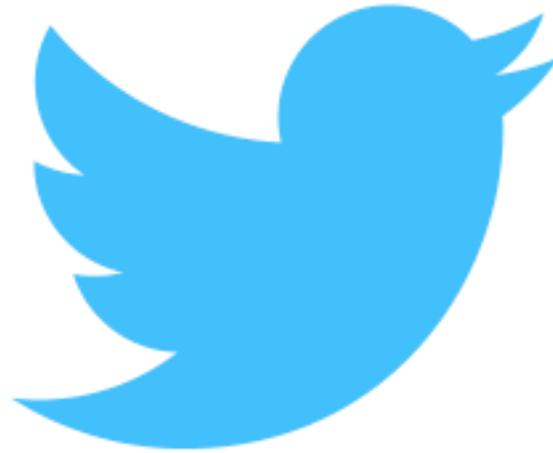# Campaigning in
140 Characters (or Less)

How   Twitter
Changed Running for President

By Joseph Vitale

Spring 2016

Table of Contents

Running for Office in the Internet Age

In a presidential election, campaigns have one goal: To "put feet on the ground and bodies in the voting booth." Elections are about doing this effectively and efficiently, and they rely on developed strategies that connect candidates with voters. These operations, which require dozens of staffers and strategists, aim to provide citizens with information about a candidate so that they will organize for and contribute to their campaigns. The goal, ultimately, is to encourage voters to choose their preferred candidate on election day. The prize, hopefully, is the candidate's assumption of the Office of the President of the United States.

Since the first presidential elections, communication has played a central role in campaigning. It is, as White House media advisor Bob Mead wrote, the "essence of a political campaign," allowing a candidate to convey his ideas and visions to voters with the hope that they can trust him, support him and elect him.[1] The significance of communication has been a constant in electoral politics, but the modes through which we communicate have not. In the past 250 years, some of the most significant technological advances of mankind have changed how we communicate with other people. Inventions such as the printing press, the telephone, the radio, the television and the Internet have fundamentally transformed how human beings, near and far, exchange ideas.

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[1] Bob Mead to Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, "White House memorandum on "The Role of Radio and Television in Political Campaign," 19 June 1975. Web. 18 March 2016
http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0047/phw19750619-01.pdf

They have transformed presidential elections as well, as campaigns have used mass media to communicate with large groups of voters since the 1700s. First, campaigns used print media, such as newspaper and pamphlets, to distribute information to voters. When newspaper circulation rose in the nineteenth century, political parties and publishers used that medium to introduce presidential candidates to the American electorate. With the development of the radio, campaigns began utilizing radio to carry sound into the homes of Americans. When Americans began purchasing radios in the 1920s, presidential candidates began to speak directly to voters through the radio waves. Soon enough, millions of Americans were able to hear the voices of presidential candidates from their own homes. In the 1950s, Americans turned to television, a visual form of mass media. Americans could not only voters hear a candidate's voice, but they could see his face as well. Candidates now need to act and look presidential, altering elections forever.

The latest mode of mass media is digital media: the Internet, and one of its greatest tools, social media. Similar to radio and television, social media has changed the nature of electoral politics. Social media has altered not only the relationship between candidates and voters, but also the relationship among voters themselves. Large virtual communities like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have provided platforms for people to interact with individuals from around the globe, providing a space to share all kinds of information including text, graphics, audio and video. The type of shared content is vast, spanning entertainment to academic. Inevitably, these ned media influenced politics as well.

The Internet has played a role in every election of the twenty-first century, starting with its minor impact on the 2000 presidential election. Social media first made an impact in 2008,

when then-Senator Barack Obama, a Democrat from Illinois, defeated Senator John McCain, a Republican from Arizona. Obama's campaign, which utilized an array of online tools to communicate with voters, solicit donations and recruit volunteers. has been hailed as the first true "Internet campaign." His victory, in many ways, is where American politics and the Internet first intersected — and the two have never been the same since.

In many ways, social media has been used in ways similar to traditional media, like newspapers, radio and television. Social media is used to introduce presidential candidates, share information, communicate policy positions and encourage voters to choose a single candidate. Campaigns create content, distribute it and voters receive it. This resembles the familiar hallmarks of mass communication, suggesting social media is not a significant departure from other modes of mass media.

But social media's role in the 2012 and 2016 election indicate otherwise. Technological advancements made in the last eight years reveal that the possibilities of social media are still coming into focus. For one, social media makes it easier for campaigns to quickly and effectively measure and analyze responses from the public. A campaign may post something on social media, and know within minutes how many people see it and, more importantly, how people are "interacting with it": whether they liking it, sharing it, retweeting it, favoriting it or replying to it. This kind of information provides minute-by-minute updates to campaigns about how the public is receiving their content — something unthinkable with radio or television.

In traditional media, communication was largely a one-way street. A campaign would run an advertisement and people would watch it. They could recommend it to a neighbor the next day, but, for the most part, it ended there. On social media, it is just as easy to receive content as

it is to share content, giving social media a dimension of "virality." If users are reacting to a piece of content, they could just as easily respond to the creator as they could share it with other users. With social media, users can send each other content that could then be sent to other users. If the original content becomes large enough, it can begin to spread exponentially, gaining a virus-like quality — all at the hands of the consumers.

My thesis will explore the new uses of social media — particularly Twitter — and its role in presidential elections. I will explore several relevant questions that span its role in the presidential election in 2008 to the current presidential election in 2016. The central question that will be considered is: How has Twitter shaped the nature of the presidential election process? This will be explored by examining general trends in presidential campaign strategy in the past eight years and a detailed analysis of Twitter's role in this strategy. This examination of Twitter will evaluate how presidential candidates are using Twitter and what kinds of messages are being communicated on the social network.

Overall, my research finds three key developments in social media that are true for presidential campaigns. The first thing is that Twitter, though it has some general guidelines and norms, is an amorphous and dynamic community. It has no distinct shape, being made up of thousands of millions of users gathered in many smaller communities. Similarly, Twitter is always changing: there are constantly new features, new capabilities and new trends that dictate what people are talking about. The result is that campaigns often change and conform to this structure to make the most impact on social media. This can happen within the duration of a single campaign, but it also happens from one election to the next.

Second is the development and mature of the "social" aspect of social media For the majority of American history, campaigns have been a one-way dialogue: The media speaks and people listen. Campaigns use voter information and target different groups but there are few instances of incorporating voter voices into a campaign. Social media makes that possible and candidates have been able to use this to their advantage.

Third, some of the most successful campaigns manage to bring together the medium and the message. They find a way to synthesize the digital strategy and the thing being communicated to people on social media. Examples of this include Barack Obama, who came onto the scene as a new candidate using a new technology. In many similar ways, Bernie Sanders is also an example of this, in that he has managed to wage an attack against the highest earners and large campaign donations by motivating online users to provide smaller donations.

One thing this research does not explore is whether social media affects election outcomes. This is not an easy to question to answer at the moment. Every candidate running for the office of the president has a presence on social media, and it is difficult to trace election outcomes to a single factor. Successful presidential elections, after all, are also products of strong election results, steady donations, popular messages, and a whole range of important factors that complicate the equation of what makes a candidate successful or not. Social media may play a large role, but it is just one role in a theatre of many.

Mass Media and Elections: A Brief History

Presidential campaigns typically have one central goal, which is to persuade eligible individuals to vote for a particular candidate. Within this goal, campaigns have several smaller goals: One is to communicate a message to voters that will encourage them to vote. Another is to encourage individuals to contribute to campaigns to continue to fund them. A third goal is to mobilize voters to organize and support a particular candidate. If a campaign can do this more successfully than another candidate, he wins the election and can assume the White House.

The ways in which this was accomplished have changed since the first contested U.S. election in 1796. Over the past two hundred years, presidential candidates have had to adapt and develop with the habits of American voters, which have changed drastically. But the three pre-internet forms of mass media (newspapers, radio, and television remain significant. Still, several themes have remained constant with the technological advancements. With each one, several themes have remained constant. The first is that these modes of mass media have involved a content creator, a channel of distribution, a message and a receiver. The second is that, with each new mode, another layer of communication has been added. With radio, a consumer could hear a voice speaking with the words. With television, a consumer could see a face speaking the words. Third, with each new mode, the message was affected by the medium. With newspapers, newspapers could print image and speeches spoken by candidates for presidency, but with radio, a president often tailored messages so, when spoken, it had a stronger

impact for a listener. With television, campaigns were able to incorporate visual imagery that could manipulate viewers, making them feel a particular way about what we are watching.

The first form of mass media was newspaper, which have been in use since 1700s for political purposes. Many newspapers were controlled by parties, like *The Log Cabin*, which had a circulation of 80,000 and was the leading campaign newspaper in the 1840s. This continued through the early 1900s as papers were easily accessible and had large amounts of readers. They were often used for news and commentary, but also for the printing of speeches and policies.

The next important form of mass media is the radio. By 1924, 1.25 million American households had a radio, compared to 400,000 the previous year.[2] In the opening of the century, political leaders saw the radio as a valuable tool for amplifying there voices, and it was first used to broadcast speeches. In the presidential campaign of 1924, radio broadcast the political speeches of incumbent President Calvin Coolidge, the Republican candidate, and John W. Davis, the Democratic candidate. Later, by the 1930s, the two largest networks, the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System, were becoming household names and began using the radio as a medium of mass communication.

The third important development is the television, which began becoming a popular household item in the United States in the 1950s, when just a handful of channels were available to viewers. In the 1960 presidential election, when Richard Nixon campaigned against John F. Kennedy, more than a 115 million people are able to tune into the event through radio and television. The debate, telecast from Chicago in September of 1960, featured two men discussing domestic policy. For the first time, the American public was exposed to both of the presidents

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[2] "Communicating the Presidency." National Museum of American History. americanhistory.si.com. 2004. Web. 18 March 2016. http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/4a4.html

squaring off — and many believe that the exposure favored Kennedy (who "looked pleasant, relaxed, self assured") over Nixon ("pale, tired, and emaciated, with his customary five o'clock shadow making him look a bit sinister)."[3]

For the four debates during the run-up to the general election, an average of 71 million people watched the debates on television, with the remaining 43 million listening in on radio. The ability of the American public to watch the candidates became a important factor in the election, with many Americans taking to the youthful idealism of Kennedy. They proved to be a turning point, however, as in the following debates, Kennedy began to give promising performers, prompting many to predict his victory in the November general. Ultimately, Kennedy won, with 49.7 of the vote in the largest turnout in the nation's history.

Politics and The Social Web

The most current and most recent form of mass media is the Internet. After winning the White House in 2008, President Obama remarked "there's no more powerful tool for grass-roots organizing than the Internet." The Internet, in countless ways, has changed how presidential candidates run for office. The history of its role in elections is brief, but impactful.

Candidates Foray into Web 1.0

The first presidential candidate to use the Internet were Al Gore, a Democrat from Tennessee, and Bill Clinton, a Democrat from Arkansas, in 1996. Their websites were simple: their campaigns posted policy information and positions, plus candidate backgrounds. They did not change from the beginning of the election until the end, when Clinton defeated Bob Dole, a

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[3] Boller, Jr, Paul. *Presidential Campaigns: From George Washington to George W. Bush*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Page 299

Republican from Kansas to win. The Internet became more significant during the 2000 election, when George W. Bush, a Republican from Texas, campaigned against Al Gore. The websites were similar to those in 1996: static, clunky, and lacking in in-depth information. Gore's website put off users with an overabundance of menu options and it did not fit a web page without extensive scrolling. Similar to 1996, there was not a significant portion of Americans on the Internet, and it had little effect on the election.[4] By this time in 2000, however, Internet use was growing, with nearly 50 percent of American adults were online at the time.[5]

This period was largely considered the Web 1.0: when websites were primarily meant for consumption by users active online.[6] Websites, particularly those created by the candidates, were meant for consuming content. Hence, for political candidates, it was a way to provide information about the candidates, including personal biography, campaign news, policy positions, and photographs. This continued the mass media theory of a content creator, a channel of distribution, a message and a receiver.

However, Internet usage was growing. In 2002, Pew Research Center found that almost a quarter of people online were using the web to find election news. Almost four-fifths of those using the Internet for election information were doing so to find out information about candidate positions.[7] Within that same year, more politicians began publishing website, conducting

[4] Pollard, p. 577

[5] Rebecca Pineiro, "E-Electioneering: The Political and Cultural Influence of Social Media in the 2008 and2012 Presidential Election," Student Pulse 7, no. 2 (2015),Perrin and Duggan, "Americans' Internet Access: 2000-2015."

[6] Balachander, Krishnamurthy and Cormode, Graham. "Key Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0" *First Monday*. 2 June 2008. Web. 18 April 2016.

[7] Pew Research Center. "Untuned keyboards: Online campaigners, citizens, and portals in the 2002 elections." 15 April 2003. Web. 21 March 2016

research, sharing policy positions and posting endorsements online.[8] Many of these websites could be defined by two general trends. The first is that most online experiences were defined by textual information, with some inclusion of photographs and other graphic media. Second websites were mostly "pull" experiences, meaning that they relied on users to "seek out" a candidate's website in order to find it. This was a general pattern of what was known as "Web 1.0", and carried over into presidential campaigns.

By 2004, however, the Internet was changing quickly. During the presidential election, 10 candidates launched active web presences by summer 2003.[9] For that election, former Governor Howard Dean, a Democratic candidate from Vermont, launched a website that influenced many other candidates. First, Dean's website provided a tool for users to provide feedback on his website's content and appearance, allowing the campaign to hear direct feedback on Dean's policy platforms. Second, Dean's website hosted an online forum for users, where they could have conversations and debates about policy issues in the campaign. Third, Dean used the website to solicit donations from voters.[10] These functions, which introduced the social aspect of the Internet, drew attention from many online users. It not only capitalized on the opportunities to increase its donor base, it gave a platform for a community of people interested in politics.

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[8] Pew Research Center. "Political sites gain, but major news sites still dominate: Modest increase in Internet use for campaign 2002." 10 January 2003. Web. 18 March 2016.

[9] Endres, D., & Warnick, B. "Text-based interactivity in candidate campaign websites: A case study from the 2002 Elections." Western Journal of Communication, 68, 322–342. July 2004. Web. 18 March, 2016. p 322

[10] Endres & Warnick, 2004. p 322.

By 2004, almost half of all Americans using the Internet were using it get to information about political candidates during the election year.[11] Dean ultimately lost the nomination in 2004 to John Kerry, who was defeated by incumbent George W. Bush. Nonetheless, Dean's online presence became a model and a precursor for future candidates for president.

Candidates Move Into Web 2.0

To understand the role of social media and politics, it is best to identify the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, and its effects on mass media. Though there is not a single authority on this, many commentators finds some key differences between the two. When it comes to Web 1.0, one of the most important aspects is that is it static. Websites might have useful information but are not regularly updated. Another feature of Web 1.0 pages is that users are not capable of interaction. Users cannot post on the websites, alter them, or change content (unlike, say, a Wikipedia page, which can be altered by users).[12]

Web 2.0 represents a giant step toward interactivity. In addition to graphic design advances, Web 2.0 signifies the increased capability for social interactions on the web. Social networks have been a major feature of the Web 2.0 and have been steadily growing in popularity since the mid-2000s. Perhaps one of the first examples was MySpace, a tool that allowed for posting text, photos, music and other web content on a profile, all of which was hosted by large software companies. MySpace had the hallmarks of Web 2.0 services. It allowed for full interactions with content and users were able to customize content. Also, they were all to have

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[11] Gallup Organization. "2004 campaign trail winds through cyberspace." January 20, 2004. Web. 18 March 2016. http://www.gallup.com/content/default.asp?ci=10321

[12] Strickland, Jonathan. "Is there a Web 1.0?". How Stuff Works. HowStuffWorks.com. 28 January 2008. Web. 14 March 2016

interactions with other people on the web. This social aspect continued with Facebook, a social

networking tool that was launched in 2006 and was meant for college students to connect with

their peers. Facebook allowed users to post photos and texts, and allowed users to "friend" one

another and chat with each other.

A third service, Twitter, has also grown in popularity and has made the biggest impact on

presidential elections in America. Created in 2006, the device created a way for users to send and

read short 140-character messages called "tweets." The service grew rapidly and, within 6 years,

there more than 100 million users on Twitter tweeting millions of tweets per day. Since its

release, the social network has expanded user capability, and it now allows for posting of photos

and videos, with added features like geo-tagging. Other features include "trending topics," which

enables users to view popularly tweeted-about topics in the world, or even in their country or

city. There are several other important features. True to the name "Twittersphere," the social

media outlet has a language of its own. A few examples of this:

Handle: A shorthand for a Twitter user's profile name (e.g. @POTUS)
Tweet: A message up to 140 characters sent publicly by a Twitter user; can include text, photos, links, videos, polls, and more
@Replies: A Twitter user can reply publicly to another tweet using the @ and the other user's Twitter handle
Retweet: Reposting another user's tweet (or RT)
Follower: Somebody who subscribes to another user's tweets
Following: Subscribing to another user's tweets
Feed: A user's home page where he/she sees all of his followers tweets and other content
Hashtag (#): A way of organizing a trend on Twitter. When clicked, can be used to view other tweets with that same hashtag (e.g. #Election2016)

Users can follow others and "favorite" certain tweets that they like and can "retweet"

certain messages they wish to have on their feed. They can also post polls for other users and

direct message other users privately. Shortly after its creation, many large organizations and

groups began capitalizing on Twitter's ability to disseminate information to large groups of

people quickly. Just about every political organization, governmental body and political office in

the country maintains a Twitter account. This equates to thousands of accounts communicating

with millions of followers daily. @BarackObama, one of the president's two accounts, has more

than 70 million followers. His secondary account, @POTUS, an acronym for President of the

United States, has more than 7 million followers.

The Audacity to Tweet: Obama's Digital Strategy

"Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president," Ariana Huffington

said.[13] Huffington's claim, though debatable, suggests an undeniable point: That Obama's digital

strategy played in influential role in his campaign for the White House in 2008. His campaign,

after all, is often considered the first "Internet campaign," one that that utilized an array of

informational technology to encourage millions of citizens to donate to his campaign, organize

events and, ultimately, vote for him in November.[14] Across a spectrum of emerging social

networks and online tools, Obama "mastered the use of new digital networks" in a way that

updated and rewired the ways in which candidates and citizens interact.[15] Harnessing the power

of informational technologically, he energized voters, tapped into America's hope for change and

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[13] Schiffman 2008. Johnson Pg 176.

[14] Greengard, Samuel. "The First Internet President." Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery News and Society February 2009, Vol 52.2.

[15] Carty, Victoria and Takagarawa, Stephanie. "The 2008 U.S. Presidential Election and New DigitalTechnologies: Political Campaigns as Social Movements and the Significance of Collective Identity." Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry: Tamara. volume 10 Issue 4. December 2012. Web. 18 March 2016. Page 78

won a landslide election in 2008, making history not only as the first African-American president, but as the first Internet president too.

The election in 2008, some considered, was a presidential election defined largely by technology, in both its medium and its message.[16] Information technology had been growing since the turn of the century and it played a minor role in the preceding elections. But social networks like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter began gaining traction around 2005 and became popular among young Americans and offered new ways for people to connect with individuals around the globe. Twitter was approaching 5 million users when the election began and Facebook had around 80 million users during the first primaries in 2008.

The Obama campaign sought to use this new media from the onset of the campaign. "Technology, like the grassroots focus, would be at the core of our campaign from the start," wrote David Plouffe, a campaign strategist, in his memoir about the 2008 campaign.[17] This was true before the campaign even began. To announce that the one-term Senator from Illinois was going to be entering the race, the campaign posted a video on YouTube in January 2007. Quickly, the video became a "YouTube phenomenon, driving hundreds of thousands of people" to the campaign's website.[18] Though just the beginning, it became an important, telling moment for the Obama campaign: That social media could be an unfiltered mass communication tool that would help the campaign talk directly to voters and to bring them to their website.[19]

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[16] Carty, Pg. 9

[17] Plouffe, David. *The Audacity to Win: The Inside Story and Lesson's of Barack Obama's Victory.* New York: Viking Press, 2009. Pg 21

[18] Plouffe, Pg 32.

[19] Plouffe, Pg 32

From the launch of his campaign in April of 2007, Obama's digital campaign strategy was complex. The campaign had multiple tech-savvy teams to head up his online operations, including an infrastructure team, a new media operations team, a website design team and a press team that photographed and recorded his activity on the campaign trail.[20] The teams ran the campaign website,, a Facebook account, a YouTube account, a blogging service called my.barackobama.com ("myBO") and other platforms as well.

A few members of the staff were dedicated to Obama's Twitter profile, @BarackObama. It was not the most popular service at the time, nor did it have the most dedicated resources, but a focus on the campaign's use of Twitter in 2008 and in 2012 reveals several things about the role of social media in presidential elections. First, Twitter showed the social media could be an effective way of directing online users to the main hub the campaign: the website, where viewers could read about policy positions, watch videos, donate, and become involved in campaign events. Second, Twitter showed that social media was a changing network. Constant updates to the service have made available new technologies, new service and new capabilities. Third, Twitter showed that social media is effective when campaigns can communicated a medium that was unified with its message. Perfect strategies, furthermore, are a marriage of form and content, and Obama's message and the new medium were a perfect fit for this.

2008: Obama Signs Up For Twitter

When Barack Obama announced he was running for president in 2007, there only about 3.5 million Twitter accounts and Obama, a two-term Senator, had 100,000 followers. Just two

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[20] Clavyton, Dewey. *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

years old, much of Twitter's activity was fueled by a small percentage of hyper-active users: 5% of Twitter users account for 75% of all activity.[21] Still, this did not stop the Obama campaign from making its first tweet in April 2007. Posted by user @BarackObama, the tweet read: "Thinking we're only one signature away from ending the war in Iraq. Learn more at www.barackobama.com." Brief, direct, about the issues, and including a reference to his website, the short message (at 102 characters) became a telling sign of the more than 260 tweets that would be posted during the 17-month long election.

Obama's use of Twitter in 2007 opened up and became a model for future campaigns for several reasons. It revealed a great deal about the campaign's digital strategy and how it evolved — matured, even — over the period of time. A look at Obama's tweets tells us a few things about what the campaign's Twitter strategy. First, his tweets reveal that the account was often used to to update his "followers" as to where he was at any moment and his upcoming appearances. Nearly 80 percent of all of Obama's tweets included a reference to his location. Around 40% included mentions of upcoming appearances. The second was that they played a pivotal role in encouraging "followers" to his website, www.barackobama.com. Almost 60 percent of all tweets included a reference to his website and the information viewers could find there. The character limit — 140 characters, spaces included — constrained the amount of information that could be contained within one tweet but the inclusion of a link could get viewers to the website, where more information and content was available. The 260 tweets also revealed that the campaign had a continuously maturing strategy. The format, over the course of the

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[21] "Inside Twitter: An In-Depth Look Inside the Twitter World." Sysomos Research. sysomos.com June 2009. Web. 18 March 2016

election process, developed in noticeable and telling ways, revealing a change in message, content and format.

Many of the campaign's first tweets were essentially micro-press releases, and were used to update Obama's "followers" as to the status of the campaign. This included references to policy positions and events he was attending. The following was posted in the lead up to some of the early primaries, including the first one in Iowa:

"In Iowa this week. Just announced plan today to "Reclaim the American Dream."
(November 7, 2007)

The campaign also utilized Twitter to alert his followers to upcoming events, including his speeches and references to Obama's upcoming appearances on television. Some were about late-night television appearances, like the following one about his appearance on Late Night with David Letterman:

"Campaigning in South Bend, IN and will then be on Letterman tonight at 11pm ET/PT on CBS."   (May 1, 2008)

There were also announcements to followers about his upcoming appearances on political talk shows as well, like The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, a late-night satirical news program on Comedy Central that ended in 2015:

"Going to be on The Daily Show with Jon Steward tonight. 11:00 pm ET on Comedy Central."   (April 21, 2008)

The tweets reveal a conversational, informal tone that are detailed, but revealing. They acted as live updates to his followers: Where he was, where he was heading, when he would be making television appearances. Another important aspect was that they also appear as if they are typed

by Obama himself. They were not signed by a campaign manager or staff and they were in a distant, but formal, first person tone. They looked like he was providing updates to his followers in real-time.

What Obama Tweeted About in '08

Tweet Content	Number of Tweets	Percent of Tweets
Location info	206	79%
Campaign Website Reference	166	63%
Notice of Live Event Streaming	101	39%
Campaign Announcement	59	23%
Reference to TV/CAble Show	35	13%
Policy Statement	25	10%
Get out the vote message	21	8%
Personal Comment	3	1%

Source: Frederic Solop Analysis of @BarackObama from April, 2007 — November 2008

In addition to locational updates and television appearances, the campaign used Twitter for some major campaign announcements, including information abut about when speeches would be given, when debates were being held and when primaries were coming up.

> "In Iowa this week. Just announced plan today to "Reclaim the American Dream."
>
> (November 7, 2007)

> "Energized by the news of winning Mississippi. We've won most states, the most votes, and the most delegates."
>
> (March 11, 2008)

Endorsements and victors were also announced via Twitter, alerting followers to campaign news in small doses:

> Meeting folks in South Carolina today. Excited to have received Columbia's The State, Rock Hill Herald & Greenville News endorsements."
>
> (January 23, 2008)

These updates, for the beginning months of the campaign, acted as micro-press alerts for the general public. They were not long documents sent to reporters filled with unnecessary details meant for reporters. Instead, they were meant for busy people who were following the campaign, not reporting on it. The result was an idea of what Obama was up to, in the general sense: Where he was traveling, what states he was winning, what some of his speeches were about. It was an opportunity to speak directly to voters without the filter of the media. Most reporters would not file a story about Obama getting endorsed by a South Carolina newspaper — but Twitter made it possible for the campaign to share that information with his followers.

One of the most significant capabilities of the Internet is that of including hyper-links: Texts that, when clicked (or tapped), can take a user to another webpage. The campaign began to utilize this feature in the summer, after Obama captured the nomination.The strategy followed a few basic assumptions made by the campaign. The first was that not everybody was logging on to their computers to simply visit the campaign website. Only about 30% were using the Internet for political purposes. However, many users were using the social media, browsing their Twitter

feeds media to see what other people were tweeting about. The campaign also realized that 140

character limit made it difficult, if impossible, to elaborate fully on Obama's policy positions.

But this did not mean that information was not online. Even in the opening months of his

campaign, Obama had several web pages dedicated to his policy positions and personal history.

He had several web pages dedicated to speeches he had given, as well. The campaign also

developed a live-streaming service, where viewers could watch his speeches and rallies in

real-time. All they had to do was get people to view it. The answer, they found were hyperlinks,

which, from a tweet, could take viewers to his website where they "watch it live" or "learn

more." One example of a hyperlink to a town hall in Florida:

> Holding a town hall on economic security in St. Petersburg, FL. Watch it live
> my.barackobama.com/live
>
> (August 1 2008)

This resulted in many tweets (almost 65%) including a reference to the website. There was also

the following, linking followers to a rally in Colorado:

> In Fort Collins, CO. At an "Early Vote for Change" rally. Watch it live at
> my.barackobama.com/live
>
> (October 26, 2008)

The result was users of Twitter could simply click a link and be taken to Obama's campaign

website: the hub of information for the campaign.

There is also the role Twitter played in the campaign's fundraising operation. Despite

more than 260 tweets, Obama never once tweeted asking for donations, leaving no clear link to

how much money he raised from people discovering his campaign through social media. But

some see his social media presence playing a "passive role" in his fundraising operation. In the

first quarter of 2007, the Obama campaign raised 25 million from 104,000 donors, more than half of which came through the Internet. Obama, though he declined public financing for the primaries and general election, amassed almost 4 million individual contributions, many of which were less than $50. During the first month of the nomination contest, he raised $32 million, $27 million from online supporters, many in less than 50 dollar form.[22]

The intake surpassed all of his opponents, largely due to a successful online presence. Obama was "a classic Internet-start up, a movement spreading with viral intensity and propelled by some of Silicon Valley's most creative minds."[23] He amassed more than 1.2 million donors during his campaign.[24] Just as importantly, he had 750,000 active volunteers and 8,000 affinity groups. In February 2008, he raised $55 million, $45 million of which was over the Internet. Of all that money, 94 percent of donations were of $200 or less, "a number dwarfing small contributions to Clinton and John McCain."[25]

There are also some noticeable developments in how Obama's use of Twitter changed over time. Around the beginning of his campaign, the campaign posted a tweet about once a week. This, however, changed, following February 2008, when the primary season was in full swing. At this time, the campaign began making more direct appeals to voters — and did so more often. He encouraged voters to take action during the primaries, and nearly 10 percent of

[22] Clayton, p. 147

[23] Cohen, Roger. "The Obama Connection." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Co. May 26, 2008. Web. 14 April 2016

[24] Cohen, 2008

[25] Green, Joshua. "The Amazing Money Machine: How Silicon Valley made Barack Obama this year's hottest start-up. *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic Co. June 2008. Web. 23 March 2016

his posts fit into the "get out the vote strategy." This strategy culminated on election day in

November, when he sent out the following tweets in the same day:

> Asking you to help Get Out the Vote in these last few critical hours for our campaign for change. Visit *www.barackobama.com*
>
> (November 4, 2008)

> Asking for your vote today. For polling location info visit www.barackobama.com or call 877-874-6226. Make sure everyone votes!
>
> (November 4, 2008)

> Asking you to vote Nov. 4th. Visit www.barackobama.com, call 877-874-6226 or text VOTE to 62262 to find your polling locations.
>
> (November 4, 2008)

Though in the beginning they had more of a free flow, they developed a preset format overtime

by August 2008. Nearly 40 percent of election season tweets for this format, and this changed to

the following after September 1, 2008:

> In Tampa, FL at an "Early Vote for Change" rally. Watch it live at my.barackobama.com/live
>
> (October 20, 2008)

> In Miami, FL. At a "Early Vote for Change" rally. Watch it live at my.barackobama.com/live
>
> (October 21, 2008)

The election in 2008 was dominated by an array of issues, most of which stemmed from the

disastrous George W. Bush administration that was coming to an end after two terms. Both

Republicans and Democrats were trying to distance themselves from Bush, and both campaigns

ran campaigns critical of President Bush. Facing Obama was Senator John McCain of Arizona, a

veteran of the army and a career position who was favorable among many conservatives.

Though the election was somewhat close during the polls, Obama won by an extremely favorable lead in the general election, winning nearly 70 million popular votes versus John McCain's 60 million. Obama captured nearly 53% of the vote. During the election John McCain tweeted a total of 25 times, versus 262 for Obama. Similarly, McCain maintained only 5,000 followers versus 121,300 for Obama. On McCain's campaign website, there was no reference to the social media website. Meanwhile, this is with the backdrop of a serious surge in Twitter users. One website clocked Twitter's year-over-year growth at 573% in September 2008.

There is no consensus if the Obama's social media presence is the defining character, but the discrepancy is telling, and reveals one of the most significant aspects of social media, Barack Obama, and the state of the modern campaign. Obama, when he first announced his campaign, was a relatively unknown figure. He had some major accomplishments already: Born in Hawaii, he graduated from Columbia University and went to Harvard Law School, where he was president of the Harvard Law Review. He worked as a community organizer in Chicago and worked as a civil rights attorney and taught at the University of Chicago before serving as a state Senator, then as a Senator in the United States Congress. When he announced his campaign at the age of 45, however, he was far from a national figure, but he was young, handsome and successful politician who had experience, but a vision for the future. Technology, he thought, was a large part of that future, and he looked to use it is to compliment his message.

The result resonated with millions of voters who wanted to be a part of the grassroots campaign: one that encouraged individuals to organize and make the campaign possible. This was successful in accomplishing some of the main sub-goals of campaigns. It helped raise money, with the raising of a record-breaking $600 million in contributions from more than three

million people, many of whom donated through the web. It helped support the thousand thousand phone-banking events in the last week of the race and the 150,000 other campaign-related events over the course of the campaign as well.[26] Much the campaigns success depended on a message about ushering America into the future — including positions on the economy, foreign policy, energy and security, as well as social rights — that relied on the technology of the future as a fundraising and organizing tool.[27]

The campaign's ability to capitalize on this new platform helped it spread its message, court donors, communicate with voters and direct more eyes to its website. The campaigns could do this with little cost, and bypass media filters like traditional news organizations. "The campaign, consciously or unconsciously, became much more of a media operation than simply a presidential campaign, because they recognized that by putting their message out onto these various platforms, their supporters would spread it for them," says Andrew Rasiej, founder of the Personal Democracy Forum, a website covering the intersection of politics and technology (and another Dean alumnus).[28] The result was a landslide, historic election that concluded with a final victory tweet on November 5, 2008 that was as powerful as it was telling: "We just made history. All of this happened because you gave your time, talent and passion. All of this happened because of you. Thanks."

2012: Obama and His Re-Election

[26] Stirland, Sarah Lai. "Propelled by Internet, Barack Obama Wins Presidency." Wired. Wired Co. November 4, 2008. Web. 23 February 2016. http://www.wired.com/2008/11/propelled-by-in/

[27] Stirland, 2008

[28] Talbot, David. "How Obama Really Dod Ot: The Social Networking Strategy that took an Obscure Senator to the Doors of the White House." MIT Technology Review. 19 August 2008. Web. 16 March 2016 https://www.technologyreview.com/s/410644/how-obama-really-did-it/

Obama carried his winning strategy into 2012 as well when he ran for re-election against Mitt Romney, a Republican governor from Massachusetts. As an incumbent, Obama tried to replicate his digital strategy, leading Mitt Romney in digital activity on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and website activity, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center.[29] From the start of the campaign, there were some similarities in Obama's Twitter strategy. For much of the campaign, his Twitter account followed a similar pattern, with him out-tweeting his opponent by large margins. Similarly, the campaign began with a video posted on YouTube, that was then posted on social media accounts. For much of the campaign, the Twitter account posted information about Obama's location, and included many references to the campaign website.

But the campaign also set out to build another goal during this campaign. They wanted to to go beyond beginning the conversation about Obama's campaign, and they set out to use his name-recognition (as president, it is among the highest in the country) to shape the online conversation. By the time his re-election campaign began in 2011, this was not a difficult task due to his established online presence. By 2012, Obama was approaching 30 million Facebook friends and 18 million Twitter followers, compared to 2008, when he had a few million Facebook friends and 100,000 Twitter followers. Romney, lagging behind, maintained less than half as many Facebook friends and less than a quarter that many Twitter followers.

The Obama campaign used this online popularity to pump out even more content during the campaign. Overall, Obama's campaign had posted nearly four times as much as content as

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[29] Pew Research Center. "How Presidential Candidates Used Social Media." Pew Research Center. Project for Excellence in Journalism. August 2012. Web. 23 February 2016. Note: The study encompassed an examination of the direct messaging from the campaigns for 14 days during the summer, from June 4 to June 17, 2012, a period in which the two campaigns together published a total of 782 posts. The study also included audits of the candidates' websites in June and again in late July.

the Romney campaign. In just week in June, Obama tweeted over 400 times, while Romney's

campaign had tweeted just 16 times. This was amid a period of rapid growth for Twitter. By the

summer of 2012, Twitter had just surpassed 500 million users and the social network was

growing rapidly in users and content.[30] The Obama campaign also maintained more active

followers. In the same week in June 2012, Obama received more than 150,000 retweets, while

Romney's campaign had just under 9,000 retweets. Though Romney's campaign had taken steps

to close the "digital gap," Obama's presence online dwarfed Romney's. On Twitter, Romney

campaign averaged just one tweet per day, while the number was 29 for the Obama campaign

(17 per day on @BarackObama, the Twitter Account associated with his presidency, and 12 on

@Obama2012, the one associated with his campaign).[31]

How much Candidates Post Online Each Day
Source: Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism
Date Range of Content: June 4 - 17, 2012

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[30] "Twitter reaches half a billion accounts More than 140 millions in the U.S" Semiocast. Paris, France. 30 July 2012. Web. 18 March 2016.
http://semiocast.com/publications/2012_07_30_Twitter_reaches_half_a_billion_accounts_140m_in_the_US

[31] Pew Research, Presidential Candidates. p. 8

There are some other important observations that continued for the election. One is that neither campaign used the social feature of social media, meaning that much of the conversation was, for the most part, a one-way event. Campaign accounts on Twitter rarely, if ever, interacted with user content in the way of "@replies," favorites, or retweets. One analysis of Twitter activity found that only about 3% of content Obama's twitter feeds were retweets. During the same period, Romney only had 1 retweet and it was from his own son.[32]

Images Vs. Words: Obama and Romney by Percentage
Date Range: June 4-17, 2012
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because not all categories are included.
Source: Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism

The 2012 election was also the first time the two general election candidates were active on Twitter, prov

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[32] Pew Research, Presidential Candidates. p. 5
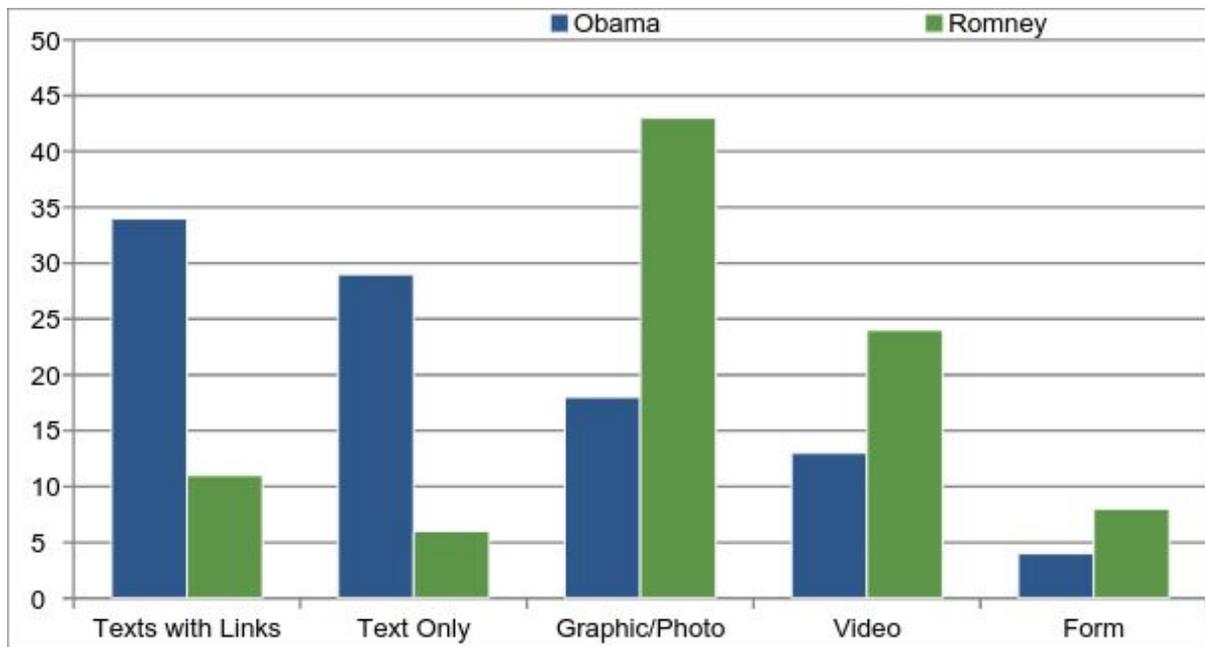
iding an opportunity to analyze what the candidates were tweeting about. For the general election in 2012, the most discussed issues were the economy, health care, foreign policy, energy, same-sex marriage, taxes, women's issues and national security. Nearly a quarter (24%) of Romney posts and 19% of Obama's focused on the economy.[33] But, like any election, there were attacks on other candidates as well, as Romney and Obama both went on the offensive. This was a departure from 2008, when Obama rarely, if ever, tweets about his opponents either in the nomination process or the general election. Romney, however, out-tweeted Obama in this category. In the month of June, the Massachusetts governor posted roughly a third of all posts concerning Obama — attacking him for decisions and actions during his presidency. On the other hand, Obama made just 14% of all tweets about Romney

Who Talked About Whom
(Percentage of Tweets Discussing Individuals)
Date Range: June 4-17, 2012

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[33] Pew Research, Presidential Candidates. p. 12

In 2008, Obama's advantage was that his opponent was far less active on Twitter. When

the Romney campaign began utilizing Twitter (and other social media) his campaign capitalized

on a new technology created by Twitter, called Twitter Ads. The service was a method of paying

for more viewership of tweets. Promoted tweets and content, created by the Obama campaign,

were tailored to appear in the Twitter feeds of users depending on their online behavior: who

they followed, what they tweeted about, what they searched, and how they interacted with other

users. Depending on these analyses, Twitter Ads strategically placed content promoted by the

Obama campaign into the feeds of users, even if they were not following the Obama campaign.

The content appeared to be like the rest of the feed's content (it could be retweeted, favorited,

replied to, or ignored). The only expected was a "Promoted by" tagline below the tweet. During

high-profile moments during the election, the campaign even promoted hashtags, like

(#Forward2012) and (#ForwardNotBack), using the promoted tweets to extend the presidents

reach and dominate the national conversation about the election. Below is one example of a

Twitter ad created by the Obama campaign:

The campaign went even further in micro-targeting tweets, based on demographics and on location. To zone in on certain groups on twitter, Obama used twitter to expand his message to key groups such as young people, African Americans, Latinos and women. He accomplished by using keywords (economy, energy, #nationalsecurity), handles (@LatinosForObama, @Vets4Obama, @Students4Obama) and interests (empty nesters, vegetarian, Latino, R&B and Soul). Obama used geo-tagging as well, targeting specific locations. The campaign began promoting tweets in large metro areas, but, as the general election grew closer, broadened the target to specific states to reach as many eligible and likely voters as possible. The president also used the trending hashtag "#Forward" on the day before the election, suggesting his vision would bring the country in a progressive direction, while Romney's would be regressive.

On the day of the election, the campaign unleashed a pair of promoted trends as well. The first was "#VoteObama" began with Obama and second was a promoted hashtag that was created to connect Obama's campaign with voters at polling stations. The hashtag, "#StayInLine" was directed at voters in long-lines and whole be checking the Twitter accounts.

The result, according to Twitter business, were important as well. The president's four promoting trends garnered 252 million impressions. The most successful trend was "#VoteObama" which had an engagement rate of nearly 20%. The average rate for his promoted tweets was around 16% overall. For the entire campaign on Twitter Ads, the campaign had close to 365 million impressions overall.[34]

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[34] "Twitter Business Stories: Barack Obama : How can the incumbent U.S. President mobilize supporters and keep voters informed in real time to win the 2012 election?" Twitter Co, N.D. Web. 16 March 2016. https://biz.twitter.com/success-stories/barack-obama

Obama, of course, won the election, and his Twitter campaign culminated in a final, historic tweet that would become the most retweeted of all time. Featuring a photo of him hugging First Lady Michelle Obama, it read: "For More Years" and more than 785,000 retweets.

Obama and a Changed Twitter

Presidential elections are at complex operations that span months, cost millions of dollars and hold the attention of the entire nation. At the same time, the ones who determine the results can have a straightforward logic. Some of the central questions are simple ones, like: 'Do I like this person?' Do I understand this person? And most importantly, do they understand my life?"[35]

This is an excellent question that Obama tried to capitalize on in 2008 and in 2012, using social media to grow his support and donor base. His success on Twitter revealed a number of important developments of Twitter. He showed that Twitter was a dynamic service that constantly shifting and changing. This was true for his the span of his first campaign, when his strategy developed throughout the course of the campaign. At the beginning of the campaign, his tweets were simply and straightforward, but, by the end, began to include hyperlinks to speeches and rallies that incorporated multi-media. Similarly, this carried over into the election in 2012, when he incorporated Twitter Ads, hashtags, and location-based tools to shape the Twitter conversation around his election.

Both campaigns revealed how Obama used Twitter as a way of distributing micro-press releases to his followers that bypassed the media. Even if national reporters covering the campaigns were not going to cover an event, town hall, or endorsement, the campaign could still communicate these announcements to his followers in an effective manner. This was true for

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[35] Freedlander, 2013)

both campaigns, a sign that it could be an effective way of communication that was immediate and organic and that bypassed the filter of the news media. The Twitter strategy in 2008 and 2012 also revealed that social media is an important asset, but that it cannot be the central hub of a campaign. Social media, especially Twitter, however, could still act as a portal to the website for users of social media. By including links to live streams, websites, and donor pages, Obama could get casual users of social media to visit his website.

Lastly, Obama focused on the marriage of the message and the medium. He was proposing a message that focused on progress and innovation, while using the technology that resulted from progress and innovation. He portrayed himself as a candidate who could be young and sophisticated, but also knew how to organize and connect with voters, many of them young. This resulted in large support from young voters, and, ultimately, their support in the polls. Between 2000 and 2008 there was an eleven percent increase in youth voter turnout and an estimated twenty-three million youngAmericans under the age of thirty voted in the 2008 residential election, constituting eighteen percent of all voters.[36] He succeeded in connecting with young voters by meeting them where they increasingly spent their time: on the web, on their phones, browsing Twitter.
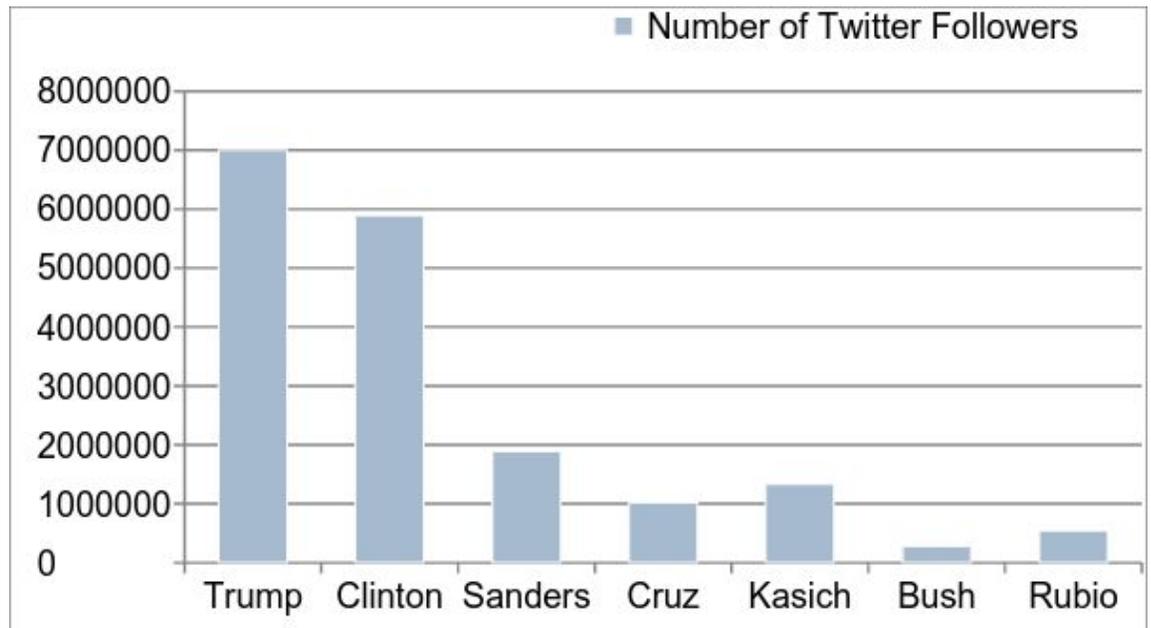
Entering the 2016 Election

The 2016 election began as Twitter entered something of a slump, despite its prominence in every day conversation. With many new users finding the service difficult to learn, it has been suffering from user growth since 2013 or so.[37] This does not mean, however, it is has play a

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[36] Tisch, 2008

[37] Manjoo, Farhad. "Twitter, to Save Itself, Must Scale Back World-Swallowing Ambitions." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Co. 10 February 2016. Web. 18 March 2016.

small role in the 2016 election. In fact, it is quite the opposite. As Manjoo noted: "Look at the headlines in every morning's newspaper and the obsessions of every evening's cable news broadcast. Just about anything you encounter in the news media these days has some foot in the controversies and conversations occurring on the 140-character network."[38]

Twitter, when the election began, the company reported user growth at just north of 300 million, having stalled for about a year. This has note kept it from swaying, chronicling and

changing the nature of the 2016 election. After all, 140 characters on Twitter can send a powerful message if its in the right hands.[39] For the duration of the election, the nearly dozen candidates who through their hat in the ring have all maintained various social media accounts — and all of them have been on Twitter.

Date: April 2016
Source: Twitter

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[38] Manjoo, 2016

[39] "The Politics Of Social Media In 2016 Election | Morning Joe | MSNBC." YouTube. youtube.com 7 April 2016. Web. 24 April 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cp2UZdNFjlw

Overall, because there have been so many candidates — and the election, as this research is being done, is still in the primary process — there has not been 1 dominant candidate who, like Obama in 2008, used social media in such a unique way that it changed the election. In fact, it is fair to say that because every candidate has used Twitter during the campaign. The question is no longer who has social media but how are the candidates using social media. With millions of followers, they now speak to far larger audiences than did Obama in 2008, when he had just 100,000 followers. This is resulting in a message that is heard by many more people than in the prior elections. It has also resulted in more constant and consistent activity on these platforms, especially Twitter. "Now, candidates have a presence on a whole breadth of platforms with custom content to target that audience, and they are producing unprecedented levels of content—the sheer volume is impressive," said Marie Ewald Danzig, head of creative and delivery at Blue State Digital, which led digital efforts for the Obama campaign in 2008 and 2012.[40] That is because people are increasingly online and using their smartphones to access these social media platforms. In 2012, for example, only 35 percent of Americans owned a smartphone — but now, 65 percent do.[41] Three-quarters of smartphone owners reported using their smartphones for social media, according to the same study.[42]

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[40] Monllos, Kristina. "By the Numbers: How Presidential Candidates Stack Up on Social Media And why Twitter, Facebook and Instagram followers aren't everything." Ad Week. 13 September 2015. Web. 24 February 2016. http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/numbers-how-presidential-candidates-stack-social-media-166870

[41] Anderson, Monica. "6 facts about Americans and their smartphones." Fact Tank. Pew Research Center. April 1 2015. Web. 18 April 2016. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/01/6-facts-about-americans-and-their-smartphones

[42] Ibid.

An analysis of Twitter in this cycle's presidential election further many of the developments that proved to be true in 2008 and 2012. The first is that Twitter is a dynamic place and how it is used is being changed, if in slightly different ways. Many of Obama and Romney's tweets focused on policy updates and included links to main websites. This, however, is changing as candidates are using to talk to one another, capitalize on personal attacks. Similarly, campaigns are increasingly using the platform to post a variety of multi-media, include photos and videos. Next, campaigns are having to adapt more to reactions that are receiving. Because Twitter's top users are increasingly active on the site, it has become a place for many people to vocalize dissent. This has been experienced by many candidates on social media, and have led to them pulling back on certain efforts in the campaign. Additionally, the use of hashtags to sir conversation have placed candidates in awkward positions. Lastly, like in 2008 and 2012, some of the most successful uses of Twitter have capitalized on merging the medium and the message campaign. When Obama ran in 2008 and again in 2012, most of his tweets were about himself and his policy positions. Romney went on the attack in 2012, but it was a limited and cautious effort. That is no longer true in 2016, when Twitter candidates are actively tweeting at and about each other. This is especially true for Donald Trump, who, in 2015, has managed to attack just about every candidate on Twitter. This is suggestive of his own campaign, which many argue is close to a "blame campaign."

Feeling the Bern: Viral Moments in Elections

A hallmark of mass communication is a theory previously discussed, concerning the idea that there is a content creator, a channel of distribution, a message and a receiver. This has been true for most of the history of social media, but there are exceptions, hinting at the power of the

"grassroots" of social media. Some of the most prominent examples of the 2016 elections have been positive, with online users creating hashtags and "moments" that are ultimately positive for a candidate's campaign. There has been a fair amount of negative examples, however, that create public relations blunders for campaigns. This continued the mass media theory of a content creator, a channel of distribution, a message and a receiver.

Perhaps the most successful and well-known campaign slogan grew from social media — from the ground up. Senator Bernie Sanders, a Democratic from Vermont, is running against Hillary Clinton, a women with an extensive resume as a First Lady, Secretary of State, and Senator. As of April, Clinton has dominated in the primaries, and is by far the favorite to capture the delegate goal for the Democratic Convention in Cleveland. This has not prevented Sanders from mounting a strong campaign and, by many measures, faring well on the Internet. Sanders receives a great deal of support from social media, with many of the users skewing young and liberal. One of the things that sky-rocketed Sanders to Internet fame, however, began with a hashtag created by Winnie Wong, digital strategist and co-founder of People for Bernie, one of the main groups campaigning for Sen. Sanders. Though she works closely with the campaign, she created the hashtag "#FeeltheBern," which the campaign now uses freely.[43] "We wanted something which would carry his name all across the Internet and be more than just a hashtag," Wang stated after the trend went viral online. Through it, many online users have been able to discover Sanders, his policy positions and the agenda he is proposing. Today, a search of the hashtag brings up millions of tweets, dedicate websites, origin stories, and a link to the Sanders

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[43] The Surprising Origin of #FeeltheBern: Meet the Creator of the Viral Hashtag." Sage Lazzaro. New York Observer. http://observer.com/2016/02/the-surprising-origin-of-feelthebern-meet-the-creator-of-the-viral-hashtag/

campaign's online store, where supporters can purchase merchandise with the phrase on hats, mugs, and more.

Trump's Insults: Attacks on Twitter

Since the start of his campaign for the Republican nomination in 2015, television show host and real estate mogul Donald Trump has insulted many groups. He began his campaign, in a speech from his hotel in Midtown Manhattan, by disparaging different groups, among them Mexican immigrantsIn his speeches, he has accused of China and Mexico of playing dirty. He has called our current leaders dumb and stupid, and suggested that we limit the entry of Muslims into America for the time being. In what has been described as a "populist" campaign, Trump tapped into a certain rage among Republicans about a great deal of things, including the state of the economy, immigration, international trade, armed forces, healthcare, and more.[44]

Like any campaign of anger and frustration, he has use social media to amplify his voice. Though he has used his debate appearances and speeches to rally thousands of supports across the country, he has also used Twitter to issue all kinds of messages. Some are along the same lines as Obama's use of Twitter first uses of his Twitter, as he sometimes uses it for announcements about his campaigning:

> Will be spending the day campaigning in Connecticut, another state where jobs are being stolen by other countries. I will stop this fast!
>
> April 23, 2016

He also uses Twitter to update his followers about his victories in the nomination process:

> Final #'s just announced in the GREAT State of MO. TRUMP WINS! New certified #'s show a 365 vote increase for me- @ least 12 more delegates!

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[44] Cassidy, John. "Donald Trump Is Transforming the G.O.P. Into a Populist, Nativist Party." The New Yorker. 29 February 2016. Web. 15 April 2016

But not everything he tweets is always positive, as Trump has also used Twitter as a place for critique. As the New York Times noted in a comprehensive list of his Twitter insults, "Trump has used his Twitter account to "mock 17 current or former presidential candidates; nearly 100 other people; more than 20 media organizations, including The New York Times; several sovereign nations; and a potpourri of things that include a Neil Young song, a lectern in the Oval Office and a book about the 1896 presidential election, which was "terrible (and boring)."[45] This is certainly an uptick on personal attacks from presidential candidates in past elections, when only 10% of tweets from Obama were about Romney in the 2012 election. Trump, in many ways, has redefined power as a tool of political attack and promotion, making Twitter one of the centerpieces of his campaign.[46]

Since joining in 2009, Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) has tweeted over 31,000 times. His most frequently used words in his tweets: "great" (more than 700 times), "winner" or"winners" (43), and "loser" or "losers" (34).[47] Many include personal attacks, like the following about Jeb Bush:

"Wow, Jeb Bush, whose campaign is a total disaster, had to bring in mommy to take a slap at me. Not nice!"

February 6, 2016

And Marco Rubio, a presidential candidate who has since suspended his campaign:

"While I hear the Koch brothers are in big financial trouble (oil), word is they have cho sen little Marco Rubio, the lightweight from Florida"

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[45] Quealy, Kevin and Lee, Jasmine. "The Week in Donald Trump's Twitter Insults." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Co. 5 February 2016. Web. 16 March 2016.

[46] Barbaro, Michael. "Pithy, Mean and Powerful: How Donald Trump Mastered Twitter for 2016" *The New York Times*. The New York Times Co. 5 October 2015. Web. 16 February 2016.

[47] Ibid.

And the same for Ted Cruz, a Senator from Texas who is running for the Republican nomination

for president:

> "Lying #Ted Cruz just (on election day) came out with a sneak and sleazy Robocall. He
> holds up the Bible but in fact is a true lowlife pol!"

February 20, 2016

His attacks have not been limited to current candidates. He has also taken liberty to insult the

current President Barack Obama in numerous tweets, like the following:

> Interesting how President Obama so haltingly said I "would never be president" - This
> from perhaps the worst president in U.S. history!   (February 17, 2016)

Clinton's Campaign: Questionable Choices

An ally and former secretary of state to President Obama and First Lady to President Bill

Clinton, Hillary Clinton launched her second run for the presidential nomination with a YouTube

video. The video included dozens of Americans and painted a diverse picture of America. There

men and woman, people of all kinds of races, gay and lesbian couples. Clinton narrates the

video, citing "tough American times," and suggested that the "deck was stacked" against many

of those who work hard. The video promoted "hard work" and ensured Americans that Clinton

would be their ally on this "journey" ahead.[48] The launch video preceded a campaign strategy

that would mimic Obama's in 2008. It featured voters voices, and looked to incorporate diversity

into a message about moving America forward. "Everyday Americans need a champion," she

stated in the video. "And I want to be that champion."

Her campaign was staffed by high level Democratic strategists, including campaign

manager Robby Mook, who is the first openly gay person to serve in that role in a major

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[48] "Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Campaign Announcement (Official)" ABC News. YouTube. April 12, 2015.
Web. April 29 2016

presidential campaign,[49] and John Podesta, who served as Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton and Counselor to President Barack Obama.[50] The chief technology officer of the campaign is Stephanie Hannon, who is the first the first female to serve in that role in a major presidential campaign.[51] Teddy Goff, who worked for Obama during his 2008 bid and was his digital director for the 2012 election, also worked on the campaign, helping with digital strategy, including the launch video. Several factors have made Clinton the likely winner of the Democratic nomination against Sanders, namely a successful campaign, including the number of skilled operatives behind her social media strategy.

The result for the campaign has been new and innovative ways of talking with voters on social media, moving beyond Obama's activity and strategy in 2012. For example, her social media output has expanded to include hashtags, question-and-answer sessions and posts written by content strategists on her campaign website. There have also been a number of colorful variations of her campaign logos, which is an "H" with an arrow moving from left to right. While her strategy has been successful by some measures, there are some questionable moments for the campaign that exposed the digital efforts by the Clinton campaign. Though they have not only occurred for Clinton, her campaign has been embarrassed to a series of online "gaffes" that reveal the changing nature about Twitter and its ability to make viral moments. These moments may have been temporarily bumps during a longer strategy, but they exemplify the ability of

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[49] Glueck, Katie. "The power players behind Hillary Clinton's campaign: A guide to some of the most influential players in her 2016 presidential bid". *Politico*. 14 April 2015. Web. 15 February 2016.

[50] Talev, Margaret."Obama to Name Former Clinton Official Podesta as Special Adviser". Businessweek. 10 December 2013. Web. 18 April 2016.

[51] Rucker, Philip. "Hillary Clinton hires Google executive to be chief technology officer". *The Washington Post*. 8 April 2015. Web. 15 March 2015.

Twitter users to respond quickly and loudly, and to make a negative reaction heard. They may have started innocently, but her large number of followers (almost 6 million followers) make her one of the most visible figures in the world. Responses to her campaign efforts on Twitter, moreover, have not always been what her strategists hoped for.

The first of these instances occurred when Clinton's campaign attempted to capitalize on the Civil Rights movement. In December 2015, she made a Twitter post about Rose Parks, with the following message:

> "History often gets made on ordinary days by seemingly ordinary people —
> December 1, 1955 was one of them. Thank you, Rosa Parks. H"
>
> December 1, 2015

The message was accompanied by a photo of a rendition of Rose Parks photoshopped onto

Clinton's "H" campaign logo:

The social media post was intended to commemorate the day, 60 years later, Rose Parks famously denied to give up her seat on a public bus. For the campaign, the intention was to show that Clinton acknowledged the struggle of the black community in America and that she was willing to work alongside them. The message, however well intended, was met with criticism online. Twitter users found that the post to appear pandering, with many negative tweets following the post:

> "So now @HillaryClinton is basically pimping Rose Parks' legacy in her logo for black votes? Nah. Just nah." logo.
>
> @LesAsamoah, December 1 2015

> "Hillary Clinton has (what appears to be) Rosa Park in her logo. I'm disgusted."
>
> @PhillyTheBoss, December 1, 2015

> ".@HillaryClinton's design team honored Rose Parks today by moving her to the back of the bus. pic.twitter.com/elYnVQ9uPa
>
> @stackiii, December 1 2015

> "You could've at least let Rosa sit at the front of the logo @HillaryClinton. pic.twitter.com/cTGorXG5c3"
>
> @imfromraleigh, December 1 2015

Alone, this minor amount of Twitter activity alone is hardly considered a "gaffe" by today's political standards. People respond harshly, on Twitter, to political messages all of the time. But these tweets were just four of many, and it led to negative coverage from news websites. Instead of seeing these tweets as some shouts into the void by unknown individuals, social media and politics websites around the country picked up on the story of people criticizing the Clinton campaign. The result were dozens of stories being posted about the "incident." BuzzFeed, the news and blogging service, ran a story the same day title "Hillary Clinton Put Rosa Parks on Her Campaign Logo and People Aren't Feeling It." Mashable ran a similar story titled "Hillary

Clinton's logo accidentally puts Rosa Parks in the back of the bus." One contributor at "The

Political Insider," a politics website, posted a story titled "Hillary's New Rose Logo Fails

Spectacularly." Dozens of other stories were posted about the alleged "gaffe"[52]

There was a repeat of this kind of episode when Clinton became a grandmother. The

Clinton campaign posted a "list article" titled "7 things Hillary Clinton has in common with your

abuela," written by Paola Luisi in December 2015.[53] The article detailed several "similarities"

between Clinton and Hispanic grandmothers. One cited "She reads to you before bedtime …"

and followed with a photo of Clinton reading in a classroom. Another suggested "She isn't afraid

to talk about the importance of el respeto (especially when it comes to women)…" and followed

a quote about Donald Trump and his remarks about woman. Another suggested "Everybody

loves abuela—even this guy" and was followed by a photo of Clinton with a Spanish pop star.

The post was an attempt at cultural relativism. Many websites read by young millennials involve

a similar format: A list-based claim and short blurbs of texts accompanied by images of popular

culture. It also was an attempt at connecting with Hispanic voters, a desirable bloc of voters for

the Democratic Party in the upcoming election.

The post was met with similar criticism. Twitter users called it "Hispandering,"

suggesting that Clinton was using the experiences of a marginalized community to win vote

during an election season. This resulted in some tweets at the campaign and the beginning of a

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[52] For more stories, see "Hillary Tries To Honor Rosa Parks…Gets Embarrassed Like Never Before" by Alexander Sommerset of TPNN; "Hillary slammed after campaign logo puts Rosa Parks in the back of the bus" by Olaf Edberg at The American Mirror; "Hillary Clinton under fire for 'disrespectful' decision to add Rosa Parks to her campaign logo" by Kelly McLaughlin at The Daily Mail

[53] Luisi, Paola. "7 Things Hillary Clinton Has in common with your abuela." HillaryClinton.com December 21, 2015. Web. April 21, 2016

hashtag, "#NotMyAbuela," resulting in people claiming Latino heritage to criticize Clinton's

campaign. Some examples of Twitter responses:

> One of my abuelas, from Utuado, worked washing the dishes and picking coffee since she was 11 years old. Hillary is #NotMyAbuela
>
> @MarcosPerezRam, December 22, 2015
>
> #NotMyAbuela because she didn't have to live in poverty with 14 kids and suffer because over half were separated over a border
>
> @veronicaqm, December 23, 2015
>
> Our experiences cannot be equated to those of a rich and privileged white woman. It's shameful and disrespectful to try #NotMyAbuela
>
> @pitaslug, December 23, 2015

Again, it is difficult to gauge a widespread reaction to the list article, but the reaction on Twitter

led again to various articles and posts online, including ones from National Public Radio and The

New York Times, The Huffington Post and NBC News.[54] Headlines were mostly negative and

confrontational, and echoed the criticism that Clinton, a woman who has led most of her life in

the spotlight of politics, does not know the struggles of Latina women. A story in The New York

Times considered: "Hillary Clinton Is 'Not My Abuela,' Critics Say," while one on NPR read,

"#MemeOfTheWeek: Hillary Clinton, Not Quite An Abuela." Others were more confrontational

like one from CNN declaring, "Twitter unimpressed with 'abuela' Clinton's outreach." "Twitter

Went In On Hillary Clinton After Her Campaign Compared Her To Abuelas," declared one

BuzzFeed story.

The story, which stemmed from a single post, was an example of one social media post

that turned into a mass of criticism. First, it was in the form of response tweets, which grew into

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[54] See "Hillary Clinton is 'Not My Abuela,' Critics Say" by Katie Rogers, New York Times. Dec. 23, 2015; "#MemeOfTheWeek: Hillary Clinton, Not Quite An Abuela," by Sam Sanders, NPR, Dec 26, 2015; "Not my abuela": Twitter explodes in outrage over Hillary Clinton's "Hispandering" Ben Norton, salon.com Dec 23, 2015; "Dear Hillary, Let Me Introduce You to My Abuela" by Barbara Sostaita, Huffington Post: Latino Voices, Dec. 23, 2015.

a hashtag that many Twitter users began to use. Next, news sources, gossip blogs, and politics

websites ran stories on the campaign's stumble, and even incorporated opinion articles by Latino

writers. It was, in short, a lesson in multiculturalism and message tone for the Clinton campaign.

The backlash prompted the campaign's director of Latina outreach, Lorella Praeli to issue a

statement that was published by NPR. In the statement, Praeli declared: "Hillary is committed to

fighting against Republican attacks to tear families like mine apart. I'm proud to work for

someone who stands up for Latinas and I will continue to travel the country to discuss how she

will fight for our community as President."[55]

These two instances do not suggest Clinton's campaign has struggled to gain popularity

on Twitter and other social media outlets. She has 6 million followers and, since 2016, has not

had any similar instances. But the examples are telling of a certain chain of events that takes

place — a sort of testament to this evolving "social" aspect of social media. The nature of

political campaigns have evolved from a one-way dialogue. Clinton and her followers (in fact, all

of Twitter) are on the same playing field, suggesting a heightened importance of voter voices. In

some ways, this can be a positive development for campaigns. It gives them feedback in real

time, allowing campaigns to constantly develop their digital strategies. But in some ways it can

be a pitfall. Clinton, through the Rosa Parks logo change and the "Abuela" comparison,

attempted to reach out to key voter groups in the campaign that makeup growing segments of the

population. It is difficult to assess if these efforts had the same effect on the majority of

American voters. It is impossible, furthermore, to assess how many voters even saw the

campaign's posts. The deciding factor was the vocal users who were responding on Twitter and

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[55] Sanders, Sam. "#MemeOfTheWeek: Hillary Clinton, Not Quite An Abuela," NPR. 26 December 2015. Web. 18 April 2016.

the media websites who decided to turn it into a story — a testament to this social nature of social media.

Analyzing Twitter's Role

Over the past three presidential elections, Twitter has made an impact on campaigns. Candidate's, in addition to strategists, advisors, communication directors, now employ full teams to develop and implement digital strategy. With growing memberships on social media networks, campaigns are looking to tap into the growing trends and developments in mass media. As in radio and television, campaigns are finding people where they already are in attempts to communicate with them and motivate them to vote on election day. While it is difficult to determine if social media activity determines or in any way effects election outcomes, it is certain that how campaigns are conceived have been altered to some degree.

Each election cycle, moreover, shows that there are some distinguishable trends regarding the relationship between presidential elections and social media. Twitter, because of a large user base and lack of central structure, is an amorphous and dynamic community. There are many users that collectively organize into smaller communities that focus on different topics, and constantly updating features that change the capabilities of Twitter. This makes campaigns, like Obama's in 2008 and 2012, likely to adapt to these changes. Obama started out by tweeting out press updates, but soon started tweeting hyperlinks and encouraging users to vote on election day. Later, in 2012, his campaign capitalized on the success of hashtags and Twitter ads, and implemented them into their digital strategy. While his campaign did not focus on personal comments and attacking other candidates, this became a hallmark of the Trump campaign in

2016, when he used Twitter to issue statements and criticisms of other campaigns directly — a venture that capitalized on his large number of followers and his status as a celebrity figure.

Candidates' use of Twitter also reflected the developing "social" aspect of social media. A change from the traditional one-way dialogue of mass media, Twitter users have been able to respond directly and dictate the content of campaigns. The hashtag "#FeelTheBern" is one example of this, where a person not hired by the campaign created a viral hashtag online that became one of the most distinguishable and discussed aspects of the Sanders campaign. Clinton's
mis-steps in 2016 also reflect this emerging "social" feature. While her content was typically well-received by voters and the media, there were some attempts at connecting with voters that turned into examples of how not to reach out to voters, especially minority voters in America. Still, the instances reflect the power of voters voices in the age of social media.

Lastly, Twitter again has shown that the most expert uses of media are the ones that bring together the medium and the message. American politics is many things, but the most successful candidates are the ones who can connect with voters by communicating a message with which they understand and agree. In 2008, Obama emerged as a new face in politics capitalizing on a new technology. He communicated a progressive vision for America while using one of its most progressive technologies: social media. Similarly, in 2016, Sanders and Trump both managed to align these two important campaign aspects. Sanders, who criticized the influence of Wall Street on American politics, attempted to use his social media following to raise money through smaller donations. This method made it possible for him to run a campaign and to do it in a way that was consistent with his anti-Wall Street message. Similarly, in 2016, Trump ran a campaign that

labeled America's leaders as incompetent and unsuccessful. He stressed this message by tweeting at them directly on Twitter, issuing criticisms about every candidate in the field. The result may not have been the most positive campaign, but his digital strategy became consistent with the "outsider" message he was insisting upon during his campaign.

Twitter's Future

After two full election cycles, it is a challenge to predict how the last one will end in November. Twitter's role has evolved over the past eight years and will continue to change during the next president's tenure and the next election cycle. In what ways, it cannot be said. The landscape of new media is constantly changing and is under pressure to change. Just as user's habits will change, campaigns will look to capitalize on these emerging trends and find ways to communicate messages more clearly and effectively.

If this research were to make a prediction, it would be that the next successful presidential candidate will find a new way to bring together his or her political message with the digital strategy. While Twitter may not effect outcomes directly, the network of users has the power to influence news coverage and campaign messages. It has the power to shape elections in ways that radio and television did not. Now, more than ever, users have the power to speak back when spoken to, a development that is only beginning to be realized.

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