



Political mobilization in the age of social media: A case study of Barack Obama's presidential campaign

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Abstract

The central theme of this chapter is to situate the presence of political parties in the new age of social media. It is important to have a certain understanding of this term social media. While there lies no established consensus on what exactly is social media, this term was, first popularized by O'Reilly. These forms of new media are used in reference to the networking websites like "Face book, Twitter and many more. As argued by Gainous and Wagner in their work "Tweeting to Power" Social media comprises of a wide and growing portion of internet that is modified in a manner that it allows users, and group of users, to create and exchange content, mostly in a fashion which is more interactive and collaborative.

Keywords: presence, interactive, mobilization, barack, presidential

1. Introduction

The Web content is evolved from largely text and graphics to now include video and audio spreading. This development is caused due to the enhancement in the network capacities which have emerged with the diffusion of broadband and now larger amounts of data can be transferred even at faster speeds. The arrival of wireless technology (Wi-Fi) has marked a considerable rate of increase in mobility. In its early versions Web 1.0 was basically confined to include computer based and static networks but now public can even browse the web through their mobile phones" (Cardoso, *The Media In Network Society* Browsing, News, Filters and Citizenship, 2006). This enhancement has not only provided with diverse platforms from where the content can be visited but it is now become more feasible to "upload and disseminate text, audio, video, and digital photographs over the web". The User-generated content sites such as "Face book, YouTube, and My Space" have become prominent with the visible features of Web 2.0. During the campaign in 2001 in United States only about one- third of the candidates acquire websites but now significantly everyone do. There is a general understanding that whenever any new digital technology which becomes successful in capturing people attention, rapidly becomes politicized. The manner in which Face book, Twitter and YouTube have become one of the most popular online applications and also a tool for content distribution by political campaigns.

The advent of internet and the way it's being popularized has established a "great deal of hype about its potential to stimulate electoral politics. As once said by Dick Morris, who was former advisor to President Clinton, "that a with the advent of "fifth estate" of internet politics will somehow change the level of political power in the United States by merging people together".

Internet is certainly a less expensive medium when seen in comparison with television, has the potentials to level the balance between the outsider candidates and minor parties. Although major party candidates are still advantaged in

because they have better chances to carry their message to the public. But the establishment of this new medium of communication as a campaign tool provides citizens with more preferences which consequently enhance candidate options.

This medium does not provide with filtered information's. The candidates and parties are competent to communicate their messages to reach interested voters without going through traditional media gatekeepers. It is considered as a sophisticated and relatively economical communication tool that like-minded citizens, candidate, and party organizations can use to interact with each other and mobilize supports.

With this very brief background the present chapter will try to develop an understanding that how these new networks affect political information and communication. The first section will explore the implications of the social media and how it may change the political landscape. The growth of social media is not to be seen simply an enhancement in communication technology but rather a foundational change in how people communicate, not just between each other but with political actors and institutions. The second section will examine the American presidential election campaigns of 2008 and 2012 which led to the victory of Barack Obama and through that it will understand how politicians are influencing and controlling the flow of information through social media

Implications of social media in political Mobilization

"George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton were the first presidential candidates to make use of the internet during their 1992 campaigns" ^[1]. The office of White House Communications roughly e-mailed 200 Bush speeches and position papers, and distributed them to several commercial bulletin boards. Clinton was somewhere more aggressive in his use of the medium, distributing speeches, position papers, and biographical information on various newsgroups

¹ Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and Neyork.pp-14

and a Clinton Listserv. He also made his e-mail address for the campaign available through commercial internet service providers, such as Compuserv. Though the reach of these electronic campaign efforts was limited, as few citizens used or relied on the internet for their political information at that point of time. But during 1998, approximately two-thirds of all congressional candidates maintained websites for their campaign, and many state party organizations had established an online presence as well. Many of these early campaign websites were little more than “brochure ware.” They offered little interaction and were not updated often. However, they did offer a wealth of information like for example common platforms, issue positions and so on through this new and growing medium. Political campaigns are fundamentally exercising in communicating a simple message: “vote for me,” or, “don’t vote for my opponent.” Presidential candidate websites can provide state and local information about campaign events, as well as disseminate unique information about voter registration and early voting in all 50 states. Campaign websites also provide information about the policy positions of the candidate, which include statements of issue positions, rebuttals of charges from the opposition, speeches, and campaign pamphlets.

To define Mobilization is a particular form of political communication which tries not only to inform but also engage supporters to act. The one main important medium that is employed by politicians to mobilize political campaigns is through the means of blog. The Blogs connect supporters with the candidate, the campaign, and with each other, providing them with a ground in which they can raise their opinions and concerns. In addition, the hypertext format allows writers to link to other stories relevant to the campaign. The most well publicized use of blogs in a campaign effort was done by Howard Dean in 2003. The "Dean campaign directly or indirectly supported and moderated several blogs throughout 2003 and into 2004, including “Dean Nation”, “Change for America” (www.changeforamerica.com), Howard Dean 2004 Call to Action Weblog” (deancalltoaction.blogspot.com), and what was to become his main blog, “Blog for America” (blogforamerica.com). Dean even parlayed his blog into a forum for decision-making in his campaign”^[2].

The campaign of Howard Dean ultimately did not win the nomination. In fact, Dean only won in one state—Vermont. The Dean campaign’s failure illustrated the drawbacks of using online discussion as a substitute for outreach to undecided voters. Even though Dean was able to appeal strongly to his online supporters, his base was simply too small a proportion of the primary electorate. Dean’s initiatives, however, did affect other campaigns attitude towards use of blogs. There are many official blogs of George Bush and John Kerry which were associated from their campaign websites in 2004. Several candidates who stood for presidential elections in 2008 also had blogs since March 2007.

The internet serve as tool for mobilizing supporters for local campaigns events and provides ways to volunteer on a local basis. In 2000, Al Gore had a section on his website called “Take Action,” which provided visitors the opportunity to select their state and their “coalition” (group), and returned

suggestions about how they might help the campaign based on those selections.

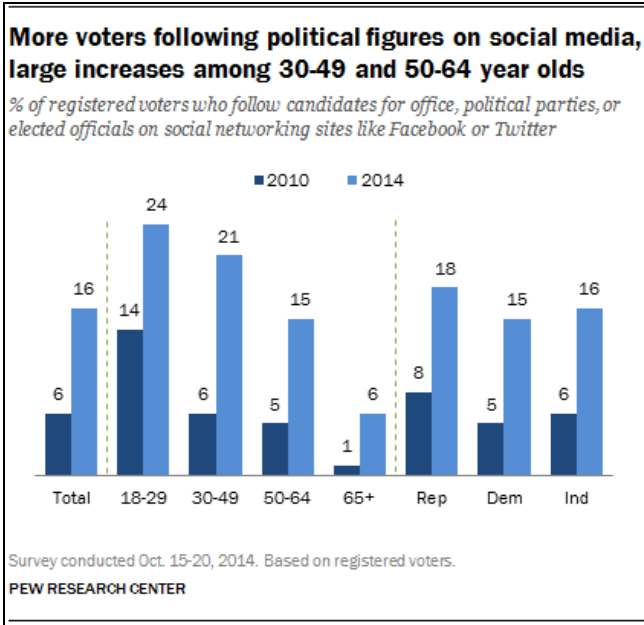
The presidential primaries of 2000 demonstrated the potential of using the internet as a fund-raising tool as well. New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, a candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, was the first candidate to raise one million dollars online. Even more impressive was the internet fund-raising of John McCain, who was standing for the Republican Party nomination. At the time of the New Hampshire primary, McCain was virtually out of money. His surprising win, however, coupled with the publicity generated from it and an online appeal for donations, helped him raise more than one-half million dollars in online donations in a single day. The demands of online donations have increased because in recent times campaign finance system promotes small donations from a large number of sources. The small donations McCain received from online donations after his New Hampshire victory, in conjunction with federal matching funds, enabled him to raise a large amount of money very quickly.

In terms of their demographic profile, online donors tend to be middle-class, fairly well educated, and politically active. Disproportionate numbers of online donors, for example, attended a house party or Meetup.com event. Online giving seemed to be considered a preferred method of donating to a campaign. Campaigns have reached out beyond their own websites to two other types of types of communication which are internet based and are both media controlled and user controlled. Media-controlled online communication are referred to websites disseminating news and information to a relatively large number of voters, but which is controlled by a third party. Like for example ABCnews.com, Foxnews.com. In terms of the news functions, candidates approach the online versions much as they do the traditional print or broadcast versions.

A growing area of interest for candidates is advertising on media-controlled sites. Internet advertisements cost only a fraction of what advertising on television costs. Because the audiences for such sites are likely voters, candidates have steadily increased the share of their advertising budget devoted to online advertising. In 2004, both presidential candidates produced and distributed many of the “banner” ads online.

A newer relationship is between candidates and another form of media-controlled website, the blog. In addition to candidate- controlled blogs or blogs started by an individual, there are also more popular and well-known political blogs such as Daily Kos or Insta Pundit. These blogs constitute a new type of online information that is beginning to rival some existing traditional media sites in readership size and loyalty. Moreover, much like traditional media, many of their writers or bloggers have journalistic status, gaining special entrance to political events such as national party conventions, and candidate and policy-maker press briefings.

² Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and New York. pp-17



[3] Fig 1

Political blogs offer the opportunity to reach well ahead of the campaign’s website. By placing information with blogs or, holding the support of high-profile bloggers, candidate campaigns hope to tap into the millions of Americans who read blogs.

One of the features of the internet is the potential for self-publishing [4] At its inception, this was one of its much-heralded characteristics. However, the audience for an individual’s website was rarely more than family or friends. But a new medium for self-publishing the social networking site—has enhanced the reach of the practice. These online mediums like YouTube, Flickr, My Space, and Face book have given a centralized self-publishing platform which has made escorted large audiences to such portals. These types of sites have recently begun to have an impact on political campaigns. Possibly the best-known online site for self-publishing is YouTube, a website that allows people to upload videos for general viewing. The growth of YouTube’s audience has been phenomenal. In a six-month period in 2006, the number of unique site visitors grew by 300 percent. YouTube has become the one-stop source for popular videos about politics. The site even created a separate section for political campaign videos for the 2008 presidential campaign.

The "modern capacities of video recording devices have substantially enlarged candidate exposure to an unprecedented level. The existence of YouTube democratizes “gotcha journalism” by allowing anyone who catches a candidate or politician off guard to self-publish the gaffe" [5]. The problem is not limited to a candidate doing or saying something in an off moment. An old video could highlight the candidate making a speech or speaking in a debate and contradicting his or her position on an issue. The well known incident of this is when a YouTube video of Mitt Romney giving a speech in an earlier campaign touting his pro-choice position on abortion and his support for gun

³ Pew Research Centre Internet, Science and Tech.

⁴ Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and New York.

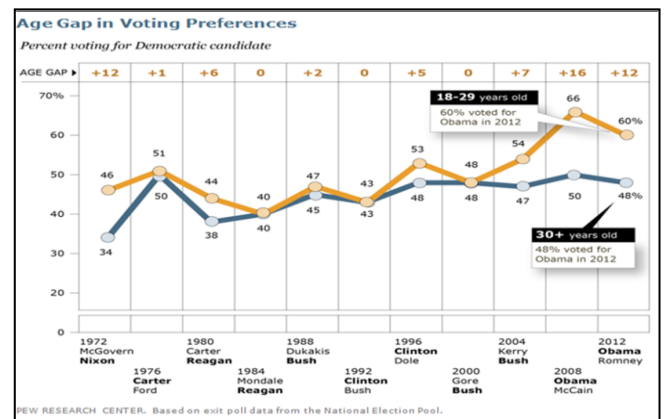
⁵ Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and New York.

control. By 2008, presidential candidate Romney had changed his positions, but YouTube has been there to remind voters of his previous position.

These are web pages where the individual who is active online can create their own web pages and link them to the “profiles” of others. Social networking sites have the capacities to execute conversations, create discussions, keep journals, and can also display photos. and so on. Many such sites exist, but the two best known of this growing genre are MySpace and Face book. These have acquired a large following, particularly among young people. According to the Pew Research Centre Survey, "54 percent of young people aged 18–25 have used one or more of these sites. And 76 percent of young people visit them at least once a week and almost spend an average of about two hours per visit" [6].

Candidates have discovered the political uses of these sites. In 2006, several candidates created profiles on MySpace and Face book including Sherrod Brown, Claire McCaskill, and Ned Lamont. All the major presidential candidates for 2008 did so. It's not only the candidates who create their own sites, but there are people who acts as supporters of these particular candidate and create sites and group which specially favors their supported candidate. The time when Barack Obama declared his candidacy for president, he had probably more than 500 Obama groups on Face book. These groups devoted their space to discussing the Obama campaign, posting photos of Obama, and spreading news about their favored candidate. While candidates may not control such sites, they can benefit from them.

One problem with online social networking as a campaign tool, however, is the demographic of the audience and their potential to affect the candidate’s chances of victory. These are the sites which are very popular among the age group of 18 to 24 who are considered to be the least participatory age group in relation to voter turnout. However, this is not so much a problem per se because this can be effective for volunteer recruitment given that young people often become the foot soldiers for political campaigns [7].



[8] Fig 2

⁶ "Pew Research Centre Internet, Science and Tech. Cell phones and social media platforms like Face book and Twitter are playing an increasingly prominent role in how voters get political information and follow election news, according to a new national survey by the Pew Research Centre".

⁷ Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and New York.

⁸ Pew Research Centre Internet, Science and Tech. In winning re-election, Barack Obama won 60% of the vote among those younger than 30. That was down somewhat from 2008, when Obama won nearly two-thirds

As argues in their work internet politics that during the early time the impact of net on politics was dominated by the two predominant thoughts (Howard, 2009) The "replicated online, and the optimists, who claim that the internet will reform politics and radically redistribute political power. These two camps are descendants of an older debate between sociological and technological determinisms. Basically those who claim that between the impact of technology is shaped by social and political institutions and those who believe technology has the power to shape society and politics. The discussion between normalisers and optimists has been useful in creating much of the significant early analysis of the internet" ^[9].

The "relationship between normalization and political institutions can be studied critically in two ways. The first theory is 'socially determinist' which assures that pre-internet power brokers will come to define the online world, independently of technological change. It is therefore disregarded completely the important differences between old media of political communication, particularly the paper press and television, and on the other side is low-cost engaging and interactive media. And the second theory is 'normalization theory' in which existing institutions provides a structure for the justification of political behavior which stays normal" (Howard, 2009).

Due to the inevitabilities of the television age the political campaign have make "political parties centralized and steeply hierarchical, and grass-roots activism and civic life have somehow withered. The tele-visual process is confine to one-to many but the the internet offers speedy, properly diffused and multidirectional many to many interactive engagements. The above mentioned normalization and internet optimism approaches does not adequately represent the possibility that some political institutions have structures which are more likely to act as a mechanism for the integration of the internet into election campaigning while the others may not be able to incorporate that" (Howard, 2009).

In many of the earlier studies on internet and politics there is remarkable focus on America which is somehow justifiable because the "country can claim to be the birthplace of the internet. It is the only global hyper power, its elections are followed throughout the world, and interest in its politics is strongly linked to the idea of Americanization, which suggests convergence in electoral politics, especially in styles of campaign communication" (Howard, 2009).

It was the Howard Dean's candidacy in 2004 for the Democratic nomination that really seemed to attain the early promise of the internet as a campaigning tool. In his early phase of campaigning he struggled to attain a decent number of supporters and funds as well. It begin in the end 2002 that Dean campaign team restructured their online presence, to examine the potentials of Internet, if it a reasonable medium to organize networking and fundraising. During the end of 2003 Dean was no longer an isolated candidate with very few financial accounts to lead the race and become one of the most influential fundraiser in the history of the

Democratic Party. There are various accounts after the Howard Dean successful accomplishments in employing internet as an efficient tool in mobilizing supporters and raising funds. The eventual winner of the Democratic nomination John Kerry, who while relying mainly on large donors to get him through the primaries "however employed the internet to raise a measurable number of small donations during the main campaign. This led Kerry, in a situation extraordinary for a Democrat, to achieve near financial parity with his Republican opponent, George W. Bush, by the close of the 2004 campaign" (Howard, 2009).

The effectual demonstrations are quite visible during the 2006 midterms and they continued to portray the success of the internet. When there were elections held for Seat Senate seat in Connecticut, Ned Lamont who earlier holds the local positions defeated the three term senator and former vice-presidency candidate Joe Lieberman. Ned Lamont victory lies in his potential to use the internet. He was embraced by high-profile Democratic bloggers who can also be called as "net roots," who not only mobilize supporters but also raised funds. The internet was essential for creating momentum and his eventual victory against Lieberman. At the time of 2006 midterm elections Internet was use extensively. With the most disreputable episode came during the race for the Virginia Senate seat. In between one incident took place where Republican incumbent George Allen was filmed where he referred to a campaign worker of Democratic opponent as "macaca" which is a racist term. George Allen who was expected to comfortably regain his position, as the precursor to a possible presidential run in 2008 had to lose. Possibly the reason for his eventual defeated can be attributed to the diffusion of his video of this event which was shared across the YouTube and very soon it led the viral consciousness. The views of Allen's were questioned not only virtually but also crucially in mainstream newsprint and television media. During 2006 midterms and in the early stages of the 2007-8 the growing use of SNS's such as My Space and Face book were observed.

The above-mentioned high-profile cases captures the picture of the prominent role Internet plays in the American campaign environment. It creates political networks, promotes discussion in politics, important in raising funds and in storing, reclaiming and mechanizing information.

As argued by Bimber, with the growing abundance of political information online which has also elevated the costs of exclusion from the medium. Networks facilitate political participation and the internet offers these in new forms, with the possibility of surpassing geographic location and forming new communities of interest. Davis also argues that the analysis of U.S. elections exposes a growing willingness among politicians and citizens to create internet fuelled, decentralized, distributed campaign organizations. The engaging nature of these new social media technologies creates a potential environment for enriched politics, that is the reason which makes these information and communication technologies important to realize "electronic democracy".

The online medium acts as a channels through which the political can make a direct line of communication with their constituents avoiding journalists. This communication which will be "unfiltered and unrestricted by the norms and structural constraints of traditional print and broadcast media. With the diffusion of Web sites, e-mail and on-line

(66%) of the votes of young people. However, Obama's youth support may have been an even more important factor in his victory this year than it was in 2008.

⁹ Andrew Chadwick, Philip N. Howard. 2008. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. 2008. Taylor and Francis Books. London and New York.

forums the politicians can create direct engagements with citizens" (Huggins B. A., *New Media and Politics*, 2001). As argues Bimber and Davis in their seminal work "Campaigning Online" that internet now "generates a direct channel of communication between leaders and the led. In the initial years the number of users was confined to small percentage but with the changing the users are increasing" (Huggins B. A., *New Media and Politics*, 2001). "In 1996 about 12 per cent of the voting age citizenry or 21 million Americans reported that they had gathered political information from the Internet. For 3 per cent, the Internet was the main channel of political material. 'The new venues,' wrote *Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz, 'will give ordinary folks the ability to search voting records, election returns, exit polls, speech and position papers, enabling them to cut through the political fog by downloading the facts for themselves'. A citizen can express her views in the form of e-mail, in discussion groups, in chat rooms or electronic bulletin boards" [10].

In the work "New Media and Politics" where James MacGregor argues that "leadership should 'engage followers, not merely to activate them, but also to communicate needs, aspirations and goals in a common space which will make better citizens of both leaders and followers" [11].

Basically in U.S the political actors have done several experimentations with internet for several electoral cycles since 1994 but the elections in 2000 were eventually a leap forward. The candidates have done efforts to raise money and innovations in fields of internet. "In 1995, Representative Charlie Rose, Democrat from North Carolina, predicted that "by the year 2000 'the Internet' is going to be an indispensable campaign tool."

Many presidential candidates have used the potentials of internet during campaigns and serve as medium to target information dissemination, and supports reinforcement, supports volunteer recruitments and utilization, raise funds and mobilize voters. fundraising.

The elections in 2000 were considered to be milestone in the history of internet politics as during the 2000 elections more than half of American adults used internet. The online individuals use to spend a significant-amounts of time in online activities. During 2000 elections web users were considered to be more active politically than the general public, and they were more likely to vote.

On the whole, the surveys which were conducted showed that approximately one-third of all Americans went online for political information, news, or other campaign related activities in 2000.

The most prominent factor which can be observed from American political history is that "when a new medium is taken up by political candidates and voters alike, public expectations typically run high that democracy will be transformed for the better". During 1830s and 1840s, the new medium of the day was the mass newspaper. With the emergence of press there was widespread expectations that citizens capacity will be improved to the political affairs of state and somehow this proved to be right. And almost a century later, introduction of television gained similar prophecies.

The evolution of these networks appeared ideal for unfiltered candidate communication. While using these networking sites the candidates now can formulate their own messages and control the content of the presentations. The candidates are provided with new opportunities through which they can directly speak to voters, while maintaining control of the message in the process. With the Web, the candidate could govern the production of the message. Web site design and content were completely within the purview of the candidate. Although paid advertising also offered that level of control, the costs were excessive. With this low-cost medium that allowed the candidate to establish the content of the message received by the voter without worry over journalistic filtering. The other capacities of the Internet, such as facilitating the mobilization of volunteers and the channeling of donations, were revealed majorly later in 1990s (Davis, 2003).

In 1998 electoral cycle what was quite visible is the expanding usage of the Internet by candidates, but somehow with the usage the difference in electoral outcome was not yet noticeable. Evidently there was a minute difference in Internet campaigning between winners and losers. Nonetheless, campaigns, particularly those with serious competition, began to see the probability of the Internet for internal campaign functions such as the management of data and internal campaign communication. With the campaign starts the online efforts to mobilize potential voters. The people who use political site are more likely to vote in the first place. The citizen who comes to the candidate site is more political than the average television advertisement viewer in the opinion of campaign staff. Once a campaign Webmaster even concluded that "If you have a voter who has taken the time to come to the Web site. There is a high-chances that this person is going to vote. So we make every attempt to provide as much information as we can to help to capture that vote" (Davis, 2003).

As argues Bimber and Davis that "since American elections have become so highly candidate-centric the idea of candidates presentations of self has become really crucial". In elections that are party oriented, the way it was during nineteenth century U.S. system. The appeals that parties use to make for electoral support where based more on tradition, ideology, and the past performance of the party. The personal, affective connection that voters might feel to candidates was considered to be of secondary nature. But with time since the Progressive era the United States has moved away from party dominance in the electoral process. The annihilation of patronage systems, the replacement of the single-party ballot with a multiparty ballot, the growth of nonpartisan elections at the local level, and especially the development of the primary system have all led to the evolution American elections toward individuals over parties [12] (Davis, 2003).

The advent of television has also powerfully encouraged candidate-centered politics, where the individual person running for office is the focus of a presidential election process rooted in the rhythms of the media. Television encourages voters who are evaluating candidates to place even greater weight on candidates' personal characteristics. In this modern style of campaigning, the voters are not only

¹⁰ Bruce Bimber, Richard Davis. *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. elections*. 2003. Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Barrie Ax ford, Richard Huggins. *New Media and Politics*. 2001. Sage Publications.

¹² Bruce Bimber, Richard Davis. *Campaigning Online: The Internet in U.S. elections*. 2003. Oxford University Press.

interested in candidate's policy positions and record in office, but they concentrate on individual traits, such as the candidate's spouse and children, family background, and personal likes and dislikes (Davis, 2003).

The outstanding creative advantages of the Internet was its capability to create rapid feedback from the public. It could determine instant public opinion. As argued by some analysts that by the derived public opinion candidates could "learn what interests voters, and how they feel about the positions taken, and how the particular issues affect the voters."

The new space of social media has provided candidates new opportunities for self presentation on issues. As this new medium offers virtually unlimited room for candidates to express issue stances, and the limitation is no more space but the endurance of the reader (Davis, 2003). This is the core departure from traditional media messages when we looked at candidate Web sites.

What makes this new medium different lies in the fact that it is interactive, information intensive functions that this new technology provides. It seeks online donations, creates e-mail networks, tailoring messages at the individual level, and encouraging online activism (Davis, 2003). The new web sites are certainly different from traditional news media because of the richness of their content. This is not to suggest that everything candidates claim on their sites is factually accurate or objectively true. But it basically means that Web sites offer a vastly greater volume of political and politicized information than is contained in television ads or print advertising. Even a citizen who follows a campaign by reading newspapers closely would require a good deal of time and effort to obtain a volume of information about any particular candidate comparable to what is available at the average Web site.

The web is seen as a tool for the less politically engaged, as argued by many scholars that internet has the capacities to create a political space for a wide range of segments in society, which will include "individual citizens, interest groups, social movements, political parties, candidates, the press, and governmental bodies".

According to the Pew Internet and American Life the internet was a noteworthy source of political information and a location of political action in the 2004 election. More than a third of American adults used the internet for political purposes at some time during the 2004 election. The most familiar uses of the internet were getting news or information about the elections, and using e-mail to discuss politics.

The online activism adapted by political actors help in the emergence and evolution of certain norms and also generates online structures for political action which are fairly innovative. The "online structures" can be defined as shared electronic space, which constitutes of diverse html pages, features, links and texts, which creates opportunities to associate and act. On the web, relations between web producers, as well as between producers and users, are endorsed and arbitrated through online structures. And every online structure enables and constrains the capacities of numerous kinds of political action which can be both online and offline.

Barack Obama Presidential Campaign

In 2007 elections Hilary Rodham Clinton was considered to be the likely victor for the Democratic nomination for

president. But despite of all the advantages of " name recognition, accomplishments, and fundraising expertise, Barack Obama defeated her in the battle for delegates and on January 20, 2009, and was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States" ^[13]. The question which are very crucial to ask here are: "How a first-term junior Senator from Illinois with a short list of achievements defeated Clinton who was a former Senator and Vice-Presidential nominee, John Edwards, and then in 2012 defeated the Republican nominee John McCain, to become America's first African American president?" (Ames, Social Media: The influence of social media on American Politics, April 2014). There are several researchers which claims that the key element in Obama's successful campaign was "the technology of social media which his team efficiently adapted as a vital tenet of its strategy that helped with fundraising and also empowered volunteers who now felt they could make a difference" ^[14].

During the presidential campaign in America "Barack Obama and his campaign team implemented one of the most well-planned campaigns of the modern time. The campaign made substantial use of new media and new technologies to mobilize large numbers of supporters" (Hume). "The most influencing factor in 2008 campaign strategies was candidates' personalities and their attitudes towards the Internet. Like for instance McCain was probably considered to be incapable to check even his own e-mail, while on the other hand Obama was glued to his mobile Blackberry device. The powerful attitude towards the Internet which Obama showed facilitated his supporters" ^[15].

The efficiency of the Internet in the transmission of campaign ideas was illustrated by an inexpensively generated online video supporting Barack Obama in 2008 entitled "Yes, We Can." This video become very popular and reached nearly four million people in a few weeks. On the other hand, Hillary Clinton, when she was competing with Obama for Democratic nomination for president in 2008, attempted to reach out using a televised town hall meeting that not only reached a fraction of audience size but was much more expensive (Anderson).

In presidential elections Barack Obama won by nearly 200 electoral and 8.5 million popular votes. The principal factor for his success lies in the manner in which factor his campaign used social media and technology as a potential means of their strategy for raising funds and to develop a force of empowered volunteers. There is a popular belief that "Obama won by converting everyday people into engaged and empowered volunteers, donors and advocates through social networks, e-mail advocacy, text messaging and online video. The campaign's inclination to online advocacy is a major reason for his triumph".

"Obama's campaign acquired 5 million supporters on social networks. He had almost 2.5 million by November 2008 Face book supporters, outperforming McCain by nearly four times. In Twitter he almost had 115,000 followers approximately 23 times those of McCain. Fifty million viewers spent 14 million hours watching campaign-related

¹³ Kenneth Scott Ames. Social Media: The Influence of Social Media on American Politics. April 2014.

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott Ames. Social Media: The Influence of Social Media on American Politics. April 2014.

¹⁵ Media Ajir. The Effects of Internet Usage on Voter Choice in 2012 U.S Presidential Elections. Craghton University.

videos on YouTube, four times McCain's viewers. The campaign sent out 1 billion e-mails, including 10,000 unique messages targeted at specific segments of their 13-million-member list. The campaign had captured almost 3 million mobile and SMS subscribers" [16]. The campaign's "social network, www.my.barackobama.com allowed individuals to connect to one another and activate themselves on behalf of the campaign. Two million profiles were created. Registered users and volunteers planned over 200, 000 offline events, wrote 400,000 blog posts, and created 35,000 volunteer groups. Obama raised almost \$639 million from 3 million donors, mostly through the Internet".

Barack Obama than any other "candidate engaged with the new tools of social media more efficiently than other candidates to organize, communicate, and fundraise, but also leveraged them to support its grassroots strategy that tapped into the hearts of the voters, which resulted in the victory of Democrats and Obama. And the legacy of one of the most effective Internet marketing plans in history, where social media and technology enabled the individual to activate and participate in a movement".

The way Obama strategy of using social media certainly changed the way elections were held and will be held in the future. "He with his team portrayed the power of social media and technology and more importantly, that individuals could make a difference if given the right tools and encouragement". They showed that technology was not just a "tool in the arsenal, but a transformative force,"

The "earlier model of one-way communication of mass media, in which the voice of one authority is broadcast to the masses who receive it unthinkingly, is fading with the arrival of interactive media technologies that allow the audience to play a more active role" [17].

There are structural differences which leads in the variation in usage of social media by Democratic and Republican parties in presidential elections. The past elections history also explains that structurally, the "Republican Party is typically a more top-down, hierarchical organization. A kind of organization that functions well with dictates from above, with a single leader, a single message and a comprehensive organization for distributing that message. The Republican convention acknowledged in an interview that the party was not prepared to delegate responsibility for message generation and management to people outside the traditional party structure. On the other side, is the Democratic Party which goes by its definition as more heterogeneous group, which are more comfortable with ceding control to others outside the formal party hierarchy. And this can be one reason which led to more widespread use of social media tools by the Democrats. It is clear that the Obama campaign practiced all of the above principles" [18].

The argues Media Ajir that the "vigor of social media lies in its communal nature and lack of strict hierarchies. And many scholars referred Internet as a "democratizing medium for its ability to provide increased access to information and interaction, bringing individuals into the political process".

¹⁶ Dr, Emily Metzgar, Albert Maruggi. Social Media and U.S Presidential Elections.

¹⁷ Media Ajir. The Effects of Internet Usage on Voter Choice in 2012 U.S Presidential Elections. Craghton University.

¹⁸ Dr, Emily Metzgar, Albert Maruggi. Social Media and U.S Presidential Elections.

And moreover the open and participatory nature with fundamental Democratic values. It is distinguished with traditional media in the sense that it "compresses the time and space in which information passes. A person with a very small piece of information, which can be communicated in 140 characters can potentially capture a nation imagination. It can spread like a air from idea, to digital post, to a national audience with very few gatekeepers or powerbrokers hindering that information" (Gerbaudo, 2012).

The power of the short messages shared on twitter was evident during the 2012 presidential election in United States. Twitter was exploded with millions of short messages which were based within the themes of the debate during the third presidential debate between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama. A successful campaign should capture the attention of voters who are otherwise disinterested or distracted, this is achieved through an expression of direction rather than the details which is fulfilled by tweets. Twitter makes certain activities more efficient, inexpensive, and immediate. "A campaign can dispatch a tweet within seconds to advertise a success, claim credit for a new policy, or even to reply to the actions of their opponent". It has the capacity to carefully target supporters for the largest impact before such activity was only confine through mail or tele - phone if targeted, or mass media such as broadcast television. Both of them are slow as compared to Twitter (Maruggi, 2008).

Twitter usage for activities where it especially highlights events, personal characteristics, and emphasizing success is occurring with increasing frequency. With the evidence that online campaign activities can have substantial and significant effect on electoral outcomes.

Social media was not only seen as beneficial for its capacity in distributing a campaign message, but also for its worthiness by providing a medium for ongoing engagement on the bases of those moved by the message. The ground-shifting advance creates an entirely new way to see politics and the values attributed to advertising and campaigning.

Using protocols like Face book and Twitter allowed senate candidates to simply avoid traditional media and still reach and target voters. The significance of this approach has become so apparent that a new political industry has started to aid and instruct politicians on how to maximize their influence in the social media.

Both the republicans and democratic parties have social media presence on the two most prominent Social Networking Sites, Face book and Twitter. Both of these parties use their access to advocate for positions, persuade, inform, and, of course, raise money. The nature of social media provides an interested party with the capacity to shape a network and drive content, it is a fertile ground for interested parties to market view- points, ideas, and content. Political actors can anticipate the needs of various subsets of voters and then enter their networks by designing content to appeal to these users.

In their work "Tweeting to Power" Gainous and Wagner argues that " while campaigning through the internet creates an alternative that allows competition which was not possible with earlier forms of traditional sources. The campaign organized through social networking sites makes it easier to outreach and educate the voters at a fraction of cost as compared to traditional media. From both the "campaign(supply side) and the voter (demand side), the

cost is minimized, and the potential exchange far more substantive, as the internet can hold considerably more information and is interactive in its approach" [19]. A well-tailored social media appeal should be able to put a focused, directed, and targeted appeal to the voters with limited cost. And if the messages are well executed through social media networks can drive an idea, influence issue understanding, and efficiently mobilize and motivate voters to support a candidate at the polls. The presence on social media does not then becomes a substitute for older campaign strategies but an important illustrative variable for electoral success in any current or future campaign.

Effective or not, the integration of social media into politics is happening rapidly. It is not the only question of whether political actors can develop newer and more clever ways to market themselves though it somehow part of it. It is a change in who we communicate with and how that communication occurs. It is a change in who we communicate with and how that communication limits old forms of political communication and provides new opportunities for others. The internet is changing and altering the world around us. Altering the calculus of information exchange is not just an abstraction but it has a very real and durable consequences.

Concluding Remarks

The advent of social media has certainly shifted the process of political communication in the United States. "The U.S. presidential elections was another step in the direction of democratic discourse enabled by social media technology. While the end-state of such discourse is not possible to predict, what is clear is that the people formerly known as the audience, empowered by technologies and spurred on by their fellow formerly passive audience compatriots have now effective role to play than ever before" [20] (Maruggi, 2008).

The success of Barack Obama's presidential campaign can to some extent be credited to his capability to use technologies and strategically employ them in "mobilizing communities and raising necessary funding to sustain a national campaign. He was able to spread his message of "Yes We Can" by fully utilizing new social media technologies. That was remarkable to in terms of how one runs a presidential campaign. Now the campaign is not confine to the 30 second television commercials and is more about engaging the voters in a process essential to democracy. The presidential campaign led by Barack Obama in American Politics is the first one to bring campaign to the virtual space and truly engaging votes, and expanding what one calls e-democracy" [21].

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