



***2008 UNDECIDED VOTERS:
HOW THE OBAMA & MCCAIN
WEBSITES IMPACT AND
SWAY THEIR DECISIONS***

White Paper - September 2008

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2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview

From August 8th through 28th, 2008 First Insights and Murray Hill Center partnered to conduct in depth qualitative research on the Websites of Presidential candidates Barack Obama (www.barackobama.com) and John McCain (www.johnmccain.com) with undecided voters around the United States. The research undertaking was implemented as one-on-one qualitative usability testing interviews lasting 60 minutes each.

The 43 undecided voters spent equal time on both Websites and were asked a series of similar questions centered around the navigation, visual design, functionality, content, nomenclature and general usability of each site. A mix of urban and suburban participants for this study were interviewed at controlled testing environments in New York City, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles. During the screening and recruitment process all stated that they were definitely/highly likely to vote and were undecided as to their choice of Senators Obama or McCain.

Our overall findings are summarized on the pages that follow and we welcome any inquiries about this document. Questions can be directed to Lon Taylor, Principal Usability Consultant at 212 926-3700 or lon@firstinsights.com

2.2 Objectives

In order to achieve concise results from the research, First Insights followed a detailed yet flexible qualitative research methodology. Unlike quantitative research where one is looking to draw conclusions from statistically valid data, qualitative research and specifically usability testing is aimed at learning the details behind people's attitudes, actions and behaviors. During this project our high level goals were to ask focused open ended questions in a way that allowed our team to easily gauge participant's reactions to the granular and big picture issues on each Website.

Our team looked for the following during the entire undertaking:

- How much could a Website sway undecided voters to commit to voting for a specific candidate?
- What were the perceptions and attitudes of undecided voters as they used each site?
- Did participants believe that the sites were easy or difficult to use and why?
- What did they think about the navigation, terminology and functionality of the sites?
- How did the visual design and branding on the sites meet users' expectations of what a Presidential candidates Website should convey?
- How well did the candidates convey their ideas and personal backgrounds via the content being presented on each site?
- Were the sites effective or ineffective in engaging undecided voters to learn more?
- What, if anything, was missing from each site that undecided voters wanted to see?

2.3 Participant Profiles (See Appendix)

In order to gather a representative sample of undecided voters our team recruited 43 urban and suburban people from four different geographic locations – New York City, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles. Because our research was qualitative in nature it is not designed to be statistically projectable. However we did attempt to match the overall US Internet population with participants who fit the following demographic and psychographic criteria:

- An even mix of ages from 18 – 79
- Even split Male & Female
- Education: High School +
- Mix of Household income from \$20K +
- Ethnic mix to mirror US population (About 68% white, 14% Hispanic, 12% African American, 6% mix of Asian, Native American or other groups)
- Mix of urban and suburban people
- Web savvy – spend 10 hours + on the Web each week
- Have broadband access to the Internet at home or work
- A fairly even mix of registered Republicans, Democrats and a few Independents
- Definitely will vote or highly likely to vote

2.4 Moderation Technique

Our research was undertaken by four usability research moderators as we conducted qualitative interviews in the various cities. Over the course of the 60 minute sessions we structured our questions to gather detailed commentary before, during and after viewing each site.

During the task portion of the interviews we asked people to take 2-3 minutes to read the content and details on each of the pages being reviewed. This enabled participants to draw comparisons and offer their unique perspective on the navigation, features and content being presented.

Pre-task questions included:

- In thinking about an ideal Website that would help you learn more about the 2008 presidential candidates, what would you expect to find on that type of site?
- What, if any, campaign Websites have you visited in the past few months?
- How much influence do you feel the candidates Websites may have in helping voters decide who to vote for?
- Are you familiar with Senator John McCain's campaign website or Senator Barack Obama's campaign Website?

Task based questions included:

(Note: we rotated sites in terms of showing half the Obama site first and half the McCain site first to avoid any bias toward either site.)

- Initial thoughts on the homepage.
- Where would you go first on this site from the homepage?
- Do you feel the site is organized in a way that allows you to easily find the information you might be looking for?
- Does the content and messaging on the homepage make you feel like this site is aimed at someone in your age group?
- What are your biggest concerns during this year's election?

- How would you learn more about the candidate's positions on the topics you mentioned were your biggest concerns?
- How would you learn more about the candidate's background before his political career?
- What are your thoughts on the personal timelines and/or rumor control pages presented?
- Let's say you wanted to find a McCain/Obama event in your neighborhood. How would you do that?
- What's the biggest concern for you about McCain/Obama? How well does this site address that concern?
- How would you find and watch a video on the site?
- Overall ratings questions for navigation, features & functionality and the accuracy & reliability of the information on each site.

Post-task questions included:

- Now that we've looked at both of the candidates sites, which site would you say is more user friendly and why?
- How important is it for the candidates to have an effective website in helping to educate and inform prospective voters? Which site would you say was more effective in doing this?
- Would you go back to either of these sites?
- How much influence did the Obama / McCain sites have on your decision making process?
- Did spending time on these sites help change your status as an undecided voter and if so, which candidate are you leaning toward?

2.5 Pages Reviewed

With both sites having a robust volume of content and features it was not possible to view all of the pages on each site. We focused our attention on the homepages, issues pages and personal profile pages that people seemed most interested in exploring.

www.johnmccain.com

- Homepage
- Issues pages such as American Energy, Economic Plan, Iraq, Healthcare, National Security
- About pages such as About John McCain, McCain Timeline
- Events – Event Calendar
- News & Media Multimedia page

www.barackobama.com

- Homepage
- Issues pages such as Economy, Energy & Environment, Healthcare, Homeland Security, Iraq
- Learn pages such as Meet Barack Obama, Know the Facts, Fight the Smears
- Find Events pages
- Media – BarackTV

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 *Summary of Results*

The 43 participants interviewed for this usability study provided volumes of detailed insights that shed light on how the McCain and Obama Websites can have a serious impact on an undecided voter's decision making process. Almost all participants expressed that they learned more than they expected about the candidates personal backgrounds and positions on the issues. Indeed when asked if they would return to the sites, 36 of 43 said that they would do so.

Looking at the sites from a strict usability point of view, it was evident that each site was reasonably easy to use and that almost all participants could navigate around the sites adequately. The top navigation was similar on both sites in terms of the drop down menu functionality and nomenclature being presented.

In terms of our critical questions about the sites and how much influence they are having, we uncovered the following:

- At the conclusion of the task portion of the testing we asked which site was more user friendly.
 - 22 participants chose the Obama site
 - 16 participants chose the McCain site
 - 5 thought both were equally user friendly
- At the end of the entire interview when asked if either site had changed their status and if they were now leaning toward a specific candidate, participants responded as follows:
 - Now leaning toward Obama – 12
 - Now leaning toward McCain – 4
 - Still undecided - 27

There was a clear preference toward the Obama site among our participants and the importance of having a highly usable and focused Website cannot be underestimated – it did seem to move voters in a specific direction. The Web and candidate sites in particular have easily become as important as traditional media outlets during this election.

While we mentioned that both sites were relatively easy to use, we also found several significant areas of concern that both campaigns should address if they hope to influence undecided voters who are using the Web to formulate opinions.

Among our key findings are the following:

- The Obama splash page presented a major obstacle for 15 of 43 participants as they did not see the Skip Signup button at the bottom of the page. Some mentioned they would have abandoned the site at that point since they did not want to provide their e-mail and zip code to enter the site.
- While many political pundits seem to indicate that negative campaigning works, it did not seem to be the case in our study as many participants did not like the negative tone in certain areas of the McCain Website – particularly the videos.

- Although participants were focused on the issues as they read specific pages on the economy, Iraq, healthcare and energy, many expressed that they wanted to see the sites offer a bulleted list of subtopics (with links to more details) vs. reading long paragraphs. The Obama and McCain sites came close to this formatting on some pages but overall most participants wanted to see more concise descriptions and read less – a trend we see on many consumer and business oriented sites.
- Almost all participants wanted to learn more about the personal backgrounds of the candidates and thought the pages presented - Meet Barack Obama & About John McCain - should have additional details. A few didn't know that John McCain was ever in the military and many didn't know Barack Obama was raised mostly in Hawaii. The Obama site was perceived as being a bit more personal and the McCain site was perceived as showing his leadership and military service.
- Neither site presented the candidates legislative and/or voting records – a major omission. This was noticed by about a 1/3 of the participants. They wanted to see what each candidate voted for in the past with a link to what the legislation was about.
- When asked what their biggest concern was about Obama 17 participants said his lack of experience was a concern and 9 mentioned that they would be worried that he would not be able to keep his promises. Many participants did not believe that the Obama site effectively and directly addressed these particular concerns.
- When asked, 12 participants were concerned with McCain's older age, 5 believed he was too close to George W. Bush in terms of his stance on several issues, 6 were concerned that he would stay at war in Iraq and 6 expressed that they thought he was out of touch with average people and/or the desire for new policies. Those who mentioned the age concern and being out of touch did not believe the Website adequately addressed those specific issues.
- Finding local fundraising and/or get out the vote rallies was easier on the Obama site and participants responded positively to the large number of events listed. While the McCain site offered some events, several participants perceived that he simply did not have as much going on as Obama in terms of voter outreach programs.
- The Obama site captures opportunities to leverage Web 2.0 technologies via his site links to Facebook, MySpace, Digg, Twitter, and other community oriented sites. We did not find any such links on the McCain site during the time of testing and believe he is missing a huge chance to reach younger voters.

On the pages that follow we present detailed findings and quotes from our participants.

Based on our research it is clear that viewing the candidate's sites can have a significant influence on who undecided voters select in the upcoming election. As the Internet consumes an increasing amount of time in people's daily lives, the importance of having an easy to navigate, user friendly and well branded Website is becoming more critical in the political world.

While we're not ready to predict who will win the election, both candidates would benefit considerably from driving traffic to their sites and paying close attention to navigation, functionality, branding, content and ease of use concerns.

4. DETAILED FINDINGS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

4.1 Pre-task Participant Responses

4.1.1 Question: What are your primary news sources in regard to the upcoming 2008 Presidential election? (Reported by how many people mentioned each media property.)

Television	Online	Magazines/Newspapers
CNN - 24	Yahoo.com - 16	LA Times - 12
FOX - 10	CNN.com - 15	NY Times - 7
ABC - 9	AOL.com - 7	Time - 6
NBC - 8	NYTimes.com - 5	Newsweek - 3
MSNBC - 8	MSNBC.com - 5	Newsday - 3
CBS - 6	MSN.com - 4	Chicago Tribune – 3
CNBC - 3	Google.com - 4	WSJ, NYPost, Atlan. Journal – 2
	FoxNews.com - 3	Washington Post, Daily News - 1

4.1.2 Question: In thinking about an ideal Website that would help you learn more about the 2008 Presidential candidates, what would you expect to find on that type of site?

Findings

- For the most part undecided voters wanted to review candidate sites that are easy to use and informative. Many mentioned wanting to see detailed bios on the candidates, visual designs that were reflective of their personalities, and a serious tone regarding the issues.
- Many also asked for easy to digest content that was not too wordy.
- A few believed that up to date photos were to be expected on the sites.

Quotes:

“Ideally, a site that has bullet points of their various positions. Don’t want to see wishy, washy language that after I read through it, I say what does that person stand for.” Robert, NYC 41

“With always being in a rush, get rid of the fluff and get to the heart of the story and give me important points in an easy-to-read format.” Nadeem, Chicago 31

“I would expect honest info about their platforms. Not attacking the other candidate. Easy to understand. Omar, Atlanta 22

“People are trying to learn about them and in addition to standard info, a personal touch is important.” Dawn, NYC 40

“First it needs to be user friendly.” Jacqueline, LA 56

4.1.3 Question: What, if any, campaign Websites have you visited in the past few months?

Findings

- Seven had not been to any campaign related Websites or read about the campaign online.
- Most had been to a mix of general news sites such as CNN.com, MSN.com, MSNBC.com, Yahoo.com/MyYahoo, NYTimes.com and AOL.com

4.1.4 Question: Are you familiar with Senator John McCain's campaign Website or Senator Barack Obama's campaign Website?

Findings

- Zero participants had been only to the McCain site.
- Four participants had visited only the Obama site.
- 10 participants had been to both sites
- 29 had not been to either site

4.1.5 Question: How much influence do you feel the candidates Websites may have in helping voters decide who to vote for?

Findings

- Almost all believed that the candidate's sites would be useful and somewhat influential when asked prior to exploring the sites. We asked this question again post-task at the end of each interview and most were much more expressive in thinking that the sites would have a very important role in helping people choose who to vote for. (See p.58)
- Some pointed out that younger voters might be more influenced by the Websites.

Quotes:

"No one reads the paper so the internet is very important." Jackie, NYC 32

"There are probably people voting for the first time that are younger than me - the individual sites might be more important to them than to me." Ellen, NYC 55

"If I were to go on their websites it would help me to determine what positions they take, so it would give me enough information to help make a decision." Stacy, LA 37

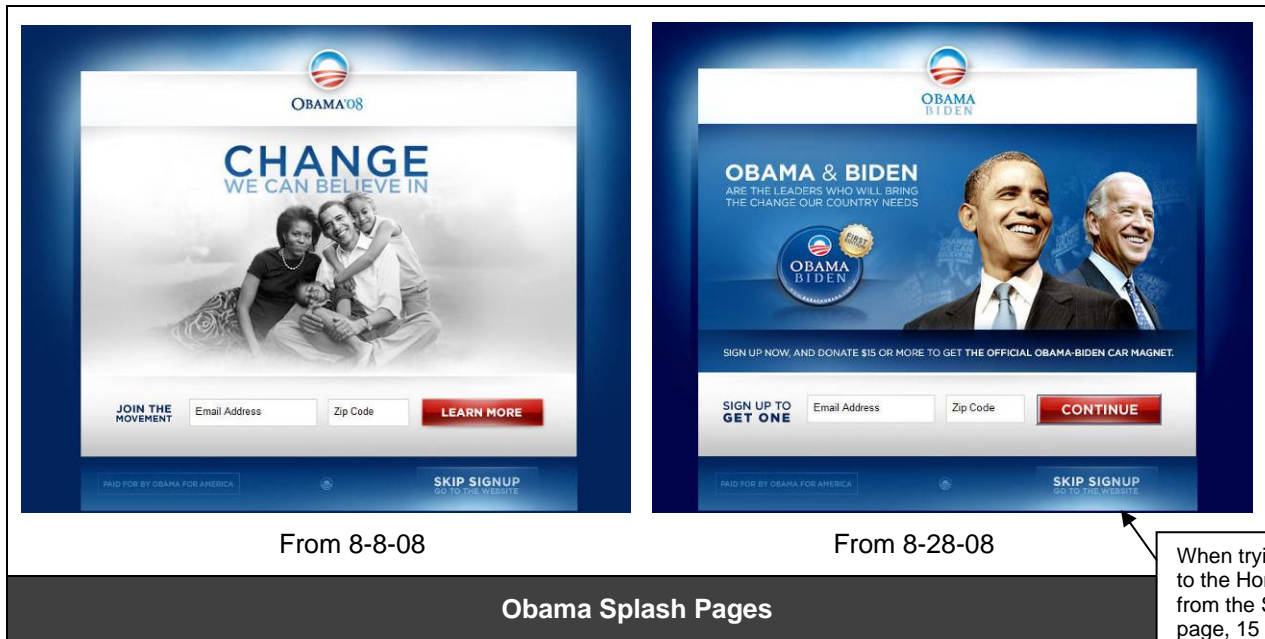
"Most people watch TV, that's #1 draw for people to get to know the candidates." Patrice, Chicago 30

"I don't know but have an idea it will make more of an impact on younger people." Carlos, LA 72

"It could have somewhat of an effect." Mollett, Atlanta 39

"Younger generation 40's and below - are on Internet more. Jennifer, Atlanta 29

4.2 Splash Pages



4.2.1 Question: What are your initial thoughts on the Splash page?

Obama Findings

Almost all expressed that they liked the images and visual design presented on the Splash page. Only three has negative comments or thought the images were contrived.

Quotes:

"I find him and his family very attractive. There isn't the assault of "stuff" like on McCain's site." Ellen, NYC 55

"It's a very eye catching picture. I like they are smiling like they are really going to take care of business." Patricia, LA 49

"Very positive, family oriented, loving family." Bernard, Chicago 55

"I don't think it's a good picture of his wife. She looks like a smirk as opposed to a warm friendly smile. At least Cindy was smiling before." Robert, NYC 41

"I like his colors warm and fuzzy all inclusive feel. Good branding for his symbol." Kevin, Atlanta 58

Moving forward from the Splash page to the Homepages was a problem for 15 of 43 participants as they did not see the Skip Signup button at the bottom of the page. Some mentioned they would have abandoned the site at this point.

(Note: Based on their computer's screen size and resolution, some may not even see the Skip Signup link as it would appear below the page fold.)

Quotes:

"Here you'd enter your email address, zip code. I'm skeptical to do this here. I'd close the site if this came up and I had to give it. I don't want to be spammed." Robin, NYC 44

"I'm not sure I want to give him my email. I didn't see skip under top fold. I'd compress the screen so the skip showed up." Robert, Atlanta 66

"Sick of the word 'change". Doesn't have any details yet here. Wouldn't join or put e-mail" Vicki, Chicago 50

"I like that McCain's you see links right away, but this you have to hit continue." Roxanne, LA 19

"I'm already pissed off - I don't want to get on your mailing list." Jeff, Atlanta 39

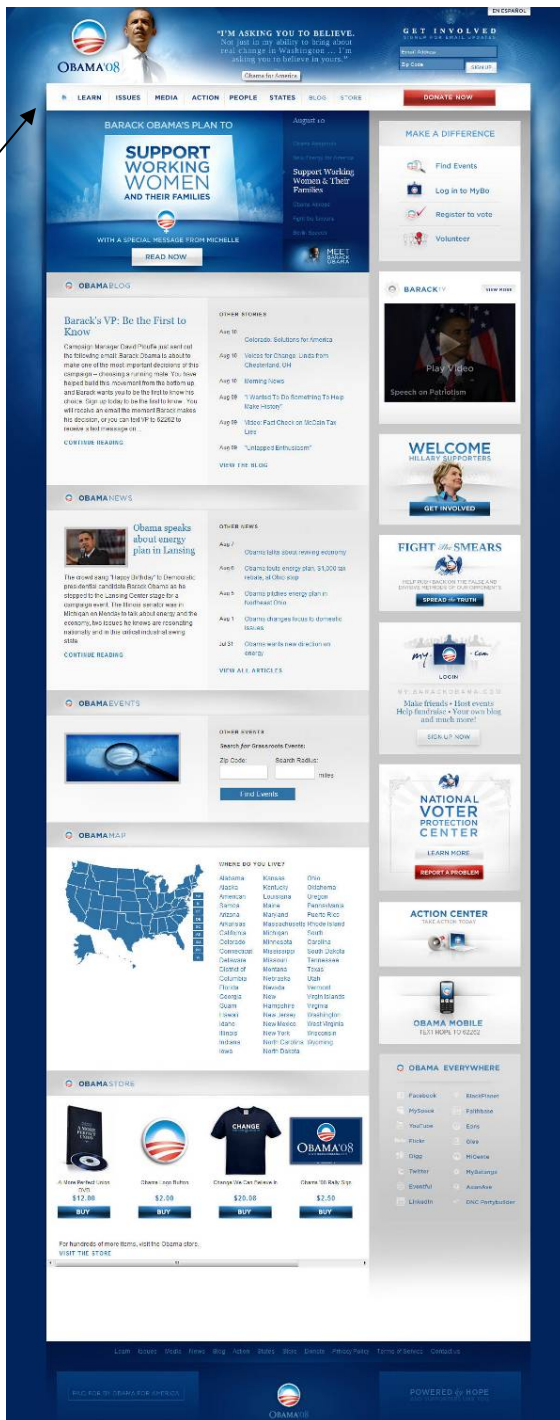
McCain Findings

The McCain site did not have a Splash page on the days we conducted testing.

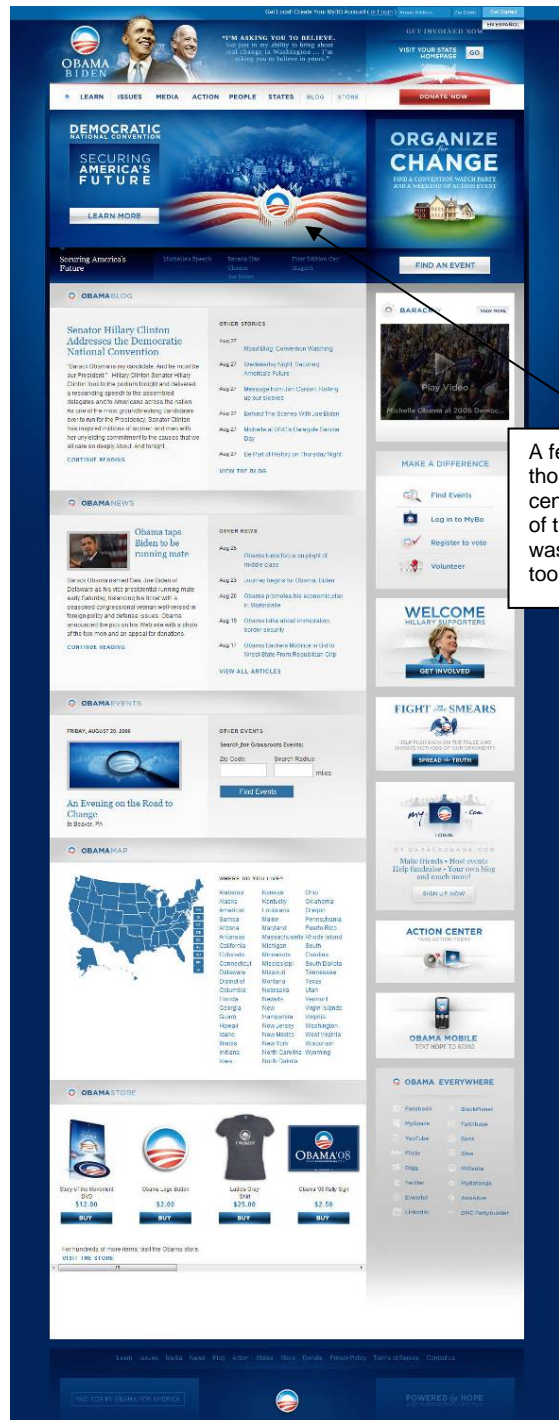
4.2.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- The Obama site should create a more visually obvious Skip Signup button that clearly gets people past the splash page as this is a significant usability issue. There is an understandable desire to gather peoples e-mail and zip code information however many undecided voters we interviewed seemed turned off by this request and/or didn't notice a navigation pathway to the main homepage.

4.3 Homepages



From 8-8-08

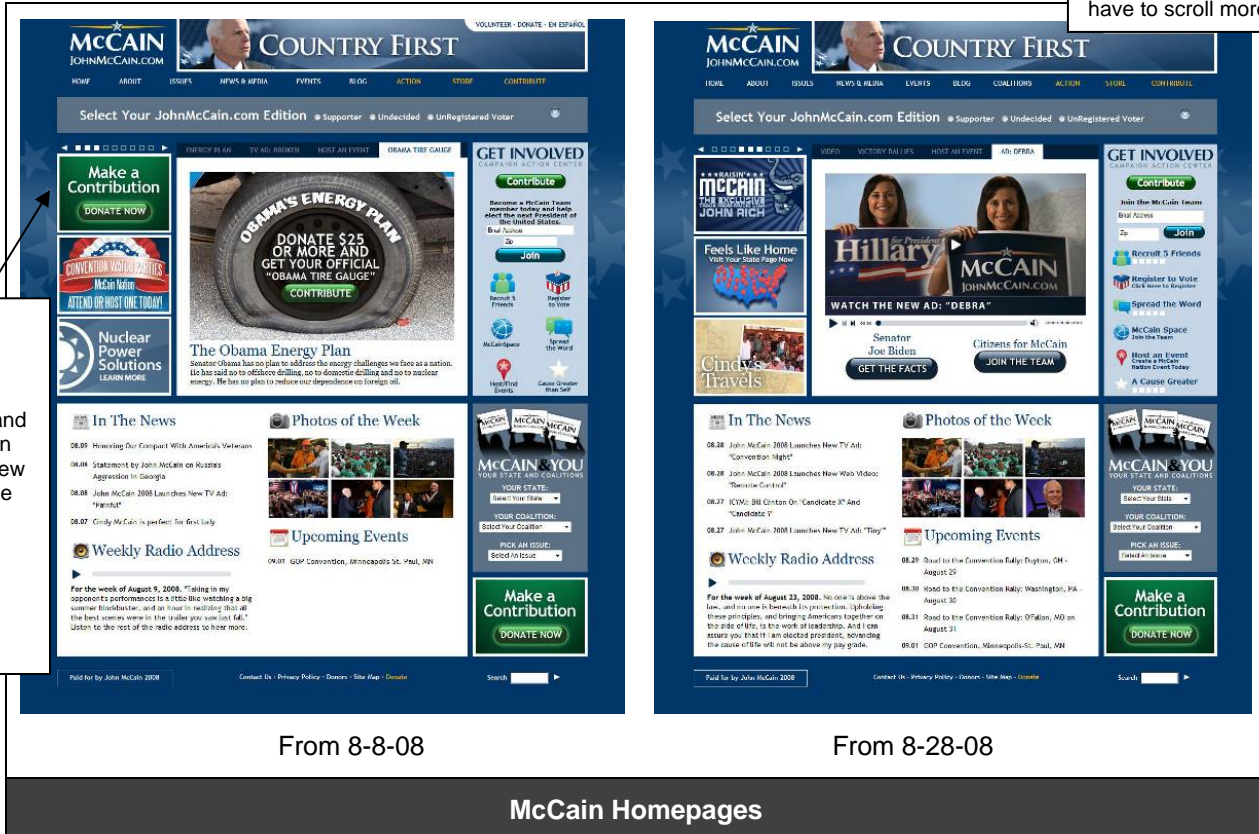


From 8-28-08

Obama Homepages

A few liked the more compact homepage vs. Obama's longer homepage where users have to scroll more.

Most responded positively to the overall navigation and visual design however a few didn't like the multiple contribution areas or "busy" elements of the page.



From 8-8-08

From 8-28-08

McCain Homepages

4.3.1 Question: What are your initial thoughts on the homepage? (Note: pages were rotated so that half viewed the McCain site first and half viewed the Obama site first.)

Obama Findings

Almost all (41 of 43) liked the overall visual design and colors on the homepage. Some used terms like "neat" or "modern" when asked for adjectives describing the homepage.

Quotes:

"This looks more like a news page, which is appealing to me." Ellen, NYC 55

"So far it looks pretty professional here. It's a lot to take in and review. Straightforward." Omar, Atlanta 22

"Colors are really good. It seems a lot less complicated, not as much going on. Seems very modern, very positive, very clean." Jim, LA 40

"It's very different than the McCain one. That one was red meat and facts and this one is let's all just feel good about each other." Tom, Chicago 47

"I think it is hypocritical of him to have red, white and blue when he won't wear a pin on his jacket". Jon, Chicago 29

While a few thought there were some busy elements on the page, most expected to be able to find their way around.

Quotes:

"You could get lost in terms of time - that's a good thing. You can watch Michelle's speech. You can find out a lot of good things here - piques curiosity." Dawn, NYC 40

"The colors are very presidential very American. It looks very easy to navigate, I like the dropdown menus." Emily, LA 28

"This is a good site. But there may be a bit too much." Thomas, NYC 30

"It's busier than the republicans - the font is too small." Leonard, LA 77

A few noticed that the Issues area on the homepage was longer than McCain's.

Quote:

"This is good, has a lot of issues - more than McCain's list of issues." Patrice, Chicago 30

As they scrolled down the page a few mentioned the Hillary callout on the right side of the page.

Quote:

"Welcome Hillary supporters is interesting." Jon, Chicago 29

Two participants noticed the Fight the Smears callout on the right side of the page."

Quote:

"I saw the Fight the Smears and noticed the Foreclosure call out graphic." Kevin, Atlanta 58

Only one participant mentioned the calls for contributions on the page.

Quote:

"This one just has one side to the right that says donate now, but the McCain site had Contribute now on both sides." Stacy, LA 37

A few mentioned that the rotation on the center video / issues call out area was slightly distracting.

Quotes:

"For me it's going a little too fast maybe. But I think you need to take a look at the voters and think about who you are trying to attract, for younger generation the faster the better, but for older maybe not." Jacqueline, LA 56

"I don't like to start reading something and then have the rotation change on me." Jeff, Atlanta 39

McCain Findings

Initial overall reactions to the homepage visual design were fairly positive with 31 of 43 providing feedback that the homepage was "colorful" and "professional." A few also noted that this page was shorter than Obama's homepage with less scrolling.

Quotes:

"Clean, professional looking. Draws you in." Tom, Chicago 47

"It's very elementary the way they have it laid out. Or user-friendly I should say. The colors are eye catching." Sandra, Atlanta 48

"This one has a lot more going on than Obama. Not sure if that is good or bad." Anna, Chicago 47

"It looks like easy to navigate, the colors are nice." Kenneth, LA 38

"It's pretty good. I like the layout, it's nice. I like the presidential colors he has here." Patrice, Chicago 30

Twelve participants believed the page was “busy” or “cluttered” at first glance.

Quotes:

“It’s cluttered. The colors are dull, Obama’s blue was richer. There is a lot on the side” Robin, NYC 44

“You can read it easily but it’s a bit more busy and cramped.” Jennifer, Atlanta 29

“Lots of icons and different fonts. For me it is bad. Emily, LA 28

On the first NYC testing date (8-8-08 not shown) three of eight participants reacted negatively upon seeing Cindy McCain being featured on the page.

Quotes:

“I am not interested in Cindy McCain, I am interested in the candidate, they focus should not be her.” Robert, NYC 41

“I see Cindy McCain first. That’s not what I’d want to look at. If I’m going to vote for him, I’d prefer to see him.” Sage, NYC 19

A few liked the “Country First” top banner callout and believed that this showed some patriotism on McCain’s part.

Quotes:

“Country First jumps out at me first.” Sherwin, NYC 30

“This one is more you know he is running for President – Country First.” Brian, NYC 37

“It does indicate that he’s Country First - putting us first definitely we need to make sure we take care of our economy and the U.S. I think that’s important.” Stacy, LA 37

When shown the homepage on 8-28-08 a few participants were confused by the visuals of the Hillary Clinton voter and links to Get the Facts on Joe Biden.

Quotes:

“Not clear why Joe Biden is on site and why Hillary & McCain are next to each other.” Rigo, NYC, 27

“I am surprised to see Hillary on there, because she is not the candidate. Leonard, LA 77

“I don’t know why they have Hillary for President there. I feel that is what she is fighting for there but why do they have it. Who is she backing, she is there with Obama and now she is with McCain.” Zelia, NYC 58

A few were turned off by the three areas on the page that called for contributions.

Quotes:

“Too many calls for a Contribution - that could be more subtle.” Dawn, NYC 40

“It makes me think that McCain needs some money because he has 3 Contribute buttons” Robert, Atlanta 66

“First thing they ask you for is money and think it is rude.” Carlos, LA 72

Just under the main navigation the site featured an area to “Select Your John McCain Edition” and presented three buttons for Supporter, Undecided, Un-Registered Voter.

Only four participants seemed to notice and/or asked about this area of the page. The two who clicked on Undecided looked for some change in the page but did not see any and wondered about the relevance of this area.

4.3.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Overall it seemed as if more participants initially reacted well to the Obama homepage however, given the problems on his Splash page, some undecided voters may not even make it the his homepage.
- Of those who did not respond well to the McCain homepage the multiple calls for contributions and focus away from McCain himself seemed to be the factors contributing to the negative feedback.

4.3.3 Question: Without clicking on anything just yet, where do you think you would go first?

Obama Findings	McCain Findings
<p>In terms of where they would want to go first on the Obama site participants said the following:</p> <p>Issues – 19</p> <p>Center video area – 9</p> <p>Learn – 5</p> <p>Hillary Supporters callout – 2</p> <p>Others would explore the Blog, State and News areas on the page.</p>	<p>In terms of where they would want to go first on the McCain site participants indicated the following:</p> <p>Issues – 16</p> <p>In The News – 13</p> <p>The center video callout area – 12</p> <p>Others would go to a variety of sections first.</p>

4.3.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- It was evident that our undecided voters wanted to learn more about the Issues first and how they were being addressed by each candidate.
- Those who expressed that they would go to the video areas on both sites seemed to want to hear from the candidates themselves as they talked about and addressed the issues.
- An interesting finding with this question is that five would go to the Obama Learn section first as they had a desire to educate themselves more about him personally. None indicated they would go to McCain's About section first as our participants may have believed they knew more about his personal story vs. Obama.

4.3.5 Question: Do you feel the site is organized in a way that allows you to easily find the information you might be looking for?

Obama Findings

None specifically expressed any apprehensions about exploring further and none expect to have any significant problems navigating the site.

Quotes:

"Yes I do. It's similar to McCain's. I would probably go to fight the smears, and find out what this welcome Hillary supporters is all about." Robert, NYC 41

"Yeah I like these (top) drop downs - looks real good." Kevin, Atlanta 58

McCain Findings

None specifically expressed any apprehensions about exploring further and none expect to have any significant problems navigating the site.

Quotes:

"So far you just scroll down and you are there. It's like one of the simplest pages I have ever been on. This and Obama's (both of them)." Leshun, LA 33

"Yes, does feel site is organized well. This is what I really like - these user-friendly drop-down menu." Nadeem, Chicago 31

4.3.6 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- In terms of usability and navigation of each site, both did a good job of giving people confidence that they would be able to find what they were looking for. Keep in mind that this question was asked as users were still reacting to the homepage before they really had a chance to dig into the site.
- We believe that the use of a clear and similar global navigation on each site was evident to almost all users. Even older, less savvy participants were able to easily recognize that the top navigation featured drop down menus with links to a variety of secondary pages.

4.3.7 Question: Does the content and messaging on the homepage make you feel like the site is aimed at someone in your age group?

Obama Findings

Overall 37 of 43 believed that the Obama site was aimed at someone in their age group and/or at any age group. Two believed it was aimed at older voters and four thought it would be aimed at younger voters.

Quotes:

"Seems more geared towards someone like me than the McCain site." Ellen, NYC 55

"Definitely. I would say it targets 20s, 30s, and 40s." Anna, Chicago 47

"This is for anybody and everybody - any age." Robert, Chicago 66

"It might be for older (early 40's) people because the font size is larger." Jon, Chicago 29

"It's for anyone. Doesn't look like it's leaning towards any age group." Travis, LA 30

"Yes. It has links to MySpace and these others." Anna NYC 24

McCain Findings

Overall 31 of 43 believed that the McCain site was aimed at someone in their age group and/or at any age group. Eleven believed it was aimed at older voters and one thought it would be aimed at younger voters.

Quotes:

"It seems more to an older crowd." Brian, NYC 37

"I mean it could be, I'm almost 50. But when I saw the site I thought it was for older people." Sandra, Chicago 48

"It's attracting you, just a little bit of everything." Enrique, LA 45

"This page is aimed at anyone who is interested in learning anything about McCain. Not tailored for any age group." William, LA 60

"No, I don't think someone in my age group would be into it, could be the visuals, I'm not sure." Ramonita, Chicago 23

4.3.8 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Most of the undecided voters who thought the McCain site was not aimed at them were in their 20's and 30's.
- The Obama site seemed to reach out a little more to all age groups or skew a bit younger.

4.3.9 Question: What are your biggest concerns during this year's election?

Findings

Since there was no task or Website feedback related to this question, we are simply providing the overall responses below.

- Economy - 19
- Iraq/War – 10
- Energy Prices/Plans – 5
- Education – 3
- National/Homeland Security – 2
- Healthcare – 2
- Taxes – 1
- Jobs - 1

Once participants expressed their opinions as to their top issues, we asked them to go to the page on the site that would offer more information on that topic. Almost all had no difficulty navigating to the Issues drop down menu on both sites.

None seemed to have any issues with the nomenclature in the Issues drop downs either.

4.3.10 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Although we can't project our data given the size of our sample group, their responses to our Issues question seemed to mirror a variety of quantitative research surveys taken in or around August/September 2008. See <http://www.pollingreport.com/prioriti.htm> for a list of recent surveys on the top issues.

McCain
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Jobs for America

Watch the Video
THE MCCAIN ECONOMIC PLAN

John McCain has a comprehensive economic plan that will create millions of good American jobs, ensure our nation's energy security, get the government's budget and spending practices in order, and bring relief to American consumers. Read each of the sections below to learn how the McCain Economic Plan will help bring reform, prosperity and peace to America.

- Workplace Flexibility
- Relief for Families
- Government Reform
- Supporting Small Businesses
- Cheap and Clean Energy
- Better Healthcare
- Simpler and Fairer Taxes
- Lower Barriers to Trade

ECONOMISTS WHO ENDORSE THE MCCAIN ECONOMIC PLAN:

- GLENN HUBBARD
Dean
Columbia Business School
- ANNE KRUEGER
Professor of Economics
Johns Hopkins University
- HARVEY ROSEN
Professor of Economics
Princeton University
- MARTIN EICHENBAUM
Professor of Economics
Northwestern University
- SANJAI BHAGAT
Leeds School of Business
University of Colorado
- C. THOMAS HOWARD
Daniels College of Business
University of Denver

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- 08.16 A Race McCain Could Win
- 08.16 The Georgia Test

Upcoming Events

- 08.16 Compassion Forum with Rick Warren - August, 16th
- 09.01 GOP Convention, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN

McCain Issues Pages - Economy

Many liked the way the issues were broken down on the page.

A few noted that seeing all the Economists who endorse McCain was positive.

4.4.1 Question: How would you learn more on the candidate's position on the Economy?

Obama Findings

Almost all (35 of 37) participants were able to successfully navigate Obama's site to arrive at the Economy page.

McCain Findings

All but one (29 of 30) participants were able to successfully navigate McCain's site to arrive at the Economy page.

To reach the Economy page a few users navigated via the "Jobs for America" icon in the upper left hand corner of the homepage.

4.4.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Because almost all were able to easily identify the Issues drop down menus leading them to the economy section, it was evident that the navigation pathways were obvious and intuitive on both sites.

4.4.3 Question: What are your thoughts as you review this Economy page?

Obama Findings

Feedback provided on the Obama economy page was generally positive. A few specifically liked the way the information was broken down (into tabs, special features, etc..) before getting into the paragraphs as being beneficial.

A few were a bit overwhelmed at the length of the page.

Quotes:

"I like that it has 'At a Glance' and I can get more information... I think he has a lot of information on here. I like how he says to amend the American trade agreement; I don't think a lot of people realize what that costs to American jobs. I like it, it's very successful as far as bringing certain plans he has for the economy, what stimulus and so forth." Stacy, LA 37

"The good thing is before each paragraph there is a bullet, so instead of reading the whole paragraph can just read the top, then if you want to read more you just read the whole paragraph. This stuff is so intense, so it is good they have a little summary. So the simpler and less words they have, the better. And the more attractive it is and easier to read and enjoy." Jim, LA 40

"This is getting at the nitty gritty and what I'm looking for. It's not too complex, no, easy to understand." Vicki, Chicago 50

"Obama's site is better organized than McCain's. McCain might have put poverty in with Economy whereas Obama has it separately [on drop-down tabs]." Robert, Atlanta 66

Eleven of 43 respondents noticed the prominence of quotes on the page, with 8 of the 11 reacting positively to them. The remaining 3 respondents felt that the quote was outdated and that it lacked focus on actionable plans.

Quotes:

"Again I like that he starts with a quote here, I like that he has the same set-up for everything - a quote, a video and there's always the problem and his plan for the problem." Sage, NYC 19

"McCain's was better on economy - it explained it in depth. It was more concentrated on what the issues are. This is just quoting what he said in September." Jackie, NYC 32

"This is his plan and what people are talking about. I really like this. Easy to understand, but could state how he's going to do this. He has to have money to invest in all this." Ramonita, Chicago 23

"Could have a new quote - this is a year old, you haven't talked about the economy in a year? That stands out." Nadeem, Chicago 31

"The quote is cool but you can't be swayed by just quotes. Sounds good on paper but you have to get down to real stuff." Omar, Atlanta 22

5 of 43 participants offered commentary on the "Keeping America's Promise" section with about half skeptical about the reliability of the promises made.

Quotes:

"Sounds good but how many of these promises are they going to make?" Robin, NYC 44

"These are promises. At least he's sticking his neck out...he's making a boatload of promises so I think I am more impressed." Tom, Chicago 47

Similar to the Iraq pages, one participant preferred to see a break-down comparing each candidate's positions side-by-side on the issues.

Quote:

"When I hit the websites I don't want to have to spend hours on the site and keep hitting more links, I don't have time. I would prefer bullet points; I don't have time to look at all issues. This is my position this is how I am going to do it. Even a chart, when you look at something one page can see here's my position, here's his position, this is why mine is better than yours." Robert NYC 41

McCain Findings

The general organization and features of the page were well-received, particularly the breakdown of economy related images/links under the "Watch the Video – the McCain Economic Plan."

Quotes:

"That is so cool - I like this, the fact that I'm thinking about how bad the economy is but he's working this down into 8 different sections...this is really nice, it's a little bit clearer to understand his stance here and at least he's saying something - both of the candidates have been vague on their stance and they've said what we've wanted to hear." Sandra, Atlanta 48

"I like the way it has all the boxes here that you can click on and learn more about versus a lot of different paragraphs. You can just go to what you are interested in. To me it's better than Obama's - is a little simpler. You can go right to the box and click and then you have the picture right in your face. It's symbolic for what you are going to read about, so less reading." Leshun, LA 33

"Of course they are going to tell you he has the perfect plan in mind, but I also like that he has all these little options that you can click to get information such as work place flexibility, relief for families - the icons...it's pretty informative." Stacy, LA 37

"I would like to see more detail. This is good but I want more." Bernard, Chicago 55

While the breakdown was pleasing to voters, the "Cheap and Clean Energy" link garnered the most attention of the options below the video. Five of 43 users commented on the Cheap and Clean Energy box, and explored the content page with varied positive and negative responses.

Quotes:

"I don't like the word "cheap" - that sounds negative. You can say inexpensive, cheap sounds trashy." Jim, LA 40

"From here I'd click on 'cheap and clean energy', because fuel is a major thing." Stacy, LA 37

"Didn't like the nuclear power pitch - what are the benefits? Environmental concerns? I'd want to see more on clean energy and water desensitization." Rigo, NYC 27

"So tell me what you're going to do about me paying so much for gas - I want more information on how he feels about it being so expensive." Sandra, Atlanta 48

Reactions to the content varied, with some voters feeling the information presented was detailed enough, while others felt it was lacking specifics about 'how' he would achieve those goals.

Quotes:

"I think this site goes into more depth on a couple of specific issues within each subcategory on the economy. Gives overall view on energy but then gets more specific. Gives more specifics than Obama's does. Gives specific issues that he has on his website that he is addressing rather than overarching like Obama has." Brian, NYC 37

"I'm against the war but I do like the idea of supporting micro-economies for the Iraqi people to rebuild their economy. It's comprehensive. Nothing stands out as missing." Ellen, NYC 55

It's pretty cool - it spells everything out. It makes you want to look at all the different things. How he plans to do all that stuff." Jim, LA 40

"The content doesn't seem to say too much - he doesn't say how he would do some of these things. Didn't agree with the gas tax holiday idea." Thomas, NYC 30

6 of 43 people observed the "Economists who Endorse the McCain Economic Plan". Among them opinions were about evenly split between the positive and negative.

Quotes

"I think these are interesting with the scrolling people who support his economic plans. These are very liberal universities - he's countering [the claim] that he only has conservative economists. Very shrewd. I like the images - very effective breakdown. This is more sophisticated than Obama's. This is a better site." Kevin, Atlanta 58

"The Economists who endorse his plan lends credibility to his plan." Dawn, NYC 40

"It's nice that he has people that endorse him on economics." Stacy, LA 37

"The economists who endorse is very distracting to the right." Sandra, Atlanta 48

"The economist who endorse scroll - sure Barak Obama has slew of experts on his site too so this doesn't do much for me." Robert, NYC 41


4.4.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- While both sites presented information of interest to the voters, it was clear that the lack of detailed plans on promises made was an issue. A few participants expressed that they wanted to understand how these ideas would directly affect them given their income and age group.
- The quote on Obama's economy page was eye-catching, conveying confidence and action to an extent, however the timeliness of the quote was very important and resonated a negative with a few voters as they believed it was outdated.
- McCain's economy plan was thought to be more comprehensive and reputable in some cases because it was endorsed by prominent Economists and in others because it had broken-down specifics that were easy to navigate and apply to daily American issues.
- Within McCain's economic breakdowns, information on gas/cheaper energy was sought after much more than any other topic.


4.5 Issues Pages - Iraq

The screenshot shows the Obama Issues Page for Iraq. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'LEARN', 'ISSUES', 'MEDIA', 'ACTION', 'PEOPLE', 'STATES', 'BLOG', and 'STORE'. Below this is a header section with the Obama logo and a quote: "46 PARLIAMENTS, 114 INVEST IN AMERICAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS". The main content area is titled "WAR IN IRAQ" and contains a quote from Barack Obama: "Here is the truth, fighting a war without end will not force the Iraqi to take responsibility for their own future. And fighting a war without end will not make the American people safer." Below the quote is a list of "At a Glance" items, including "A Responsible Threat Withdrawal", "Repeal the Iraq Authorization", "Support the UN", and "The Status of the UN Agreement". The main article text begins with "The Problem" and discusses the impact of the war on Iraqis and the American people. The sidebar on the right contains several action buttons: "DONATE NOW", "FIND EVENTS", "Log in to MyOb", "Register to vote", "Volunteer", "WELCOME MILITARY SUPPORTERS", "FIGHT THE SMEARS", "OBAMA", "ACTION CENTER", "OBAMA MOBILE", and "OBAMA EVERYWHERE". At the bottom, there are social media links for Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and others.

Obama Issues Page - Iraq



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Strategy for Victory in Iraq

The Importance of Succeeding

John McCain believes it is strategically and morally essential for the United States to support the Government of Iraq to become capable of governing itself and adequately to provide the strategic coverage with those who advocate withdrawing American troops before that has occurred.

It would be a grave mistake to leave before Al Qaeda in Iraq is defeated and before competent, trained, and capable Iraqi security forces in place and operating effectively. We must help the Government of Iraq battle those who provide sectarian tensions and promote a civil war that could destabilize the Middle East. Iraq must not become a failed state, a haven for terrorists, or a pawn of Iran. There likely consequences of America's failure in Iraq almost certainly would require us to return or draw us into a wider and far costlier war.

The best way to secure long term peace and security is to establish a stable, prosperous, and democratic state in Iraq that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of terrorists. When Iraqi forces can safeguard their own country, American troops can return home.

Support the Successful Counterinsurgency Strategy

John McCain has been a leading advocate of the "surge" and the counterinsurgency strategy carried out by General David Petraeus. At the end of 2007, four years of a badly conceived military strategy that cost tens of thousands of American troops in Iraq have brought us to the point of no return. Sectarian violence in Iraq was spiraling out of control. Al Qaeda in Iraq was on the offensive. Entire provinces were under extremist control and were denied all but Al Qaeda critical economic aid. John McCain supported sending reinforcements to Iraq to implement a classic counterinsurgency strategy of securing the countryside.

That strategy has paid off. From June 2007 through March 2008, sectarian and ethnic violence in Iraq was reduced by 70 percent. Civilian deaths and deaths of coalition forces fell by 70 percent. This has opened the way for a return to something that approximates normal political and economic life for the average Iraqi. Political reconciliation and economic life at the local and provincial grassroots level. Sunni and Shia citizens from their hatred for terrorist and sectarian violence are emerging. The Sun of Iraq and Awakening movements, where former Sunni insurgents have now joined in the fight against Al Qaeda, continue to grow.

These gains could be lost if we were to follow the policy advocated by Senator Barack Obama to withdraw most of our troops and leave behind only a small "strike force" to battle terrorists. That is, in essence, the same strategy of withdrawing from Iraq that failed in 2003. John McCain advocates continuing the successful counterinsurgency strategy that began in 2007.

Push for Political Reconciliation and Good Government

Thanks to the success of the surge, Iraq's political order is evolving in a positive and hopeful way. Iraq out of the box has tried so far as to return to something that approximates normal political and economic life for the average Iraqi. Political reconciliation and economic life at the local and provincial grassroots level. Sunni and Shia citizens from their hatred for terrorist and sectarian violence are emerging. The Sun of Iraq and Awakening movements, where former Sunni insurgents have now joined in the fight against Al Qaeda, continue to grow.

More progress is necessary. The government must improve its ability to serve all Iraqis. A key test for the Iraqi government will be finding jobs in the security services and the civilian sector for the "Sun of Iraq" who have risked so much to battle terrorists.

Iraq will conduct two landmark elections in the near future - one for provincial governments in late 2008 and the other for the national government in 2009. John McCain believes we should welcome a large United Nations role in supporting the elections. The key condition for successful elections is for American troops to continue to work with brave Iraqis to allow them to take place in relative freedom and security. Iraqi need to know that the U.S. will not abandon them, but will continue to provide their assistance to show the necessary leadership to help develop their country.

Get Iraq's Economy Back on Its Feet

John McCain believes that economic progress is essential to sustaining security gains in Iraq. Markets that were once vibrant and diverse have come back to life in many areas, but high unemployment rates continue to fuel criminal and insurgent violence. To move Iraq away from the attractions of oil limited economies, we need a vibrant, growing Iraqi economy. The Iraqi government can jump start this process by using a portion of budget surplus to employ Iraqis in infrastructure projects and in restoring basic services.

The international community should bolster proven microfinance programs to spur local level entrepreneurship throughout the country. Iraq's job neighbors, in particular, should promote regional stability by diversity in setting the fruits of their oil exports to Iraq. As these efforts begin to take hold in Iraq, the private sector, as always, will create the jobs and propel the growth that will reduce oil reliance on outside aid. Iraq's government needs support to better deliver basic services - those water, garbage collection, abundant electricity, and, above all, a basic level of security - that create a climate where the Iraqi economy can flourish.

Call for International Pressure on Syria and Iran

Syria and Iran have aided and abetted the violence in Iraq for too long. Syria has refused to crack down on Iraqi insurgents and foreign terrorists operating within its territory. Iran has been providing the most extreme and violent Shia militias with training, weapons, and technology that kill American and Iraqi troops. American military spokesmen have also said there is evidence that Iran has provided aid to Sunni insurgents.

The answer is not unconditional dialogue with these two dictators but a position of weakness. The answer for the international community is to apply real pressure on Syria and Iran to change their behavior. The United States must also bolster its regional military posture to make clear to Iran our determination to protect our forces and deter Iranian intervention.

Level with the American People

John McCain believes it is essential to be honest with the American people about the opportunities and risks that lie ahead. The American people deserve the truth from their leaders. They deserve a candid assessment of the progress made in the last year, of the serious difficulties that remain, and of the grave consequences of a reckless and irresponsible withdrawal.

Many Americans have given their lives so that America does not suffer the worst consequences of failure in Iraq. Doing the right thing is the best of a political campaign is not always easy. But it is necessary.

John McCain on the Road Ahead


"I do not want to keep our troops in Iraq a minute longer than necessary to secure our interests there. Our goal is Iraq that can stand on its own as a democratic ally and a responsible force for peace in its neighborhood. Our goal is Iraq that no longer needs American troops. And I believe we can achieve that goal, perhaps sooner than many imagine. But I do not believe that anyone could make promises as a candidate for President that they cannot keep. I believe, it is possible to withdraw our forces from Iraq, regardless of the calamitous consequences to the Iraqi people, our most vital interests, and the future of the Middle East, in the hands of irresponsibility. It is a failure of leadership."

"I know the pain war causes. I understand the frustration caused by our mistakes in this war. And I regret sincerely the additional sacrifices imposed on the brave Americans who defend us. But I also know the toll a lost war takes on an army and on our country's interests. By giving General Petraeus and the men and women his the honor to continue the time and support necessary to succeed in Iraq we have before us a hard road. But it is the right road. It is necessary and just. Those who disrupted the remarkable progress we have made in the last year and the terrible consequences that would ensue were we to abandon our responsibilities in Iraq have chosen another road. It may appear to be the easier course of action, but it is a much more treacherous one, and I hope there is no one even if it gives them an advantage in the next election." -John McCain

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McCain Issues Pages - Iraq

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4.5.1 Question: How would you learn more on the candidate's position on Iraq?

Obama Findings
Almost all (24 of 25) participants were able to successfully navigate Obama's site to arrive at the Iraq page.

McCain Findings
Almost all (26 of 27) participants were able to successfully navigate McCain's site to arrive at the Iraq page.

4.5.2 Question: What are your thoughts as you review this Iraq page?

Obama Findings
<p>Overall responses to the page stylistically were mixed. While some appreciated the perceived simplicity, others found the text heavy presentation to be on the dull side.</p> <p>Quotes:</p> <p><i>"I like this one much better. It is more in laymen's terms than McCain's. It has a lot of detail but it is all relevant. The type looks bigger and the background looks lighter too. Helpful in learning his position. No [nothing is missing], I think he gave his timelines, position and why and when he will do it." Bernard, Chicago 55</i></p> <p><i>"I don't like this. It's ok, but why does his site have to look so elementary? This is a grey font, I hate that. It needs to be a bit darker. I don't like it at all, it's very elementary. This is more difficult on the eyes, it's a strain versus the McCain site. I don't even want to read this - it's difficult on my eyes. It's not a white background and then the grey is a turn off and strain on the eyes." Sandra, Atlanta 48</i></p> <p><i>"I love that it starts with plan for ending the war in Iraq. Just says it right there, his position. I guess most people who click on his issues, it's just right there. I like the amount of information and the type of information; again it's just a lot on one page visually." Sung, NYC 30-39</i></p>
<p>Similar to other pages on Senator Obama's site, voters were pleased with the introductory quotes and found them to be effective in initially describing plans.</p> <p>Quotes:</p> <p><i>"I like how it starts with a direct quote from him. Layout seems neat and clear to navigate." Anna, NYC 24</i></p> <p><i>"I like the way it's organized - he brings out the issues. Quote is good at beginning - it's encouraging to me and people - he cares about how I'm doing. Problem and plan is broken down well - thorough. No, nothing's missing - I like that you can send in ideas. Maybe add some charts and graphs. Show past and future ideas." Dawn, NYC 40</i></p>
<p>Although a few voters were uncertain about Obama's stance on the war, in particular his plans for bringing the troops home, most were clear understand the content on the page.</p> <p>Quotes:</p> <p><i>"[My] biggest concern is that he is making a lot of promises that I don't think he is going to be able to keep all of them. Like bringing the troops home - it takes time." Patricia, LA 49</i></p>

"This is a guy that states the problem... whine, whine complain, complain, a 'new strategy needed' but he doesn't talk about how he is going to do it. I would like to see something more specific, just saying he will pull them out and they will be removed within 16 months, it just sounds too easy." Richard, NYC 30-39

A recurring trend, respondents commented that simply stating the problem was not enough and that they would have liked to see more action oriented specifics.

Quotes:

"I wish he had more on his record, like more accreditation or more hard proof rather than saying 'Barak Obama opposed the war from the beginning'...gives what his thoughts are but not necessarily what his plan is. More what he'd like to do or what he thinks should be done, on a broad level, not a detailed plan, the economy page had more of detailed plan, should give more of what he plans to do. This is more broad." Brian, NYC 37

"Iraq is not the only place we're fighting. I'd like to see something in general. I expect to see something more general about fighting. This is a way to indirectly go against McCain. It's just that he wants it to end." Jackie, NYC 32

"This first statement at the top about the truth in fighting a war - that's absolutely correct. He says he will end the war because it's the right thing to do for national security. My feeling is good words, but that doesn't address the underlying factor that until the 2 predominant Muslim groups have to work things out themselves. It states his position well but whether or not I agree with it is another story." Robert, Atlanta 66

10 of 43 voters spoke to the "At a Glance" feature, stating it caught their attention and was a good way to summarize positions as well as organize the content.

Quotes:

"I think the best thing on here is that Barack has a plan for ending the war. He talks about executing the beginning of the plan on day one. I like the 'At a Glance', allows you to jump to issues you are concerned with. 'Responsible Phased Withdrawal', that is of interest for myself...I think it covers all the ground that has to do with the war, at least for me." Emily, LA 28

"I like the 'At a Glance', so first I'd scroll further to see if links are followed by content." Kenneth, LA 38

McCain Findings

Voters expressed a variety of reactions to the layout of the page – ranging from a good flow to a lackluster font. While most McCain's stance was clear, while further details would have been appreciated by some participants.

Quotes:

"Obama's is more theory and principles, less on concrete plans and outlines - he doesn't have a game plan or action plan. Even on this [McCain] site, both of them are just their philosophies on the war how they believed it should play out rather than how they plan to implement it." Brian, NYC 37

"It was clear - successful. It has watch videos here, then the war on Iraq, that's what I wanted from the other page. I'd watch the videos, I like to see how people speak and I think confidence is big so I like to see that." Sage, NYC 19

"The Barack font is sophisticated this is not with the serifs, Barak has san serifs. I would never read this. It's the similar comment to the Obama page a lot of info visually, daunting looking and unappealing and uninteresting, but in addition to the Obama page just the font, it just looks boring." Sung, NYC 30-39

A few commented on sub-headings in different areas of the page. They perceived the language used as insensitive or unsympathetic.

Quotes:

"The top statement is callous - the 'importance of succeeding' - I don't like this. I've seen families who have lost people." Omar, Atlanta 22

"Obvious he supports the war. Can tell by wording, the "importance of succeeding" the war. I am not in support of that. It seems like a lot of justification, why it's good for us and Iraq. Seems like a lot of explaining to me - he should, but taking apart the whole war and explaining it...Barack's page is simpler and this has so much justification. Emily, LA 28

Negative criticism was more commonly mentioned on McCain's stance vs. Obama's. In several instances, voters seemed to expect this coming into the pages, especially when voters disagreed with the war.

Quotes:

"Everything's laid out, it's broken up. For someone like him I'd expect the war to be a big issue, I'm sure he's for the war while people are against it. I'm sure he's saying we have to continue to stay there because you can't just go in and surrender and lose like Vietnam." Jackie, NYC 32

"I'm against the war but I'm a little more leaning toward McCain from how he addresses it and what he thinks can happen and how especially with the micro-economy. Whereas Obama's going to put 2 million dollars towards prevention of humanitarian crisis that can be sucked up by congress." Ellen, NYC 55

"My biggest concern [about McCain] is that he's very focused on the war - I agree and think we need to be focused on that but is it too much? What about the other issues here, domestically... I view him as just spending time there...he seems to always criticize Obama on his lack of experience in foreign policy. I want to hear more of McCain's domestic plans." Vicki, Chicago 50

While a few participants criticized the strategies of how to deal with Al-Qaeda and Islamic extremists, most were able to clearly comprehend the content on this page.

Quotes:

"This part - I don't like it at all. I don't think we can defeat Al-Qaeda. They are going to keep on training and training. That is not the way." Carlos, LA 72

"This first statement at the top about the truth in fighting a war - that's absolutely correct. He says he will end the war because it's the right thing to do for national security. My feeling is good words, but that doesn't address the underlying factor that until the 2 predominant Muslim groups have to work things out themselves. It states his position well but whether or not I agree with it is another story." Robert, Atlanta 66

Voters offered suggestions on things they would have liked to see such as sensitivity to families and the troops, plan comparisons to Obama as well as information from the general's war stance.

Quotes:

"I think he can emphasize that he is concerned and that his ultimate goal is to bring the troops back. He is not emphasizing that. His ultimate goal [should be] to bring them home, not just to plan Iraqi security. People are concerned about their kids that are being killed more than Iraqi security and they want to hear - this is our plan to bring them home." Jacqueline, LA 56

"This is good and very detailed. Would like to see more about Obama's plan so that you would compare." Anna, NYC 24

"Overall it has good context from his perspective. Says how he will address the issues. Don't see what forces on the ground are saying and what does the general say? He should take that into account." Vicki, Chicago 50

4.5.3 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- The language and content below McCain's "The Importance of Succeeding" heading created and/or added a "pro-war" feeling about his stance on Iraq that many already seemed to have about him. For many, this was a significant area of apprehension in regard to voting for McCain.
- Content in both areas of the candidates' Iraq plans were subject of the most scrutiny.
- Generally users felt Obama's layout was clear and easily navigable. Introductory quotes were usually useful and added a personal touch for users.

4.6 Issues Pages - Healthcare

- **Ensuring Proven, Better Quality Care:** Obama will support legislation to expand preventive medical services and support hospital and provider practice improvement to prevent future occurrences.
- **High number of uninsured:** 48.8 million people remain uninsured but the percentage of the population covered has risen from 36.5% in 2002 to 48.8% in 2007. The number of uninsured people has risen from 48.8 million in 2002 to 48.8 million in 2007. The number of uninsured people has risen from 48.8 million in 2002 to 48.8 million in 2007.
- **Comprehensive reform:** Obama will establish an independent body to study and report on the effectiveness of the health care system and to recommend reforms to improve the system.
- **Health care workforce:** Obama will support legislation to expand the number of health care professionals and to improve the quality of the health care workforce.
- **Health care research:** Obama will support legislation to increase funding for health care research and to improve the quality of the health care workforce.
- **Health care innovation:** Obama will support legislation to increase funding for health care innovation and to improve the quality of the health care workforce.

continues>>

Obama Issues Page - Healthcare

continues>>

McCain Issues Pages - Healthcare

4.6.1 Question: How would you learn more on the candidate's position on Healthcare?

Obama Findings

Only 2 respondents out of 43 considered Healthcare to be their most important issue in the upcoming election.

Only 2 respondents of the 8 encountered problems navigating to the healthcare pages where one had to be prompted by the moderator and the other found it on the second attempt.

McCain Findings

Only 2 respondents out of 43 considered Healthcare to be their most important issue in the upcoming election.

None of the 9 respondents who navigated to healthcare related pages encountered any issues finding what they were looking for.

4.6.2 Question: What are your thoughts as you review this Healthcare page?

Obama Findings

Results on the Obama healthcare page were generally positive with 3 of 8 comments centered on how Obama seems to understand the issues related to healthcare. Starting the page with a quote and clearly stating the problem helped convey this message.

Quotes:

"I like that it starts with a quote. I feel better about this page – [bullet] points well laid out." Anna, NYC 24
"I figured he would understand this and have compassion for people because of his upbringing." Anna, Chicago 47

Obama's position resonated with 3 voters who liked and understood what they read.

Quotes:

"I can understand it, it's not too complex." Anna, Chicago, 47
"He goes into what he would do, how he plans to cover the uninsured Americans, and he breaks it down into topics, like affordable premiums, easy enrollment - simplified. Not over the top, easy to understand." William, LA 60

Two other voters felt Obama's plan as described was 'too simple' and 'lacking information' about how universal healthcare would actually be achieved. There was skepticism from 3 respondents who question if it is truly possible to have healthcare for all in this country.

Quotes:

"I wish he'd be more specific. It's easy to say that affordable premiums, etc, you tell me you'll do something but you haven't looked into the costs yet?" Jeff, Atlanta 39
"I know the health industry is so against any kind of reform....It's intriguing, its hopeful but it's going to be a long haul." Stacy, LA 37

McCain Findings

Some (3 of 9) thought the McCain healthcare plan was comprehensive because it included multiple topics of concern to independent voters such as: autism, smoking cessation, and long term care.

Quotes:

"It's good that he has Autism listed. I am impressed that he has that listed." Stacy, LA 37
"This [smoking] is a very important topic." Kevin, Atlanta 58

While McCain's policy on healthcare as described was thought to present new information, 3 of 9 felt it was not detailed enough – lacking specifics about 'how' he would achieve the goal of healthcare for all Americans.

Quotes:

"I would prefer to get more specific on this page - he'll work harder for x, ok well how. How will they collaborate?" Jeff, Atlanta 39
"I wonder if this is covering all income groups...all other countries have healthcare. Rigo, NYC 27

Three of nine voters found the content to be clearly written and felt it used formatting to help the reader follow along with strong verbiage to connect with voters.

Quotes:

"That's good, He's setting the record straight... nothing missing, I understand his positions." Patrice, Chicago 30

"The 'high quality' coverage they need. Their wording stands out. There's bold and it really helps." Anna, Chicago, 47

4.6.3 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- While both sites presented new information, voters clearly want more than has been provided on healthcare by either candidate.
- The content on Obama's healthcare page conveyed that he understood the healthcare crisis but did not serve to erase suspicion/ disbelief that it could actually be accomplished.
- McCain's healthcare plan was thought to be more comprehensive because it identified more special interest groups.

4.7 Issues Pages - Energy

NEW ENERGY FOR AMERICA

5 Million Green Collar Jobs
A Bold New National Goal on Energy Efficiency
American Energy
Reveal the New Energy for America plan
Watch Barack's speech to Congress: 100 on his new energy plan

Obama's comprehensive New Energy for America plan will:

- Provide short-term relief to American families facing pain at the pump
- Make needed investments to develop clean energy jobs and create jobs to build a clean energy future
- Within 10 years slow more oil than we currently import from the Middle East and Venezuela combined
- Put 4 million Plug-in Hybrid Cars — cars that can get up to 150 miles per gallon — on the road by 2015, cars that we will work to make sure are built here in America
- Share 10 percent of our electricity comes from renewable sources by 2012, and 20 percent by 2020
- Implement an economy-wide cap and trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050

ENERGY PLAN HIGHLIGHTS:

Provide Short-term Relief to American Families

- Enact a Virtual Payroll Tax to Provide a \$1,800 Emergency Energy Rebate to American Families
- Cancel Taxes on Renewable Energy Investments
- Swap Oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to Oil Prices
- Learn More...

Eliminate Our Need for Middle Eastern and Venezuelan Oil within 10 Years

- Enforce the Liquorice Standard
- Get 1 Million Plug-in Hybrid Cars on the Road by 2015
- Create a New \$2.08B Tax Credit for Fuel-efficient and Vehicles
- Enact a National Low Carbon Fuel Standard
- Enact a Fuel Efficiency Standard for Heavy-Duty Trucks
- Promote the Responsible Domestic Production of Oil and Natural Gas
- Learn More...

Create Millions of New Green Jobs

- Enact 10 percent of Our Electricity Comes from Renewable Sources by 2012, and 20 percent by 2020
- Double the Cleanest, Cheapest, Fastest Energy Source — Energy Efficiency
- Create a New One Million Homes Program
- Develop and Deploy Clean Grid Technology
- Finance the Construction of the Alaska-Northern Sea Pipeline
- Learn More...

Reduce our Greenhouse Gas Emissions 80 Percent by 2050

- Implement an economy-wide cap and trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050
- Make the U.S. a Leader in Climate Change
- Learn More...

GET THE DETAILS:

Read the full version of Barack Obama's New Energy for America plan
Barack's environmental plan
Barack's plan to crack down on excessive energy speculation

The latest ad on Barack's plan for a secure energy future:

\$4 BILLION NEW TAX BREAK FOR OIL

Get involved:

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ClickTech for Obama has opened its doors to you!

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Obama Issues Page - Energy



continues>>

McCain Issues Pages - Energy

4.7.1 Question: How would you learn more on the candidate's position on Energy?

Obama Findings

6 respondents out of 43 identified Energy concerns as their top issue for the upcoming election.

Five of 7 respondents who actually navigated to an energy related page found what they were looking for at the first attempt.

Two opted for videos related to energy. Areas visited were:

- Five clicked through to Issues > Energy & Environment
- 2 clicked on New Energy for American box

McCain Findings

6 respondents out of 43 identified Energy concerns as their top issue for the upcoming election.

Most respondents did not encounter any difficulties locating the page of interest:

- 6 out of 8 respondents went directly to the page of interest in their first attempt.
- Of the 8 respondents who visited energy related pages on the site
 - 5 clicked through Issues > American Energy
 - 2 clicked on the Lexington Project box on the homepage
 - 1 clicked through Issues > Economic Plans > Cheap Energy

4.7.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Navigating to the pages of interest was easily accomplished.
- Energy is clearly a strong topic of interest - on both sites there were multiple ways to access energy related information through the Issues drop down and rotating banners on the homepages.

4.7.3 Question: What are your thoughts as you review this Energy page?

Obama Findings

Obama's energy page was thought to be informative and clear in communicating his position. The layout of bullets was received positively and helped voters digest the content.

Quotes:

"Good, successful. Would know from here what he'd do as president to improve the situation." Robin, NYC 44

"Wow, there's numbers here. These are promises.... He's got meat." Tom, Chicago 47

Six comments were made about missing information related to hydrogen cars, nuclear energy, and regulating energy speculation where voters felt the plan fell short

Quotes:

"Hybrid cars that are made in America may be more expensive so how is that going to help us overall?" Jon, Chicago 29

"That's not many cars nor enough homes in his energy plans - I'm looking for something more aggressive than that." Jeff, Atlanta 39

One participant felt that while the plan helped explain his position, it was just not believable.

Quotes:

"It least it gives a plan of some of the things he is going to tackle. I haven't really heard him talk about it too much. I think that McCain's was more believable." Zelia, NYC 58

McCain Findings

The Energy section on the McCain Website presented undecided voters with new information about the different types of energy alternatives McCain would be willing to explore.

Four comments were made about the content style and tone which seemed to reinforce the 'straight talk' image of John McCain. Specific references were made to the fact that numbers were included in the text, the language was professional and strong with repetition of, "John McCain will..."

Quotes:

"They are willing to put numbers out which need to be objective...it reminds me of the McCain thing that he is willing to tell the truth." Tom, Chicago 47

"He states exactly what he will do, 'John McCain will...' I like this one because he will commit our country to domestic oil exploration and how we are going to explore it." Jon, Chicago 29

While what was presented was considered to have been clearly written, 4 of 8 thought there was not enough detail and/ or topics missing such as investment plans for hydrogen cars, clean energy, and how he plans to expand drilling in the US.

Quotes:

"Show more about the plan and what he's going to do...this is just statistics I already know. What actions is he going to take?" Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"I want to see more on clean energy and water desensitization." Rigo, NYC 27

4.7.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- While both sites included numbers which added credibility to their plans, McCain's language and tone were reminiscent of his 'straight talk' image.
- Obama's site was easy to get into with bullets and the ability to scan and/ or read further for detailed information.
- Energy pages on both sites were criticized for missing pertinent information important to skeptical undecided voters.

4.8 About the Candidates

The screenshot shows the Obama campaign website's 'Meet Barack Obama' page. The page is designed with a blue and white color scheme. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'LEARN', 'ISSUES', 'MEDIA', 'ACTION', 'PEOPLE', 'STATES', 'BLOG', and 'STORE'. A prominent 'DONATE NOW' button is located in the top right corner. The main content area is titled 'MEET the CANDIDATE' and features a large image of Barack Obama. Below this, there is a 'MEET Barack' section with a sub-section for 'EARLY YEARS'. The text describes Barack Obama's birth in Hawaii in 1961, his father's work on the ship during the Depression, and his mother's work in a garment factory in Kenya. It also mentions his education at Columbia University in 1983. The 'COLLEGE YEARS' section describes his time at the University of Hawaii, where he was a student leader and worked for a church-based group. The 'POLITICAL CAREER' section details his work as a community organizer in Chicago, his role as a state senator in Illinois, and his time in the U.S. Senate. The page also includes a 'WELCOME HILLARY SUPPORTERS' section, a 'FIGHT the SMEARS' section, and an 'ACTION CENTER' section. At the bottom, there is a 'OBAMA EVERYWHERE' section with links to various social media and community platforms. The footer contains the text 'Learn. Issue. Make. News. Stop. Action. Share. State. Donate. Privacy Policy. Terms of Service. Contact Us.' and 'POWERED BY HOPE'.

Obama – Meet Barack Obama

McCain
JOHNMCCAIN.COM

COUNTRY FIRST

VOLUNTEER · DONATE · EN ESPAÑOL

HOME ABOUT ISSUES NEWS & MEDIA EVENTS BLOG COALITIONS ACTION STORE CONTRIBUTE

About John McCain

Ready From Day One

John McCain has a remarkable record of leadership and experience that embodies his unwavering lifetime commitment to service. First elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona in 1982, John has led the fight for reforming Washington, eliminating wasteful government spending, and strengthening our nation's armed forces.

John McCain's reform agenda to reduce federal spending and lower taxes quickly elevated him to statewide office and he was elected to the United States Senate in 1986, after serving two terms in the U.S. House.

In the Senate, John continued to demand that Congress put an end to loopholes for special interests and fix the broken system in Washington that too often allows lobbyists to write legislation and members of Congress to waste taxpayer money. In November 2004, Senator McCain was overwhelmingly reelected with nearly 77 percent of the vote.

As the son and grandson of distinguished Navy admirals, John McCain deeply values duty, honor and service of country. John attended college at the United States Naval Academy, and launched a 22-year career as a naval aviator upon his graduation. He continued the McCain tradition of service to country passed down to him from his father and grandfather when he asked to serve in the Vietnam War.

On July 29 1967, John narrowly survived the first of many near-death experiences during his lifetime while preparing to take off on a bombing mission over North Vietnam from his ship, the USS Forrestal. A missile accidentally fired from a nearby plane struck the fuel tanks on John's plane and created a deadly inferno aboard the ship. John barely escaped the fiery disaster that killed 134 men, injured hundreds more and destroyed 20 planes.

Instead of taking the option to return home after the Forrestal disaster, Senator McCain volunteered for more combat duty - a fateful decision that stopped the clock on his life and separated him from his family, and country, for five and a half years.

During his 23rd bombing mission on October 26, 1967, a missile struck John's plane and forced him to eject, knocking him unconscious and breaking both his arms and his leg. John was then taken as a prisoner of war into the now infamous "Hanoi Hilton," where he was denied necessary medical treatment and often beaten by the North Vietnamese. John spent much of his time as a prisoner of war in solitary confinement, aided by his faith and the friendships of his fellow POWs. When he was finally released and able to return home years later, John continued his service by regaining his naval flight status.

Senator McCain's last Navy duty assignment was to serve as the naval liaison to the United States Senate. John retired from the Navy in 1981. His naval honors include the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Senator McCain has seven children and four grandchildren, and currently lives in Phoenix, Arizona with his wife Cindy.

About Cindy
Cindy McCain has dedicated her life to improving the lives of those less fortunate in the U.S. and around the world. [Read More](#)

On The Issues
Read more about John McCain's positions on the issues and bold solutions for the future. [Read More](#)

Why John McCain
Learn why John McCain is uniquely qualified to lead America. [Read More](#)

The McCain Timeline
Learn more about John McCain's lifetime of service to the United States. [Read More](#)

The McCain Family
Learn more about John McCain's family and what they're doing today. [Read More](#)

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- 08.30 Road to the Convention Rally: Washington, PA - August 30
- 08.31 Road to the Convention Rally: OFallon, MO on August 31

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McCain – About John McCain

4.8.1 Question: How would you learn more about the candidate's background before his political career?

Obama Findings

All of the 43 participants who were asked to locate information about Barack Obama's background before his political career navigated to the Meet the Candidate page via the top navigation Learn tab.

McCain Findings

All but three participants (40 of 43) were easily able to Navigate to the About John McCain page to locate information about McCain's background before his political career.

4.8.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Navigating to sections of the site that provided information on the Candidates background before their political career was easy on both sites, therefore this would most likely not be an issue for users seeking this type of information on either site.

4.8.3 Question: What are your thoughts as you review this About / Meet page?

Obama Findings

Several participants felt that the Meet the Candidate page appeared somewhat "light" compared to McCain's About page. While in reality there did not appear to be any less text on the Obama page, the overall layout and content appeared less robust and the apparent white space on the bottom gave the impression that Obama had less experience than McCain.

Quotes:

"I don't like all the white space here at the bottom. Blank makes me feel he doesn't have much experience." Jackie, NYC 32

"So white, there is so much space, it almost seems like he doesn't have a lot of experience. There is whole big space seems like stuff could be added. That could be a negative." Jim, LA 40

"This is a little weak. If you want a meaty resume this would be considered light." Kevin, Atlanta 58

"This is kind of short. Only a few paragraphs this hurts because he's very young." Sherwin, NYC 30

Not only did participants point out that there was more information about Obama's childhood than the McCain site provided, but the chronological listing of all the different aspects of his life – early years, college years, political years, was received well and viewed more positively than the equivalent section of the McCain site which focused more heavily on only one aspect (military).

Quotes:

"This is good. Has all aspects of his life." Jackie, NYC 32

"This tells you about him and his family. Takes you through his life in sections - takes you on to college years and then politics." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"I like that it goes in chronological order." Jeff, Atlanta 29

"It's good, starts out where he was born, who his parents were, where they were born, background of parents, gives education. And then it jumps to him. I like the way it is laid out. Then it gives you more of his political career. Enrique, LA 45

More commonly mentioned while viewing the Obama vs. the McCain (Meet/About pages) was that the information provided was detailed, informative and participants actually felt they learned something(s) they didn't already know about Obama.

Quotes:

"It does have good details; I didn't know that he had a law degree from Harvard or that he was the first African American president of Harvard Law Review, so it does give good details." Jacqueline, LA 56

"I didn't know some of this information. It has a lot of information." Enrique, LA 45

"Well written. This is the kind of information the public wants to know. I learned a little more about the family thing". Bernard, Chicago 55

A few commented on the lack of images on the Obama site. They believed the addition of historical photos might make the page more exciting and personable.

Quotes:

"I would like to see more pictures...coming from cosmetic background, but that's just me. It's a little serious." Sung, NYC 30-39

Maybe a picture I would like to see of him and his wife or with his kids, as a family. Jacqueline, LA 56

You could have more pictures. Have different pictures at different time periods – young, college, with kids." Dawn, NYC 40

McCain Findings

Mostly all of the participants mentioned that the McCain background page was heavily focused on his military career, and while this approach was effective for some in creating a sense of "power", others were not as impressed and indicated that this type of experience would not necessarily make a better President.

Quotes:

"It breaks everything down and shows him being a hero. It's very informative, shows everything about who he's about. Being in the military shows you're a strong person...So in this case McCain's site was more powerful and explained more. It looks like he has more experience that way." Jackie, NYC 32

"Talking about being very experienced, that is successful. That is fine. That is one of his strongest positives against Obama." Sung, NYC 30-39

"Seems to be a heavily military based story. It doesn't appeal to me, feels like they are trying to tug at someone's heartstrings trying to get a reaction, not working for me." Roxanne, LA 19

"It talks a lot about his time during the Vietnam war, I know that's important, but I don't know it doesn't really do anything for me." Natalie, LA 40

"Talks about his history. That's fine, it's okay. Obama didn't have this - that's okay but we don't want to keep dwelling on that, because that doesn't mean he is going to make a better president." William, NYC 60

Many participants wanted and expected to see more information about McCain's youth, family and educational background, rather than so much focus on his military experience which seemed less personal.

Quotes:

"What's missing is I would like to know a little more about his real youth. Bullet points, where, when he was born, birth date. I'd really like to know more about him as a kid, and that doesn't stand out." Richard, NYC 48

"You want to know about this birth where he was born, his parents, where they were from. In every biography, you want to know the foundation of family and then what he did and all that." Enrique, LA 45

"Maybe some educational experience, Basically he went to college and the military, If you are going to do something you have to have the knowledge, it doesn't really show in education where he went to law school, or somewhere he went where he would have gained this knowledge." Travis, LA 30.

"Tells you what he's done politically – I want something more personal." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

Also, several commented that the page did not appear in chronological order and they would have preferred to see it based on his life events rather than highlighting his political/military career first.

Quotes:

"It's not starting from the beginning. I think it (info on youth) should be fairly on the top after the marketing of who he is." Richard, NYC 48

"They start off first with what he is doing now. His Political upbringing." Enrique, LA 37

While some of the information presented about McCain was viewed as informative, several indicated that there was nothing really "new" as it was mostly information they had already learned about him over the years.

Quotes:

"Some of the stuff I know - his history, because he has been in the spot light for years, you know his record." Robert, NYC 41

"Nothing really new, just more detail." Bernard, Chicago 55

"I've heard these things in the media. It's all pretty much covered at a glance." Mollett, Atlanta 39

Some mentioned that the pictures on this page helped to enhance the page presentation, by making it easier to read, creating a more personal connection and keeping visitors interested.

Quotes:

"Shows pictures, you can relate to him." Stacy, LA 37

"I love that it has pictures of different time periods of his life." Dawn, NYC 40

4.8.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- The less robust appearance of the Obama page created and/or added to the "lack of experience" feeling that many already have about him. The way the McCain page was presented created a more "powerful" feeling concluding that users were somewhat effected by these aesthetics.
- Though Obama does not appear to have as much experience as McCain, users were impressed and felt informed by the clear chronological details offered on Obama's Meet the Candidate page. This helped portray Obama as a professional and organized yet, friendly and approachable candidate. To the contrary participants felt the About John McCain page did not allow them to really get to know him since so much of the page focused and highlighted his military background, rather than all aspects of his life. Adding more personal details such as his youth and family history might be beneficial in helping visitors really learn about John McCain.
- While content on the About John McCain site lacked the personal touch of information about his earlier years and family background, the use of pictures did add to its appearance and gave users a more personable feeling. Contrarily, the lack of pictures on the Obama page was definitely noticeable and it was clear that historical photos can definitely impact and enhance users feelings when learning about the candidates.

4.9 About the Candidates – Obama Fight the Smears

The screenshot displays the 'FIGHT THE SMEARS' website. The main header reads 'FIGHT THE SMEARS' with a logo. Below the header, there are several columns of content. On the left, there is a navigation menu with links like 'Flag on the Fly', 'Voting History Resources', 'Making Time to Do Things', 'Mentors & Tutors', 'Mentors on Tap', 'Self-Care', 'Smear's Blog', 'Smear's Books', 'Smear's Calendar', and 'What's Behind the Lies'. Below this is an 'Updates' section with bullet points. The main content area features a grid of articles, each with a 'Smear' icon, a title, a brief description, and a 'TRUTH' button. The articles include:

- 'Smear: Barack Obama does not display a flag on his campaign plane' with a 'SIGN UP FOR THE OBAMA' button.
- 'Smear: Barack Obama's campaign plane does, in fact, display the American flag on the outside fuselage of the plane.'
- 'Smear: John McCain is attacking Barack Obama for not sending wounded troops'.
- 'Smear: Barack Obama's campaign conceded an originally private visit (by name) to Germany to avoid politicizing our soldiers during his campaign-funded trip to Germany.'
- 'Smear: Barack Obama doesn't take time for the troops.'
- 'Smear: Barack Obama spent time throughout his foreign trip visiting with and thanking our troops.'
- 'Smear: Michelle Obama isn't proud of her country'.
- 'Smear: Michelle Obama loves the United States and the opportunities it has given her. Even Laura Bush has defended her comments - watch the video.'
- 'Smear: An email claims that Barack Obama wants to tax your home, IRA, & even your water.'
- 'The independent group, Factcheck.org, concludes that the rumor email about Barack Obama and his tax is "a pack of lies."'

 On the right side of the main content area, there are several call-to-action buttons: 'SIGN UP FOR THE OBAMA', 'UNITE FOR THE RIGHT WING SMEAR BOOK', 'MEMBERS OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND PRESENT BACK', and 'PHOTOGRAPH'. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text 'POWERED BY TRUTH'.

continues >>

Obama – Fight the Smears

4.9.1 Prompt & Questions: Let's say that you wanted to learn more about the candidates personally and went to the following pages...

- Now I'd like to show you this "Fight the Smears" area of the web
- How effective do you think this feature is?
- Are any of these "rebuttals" powerful enough to change any existing feelings you have about Obama?
- Would you use this "Spread the truth: Push Back Now" feature?

Obama Findings

Some (6 of 43) voters commented on the "Fight the Smear" sections without being prompted.

About half the participants responded favorably to the feature, 5 were neutral and 7 did not like the feature.

A few did not like the way the page was presented visually and were a bit confused as to which blocks of information were connected to each other.

Obama Findings

Quotes from those who thought this Was an Effective page

"This is effective and easy to read. They are trying to say he's not American. Yes, this helps to rebut these stories." Anna, NYC 24

"I don't think the McCain site had the 'Fight the Smears' section. You can add that to the McCain feedback, I think that is an effective way to go...This would influence me." Robert, NYC 41

"The rebuttals do change things a little bit.. it was the Smears - that was powerful." Jacqueline, LA 56

"All you hear from McCain is smear tactics, we need to learn how to get around this. It is a good feature, very informative. It's pretty comprehensive, these are issues written about him and it gets out of hand, it's all about smearing now." William, LA 60

"I like the "Fighting the Smears" given all that's been going on...I like recent statements are being addressed as they often get twisted." Ellen, NYC 55

"It's pretty effective. It tells you the truth about things - he does have a flag on his plane. It's a good thing because it wants me to make sure I know what's is true or not. It's good research." Enrique, LA 45

"I like this as it tells you the smear and then the truth. I expect some negative, but making stuff up doesn't come across well to me. This is helpful. This reminds me of the Truth cigarette commercials. I wouldn't send out too many e-mails here but I might pass along if I got something like this." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"This gets what's out there on him. Have heard most of these but this gets at it head on. I'd read more about these. It is helpful to read this information as an undecided voter, yes, to clear these up a little. It won't make the decision for me though." Vicki, Chicago 50

"I think it is needed. Cause all you see is the smears. Needed to clear things up. Yes I would read more rebuttals and if there was one I heard of I would go and read it. Would go into More of the truths. Yes, I would use it." Leshun, LA 33

Quotes from those who thought this Was Not an Effective page and/or were a bit confused about the content being presented.

"I think it makes him look a little whiny. You hear a lot about that; people do believe he's a Muslim and that [Michelle Obama] has made racist comments. I have heard all of these and I have heard that many Americans believe that. They've spent a lot of time. It seems like they are really worried about this.." Tom, Chicago 47

"This is defensive again, that's essentially a negative thing. You could just show a picture of the flag pin rather than saying this. And no man can control his wife's' mouth. That's her statement, not his." Robert, Atlanta 66

"I didn't notice the Fight the smears feature, I typically ignore the side bars, because usually paid advertiser, it's the placement and the look of it. I don't look at that kind of stuff." Sung, NYC 30-39

"He should address these issues. If he doesn't defend himself, then that wouldn't be good. The two "The truth" links I went to doesn't explain the truth very well. When you click to learn more, you don't get much more of an explanation." Jon, Chicago 29

"I take this with a grain of salt, they both have issues... this is clever to devote the time and effort to do this - I don't know that I've seen anyone else do that. Obama's had things in his past that other people haven't had like being a Muslim...If you've converted to Christianity then say it, problem solved. But to say you never had been and was in a Muslim school, that's... I'd like to see more of the Indonesian piece." Jeff, Atlanta 39

"I don't think I would vote or not vote for a man who didn't have a flag on his plane. Would not base my vote on these things." Leonard, LA 77

"I think it is needed. Cause all you see is the smears. Needed to clear things up. Yes I would read more rebuttals and if there was one I heard of I would go and read it. Would go into More of the truths. Yes, I would use it." Leshun, LA 33

"I didn't notice it. This is trivial, it's silly. What is this about a flag? It's silly, who cares? I would not 'spread the truth' because this is silly." Natalie, LA 40

4.9.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Some people felt that Obama was just drawing more attention to the smears by addressing them online, however, many saw it as a great move to "clear up the truth" on his part.
- Of those voters who found the section effective, the majority of them also found it to be an original feature, which might be influential in their decision-making process. Voters supported the addressing of smears directly rather than passively which might be confused for weakness and "hoping" they will go away. A few commented that it would be nice to see the same feature from McCain's site.
- Of those voters who disliked the feature, reasons given were that the section seemed trivial in his campaign as well as that it made Obama seem defensive and "whiny."
- Once participants reviewed the information on the page and were asked how to return to the Homepage, almost all noticed that the top navigation was gone and there was no direct link to the Homepage.
- This page would benefit from an updated layout that uses two column to present the Smear and the response as people find it easier to read left to right.

4.10 About the Candidates – McCain Timeline

McCain - Timeline

4.10.1 Prompt: Let's say that you wanted to learn more about the candidates personally and went to the following pages...

- Now I'd like to show you this "McCain Timeline". What are your thoughts in terms of navigation - where might you go first?

McCain Findings

Most (26 of 40) voters were happy with the timeline feature and felt it was an interactive tool to learn more about McCain.

Some (14 of 40) voters had trouble navigating the timeline, felt the feature was not user-friendly and/or were confused by its content.

McCain Findings

Quotes from those who thought this Was an Effective page

"Wow that's nice, cool. I like that. Navigation is pretty easy to do...Great pictures too - that's excellent. Very well done. I like the breakdown of US History vs. his history. This would occupy me for quite some time. Didn't notice what stars were for at first. This is much more effective than Obama's page, this has dates and I like that. I like pictures also." Dawn, NYC 40

"This is nifty - cool for the eyes. I like dragging the bar. Now that I look at it, it's cool but now I'm not sure what's going on. Rolls over stars and start to understand how page works. I'm wondering what's not here. It's a pretty cool feature. I was trying to understand what the colored bars were - it's just moments in his life - this guy has done it all. Is that his father? (rolls over stars from 1942 and before to 1851) That's kind of weird but I guess he can trace his family back. He can trace all the way back - I'm sure Obama can't do that." Omar, Atlanta 22

"It's an FYI feeling, I like the colors - pronounced - and pop-ups. I like it a lot - it's great. He matches his timeline with the US war, what was going on at that time and where McCain was. But this 'Contribute' button up top - it almost gets to a point where you're a beggar on the street hounding me - if I want to contribute I will. It's too much." Nadeem, Chicago 31

"It's interesting. Stars are neat. Oh so this is the US history (bottom line). That's neat (starts) but I feel like a lot of people including myself worry that McCain is a little on the older side and this kind of reinforces the things about his life." Roxanne, LA 19

"It's nice, very modern looking. Very impressive. I guess it just talks about his experience. But it looks very elegant and very professional. It showcases all his experience." Jim, LA 40

Quotes from those who thought this Was Not an Effective page and/or were confused by the content & functionality.

"This has got me- this is kind of weird.... the drag was not that obvious. I guess I could find out about him, but I really have to dig though. It's a little difficult to navigate, but it's a pain. I guess trying to be more current, but not that user friendly, it's just there." Richard, NYC 48

"I don't understand. This is not clear to me. I'm confused doesn't say anything about him?" Ramonita, Chicago 23

"I would just go from beginning to end but I'm confused what to click on - left side? I guess the blue if for Vietnam? Now I see how this goes - what does this have to do with him - the Great Depression? Why go back through family tree and US history? They want to show his whole family has been in army - but that doesn't make you qualified to run the country." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"I don't care for it. I think it's confusing, the background is too dark, it is not eye catching so you really have to decipher what you are looking at. I guess I would have to drag this thing but to me...I don't care for this at all. I don't think it does anything to help him." Bernard, Chicago 55

"This scares me, this looks very busy. This says drag so I will drag it. I'm not interested in that I am interested in more current. I'd like to see his record as a legislator. What committees he served on in the senate." Leonard, LA 77

"Looks like something you would download music from. Pop up open player but didn't work - confusing. Not helpful, didn't get how to use it." Patrice, Chicago 30

"It is interesting but I don't think I like the set up. I guess he wants you to know his background and experience. I thought this was all on his About page but I guess these are factors. Covering a certain time?" Anna, Chicago 47

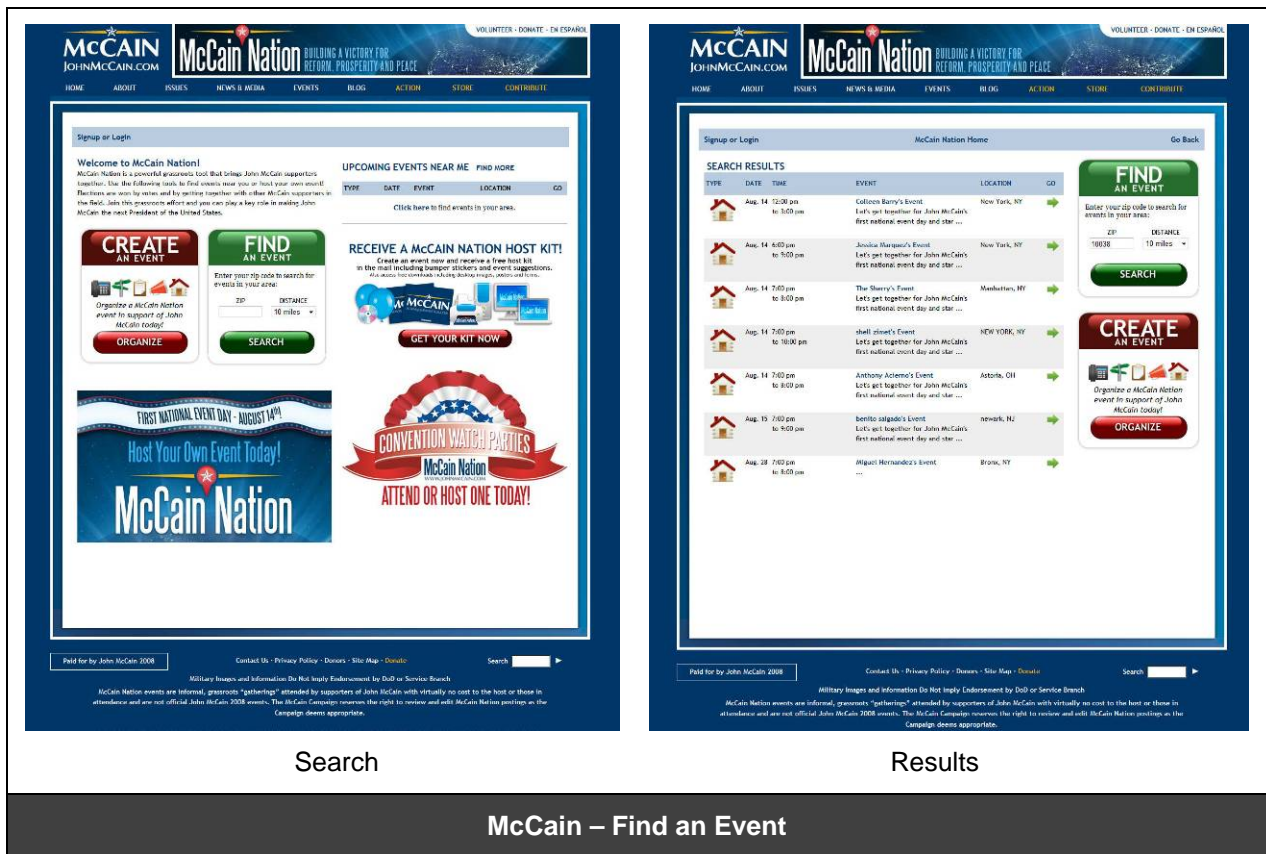
4.10.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- The timeline page conveyed a sense of “cool” interactivity to users and made them think of ads, MTV and other similarly “modern” features they had seen elsewhere.
- There was an overwhelming response to a general lack of user-friendly navigation and it was unclear to many users as to what functionality was meant by the stars, arrows, and double timelines.
- The small link to go back to the homepage at the bottom of the timeline was missed by almost all users, with only a few actually locating the link. Not being able to find an obvious Home button was frustrating for participants.
- The chronology dating so far back further highlighted McCain’s family legacy and perceived experience. To some users, this seemed to make them think of Obama’s lack of experience and/or family military service.

4.11 Find an Event

The image displays two screenshots of the Obama.com 'Find an Event' interface. The left screenshot shows the search page with filters for Country (United States) and Zip Code (92711). The right screenshot shows the results page with a map of the United States and a list of events including 'DNC Housing (opening)', 'Obama Postcard Campaign (opening)', and 'The Positivity Pledge (community service)'. The interface is labeled 'Search' and 'Results'.

Obama – Find an Event



Search

Results

McCain – Find an Event

4.11.1 Question: How would you find a McCain / Obama event near you from the site?

Obama Findings

Almost all were able to easily locate the Events link on the right side (via the Make a Difference area) or via the States top navigation drop down menu.

McCain Findings

As they looked to find a local event 7 of 18 had trouble locating the link on the homepage (lower right) or from the Events > Campaign Calendar link from the top navigation.

Quotes:

"I'm confused?" Vicki, Chicago 50

"I think Obama's was much easier - didn't see on right, right away so went to events on top." Brian, NYC 37

4.11.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Finding a local event on the Obama site was easier for participants as his link to this page was positioned in the top right Make a Difference area. The McCain event link was half way down the right side of the page and while the Find and Host buttons were big, the callout text “McCain Events in Your Area” was in a type face that was thin and may have been hard for participants to read.

4.11.3 Question: What are your thoughts as you review the information on this (Events Results) page?

Obama Findings

Many participants were impressed with the volume of Obama events near them. The search results page mapping out locations and providing event details was also impressive to many participants who perceived that it would be easy to participate if they were inclined to do so.

Quotes:

“Compared to McCain's events site, there was blank on his, but this has 272 events in the next month, that's awesome. That's a positive.” Jackie, NYC 32

“13 events. Wow. Mapquest. Very impressive.” Tom, Chicago 47

“All this means to me is that there are tons of events going on and Barak probably won't be there, I would not go to these events.” Robert, NYC 41

McCain Findings

There was mixed feedback on the Event Results page with about half offering positive comments and half disliking the page due to a lack of detail and/or a lack of events near their zip code.

Quotes:

“This doesn't even tell you where it is. This is not as informative as Obama's.” Brian, NYC 37

“The first thing my eye went to is this white space and this just had one event going on and this made it look very sad and pathetic. The Obama site had tons of events going on.” Sung, NYC 30-39

“I like this. It is inviting, easy to maneuver, easy to work with, it is very good. That is only 10 miles from my home.” Bernard, Chicago 55

Two seemed to think that these pages were showing where McCain was going to be and didn't realize that they were local fundraisers however most did understand the page clearly.

Quote:

“I would have expected him to visit or campaign here too.” Anna, Chicago 47

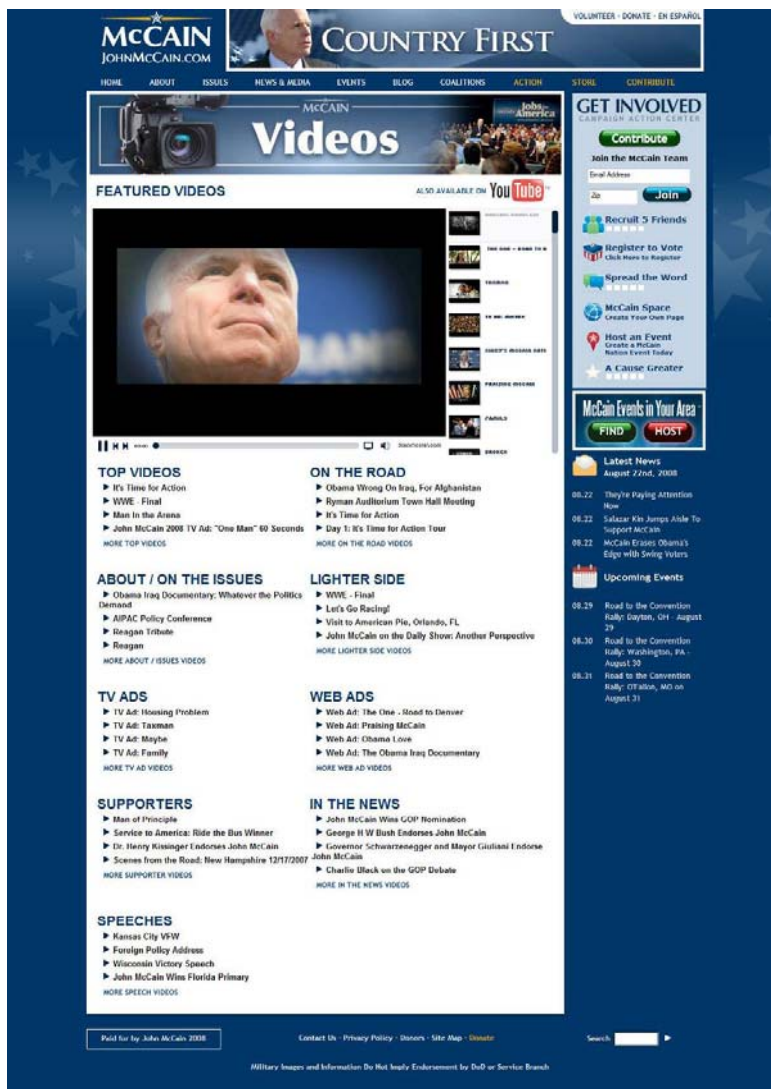
“So these are all the events that contributors are holding for him, that's nice.” Sandra, Atlanta 48

4.11.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Most participants believed that the Obama site offered more ways to get involved in the actual campaign and was inviting. The lack of events on the McCain site lead some participants to believe that the McCain campaign did not have as many local events and we therefore less inviting. Since many undecided voters may swing toward who is perceived as being the leader, this events feature clearly favors Obama as there was a sense among participants that he may be more organized and have more outreach to attract voters.

4.12 Videos

The screenshot displays the Obama-Barack TV website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "Get Local", "Create Your MyBO Account (or Login)", "Email Address", "Zip Code", and "Get Started". A "DONATE NOW" button is prominently displayed in red. Below the navigation bar, a main banner features the Obama-Biden logo and a quote: "I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington ... I'm asking you to believe in yours." A "GET INVOLVED NOW" section includes a "VISIT YOUR STATE HOMEPAGE" button and a "GO" button. The main content area is titled "BARACK TV | MOST RECENT" and features a large video player with a "Play Video" button. To the right of the video player, there is a list of video thumbnails with titles and "PLAY" buttons: "Michelle Obama at 2...", "Speech on Patriotism", "Unite for Change: Ho...", and "St. Paul Victory Spe...". A "CHANNELS" sidebar on the right lists "MOST RECENT", "ISSUES", "PEOPLE", "YOUR STORY", "BARACK'S STORY", "MICHELLE'S STORY", "SPEECHES", "CLOSED CAPTIONING", and "EN ESPAÑOL". The footer includes a "PAID FOR BY OBAMA FOR AMERICA" logo, the Obama-Biden logo, and the text "POWERED BY HOPE AND SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU".



McCain - Multimedia

4.12.1 Prompt: Now I'd like you to pick out a video on either site to watch. Then I'd like you to go to the other site to see if you can locate and watch a video that addresses the same issue or rebuts the content of what you have seen in the first video.

Obama Findings

When asked to find a video to watch on the Obama site 24 of 25 had no trouble locating a video on the page they were browsing and/or finding the BarackTV link to the main video page.

Quotes:

"Easier to find videos here." Dawn, NYC 40

"Videos in general are good, would want to see him speak." Robert, Atlanta 66

"Obama site's easier to use." Nadeem, Chicago 31

Overall reactions to the Obama videos were as follows:

Quotes:

Ohio Barn video *"The republicans are really good at ripping up their opponents - that was a positive video. That was dealing with rural issues and I like that."* Kevin, Atlanta 58

Unite for change video. *"He is far more eloquent than McCain."* Leonard, LA 77

Michele Obama video *"He doesn't have a section where he attacks McCain, I like that better."* Anna, NYC 24

McCain Findings

When asked to locate videos on the McCain site 5 of 25 had trouble locating the Multimedia link under the News & Media navigational drop down menu.

Quotes:

"I understand that it (the Multimedia link) could contain videos but it should just say videos." Bernard, Chicago 55

"Difficult to find on this site." Enrique, LA 45

Overall reactions to the McCain videos were as follows:

Quotes:

Watched the 10 Commandments video. *"That was ridiculous that McCain paid for that - a waste. This has no place in politics this changes my opinion of McCain - why would you take that approach?" Omar, Atlanta 22*

Watched the 10 Commandments video. *"Very persuasive. Shows that Obama is arrogant and he has to watch that - he thinks he's the one." Kevin, Atlanta 58*

The One video *"This is very clever - it took his (Obama) greatest skill and turned it into a joke." Jeff, Atlanta 39*

4.12.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Almost all of our undecided voter participants really liked the fact the each site had videos. Even the older segments of the audience seemed to embrace the fact that they could watch video clips on the Web, something that was barely used during the last Presidential election in 2004.
- Participants leaned toward favoring the positive, non-aggressive videos on the Obama site over some of the hard hitting or mocking videos on the McCain site. Most participants wanted to become more educated on the issues and candidates as they were still unsure of who they're voting for.
- While the videos alone didn't necessarily move anyone in to one camp or another, they did have a significant impact in terms of helping participants learn more about the tone, tactics and positioning of each candidate. The education regarding these aspects of the campaign would seem to favor Obama given that people expressed a desire for a positive message.

- Although a few were confused by some of the McCain videos, they did seem to effectively plant the seeds of doubt about Obama. However, those people still wanted to hear positive messages from both campaigns and a few expressed that McCain's strategy may backfire in the long run.

4.13 Biggest Concerns About the Candidates

4.13.1 Question: Now that we've gone through the site, what is your biggest concern about Senator McCain / Obama?

Obama Findings

Participants had varied concerns about Obama with 17 questioning his experience, 9 expressing that they were concerned if he could keep his promises and 4 saying his age and youth were their main worry. Others had a mix of concerns and/or were not concerned about him as much his stance on the issues.

Quotes:

"How much experience he has. He doesn't have as much experience as McCain." Stacy, LA 37

"He's young and not as much experience as McCain." Sherwin, NYC 30

"I'd question his Senate experience and if its enough." Omar, Atlanta 22

"His inexperience, but that may be a plus. It's been characterized as a negative." Dawn, NYC 40

"That he is making a lot of promises that I don't think he is going to be able to keep all of them." Patricia, LA 49

"That he's young which is a good thing because he's not tarnished from being in politics for years but that he may be too young and that he may not be able to protect us but if he surrounds us with people with good experience - we're drowning over here with Bush so we need someone." Sandra, Atlanta 48

"He's too young. McCain is too old, older than Ronald Reagan and I know that's bad." Jon, Chicago 29

"I like him, I'm a democrat, but it's like can he really do what he says he is going to do. Will he have the support and back up of the senate?" Enrique, LA 45

McCain Findings

When asked, 12 participants were concerned with McCain's older age, 5 believed he was too close to George Bush in terms of his stance on several issues, 6 were concerned that he would stay at war in Iraq and 6 expressed that they thought he was out of touch with average people and/or the desire for new policies. Others had a mix of concerns related to specific issues or did not have a main concern.

Quotes:

"I also am concerned about his age. I think 71 is a tough age to be an effective president." Leonard, LA 77

"Same old politics. I'd want to see who he's going to choose as his VP. He's up there in age and whoever he picks could be the next president." Robin, NYC 44

"Would he keep promises and not do what Bush did." Ramonita, Chicago 23

"His age is an issue." Ellen, NYC 55

"His age. I would want to see how his health is. It's not discriminating but when you reach a certain age, things start to happen." Anna, Chicago 47

"That he is going to keep us in the war forever. He voted with Bush on 95% of his issues, the war, health insurance, everything." William, LA 60

"His concern for the people - the everyday Joe." Dawn, NYC 40

4.13.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Neither candidate did a great job of directly addressing voters key concerns about them. Both sites could benefit from taking these issues on with specific examples to combat voter apprehensions.

4.14 Post Site Review Ratings Questions

4.14.1 Question: How would you rate the ease/difficulty of being able to navigate and use the site? (Reported by how many people chose each rating.)

Obama Findings	McCain Findings
Very Effective - 24	Very Effective - 24
Moderately Effective - 13	Moderately Effective - 11
Slightly Effective - 5	Slightly Effective - 4
Neutral - 0	Neutral - 1
Slightly Ineffective - 1	Slightly Ineffective - 3
Moderately Ineffective - 0	Moderately Ineffective - 0
Very Ineffective - 0	Very Ineffective - 0

4.14.2 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Both sites proved to be easy to navigate and participants reacted well to the overall structure of each site.

4.14.3 Question: How would you rate the site in terms of the features and functionality being presented? (Reported by how many people chose each rating.)

Obama Findings	McCain Findings
Very Effective - 24	Very Effective - 21
Moderately Effective - 13	Moderately Effective - 17
Slightly Effective - 5	Slightly Effective - 2
Neutral - 1	Neutral - 1
Slightly Ineffective - 0	Slightly Ineffective - 1
Moderately Ineffective - 0	Moderately Ineffective - 1
Very Ineffective - 0	Very Ineffective - 0

4.14.4 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- From a general perspective, most participants believed each of the sites offered them effective features and tools to explore the sites.

4.14.5 Question: How would you rate the site in terms of the accuracy and reliability of the information you explored on the site? (Reported by how many people chose each rating.)

Obama Findings	McCain Findings
Very Effective - 14	Very Effective - 15
Moderately Effective - 15	Moderately Effective - 13
Slightly Effective - 7	Slightly Effective - 6
Neutral - 5	Neutral - 7
Slightly Ineffective - 0	Slightly Ineffective - 2
Moderately Ineffective - 2	Moderately Ineffective - 0
Very Ineffective - 0	Very Ineffective - 0

4.14.6 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- Participants did not rate this question as highly as some simply didn't trust either site and how accurate the information might be. All realized that the source of the content were the campaigns leading to a general skepticism and comments about the fact that participants would also review independent Websites to confirm or dispute what they had read on the Obama and McCain sites.

4.14.7 Question: What, if anything, could be added to the site to make it more effective?

Obama Findings

While most participants felt that the site had just about all they would expect, a few mentioned wanting to see Obama's voting record for the past several years. Others mentioned wanting to see some graphs and some more details on Obama's past.

McCain Findings

Most participants believed that the McCain site had just about all they were expecting and a few requested a Search feature, a site map and more on his voting record from the past.

4.14.8 Analysis & Key Takeaways

- In general, participants expressed that both sites were comprehensive did not believe that either site was missing large chunks of information.
- The issue of providing each candidates voting record did come up again when we asked this question and it would benefit both campaigns to present a separate page listing their voting history along with links to details on the legislation they voted on.

4.15 Post-task Participant Responses

4.15.1 Question: Now that we've looked at both of the candidates sites, which site would you say is more user friendly and why?

The Obama site was the winner for ease of use as many cited the overall navigation, break down of issues, colors and some of the icons & callout used on the right side of the page.

- Obama – 22 preferred his site in terms of being the most user friendly
- McCain - 16 preferred his site in terms of being the most user friendly
- Five believed that the sites were equally user friendly

Quotes:

"Obama's was more user friendly. Just easier to navigate, less color, graphic pictures, pop ups. Less busy in general." Brian, NYC 37

"McCain's is more user-friendly. Hyperlinks are easier to identify and navigate through." Robin, NYC 44

"Obama because he doesn't have 7 Contribute buttons, design's more appealing." Ellen, NYC 55

"McCain's - has navigation on bottom of the issues page." Vicki, Chicago 50

"Obama's because of the color, the size of the print, it is easier to locate things. McCain's is darker and the print is smaller." Bernard, Chicago 55

"Obama - its clean a fresh. The homepage is not jumbled and cramped." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"Barack Obama. It just seems less cluttered, and more modern and more up to date and cutting edge. The other one seems basic." Jim, LA 40

"McCain. It was all there. Obama's was even harder than McCain." Carlos, LA 72

4.15.2 Question: How important is it for the candidates to have an effective Website in helping to educate and inform prospective voters? Which site was more effective at doing this?

When asked a similar question about the importance of viewing the candidate Websites at the start of our interviews participants expressed a modest curiosity. However after viewing both sites, participants were much more vocal about their belief that reviewing each candidate site was very important.

Quotes:

"I think they would both equally effective in educating and informing people. Didn't take very long to find the issue I wanted to see." Robert, NYC 41

"Both sites are the same in educating once you hit the Issues area." Jackie, NYC 32

"More important than I considered." Ellen, NYC 55

"A 10 - very important for those who don't have time." Nadeem, Chicago 31

"Very effective especially for those of us...how much do you really get from the news? I think websites would be a lot more thorough and honest about the candidates." Anna, Chicago 47

"Very important if you are trying to reach a younger generation under 50. Younger generation goes to the Internet. Thomas, LA 30

"Its very important - it's the major form of research out there. Obama gave quotes and plans better." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"I think it's important a lot of people spend a lot of time online, and would go to these sites to try to make a decision." Roxanne, LA 19

When asked which site was more effective at educating them participants responded as follows:

- Obama – 13
- McCain – 4
- Were not asked this questions or thought both were effective - 26

4.15.3 Question: Would you go back to either of these sites?

When asked, 36 of 43 would return to both of the sites.

Quotes from those who would return:

"I'd look at them to see how they evolve in the next few months and look up something major in the news even if it's a scandal to see how they position themselves on the site." Ellen, NYC 55

"Yes. Would want to see current speeches and topics." Nadeem, Chicago 31

"Yes I'd go back to both sites. Would look at more things in Issues." Sherwin, NYC 30

"Yes, both. Would look for same issues that I told you, I would go in and read more about them." Jaqueline, LA 56

A few expressed that while the sites were helpful, they wanted to get a more objective viewpoint and information from news resources.

Quotes from those who would Not return:

"For me, I'd get my information somewhere else. I read about these guys every single day." Jeff, Atlanta 39

"I don't think it is. I think both sites both are biased, so I think it's a starting point, but I think it would be more effective to go to another source, using the internet." Richard, NYC 48

"Probably not because of the time involved in distilling from this the information I want. You gotta read your Fox, your Drudge, your CNN and your NPR." Tom, Chicago 47

4.15.4 Question: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being lowest and 10 being highest, how much influence did the Obama / McCain sites have on your decision making process?

Overall, most believed the sites had a moderate influence on them but not an enormous one. Undecided voters indicated that visiting the candidate sites was only one resource of several they are tapping into to get a perspective on who to vote for.

Averaged out, here are the scores our participants gave:

- Obama – 5.64
- McCain – 5.36

4.15.5 Question: Did spending time on these sites help change your status as an undecided voter and if so, which candidate are you leaning toward?

When asked if either site had changed their status and if they were now leaning toward a specific candidate, participants responded as follows:

- Obama – 12
- McCain – 4
- Still undecided - 27

Quotes from still undecided:

"I don't think it changed my undecided nature, I think I just learned a little more about each and which is important." Brian, NYC 37

"I was more decided for McCain but now I am more undecided than I was before. I like what they both have to offer but I think I need to read more in depth." Anna, Chicago 47

"No has NOT changed my status - I'm going to wait until they announce their VP. If McCain gets Lieberman or Romney I'll go that way. If Obama selects Clinton I'm not going for him." Sandra, Atlanta 48

"It hasn't changed my mind right now, I am still as confused as ever." Zelia, NYC 58

Quotes from those leaning toward Obama:

"At this point I would be leaning away from McCain. He needs to stop splashing Cindy McCain on the site, because I don't get why he is doing that. The effect for someone like me could be negative, if he doesn't change his site he could loose voters like me." Sung, NYC 30-39

"I will remain undecided until close to the end, right now I'm leaning more toward Obama from what we looked at today. McCain's site looks old-fashioned and it contributes to the idea that he's too old for the position although I think he's strong." Ellen, NYC 55

"I'd be learning toward Obama now - he seems more real not like a politician." Jennifer, Atlanta 29

"Yes, Obama. He seems to be addresses more issues and more people." Patrice, Chicago 30

"I am leaning a little more towards Barack based on their sites. I like the meet barrack, where it has his early years, college, and political years. Also like the little video - him with the community. (The whole Learn section.) If the McCain site showed him more as a personable person it might help. He seems like a lone ranger, very untouchable." Emily, LA 28

"That's interesting - I'm a registered Republican but I'm put off by his anti-Barack Website. I like the way Obama presented this is who I am and who I'm about. McCain is always combative - I want to know what you are going to do for me as a middle class American. It opened my eyes to each of them." Dawn, NYC 40

Quotes from those leaning toward McCain:

"Yes - had an effect on my outlook on these candidates but my decision depends on Vice President selection." Robin, NYC 44

"McCain now because he tells me what he's going to do." Jon, Chicago 29

"Yeah - leaning toward McCain. I would say about 90 percent leaning towards him." Leshun, LA 33

"Yes. A little more towards McCain. Not that confident, not sure yet. On the website it was the video's on first response that helped changed view." Patricia, LA 49

5. APPENDIX

Campaign 2008 Project Participant Lists. Note: All participants were undecided voters, had a broadband connection and used the Internet at least 10 hours a week.

New York City – August 8, 2008

	NAME	GENDER / AGE	REGISTERED / LIKELY TO VOTE?	VOTED LAST IN	PARTY LEAN TOWARD	TOP 3 CAMPAIGN ISSUES	EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	HHI
1	Robert	M / 41	Yes / definitely	Presidential 2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Economy Education	Masters	Caucasian	\$150K+
2	Jackie	M / 32	Yes / definitely	2006, Senate	Republican	War in Iraq Economy Homeland Security	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$75-99K
3	Brian	M / 30-39	Yes / highly likely	2004 Presidential Election	Republican	Energy/Gas price Economy Stimulus Taxes	Masters	Caucasian	\$150K+
4	Sage	F / 19	Yes / definitely	Never	Independent	War in Iraq Energy Education	Some College	Caucasian	\$100-149K
5	Robin	M / 44	Yes / definitely	Primary 2007	Republican	Healthcare, Energy Social Security	Some College	Asian	\$75-99K
6	Richard	M / 40-49	Yes / Highly Likely	Fall 2007	Republican	Economy Taxes National Security	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$150K+
7	Sung	F / 30-39	Yes / definitely	Could not recall	Independent	War in Iraq Energy/Gas Prices Economy Stimulus	Bachelors	Asian	\$100-149K
8	Ellen	F / 55	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Energy Homeland Security	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$150K+

Chicago – August 15, 2008

	NAME	GENDER / AGE	REGISTERED / LIKELY TO VOTE?	VOTED LAST IN	PARTY LEAN TOWARD	TOP 3 CAMPAIGN ISSUES	EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	HHI
1	Nadeem	M / 31	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Energy/Gas prices Environment	Bachelors	Asian	\$150K+
2	Ramonita	F / 23	Yes / definitely	2004	Republican	Economy Energy/Gas prices Healthcare	Some College	Hispanic	\$20-74K
3	Patrice	F / 30	Yes / highly likely	2007	Democrat	Energy/Gas prices Healthcare Taxes	High School	African American	\$75-99K
4	Vicki	F / 50	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Democrat	Economy Energy/Gas prices Homeland Security	Masters	Caucasian	\$100-149K
5	Bernard	M / 55	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Republican	War in Iraq Energy/Gas prices Social Security	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$150K+
6	Anna	F / 47	Yes / definitely	Never	Republican	War in Iraq Healthcare Homeland Security	High School	Caucasian	\$20-74K
7	Tom	M / 47	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Independent	Economy Energy/Gas prices International Issues	Masters	Caucasian	\$100-149K
8	Jon	M / 29	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Democrat	War in Iraq Energy/Gas prices Education	Some College	Caucasian	\$75-99K

Atlanta – August 22, 2008

	NAME	GENDER / AGE	REGISTERED / LIKELY TO VOTE?	VOTED LAST IN	PARTY LEAN TOWARD	TOP 3 CAMPAIGN ISSUES	EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	HHI
1	Sandra	F / 48	Yes / highly likely	2004	Democrat	Healthcare Energy/Gas prices Taxes	Bachelors	African American	\$50-74K
2	Omar	M / 22	Yes / highly likely	2004	Independent	Energy/Gas prices Environment Education	Some College	Hispanic	\$150K+
3	Robert	M / 66	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Republican	War in Iraq Energy/Gas prices Economy	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$150K+
4	Jennifer	F / 29	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	Healthcare Environment Taxes	Some College	Caucasian	\$50-74K
5	Mollett	F / 39	Yes / highly likely	2004	Democrat	Education Overseas Oil Supply Healthcare	Some College	African American	\$50-74K
6	Kevin	M / 58	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Democrat	Healthcare War in Iraq Economy	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$100-149K
7	Jeff	M / 39	Yes / highly likely	Primary 2008	Independent	Healthcare Energy/Gas prices Economy	Masters	Caucasian	\$150K+

Los Angeles – August 27 & 28, 2008

	NAME	GENDER / AGE	REGISTERED / LIKELY TO VOTE?	VOTED LAST IN	PARTY LEAN TOWARD	TOP 3 CAMPAIGN ISSUES	EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	HHI
1	Leonard	M / 77	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Democrat	Healthcare War in Iraq Economy	High School	Caucasian	\$20-74K
2	LeShun	M / 33	Yes / definitely	Primary 2008	Independent	Healthcare Economy Social Security	Some College	African American	\$75-99K
3	Roxanne	F / 19	Yes / definitely	City Election 2007	Independent	War in Iraq Environment Education	Some College	Caucasian / Hispanic	\$100-149K
4	Jacqueline	F / 56	Yes / definitely	2000	Independent	Energy/Gas prices Economy Housing	Some College	Middle Eastern	\$20-74K
5	Kenneth	M / 38	Yes / highly likely	City Election 2007	Republican	War in Iraq Economy Immigration	Some College	Caucasian / Hispanic	\$20-74K
6	Enrique	M / 45	Yes / highly likely	City Election 2007	Democrat	Energy/Gas prices Healthcare Employment	Some College	Hispanic	\$75-99K
7	Patricia	F / 49	Yes / highly likely	2000	Republican	Social Security Taxes Housing	Some College	African American	\$75-99K
8	Stacy	F / 37	Yes / highly likely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Economy Immigration	Some College	Caucasian	\$100-149K
9	Natalie	F / 40	Yes / highly likely	2006	Democrat	Energy/Gas prices Education Social Security	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$75-99K
10	Carlos	M / 72	Yes / definitely	Propositions 2008	Independent	Healthcare War in Iraq Economy	High School	Hispanic	\$150K+
11	William	M / 60	Yes / definitely	2004	Republican	Healthcare War in Iraq Economy	Masters	African American	\$150K+

12	Jim	M / 40	Yes / definitely	2004	Independent	Healthcare War in Iraq Energy/Gas prices	Bachelors	Caucasian	\$75-99K
13	Emily	F / 28	Yes / definitely	2004	Independent	Environment War in Iraq Economy	Some College	Caucasian	\$75-99K
14	Travis	M / 30	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Economy Taxes	Some College	Caucasian	\$20-74K

New York – August 28, 2008

	NAME	GENDER / AGE	REGISTERED / LIKELY TO VOTE?	VOTED LAST IN	PARTY LEAN TOWARD	TOP 3 CAMPAIGN ISSUES	EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	HHI
1	Sherwin	M / 30	No / definitely	2004	Independent	War in Iraq Economy Employment	Masters	Persian-American	\$75-95K
2	Thomas	M / 30	Yes / definitely	2004	Republican	War in Iraq Economy Healthcare	Bachelors	Asian	\$75-95K
3	Rigo	M / 27	Yes / definitely	2004	Independent	Economy Healthcare Education	Some College	Hispanic	\$30-50K
4	Zelia	F / 58	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Homeland Security Energy	Some College	Caucasian	\$20-75K
5	Anna	F / 24	Yes / definitely	2004	Independent	War in Iraq Healthcare Education	Bachelors	Bi-racial	\$30-50K
6	Dawn	M / 40	Yes / definitely	2004	Democrat	War in Iraq Economy Healthcare	Masters	African American	\$100-149K