

On the Role of Social Media in The Presidential Campaign

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Abstract: In contemporary society, social media plays a very important role. More and more users suggest that social media has become part of their daily lives. This paper mainly analyzes the development process of media network, analyzes the political movement influenced by social media and the influence of social media on American presidential campaign, and draws a conclusion that most of the images of presidential campaign are packaged by media, and voters' intention will be influenced by the information spread by media to a large extent.

Keywords: Social media, Presidential campaign, Web 2.0.

1. Introduction

Social media is the ultimate goal of subversive technology (West, 2018). They change the way of information transmission, business organization, online content, news reporting and personal development (West, 2018). It is undeniable that the rapid development of social media is inseparable from the background of Web 2.0. The so-called Web 2.0 is relative to Web 1.0, the main feature of Web 1.0 is that users can only browse and obtain information through the Internet, while Web 2.0 pays more attention to user communication and interaction. Users are not only web content browser but also the content creators. For social media this can be considered the web 2.0 era, as O'Reilly notes, "Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices" (Fuchs, 2014). The era of Web2.0 and social media was born in the crisis of capitalism. The aim is to overcome the crisis and establish a new model of capital accumulation for the enterprising Internet economy (ibid.).

With the advent of the era of web 2.0, social media to get a better development, people not only can share your photos on social networks, browse the news in time, can also participate in the political events, such as the user can on twitter topics they are interested in politics and politicians. Therefore, social media is also widely used in politics, especially in some political elections. The rise of social media not only changes the way people communicate, but also affects the individual's political participation pattern. Social media is becoming more and more widely used in contemporary politics (Bright et al., 2017). There is a evidence of campaigning on social media can make voters feel more connected to politicians, which could increase the willingness of voters to vote for politicians (Bright et al., 2017). In some ways, campaigning through social media may actually be more effective than other forms of campaigning (ibid.). As shown in the 2008 campaign, these digital tools are examples of voter mobilization and electoral impact textbooks (West, 2018). By using social network expansion tools such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter, some democratic and republican candidates raised money, identified supporters, established electoral alliances and made people closer to the electoral process (ibid.). In some democratic western countries, political elections often have important significance. In this essay, I am going to seek

the relationship between the social media and political campaign, and does social media play a positive role in political elections? I will choose the most representative campaign--Obama campaign for specific analysis, for example, how does Obama's team operate social media to make Obama succeed?

2. Social Media in Contemporary Society

In fact, in the early days of social media, social media platforms were used as tools to promote relationships and community building (van Dijck, 2013). Until today, the most important function of social media is to provide a platform for communication so that users could better participate in social interaction. A research from Pew Research Center demonstrated that 'A majority of Americans use Facebook and YouTube, but young adults are especially heavy users of Snapchat and Instagram.' Facebook and YouTube play a leading role in this field, because most American adults are using them (Smith and Anderson, 2018). At the same time, young Americans, especially Americans aged 18 to 24, stand out because they embrace various platforms and often use these platforms (Smith and Anderson, 2018). About 78% of the young people aged 18 to 24 use Snapchat, and the vast majority (71%) of the users visit the platform every single day. Apart from that, 71% of Americans in this age group use Instagram, while nearly half (45%) are Twitter users (ibid.).

Because of social media belongs to a participatory culture (Fuchs, 2014). Participation is important to guide people to share their stories through a dense social network, to pay attention to the universal use of social technology, and to make individuals an important catalyst for the activation of collective action, because they activate their own social networks (Bennett, 2012). Because social media is part of this participatory model, it makes social networks more open and free. People can not only share their daily life with social media, but also participate in political events on social media platforms. So you may want to ask me, how do users get involved in political events through social media? As far as I can see, the most typical way is to get involved in political campaigns through social media.

3. The History of Political Campaigns and People Participate in Politics Via Social Media

In fact, a long time ago, some governments and politicians realized the importance of campaigns. At the end of the eighteenth Century, the public relations activities of the US presidential campaign were mainly through newspapers, speeches, gatherings and so on (Benoit, 2009). The emergence of radio in World War II, Roosevelt won the understanding and support of the American people through public relations, which played a great role in the difficult period of the Great Depression of the American government. With the growing maturity of new media like TV in the United States, the first presidential debate on television in the United States came into being in 1960. In the early 90s of the 20th century, the Internet began to emerge in the presidential election of the United States. In the presidential election of 2008, the Internet has become the stage of presidential election.

Web 2.0 fosters a wider array of ways in which private and public life take place, thus making political life increasingly ubiquitous (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). A research from Pew research center noted that about one in three of social media users say they are often (9%) or sometimes (23%) on social media to comment, discuss, or publish articles about government and politics; at the same time, seven in ten say they are almost never (30%) or never (38%) (Duggan and Smith, 2018). In social media, young adults tend to rely more on social media as a source of news for the news than older people, but older users are more inclined to hold their own views when discussing or commenting on the political issues on these websites (Duggan and Smith, 2018). The evidence suggests that the popularity of civic participation in politics is improving, especially through social media platforms. According to Pew Research Center: 'nearly one in five internet users belongs to the online political participatory class'(Smith, 2018). Voters express their ideas or comments online and play a positive role in the political process. In 2008, nearly one in five of Internet users released their ideas, comments or questions on social networking sites, blogs or other online forums (ibid.).

It is undeniable that social media has reduced the distance from the electorate, because social media is not subject to space and time constraints that are not restricted by their own knowledge level, which helps to improve people's interest in political events. About one in five of social media users will change their views on political issues or candidates because of the content of candidates on the social media platform (Duggan and Smith, 2018). Some politicians have discovered the great potential of social media for political elections, so different political parties have chosen social media to show their political blueprint. One of the most common ways to increase voter awareness is by placing candidate ads on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. When users are using social media, users may look at what they like, follow their favorite stars or politicians, and give their support to their comments and opinions. Then, some data companies recommend users' private advertisements according to their history and footprints and interests. That would mean, if you support Obama's post on Twitter or Facebook and follow Obama's official account, it is likely that a lot of Obama's ads and videos will come up on your personal home page. As a result, there are few opportunities for users to get to know

candidates other than Obama.

4. Obama Campaign and Social Media

Barack Obama created many first: the first President of the United States who has black skin, the first refused to use a public campaign funds provided by the government (\$84 million) President, even Barack Obama became 'the first American President of the Internet'. "Experts called the 2008 presidential campaign 'the first Internet election'" according to Levenshus (2010). It is not hard to see that the Obama campaign has played an important role in the history of American political elections. Despite the previous election, many candidates used the Internet and social media in the campaign, but in the 2008 elections, Web2.0 and social media were the core of the campaign (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). During the 2008 presidential election, social media became a tool for political activities, and became a regular part of the political environment of voters in the mid-term elections in 2010. In the first few months of the November 2010 election, about 22% of online adults used Twitter or social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, to link up with the campaign or the election itself (Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech, 2018).

So how does Obama campaign works? During the Obama campaign, he created his own social network which is www.my.barackobama.com, known as MyBO (Talbot, 2018). The official website has a rich variety of content and form, the content including details of the candidate and his team, candidate's political views and so on, including video, audio, images, and other multimedia information, the user can also online donations. The Obama team captured the strong appeal of video. During the election campaign, the Obama campaign frequently posted images of Obama on video sites like YouTube. In Obama's speech, a music video called "yes, we can" has been repeatedly posted on YouTube, only the first two posts have been viewed 10 million times. On YouTube, Obama's speech on race was viewed more than 4 million times. In addition, Obama's campaign used YouTube's free advertising, which is more effective than TV advertising (Miller, 2018). Obama's team put keyword ads on Google search engine, such as Obama's video advertising. Apart from that, Obama not only owns his official blog and Twitter account, but also has millions of fans on Facebook, and this is a way to communicate directly with voters. The Obama campaign also targeted specific audience, and the main group of Obama is the grassroots, the young and the proletariat.

At the end of Obama's campaign, three million donors pledged \$6.5 million online, totaling more than \$500 million (Voices.washingtonpost.com, 2018). Obama collected more than 13 million e-mail addresses and sent more than 7000 messages. The MYBO website created more than 2 million configuration files and generated 200000 offline events, 400000 blog posts and more than 35000 volunteer groups. Obama finally won the election with more than 66 million votes (Levenshus, 2010).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the perfect victory of Obama in presidential election in 2008 fully showed the role of online public relations in political elections, apart from that, whether the Obama campaign in the 2008 or in the 2012, social media played a very important role in political campaigns. Under the background of Web 2, Obama campaign team made full use

of all kinds of popular social media, shaping the image of Obama's affinity to the people and increasing communication with voters. However, with the rapid development of network marketing and network public relations, some political elections are easily manipulated by professional campaign teams. The intention of voters is easily influenced by some political advertisements and video, which affects the process of social democracy to a certain extent. In the future, when a political campaign is truly democratic, it is likely to be a successful campaign.

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