

# The knowhow of presidential branding

 By [Naseem Javed](#)

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The boy wonder of the US minority blacks, senator Obama, is being referred to as being a "just do it" brand, and Lady Clinton of the good old White House days of the sleek Clinton era as a "yes we can" brand. You surely would know what these two slogans being created by the big advertising machines stand for.

American people have become fully entrenched in the ad lingo, bombarded with daily ads, where some of these lines have become catch phrases, while very often, no one recalls their true commercial origin, like "where's the beef"?

## Pigeonhole candidates like products

With the election frenzy on the way, another wicked way is to pigeonhole candidates like products on a shelf. It's only natural for the world's most consumer-friendly and overly- branded society to attribute this to their politicians. They said if George Bush were a Ford pickup, John Kerry would be a Lincoln Town car. Was this the reason that Kerry, a heroic lad from snob-hills, lost the election, as America needed something more like a Ford truck; built "like a rock", over the Limo-like Lincoln sedan?

The average American loves this kind of classification, and makes complex political choices as simple as choosing between a brand of ketchup and mustard. Yup.

The sound bite culture is so deeply embedded in America that half the nation is either dozing away, or is heavily subdued with constant 'breaking news' crammed with repetitive short sound bites, that hardly leaves them any time to deal with long, complicated sentences, addressing complex issues with logical bifurcation, comparing and deliberating opposing views and reaching conclusive comments.

What did you just say?

## Folksy branding machine

What would happen if the folksy branding machine were to label the entire Senate and Congress on this slogan or product association basis? Would it create a national debate along the likes of American Idol, the Price is Right, or Deal or No Deal?

Or maybe, simply a new Trump version of "You're all Fired"?

The conversations today, across the US, from the main streets to Wall Street, from trailer parks to Central Park, usually revolve around what to say when asked about the election, having to explain the issues by simply commenting on who looked the best and who reminded them of what, and who's "so nice" and who's not nice at all.

Like mumblings after an unfinished drive-in movie during a summer night on a long weekend, the chat goes on, while the two-year marathon of the US primaries seem to have not only exhausted the candidates themselves, but the public. Does this explain why US voters show up in the smallest portions of any of the Western countries?

## **Amazing labeling range**

To convey the message of personality, the labeling range is amazing.

Isn't Obama like a Superman, says one, or Robocop or Tarzan or R2D2? Sometimes, cool like Paul Newman, mumbling like Marlon Brando, feisty like Anthony Quinn or biblical like Charlton Heston. This way, people can really relate to the personality and message. Now I understand.

The overly brand-mentality society further speaks. How about Dirty Harry? Dancing with Wolves? Darth Vader? Even Mr Bean?

Finally, on what will Obama say to Hilary? "Frankly, my dear I don't give a damn", or "Go ahead, make my day", or "I'll make you an offer you can't refuse".

But the more enlightened and advanced commentators go on like this: Obama, "Now that's refreshing". "My kind of clean" And speaking of Hilary, "Welcome to the world", "Life tastes good". "Because she's worth it."

Senator McCain, a warrior and the real hero of must-see movie: The Hanoi Hilton about his life as a POW, is just a Hummer with a silent engine. His experience and stature often puts him in along the lines of "Make every day good to the last drop", "Much more than meat alone", "Good things come to those who wait", "We're right behind you. Every step of the way", "Take power to the next level".

## **Early hours**

The talks go on until the early hours; McCain will not keep the Eastern Promises "There Will Be Blood" on pork-barrel, a "Mutiny on the Bounty" certainly at High Noon.

Of course, those partisan for Hillary say, isn't she just like Erin Brockovich, Norma Rae, Wonder Woman, Aunt Jemima and at times simply Jane? This is where it gets backended to Tarzan and Jane as Obama-Clinton joint ticket possibilities come to surface, including other pending ideas like Samson & Delilah.

Is Obama 'generation next' while Hilary "brings good things to life"? Are they both trying to "think", "think different" all the way to "why think at all"?

Or are they really smart for staying at Holiday Inn Express? Let's ask the ducky called AFLAC.

Speaking on the other complex matters and domestic economy and searching for the simple solution, someone screamed, "Do it in Huggies". Folks, "Just don't do it."

## **As important as the White House keys**

These days, the knowhow of presidential branding is as important as the keys to the White House itself. The combined billion-dollar costs of campaigns to get votes is no longer a simple matter of shaking hands and soundbites. Today, all over the world, national leaders looking for breakthrough images depend on ultra-sophisticated branding and image identity

systems to strategise and oversee their campaigns.

On the other hand, American folks are a nice bunch and still the smartest and most innovative folks on the planet, and despite all the current ups and downs, they have the real core to come out of the doldrums, the good old American way.

Just do it now.

PS Those curious about the connection of the slogans to originating companies, please Google. "Let your fingers do the typing."

## ABOUT NASEEM JAVED

Naseem Javed is recognized as a world authority on corporate image and global cyber-branding. Author of *Naming for Power*, he introduced The Laws of Corporate Naming in the 80s and also founded ABC Namebank, a consultancy established in New York and Toronto a quarter century ago. Currently, he is on a lecture tour in Asia and can be reached at [nj@njabc.com](mailto:nj@njabc.com)

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