	65	61	48
Attitudes toward the internet							
Internet allows to know about dissimulated information	73	82	75	61	62	60	NA
Internet allows for a better communication among people	82	81	82	79	77	76	NA
Internet grant more influence on politics	59	58	53	41	42	40	NA

Additional source for the general population of French voters: CEVIPOF 2007a.