Research Article

I only have eyes for YouTube: Motives for political use

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Abstract: This paper examines the uses and motivations for connecting to YouTube for political information. Instead of using motivations derived from scales that measured traditional or online media use, this study examines 755 open-ended reasons for using YouTube for political information given by 470 respondents who completed an online survey during the two weeks before and the two weeks after the 2012 presidential election. Each of the 755 reasons was grouped into broader motivational blocks based on similar meanings. Ten motivational blocks emerged from the open-ended responses; Political Surveillance, Media Substitution, Credibility, Candidate Insight, Convenience, Social Fulfillment, Personal Fulfillment, Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment, Curiosity, Political Commercials. This paper offers five new reasons for using YouTube for political information that arose from the open-ended responses.

Keywords: Uses and gratifications, YouTube, political information, media use motivations

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1. Introduction

YouTube was created in 2005, and as quickly as one year later it saw its first important political use. Virginia Republican Senate candidate George Allen was video-taped referring twice to an Indian American field operative as macaca, a Portuguese term for a female monkey that was perceived as a racial slur. The video went viral on YouTube and Allen lost the election by a narrow margin (Craig, 2008).

In the time since the Allen incident, YouTube has become a formidable campaign tool that can strongly influence an election’s outcome. YouTube’s power to shape the democratic process highlights its importance as a source of political information for the voting public and warrants investigation into its role in the political domain. While several studies have explored the role of YouTube in the political process (Baumgartner, 2013; Cortese & Proffitt, 2012; Gueorguieva, 2008) and how candidates use the video-sharing site (Carlson & Strandberg, 2008; Gueorguieva, 2008; Gulati & Williams, 2010), research into the consumers of political videos is scant.

This study fills the gap by focusing on reasons why YouTube users specifically access political videos. The study is guided by the basic tenets of uses and gratifications theory, which examines media use from a consumer perspective. Uses and gratifications, thus, is an appropriate framework for studying what motivates individuals to watch political videos.

The primary motivations for viewing political videos were derived from open-ended responses from YouTube users who filled out an online survey in 2012 during the two weeks before and after the presidential election. Rather than using a pre-existing list of motivations for using other media for political reasons, this exploratory, descriptive study uncovers unique motivations for watching political videos on YouTube.
2. What Makes YouTube Different

Online sources are not all the same. Social networks sites (SNS), such as Facebook are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Although YouTube meets this definition, at least for those who have created an account to upload and comment on videos, it differs from the typical SNS in four key ways, which may affect gratifications.

1) YouTube focuses on video sharing instead of relationship building.
2) YouTube lets users view and share content without creating a profile, but they need to create a one if they want to upload, rate or comment on videos. Also, YouTube members get their own subscription-based channel on which they can post their own videos.
3) YouTube’s openly accessible comments section fosters more of a heterogeneous network than other SNS (boyd & Ellison, 2007).
4) YouTube’s overall tone is generally negative. Although self-made videos of political candidates and others generally fashion a positive image, opposing videos and follow-up comments can be mean-spirited (Johnson, Zhang, Bichard, & Seltzer, 2010).

Because YouTube is a video-sharing site that is different from other social media in several key aspects, users may connect to it for different reasons than they do the Internet in general or even other social media such as social network sites, blogs or Twitter.

3. Political Uses of YouTube

By 2006 YouTube had revolutionized political campaigning. For the first time, candidates could post campaign videos on an open and popular site that reached millions of voters inexpensively (Gueorguieva, 2008). In turn, users helped boost candidates’ public exposure by sharing videos with friends through e-mail or on another social medium (Carlson & Strandberg, 2008). By 2008 campaigning on YouTube was a must tactic with 72% of major party candidates for the Senate creating their own YouTube channel (Gulati & Williams, 2010). Candidates learned that posting videos targeted to different regions and demographics strategically befitted their campaign. They also took advantage of YouTube’s “Election Hub,” a one-stop site on which candidates and the public could post live-footage and political videos (Krashinsky, 2012), and the YouTube-created election page (YouChoose ‘08).

The public also responded favorably to YouTube. Almost one-quarter of voters considered YouTube an important source of political information in the 2008 election (Kohut & Keeter, 2008), and two-thirds of registered voters who used the Internet had watched election videos online (Baumgartner, 2013). The number of people who watched an Obama campaign video tripled from 2008-2012 (Baumgartner, 2013), and videos such as Obama Girl were said to have boosted his standing in the primaries. One political journalist summed up 2008 by claiming YouTube was the most important political venue in the campaign (Ramirez, 2008).

On the flip side, political operatives and ordinary users know they can post embarrassing “gotcha” videos to harm candidates’ reputations and their chances of winning an election (Cortese & Proffitt, 2012; Gueorguieva, 2008). The opposition can post attack ads without being required to endorse their message, as they must do on television (Cortese & Proffitt, 2012), and candidates and elected officials do not have control over who posts a comment or over what is said, so anyone can vilify a candidate or sabotage an issue (Lev-on, 2012).

4. Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications studies investigate how the audience uses the media, rather than how the media uses the audience (Blumler & Katz, 1974). The approach is based on the assumptions that individuals actively seek out media, that media use is goal directed, and that media consumption satisfies a wide variety of needs. Uses and gratifications researchers claim that individuals are aware of their reasons for using specific media and media content, and that they turn to the media to gratify those needs (McLeod & Becker, 1981; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985).
Researchers have advocated applying the approach to new communication technologies (Williams, Phillips, & Lum, 1985) and some of the earliest Internet scholars urged that the approach be applied to online sources (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). Since the late 1990s research has moved beyond simply examining online content and describing Internet users to explaining why users are attracted to the medium.

5. Measuring Uses and Gratifications

Early uses and gratifications studies of the Internet often adapted motivations for using traditional media, particularly television (Eighmey, 1997; Kaye, 1998, 2005; Lin, 2002; Perse & Dunn, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1982; Vincent & Basil, 1997). For example, when Kaye (1998) studied motivations for using the Internet she adapted items developed for television viewing that were constructed by Rubin (1981, 1983). Others (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Kaye & Johnson, 2002, 2004; Lin, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000) combined motivations from several studies and adapted them for the Internet. However, the fundamental differences between the Internet and traditional media, including levels of interactivity, 24/7 access, and users’ ability to be content creators and distributors rather than just consumers (Ruggiero, 2000), led to the realization that the Internet serves different needs than the traditional media.

One solution to the problem of relying on gratifications of old media to explain new media is to employ open-ended responses to develop motivations relevant to a particular medium (Bellamy & Walker, 1990; Charney & Greenberg, 2001; Donohew, Palmgreen, & Rayburn, 1987; James, Wotring, & Forrest, 1995; Palmgreen, Cook, Harvill, & Helm, 1988; Rubin & Bantz, 1989). Other studies uncovered unique motivations through audience interviews (Brown, Hendrickson & Littau, 2014; Donohew et al., 1987; Rubin & Bantz, 1989; Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999), a combination of interviews and items taken from previous uses and gratifications studies (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999) and interviews along with personal diaries with pre-existing items (Massey, 1995).

Open-ended responses have often revealed motivations specific to a medium or specific content that would not have been discovered by adapting pre-existing motives (Bellamy & Walker, 1990; Charney & Greenberg, 2001; James et al., 1995). For example, open-ended responses revealed that blogs are used because of anti-traditional media sentiment (e.g. expose traditional media bias, distrust of traditional media), motivations not found in other studies of online sources (Kaye, 2007), and interviews uncovered that Twitter is used mainly to build and maintain social relationships (Brown et al., 2014).

6. Motivations for Using YouTube for Political Information

What motivates online consumers to use YouTube for political information is not clear because studies tend to examine YouTube motivations for general use (Hanson, Haridakis, & Sharma, 2011), use pre-existing scales, or lump YouTube with other social networks so that the unique aspects of YouTube are obscured (Leung, 2009). One study that used pre-existing motivations found YouTube satisfies entertainment, belongingness, social networking, and companionship needs (Hanson et al., 2011). Another study of general use found that YouTube mainly satisfies entertainment needs (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Moreover, three of the six gratifications were social, including interpersonal connection, co-viewing and social interaction.

7. Research Question

To investigate reasons for using YouTube for political information, this study employed a multi-step approach to uncovering motivations for using a new medium that has been used by previous researchers (James et al., 1995; Kaye, 2007). This study addresses one major question: RQ1: What are the primary motivations for using YouTube for political information?
8. Method

This study’s main objective was to discover the primary motivations for using YouTube for political information. To draw a group of politically interested respondents who were likely to use YouTube and be representative of the general online population, a survey was posted on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowd-sourcing site from October 30 to November 13, 2012 (the two-week period surrounding the presidential election day). MTurk participants interested in completing the survey were directed to click on a link to an outside site that housed the questionnaire. The survey was opened by 1,937 individuals and completed by 1,267 (65.4%).

8.1. YouTube Use Motivations

Of 1,267 respondents who completed the survey, 543 (42.9%) answered that they regularly access political information from YouTube. Each of those respondents was then asked to list two primary reasons for accessing YouTube, 470 (86.6%) complied. The responses were typed into a text box. Some respondents gave one reason and others two or more, yielding 755 motivations.

8.2. Coding Procedures

Reasons for using YouTube were coded and categorized using procedures similar to those employed by James and associates (1995) in their pilot study of uses of bulletin boards and Kaye’s (2007) study of blog use motivations. Using a multi-step approach, the first author read and categorized each response based on the words and phrases used by each respondent to describe his/her reasons for using YouTube. As with Kaye (2007) and James, et al. (1995, p. 36), a unit of analysis “could be any grouping of words that express a meaning, and sometimes consisted of one word, but consisted of several sentences at other times.”

Each of the motivations was analyzed individually. For example, “I watch YouTube to help me decide how to vote,” and “I watch the videos because they are entertaining,” were recognized as two separate reasons. In cases where a respondent gave more than one reason, such as, “I watch YouTube instead of TV and I think the videos are funny and they are informative” the response was separated into three motivations.

Each of the 755 items was then grouped into broader motivational blocks based on similar meanings. For example, the Social Fulfillment block consists of motivations that suggest that users are drawn to YouTube to satisfy social needs (e.g. to see what others think, to interact with others, to be in contact with like-minded users). The lead author repeated the process four times, further regrouping and recategorizing the motivations. Next, an independent researcher acted as intercoder to the first author. Intercoder reliability was determined by calculating the simple percentage of agreement between the coder and the first author (Garramone, Harris, Anderson, 1986). Intercoder agreement for the major motivational categories is 92.4%.

8.3. Data Analysis of Demographics

Respondents were asked their gender, age as of their last birthday, and estimated income for 2012. They also selected their highest level of education from a list that ranged from “less than high school” to “terminal degree” such as Ph.D., M.D., J.D. Frequencies and means were run on the demographic variables gender, age, education and income.

9. Results

9.1. Respondents

The primary focus of this paper is to examine the reasons for using YouTube for political information. Demographic frequencies show that the vast majority of YouTube users (86.5%) attended college or earned a bachelor’s degree or higher and they earned an average of $47,400 in 2012. They are about 34 years old and 51.7% are male and 48.3% female. The demographics are consistent Pew Research studies of politically interested online users (Smith, 2011).
9.2. YouTube Motivational Blocks

Overall, 470 respondents offered 755 reasons for using YouTube for political information, which were categorized into 10 motivational blocks: Political Surveillance, Media Substitution, Credibility, Candidate Insight, Convenience, Social Fulfillment, Personal Fulfillment, Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment, Curiosity, Political Commercials.

9.2.1. Political Surveillance (139/18.5%)

Political Surveillance is the most popular reason for going to YouTube. YouTube fulfills users’ needs to track what is happening politically. Users are attracted to the wide range of information and topics. They appreciate that they can find specific political information. YouTube “often has its finger on the pulse,” and contains all of the “recent videos of political topics.” Other users look for guidance on how to vote and “to help me see how things will affect my future.” Some respondents are motivated to connect to YouTube because “Issues are broken down better,” and “information is extremely easy to digest.” As one user summed up, “YouTube has everything you need to know about politics” (Table 1).

9.2.2. Media Substitution (123/16.3%)

YouTube is the go to place for anything political that respondents do not want to get or cannot get from other sources. It is also used to catch up with what they might have missed elsewhere. Some users go on to watch specific political channels, and to access videos put up by activist groups. YouTube is frequently used in place of television. Quite a few respondents either do not have a television set or cable hook-up, or they rarely watch television shows so they go to YouTube instead. But YouTube is not just a substitute for television; many users prefer watching YouTube videos to reading a printed article. “I like to see the information in video form.” “I like watching and listening to YouTube political videos because at times I prefer this to just reading about it,” “I like it because of the video format. I’d rather sit and watch people discuss a topic in real time than have to read multiple articles to get information.”

YouTube also substitutes for traditional media by providing users a place to see what they missed. “I access YouTube if I miss an important item on television,” “I use it in case I miss live newscasts,” “I like to watch news clips I may have missed.”

Respondents also use YouTube like a DVR “to replay specific political events or news stories,” “to see replays of the most recent news,” and to “replay news clips.” Some users like to watch videos several times “to give me the time needed to understand what’s going on. I can pause, start over etc.,” and “to watch political scenes over and over again,” (Table 1).

9.2.3. Credibility (93/12.3%)

Respondents are drawn to YouTube mainly because “seeing is believing.” “Videos don’t lie,” “videos are authentic,” and “because you see it, it makes it real and it sounds believable.” YouTube users want to see for themselves instead of relying on second-hand interpretation. Additionally, videos that are balanced enhance credibility and trustworthiness. “YouTube has both Democratic and Republican views,” “YouTube offers both sides,” “I trust what I see on YouTube.” Because information can be fact-checked easily, users deem YouTube accurate. One respondent commented that it is important that “sources can be cross-referenced,” and another noted that, “most lies can be called out” (Table 1).

9.2.4. Candidate Insight (91/12.1%)

Users connect to YouTube to find out more about candidates and campaigns. One respondent remarked, “I like to see videos posted by both major political candidates running for office,” while another noted, “I use YouTube to watch specific videos about each candidate” (Table 1).

Users watch speeches, debates, interviews, and events to learn about the candidates’ personal
qualities and stances on issues. Respondents like to see how candidates interact with their audiences and constituents. Users closely scrutinize politicians’ facial expressions and body language to “see how seriously I should take their information,” and “whether I can trust a candidate.” YouTube “gives me a firsthand view of how candidates behave and what they say.” YouTube is unique in that users are drawn to it as a one-stop venue for candidate insight.

9.2.5. Convenience (65/8.6%)

YouTube users find it easy and quick to use, and they can access information from almost anywhere and at anytime. Some even like it because it is free and it allows them to multitask. The open-ended responses also revealed that convenience means more than simply obtaining information quickly, it also includes having an easy-to-use search system that brings up a large collection of videos in an organized manner. “The YouTube format is easy to use.” As one respondent summed up, “It gives me the potential to access political information at any time of the day.” “Access to information 24/7” (Table 1).

9.2.6. Social Fulfillment (65/8.6%)

Users access YouTube to see what other people think. They gravitate to the comments section “for other people’s viewpoints,” “to see people’s reviews and suggestions,” and to “see what the citizens of the world think about things.” Only four respondents said that they specifically seek comments from like-minded individuals.

Even though much is made about interactivity, only six respondents said that they are motivated to go to YouTube to interact or share videos with others. Apparently, YouTube users are content with reading other people’s opinions but they do not have the desire to engage in discussion. It could be that the comments section does not facilitate discussion and that YouTube relies more on video sharing. On YouTube users can participate as much as they choose - they can send in comments and links or they can simply watch the videos and read what others have to say. One respondent commented, “you can interact only if you want” (Table 1).

9.2.7. Personal Fulfillment (60/7.9%)

YouTube satisfies personal fulfillment needs. Users think of YouTube as entertaining, interesting, and funny. One respondent turns to YouTube because, “I like to be entertained by some crazy people,” and others “just to lighten the mood,” “because it is interesting,” “to look for something outrageous.”

Users are also drawn to YouTube because it is humorous. “There are a lot of funny political videos.” Users also like to laugh at political gaffes and witness political downfalls. One respondent likes “to see if politicians have done something ridiculous,” and another smirks at the “humorous mistakes made by politicians” (Table 1).

9.2.8. Curiosity (42/5.6%)

Many users mentioned that they are drawn to YouTube by links from other sites and from friends. They do not necessarily go to YouTube on their own, but do so when recommended by others to watch a particular video. “I only go to YouTube if I see a link posted and I think it looks interesting. It might be political”. “I use You Tube only when someone sends me an e-mail to evaluate something that has been said on YouTube.” “I use YouTube when I get a link to it within another article or email.” These users access YouTube only when their interest is piqued by an outside reference (Table 1).

9.2.9. Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment (40/5.3%)

A response was classified in this category if it degraded traditional media or negatively compared traditional media to YouTube. Different from media substitution where YouTube is used instead
of another medium for various reasons (e.g. no cable), anti-traditional media sentiment is turning to YouTube because of a strong dislike for mainstream media that pushes them to use YouTube (Table 1).

Some respondents are attracted to YouTube simply because it is independent of traditional media and “free of advertisements and corporate control.” It is also seen as an alternative voice on which “anyone can participate” and “say anything there,” and it has the “least amount of censorship.” Other users like that they can avoid “news network commentary,” “the propaganda that is fed to Americans through TV,” and “traditional media bias” (Table 1).

9.2.10. Political Commercials (37/4.9%)

The open-ended responses revealed this unique motivation for using YouTube – watching political commercials. Even though televised political commercials are largely ignored, and are criticized for being biased, intrusive and boring, YouTube users purposely watch them. Many specifically like to watch the ones that do not air in their broadcast area. “I access YouTube because I believe it is a good way to view a wide range of political advertisements...so I use YouTube to see different ads for both sides.” “I look at different political ads that each presidential candidate has released” (Table 1).

10. Discussion

Uses and gratifications of traditional and online media have been extensively studied to understand what motivates audiences to turn to certain media and how these reasons contribute to the media’s role in today’s fast changing digital world. Users are quickly embracing new digital tools and adapting their existing media use to accommodate the latest innovations. The benefits of digital applications motivate online enthusiasts to incorporate them into their daily lives. But reasons for using online media differ as each provides unique advantages.

When uses and gratifications of a new medium are studied, initial inquiry sometimes begins with open-ended questions. Subsequent studies refine the list of motivational items and further analysis continues the testing. To that end, this paper examines open-ended responses from a 2012 election study to discover the motivations for using YouTube for political information and to develop a scale for future refinement and quantitative analysis. The survey asked respondents to list two main reasons for using YouTube for political information.

A total of 48 unique reasons were culled out of a list of 755 responses given by 470 respondents. These reasons were then categorized in 10 broader motivational blocks: Political Surveillance, Media Substitution, Credibility, Candidate Insight, Convenience, Social Fulfillment, Personal Fulfillment, Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment, Curiosity, Political Commercials.

10.1. Motivations Unique to YouTube

This study contributes to the understanding of reasons for using YouTube for political purposes by discovering the following four unique motivational blocks uncovered by the open-ended responses and not found in other studies: Credibility, Political Commercials, Media Substitution, Candidate Insight, and Curiosity.

10.1.1. Credibility

YouTube is perceived as a credible source because as many respondents pointed out, “videos don’t lie.” YouTube followers believe that videos show candidates in an honest light and that facial expressions reveal whether a person is genuine. That they can see a speaker in action boosts credibility – they believe what they see. But that is not to say that users are gullible, they understand that some videos are edited for maximum effect and that candidates present themselves in the best possible light, so they cast a critical eye on misrepresentation and rely on other followers to expose a phony video. Users are on stand-by to fact-check and set the record straight in case of an untruth or deliberate misrepresentation. Going to YouTube to satisfy the
need for credible information and to learn about candidates reveal several important aspects of YouTube users - they sift through cyberspace looking for believable political information, they are engaged in the political process, and truth matters.

10.1.2. Political Commercials

Open-ended responses also revealed users are uniquely motivated to use YouTube to watch political commercials. That users turn to any online medium solely for exposure to political advertising is unique to YouTube. Political commercials are often thought of as annoying, particularly if they attack other candidates (Chang, 2001), yet YouTube users specifically go to the site to watch them.

10.1.3. Media Substitution

The open-ended responses show that YouTube is a substitute for other media. Many respondents mentioned that they either do not have a television or cable or rarely watch television. Though it seems obvious that YouTube stands in for television, it is also used in place of print (users prefer watching a video to reading long newspaper or magazine story), and radio (video surpasses audio-only reports).

Moreover, as part of media substitution, open-ended responses show that YouTube is uniquely used in place of a DVR - for archiving and for replaying. Instead of recording a political news event or speech on their own DVR, users rely on someone else to post the video. Media substitution is further support for the supposition that the traditional media audience erodes as new technologies become popular and as creative ways of using them are discovered.

10.1.4. Candidate Insight

This motivation for using YouTube was revealed through open-ended inquiry. YouTube uniquely fulfills the need to see candidates up close and personal through video. Although scholars examining both traditional and online media have identified information seeking as an important motive (Kaye & Johnson, 2002, 2004; Rubin 1983), using YouTube is for more than just learning about stances and issues but for gaining insight into a candidate’s character and personality. Watching candidate videos increases familiarity, feelings of affinity or dislike, and gives viewers a keen sense of the candidate as a person. Candidate insight, in this sense, is a motivation unique to YouTube.

10.1.5. Curiosity

About five percent of respondents mentioned that they not typically access YouTube unless they are directed there by a link or recommendation that piques their interest. Media consumers might try various media, from video games to smartphones, out of curiosity. (Joo & Sang, 2013; Wu, Wang, & Tsai, 2010), but what makes this gratification unique to YouTube is the associated social component – users bond over shared viewing.

10.2. Other Motivations

This study’s open-ended responses uncovered other motivations for using YouTube. These motivations have also been found in uses and gratifications studies of other social media.

10.2.1. Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment

In her study of blog use motivations, Kaye (2007) discovered anti-media sentiment as a major motivation, and it has also come up as a reason for using social network sites (Kaye, 2010). This
study’s open-ended responses also point to a distain for traditional media as a motivator for connecting to YouTube. The ability to avoid perceived traditional media bias and propaganda, along with ceaseless, and often inane, televised news commentary appeals to YouTube users. They like that YouTube is independent from corporate control and that common citizens can post videos and say whatever they like without censorship. The finding that anti-traditional media sentiment is pulling people away from mainstream sources to alternative online ones like YouTube is further indication of the traditional news media’s waning reputation (Pew Research, 2011).

10.2.2. Personal Fulfillment

As part of the personal fulfillment category, the open-ended responses also found that humor is a motivator for using YouTube. Users get a kick out of the funny political videos and parodies. They also laugh at political gaffes and missteps and at the over reactions to them. Open-ended responses have also revealed that humor is a motivator for using blogs (Kaye, 2007), but it has not been found in other Internet uses and gratifications studies.

10.2.3. Political Surveillance

Political surveillance is the most often mentioned motivation for accessing YouTube. Political surveillance includes keeping an eye on politics, getting up-to-date information, receiving voting guidance. Political blogs and social network sites also gratify social surveillance needs (Kaye, 2007, 2010).

10.2.4. Social Fulfillment

Social fulfillment is a common motivation for using social media (Brown et al., 2014; Kaye, 2005, 2007), but in the case of YouTube the gratification is more one-sided – users enjoy reading the comments but they do not engage in political conversation as readily as they do on other social media.

10.2.5. Convenience

One of the hallmarks of the Internet is that it provides access 24/7 to news and information, thus freeing users from television schedules and newspaper delivery times. Many studies have shown that convenience is a motivator for using the Internet and its various components (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Kaye, 1998, 2005, 2007). It is not surprising that convenience is also a reason for using YouTube for political purposes.

Overall, this study of open-ended responses furthers explanation of the primary reasons for accessing YouTube for political information - reasons that cannot be fully revealed in studies that use motivational items from studies of other media. This study, “only has eyes for YouTube” in that it relied on open-ended responses.

10.3. Limitations

This qualitative investigation of the motivations for using YouTube has several limitations. Data were collected from Mechanical Turk, an online crowd-sourcing site. Using such sites to collect data is becoming increasing popular and acceptable, and the data are at least as reliable as those collected by more traditional means (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2011). MTurk user demographics are representative of the general population of online users and are more representative that those from convenience samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011). But because MTurk does not offer a true random selection of respondents, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to the Internet population as a whole.

Construction of the motivational categories is subjective. Although intercoder agreement is high, the motivational blocks cannot be statistically tested for reliability. Further, the fill-in-the-blank
procedure in which respondents were asked to list two primary reasons for accessing YouTube does not allow for in-depth discussion or probing for deeper meaning. This paper does not purport to deliver a definitive list of YouTube use motivations or to statistically test the findings, but it does offer unprompted motivations to use as a benchmark for future studies.

10.2. Future Research

This study offers one of the first looks at open-ended responses of uses and gratifications of YouTube for political information. Further research is needed to more fully understand the motivations for using video sharing sites and their impact on media consumption. Quantitative research should assess the 48 motivational items found in this study. Factor analysis and reliability testing should be used to confirm the strength of the motivational blocks and the validity of the measures. YouTube is an influential political voice. Follow-up studies are critical to further assess how it has changed the political process and voters perceptions of politics.

Table 1. Motivations for Using YouTube for Political Information
(755 Total Responses)

I use YouTube...

Count/Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count/Percentage</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139/18.4%</td>
<td><strong>Political Surveillance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>to get a wide variety of political news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>to be informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>to watch a specific channel or show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>because news and information is up-to-date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>because videos make political news and information understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>for political guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123/16.3%</td>
<td><strong>Media Substitution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>as a substitute for television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>to see what I missed</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>to replay videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>as a substitute for print media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>for information that is only on YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93/12.3%</td>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>because seeing is believing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>for balanced information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>to fact check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>for accurate information</td>
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<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>because I trust it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91/12.2%</td>
<td><strong>Candidate Insight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>to watch candidates give speeches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27 for general campaign information
16 to watch candidate debates
12 to judge the personal qualities of candidates
07 to see learn about candidates through interviews
02 to see lesser-known candidates

65/8.6% Convenience
23 because it is easy to use
15 because it is available 24/7
12 because it is easy to access
10 because it is convenience
03 because it is free of charge
02 because it makes it easy to multitask

65/8.6% Personal Fulfillment
25 to see what other people think
06 to interact with others
04 to be in contact with like-minded others

60/7.9% Personal Fulfillment
25 because it is entertaining
15 because it is funny/humorous
10 because it is interesting
08 because I enjoy it
01 to pass the time
01 because it is inspiring

42/5.6% Curiosity
23 because I am curious about links from other sites
15 because I am curious about video suggestions from others
04 I’m curious about what I stumble across

40/5.3% Anti-Traditional Media Sentiment
17 because it is an alternative medium
12 because it is independent of traditional media
05 to avoid media bias
04 to avoid traditional news commentary
02 for the lack of propaganda

37/4.9% Political Commercials
25 to watch political commercials
10 to watch political commercials I can’t see elsewhere
02 to watch parodies of commercials
References


