

Online campaign ads will target, track you

By Russ Choma, Mother Jones

In June, a video popped up on YouTube featuring a frenetic, shaggy-bearded pitchman in a chartreuse blazer. “Max Power here to tell you about an amazing new presidential candidate: Bailout Bush! If you love bailouts, you’re going to love Bailout Bush!” He touted Jeb Bush’s work for Lehman Brothers before the investment bank tanked in 2008 and his backing of the Wall Street bailout initiated by his brother’s administration. The 75-second clip concludes with him soaking in a bathtub full of cash, as a voice-over intones: “This offer guarantees a presidential candidate [who] cannot win a single primary state, let alone the general election!”

The bizarre but memorable video was bankrolled by America’s Liberty, a super-PAC supporting Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. It was just a taste of what’s coming in the 2016 race, when memes, GIFs, and other social-media catnip will blanket the internet. As the race heats up, every device you own, from your laptop to your Apple Watch, will become a delivery vehicle for all manner of political messaging. And you may never know which billionaire players or dark-money groups are targeting you—or how they’re tracking you.

The amount of spending on digital advertising is expected to nearly double in this election cycle compared with 2012. Online spots cost a fraction of traditional TV or print ads, and political operatives are giddy over the new-and-improved ways to cheaply and creatively bombard voters with their messages.

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