UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD

Institut mezinárodních studií

Bakalářská práce

2011   **Dan Beseda**

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Use of social media in political campaign: The case study of the Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign

Bakalářská práce

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Abstrakt

Tato práce se věnuje roli sociálních médií v americké prezidentské kampani. Média hrají obecně důležitou roli v prezidentské kampani. Každé nové médium je spojeno s velkým očekáváním ohledně jeho dopadu na vývoj politické kampaně. Z toho důvodu zkoumáme otázku: Jakou roli hrají sociální média v americké prezidentské kampani. Role těchto médií je zkoumána na případové studii. V první kapitole jsou definovány sociální média a platforma, na které fungují, Web 2.0. Prezentovány jsou zde také nejdůležitější aspekty sociálních médií. Následující kapitola prezentuje teoretické pozadí sociálních médií v politice se zaměřením na aspekty, které jsou relevantní pro sociální média a jejich roli v politické kampani. Třetí kapitola je případovou studií prezidentské kampaně Baracka Obamy. Na začátku případové studie jsou prezentována data, která ukazují využití médií během voleb 2008. Poté jsou analyzována nejdůležitější sociální média v Obamově kampani. Nejdříve je analyzována Obamova oficiální stránka MyBarackObama. Poté je analyzován YouTube, následovaný analýzou sociálních sítí, především Facebooku. Poslední kapitola se věnuje blogům.

Abstract

This thesis deals with the role of social media in the U.S. presidential campaign. Media plays an important role in the U.S. presidential campaign. Therefore every new medium comes with a huge expectation on its impact on the political campaign. Thus, we examine the question: What role do social media play in U.S. presidential campaigns? The role of social media is examined in the case study of the Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. The first chapter defines social media and the platform on which they run − Web 2.0. It also presents the most important aspects of social media. The following chapter presents a theoretical background on social media in politics, with

focus on aspects that are relevant to the social media and their role in the political campaign. The third chapter is the case study of Barack Obama's campaign. At the outset the case study presents data on the media usage in the 2008 election; thereafter the most important social media used in Obama's campaign are analyzed. The first analysis is of Obama's official website *MyBarackObama*. Next to be analyzes is *YouTube*. Following that, social networks, primarily *Facebook*, are analyzed. The last chapter of this case study is devoted to blogs.

Klíčová slova

Sociální media, Barack Obama, prezidentské volby, politická kampaň, MyBarackObama, Youtube, Facebook, blogs

Keywords

Social Media, Barack Obama, presidential election, political campaign, MyBarackObama, Youtube, Facebook, blogs

Rozsah práce: 45 stran, 81811 znaků

Prohlášení

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval/a samostatně a použil/a jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
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3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne 3.1.2012   Dan Beseda

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Zdůvodnění tématu práce:
Americké prezidentské volby jsou jedny z největších a nejsledovanějších voleb na celém světě, jelikož jejich výsledek ovlivňuje chod jednoho z nejdůležitější globálních hráčů. Navíc jsou americké volby také předurčují trendy v oblasti vývoje politické kamapně. Média jsou v amerických volbách velice důležitá. Například příchod televize změnil nejen vedení kampaně, ale i její výsledek. Když internet pronikl do americké politiky postoje k jeho roli v politické kampani byly většinou skeptické, jelikož internet byl vnímán jako prostředí pro pár technicky dovedných odborníku. Proto se v této práci budou zabývat tím, jakou roli hrají sociální média fungujicí na nové formě internetu - Web 2.0.

Cíl práce:
Cílem práce je prozkoumat a popsat proces využití internetových sociálních sítí v předvolební kampani Baracka Obamy. Práce bude analyzovat sociální média, která hrála nejdůležitější roli v kampani Baracka Obamy - Obamovu oficiální stránku barackobama.com, YouTube, sociální sítě, zejména Facebook a blogy

Závěr práce:
V závěru bude shrnuto jakou roli hrají sociální media v americké prezidentské kampani.

Základní charakteristika tématu:
Práce se zabývá rolí sociálních medií v americké prezidentské kampani. Nejprve jsou charakterizována socialní média a jejich nejdůležitjší aspekty. Dále budou sociální média zasazena do politického kontextu. V případové studii budou nejdříve analyzována data využití médií v prezidnetské kampani 2008. Dále budou anlyzována nejdůležitější sociální média využitá v této kampani. Tedy Obamova oficiální stránka barackobama.com, Youtube, sociální sítě, zejména Facebook a blogy.

Struktura práce:
1. **Úvod**
2. **Metodologie**
3.1. **Sociální sítě obecně**

3.2.   **Rozdíl mezi sociálními sítěmi a tradičními internetovými médii** **4.**   **Případová studie sociální média ve volební kampni Baracka Obamy 2008** **4.1**   **Oficiální stránka Baracka Obamy** **4.2.**   **YouTube¨** **4.3.**   **Sociální sítě** **4.4**   **Blogy** **5. Závěr**

Prameny a literatura:

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Content

Introduction

When the Internet emerged, it quickly became part of our daily lives. Today, the Internet is even more important in its new Web 2.0 form. In recent times many scholars have argued that Web 2.0 is radically changing our world. For example, in his books *Grown up digitally* and *Wikinomics*, Don Tapscott describes how the new Web has shifted the whole economic system and how it has influenced the generation that grew up with the Internet. There have been many other books and studies about this topic, such as *Socialnomics* by Erik Qualman and *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* by Clay Shirky. In the last decade many political scholars also started to realize the power of the Internet. This interest is reflected in the increased number of articles relating to politics and the Internet which were recently published, the number of which, is increasing every year (Table 1).

The U.S. presidential elections are one of the most important elections in the World. They have always been highly observed not just by Americans, but also by many people from all over the World, as the U.S. influence much of the World events. Media are traditionally a very important part of the election process in the U.S. Between 1830 - 1840 mass papers emerged. This so called penny press had reshaped presidential election. A century later Television was used in presidential campaign for the first time and it completely changed the outcome of election. Since then Television has been the most important medium in the presidential election. When the Internet in his old form Web 1.0 penetrated politics, many were skeptical about the role and the consequences for the political campaigns. It was seen as an area for a few highly technical skilled experts.

However, with the arrival of the new form of Internet Web 2.0 and new media - Social media based on its concepts and ideas, was, as previously stated, considered by many as technology that could significantly change our world, there is a question: What role do new social media play in a political campaign? In various political systems, there is at some point, a serious difference in the roles of social media in political campaigns (Anstead, Chadwick 2009). The research question is specified to: What role do social media play in U.S. presidential campaigns?

This paper examines this question in the case study of the Barack Obama 2008 presidential campaign. This campaign was the first which vastly used social media with

an exception of Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign. However, in the time of Dean's campaign, not many of today's well known social media such as Facebook, Youtube or Twitter existed. Ron Paul also greatly used social media in his presidential campaign in 2008, but he did not make it through republican primaries. Therefore so far, Obama's campaign is the best example to examine the role of social media in the political campaign.

This paper could be divided into two different methodological blocks. The first block is contextual and theoretical. In this block I used a descriptive method to describe social media and the main ideas on which they are based. Secondly, I examined the presence of social media in the context of politics and political campaigns

The second practical part is conceived as the case study. The methodological concept of the case study was chosen, as to this day, the Obama's campaign is unique in the use of social media in the U.S. presidential campaign. Therefore this case study seems to be the best methodological concept for this study. In the case study qualitative and quantitative methods are used. The most important social media from this campaign are analyzed.

This paper is based on the literature which is presented in the following chapter. As some of the literatures were retrieved via Amazon, it does not show the page number instead of that it shows its location. To make clear the difference between a page and a location, an underline text is used for a location.

This paper is structured in five chapters. The first chapter is an overview of literature. Second chapter defines social media and the platform on which they run – Web 2.0. Furthermore this chapter presents the typology of social media, which helps us to better define social media and describe the main aspects of social media.

The following chapter presents a theoretical background on social media in politics, with focus on aspects that are relevant to the social media and their role in the political campaign. These aspects are a new public sphere, which these media produce, an engagement and organization.

The fourth chapter is the case study of Barack Obama's campaign. At the beginning, it presents us with the usage of media in the 2008 presidential campaign. After that Obama's official social networking site is analyzed. This is followed by an analysis of Youtube as the most popular video site in Obama's campaign. Next I shall analyze social networks, with the most emphasis placed on Facebook, as it was the most

used and most important social networking site in Obama's campaign. The end of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the blogs in Obama's campaign.

The fiveth chapter is the most important as it compares findings from the case study with theory from second Chapter. The last chapter is summary of the results.

1. Literature overview

Social media in politics is quite a new topic. Therefore the literature and our knowledge about this topic is very dynamic. In this chapter an overview of relevant literature is presented. The literature relevant for this paper comes from different research areas as the topic itself is very multidisciplinary.

There is a vast amount of literature on the topic of Web 2.0 and social media. The most important is the article *What Is Web 2.0* by Tim O'Reilly, who defined Web 2.0 for the first time. This paper used furthermore some of the most recognized books about social media. First is *Socialnomics by* Erik Qualman, which described general changes that come with social media. Moreover its fourth chapter is dedicated to Obama's success, which was driven by social media. Another book is *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World,* by Don Tapscott. This book deals with new media and their impact on the younger generation. This book also touches on the topic of the 2008 election in chapter 9.

Basic literature on the topic of internet and politics is Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics by Andrew Chadwick and Philip Howard. This book is a symposium of various articles related to politics and the Internet written by experts from various field of study. A. Chadwick was also one of the first to conceptualize role of Web 2.0 in politics in his article *Web 2.0: New Challenges for the Study of E-Democracy in an Era of Informational Exuberance*. The role of blogs in U.S. politics is covered by Richard Davids in *Typing politics: The Role of Blogs in American Politics.*

The Journal of Information Technology & Politics published a special edition focused on YouTube and the 2008 Election Cycle in the United States. The article *"Yes We Can": How Online Viewership, Blog Discussion, Campaign Statements, and Mainstream Media Coverage Produced a Viral Video Phenomenon* by Kevin Wallsten examines the role of social media on the production of viral videos. The next article *'Online Video "Friends" Social Networking: Overlapping Online Public Spheres in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election' by* Robertson et al. analyzed the interlinking pattern

between YouTube and Facebook in the 2008 election. For a change, Christian Vaccari analyzed the role of social media in the organization of the campaign in his research paper *"Technology Is a Commodity": The Internet in the 2008 United States Presidential Election.*

Several other research papers examine the role of social media in the 2008 election. For example, Audrey Hayness's paper *Making an Impression in the 21st Century: An Examination of Campaign Use of New Media in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaign*, which is focused on use of social media in 2008 primaries. Christine B. Williams and Girish J. Gulati examined the use and impact of Facebook in U.S. congressional and presidential elections in several articles. The Research Center for the People and the press PEW traditionally do surveys about the use of media in the U.S. election. The most relevant survey for this work is *The Internet's role in campaign 2008* by Aaron Smith.

Several books have been written about Obama's campaign. David Plouff, Obama's chief campaign manager, wrote an insider's book about the campaign: *The audacity to win: The inside story and lesson of Barack Obama's history victory*. More relevant for this paper is *Yes we did it: An inside look at how social media build the Obama brand* by another Obama campaign staff member Rahaf Harfoush, which focuses on the role of social media in the campaign.

Furthermore, several articles about the 2008 election and social media were written in various newspapers such as CNN, The Economist, Wired or The Washington post. Blogs such as Huffington post and Daily Kos also covered the role of social media in few articles.

2. Web 2.0 and social media

The term Web 2.0 is usually associated with Tim O'Reilly and his Web 2.0 summit. O'Reilly describes Web 2.0 as a platform on which successful applications are those that harness the network effect and collective collaboration of users (O'Reilly, 2006). Therefore, we must understand Web 2.0 not as a technological change of the World Wide Web, but rather as a change in the way users and software developers are using the web. It is also necessary to understand these changes in a technological context − a context with both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. Firstly, the Internet has ceased to be a place for a few specialists with high technological knowledge. Today, practically anyone can create content on the Internet without deeper

technological knowledge. Secondly, there has been an increase in the number of people who have the opportunity to access the Internet; thanks to mobile Internet we can be online almost anywhere.

Web 2.0 and Social media are often used as interchangeable words and the distinction between them in recent literature is very limited. However, there is a difference between these two terms. In this work we understand Web 2.0 to be a platform on which online applications are created. Social media deals with the social aspects of these applications, such as collaboration, open source and community (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). These aspects and their importance will be further discussed in the upcoming chapters. However to begin, the term social media will be defined.

2.1 Definition and typology of Social media

Since social media is based on Web 2.0 there is no universally accepted definition. Therefore, this work will rely on the definition given by Brian Solis, which describes the difference between social media and traditional media:

> *"Social Media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers."* (Solis, 2010)

Although this definition captures the basic characteristics of social media, it does not give a clear picture of what is and what is not a social medium. In order to have a better idea of what social media consists of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) created a typology of social media with six categories:

Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia) are projects, which enable the joint creation of content by end-users and therefore are the biggest manifest of User Generated Content (UGC).

Social networks (e.g. Facebooks, Myspace) are the most popular form of social media. They enable connectivity between users through the creation of an online profile. Social networks usually provide some form of instant messaging in order to encourage

communication between users. Moreover users can share text, video, photos or links with their friends.

Blogs were one of the first forms of social media. Blogs work as publishing platforms, where anything can be published ranging from personal autobiographies to professional content on any topic. Blogs are seen as the biggest competition for traditional media.

Content communities (e.g. Youtube, Flickr) the main goal of content communities is the sharing of content. They usually do not require the creation a profile, or if so, only one consisting of basic data. However, the similarity of Youtube profiles to those on social networks demonstrates the interconnectedness of different types of social media.

Virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) in the virtual world offered by these games users can create a personalized avatar and then use this avatar to interact with other users in the virtual environment. Virtual games are usually bound by a set of rules.

Virtual social worlds (Second life) functions essentially the same as virtual game worlds except that they allow the user to behave more freely like in the normal world.

This typology is a basic scheme in categorizing social media. Mirna Bard, a social media marketing consultant, defines 15 different categories of social media. Although most of these categories could, for the most part, be narrowed down into the original listed above, it provides two more important categories.

The first category is social tagging (e.g. Digg, Stumble) and bookmarking (e.g. Del.ici.ous or Diigo). Both of these types of social media provide the user with the ability to add metadata (e.g. photo tagging) to the overall content. [1] This means that users don't have to open or download content in order to gain knowledge about it. This ability to add metadata helps to better categorize content. While some sites provide tagging options, such as Facebook's photo tagging, the sites described above are more exclusively based on the idea of tagging. In addition users can see tags that are popular

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[1] An information architect Thomas Vander Wal calls this classification system folkomony.

on these sites. This can give them a sense of what other people are interested in at the moment (Golder and Huberman 2006:3).

The second additional category outlined by Bard is social measuring sites (e.g. Technorati, BlogPlus), which measures the quality of submitted content. Even though some might argue that there are even more categories, for the purpose of this thesis the six basic categories, supplemented with the two above will be the focus. With the accruement of data on the web, it is necessary to find a way to orient oneself in the maze of data.

2.2 Aspects of Social media

2.2.1 Rise of the amateur creature

User generated content (UGC) is not a completely new thing, but it has only became popular during the last few years. There have been several technological factors that helped increase the use of UGC. Firstly, the transition to a broadband Internet connection has allowed people to quickly download and upload data such as high quality pictures and videos. Mobile Internet connections and Wi-Fi allows people to access the Internet from almost anywhere. Furthermore, the price of technology that is needed to create content has dropped as well, making the technology available to more people around the world. An example of this can be found in current mobile phone technology, in particular the rise in popularity of mobile phones with built-in cameras. Of the approximately 4, 6 billion mobile phones in use more than one billion of them have a camera (Economist, 2010). The combination of the popularity of social media and the availability of high-tech devices, such as mobile phones, has now made it easier than ever to publish content and instantly share it with a large number of people (many-to-many).

Usually, Internet users only produce UGC out of pure enthusiasm rather than for a vision of profit (Stoeckl, Rohrmeier, Hess 2007: 409).[2] (As a result, users tend to produce content relating to what they feel most enthusiastic about. This is important information for those seeking to influence patterns of UGC, as is shows that people will not be likely to create content unless they become engaged in the relevant subject matter. User-generated content is closely linked to the Long Tail theory (Anderson, 2006). 'Long tail' means that due to the decreasing cost of production, people are no

longer as focused on creating content that will generate "hits" (unlike the profit-driven traditional media). Instead users produce content in areas that they find interesting. As pointed out above, most users do not even think about earning revenue with their content and therefore are not forced to produce "hits". The best example of the long tail theory is seen in the vast amount of "Youtube stars".

The rise of amateur content is also connected to the raise of citizen journalism, that is, journalism conducted by non-professionals. Citizen journalism can occur through the publishing of stories via a blog or microblog, the discussion of a report or claim from an already published news article, or documenting a noteworthy event (i.e. through photographs or a video recording) and posting it online. (Glaser, 2006) This poses a potential problem as anything could be taped and instantly shared with many people. This especially affects famous people and people who have already been brought to the attention of society. For example, politicians must constantly think before they speak because they never know who might be watching them. Gavin Newsom, the former Mayor of San Francisco, called it "Politics 24/7" (Miller 2008).

Citizen journalism is not only an example of social media, it is an example of the power inherent to delivering messages and information from user to user. In other words, social media bypasses traditional media platforms and reduces the huge influence of media corporations on the format and selection of the message which will be delivered to users.

2.2.2 Crowd sourcing and collaboration

Another aspect of social media, which is not captured in our definition, is collaboration. Thanks to direct communication and the possibility to instantly communicate through the "many-to-many" technique, the consumer becomes a 'prosumer'. In comparison to a consumer, a 'prosumer' not only consumes service and products, but also co-creates them. According to Tim O'Reilly, this results in "perpetual beta" as users are constantly changing a final form of a product or service. (2005: 2) By actively participating, users/consumers have adopted a larger role in the shaping of services and products. Another form of collaboration is known as "crowdsourcing":

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[2] Nevertheless Dmytri Kleiner a Brian Wyrick point out that a lot of this project end up being commercial successful (Zbiejczuk 2007: 22)

"Crowdsourcing represents the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively), but is also often undertaken by sole individuals." (Howe 2006)

An important part of the crowdsourcing is that people, who are participating in crowdsourcing do it mainly because of their enthusiasm. This is different from traditional work where most employees would work for money. Crowdsourcing is connected to open sourcing. Knowledge or a part of the knowledge is shared freely so that anyone can contribute to the project. Don Tapscott, in his book *Wikinomics*, shows, with the example of a gold mining company, that open sourcing and crowdsourcing can be used even in cases where the data is a highly valued resource. In 1999 a gold mining company struggled to find a new deposit of gold. The new CEO of the Goldcorp McEwen decided to do what many people in the industry would consider unimaginable; he shared all of the company's geology data with the whole world. Amateurs from around the word started to participate in the search for a new deposit of gold. His idea resulted in the finding of 55 new gold deposits (Tapscott & Williams, 2008:7-9).

Generally social media supports a new form of organization. Thanks to social media it has become easy to connect with people sharing similar interests, organize them into groups and then further coordinate these groups to achieve goals.

3. Social Media in politics

3.1 Public sphere 2.0

The concept of the public sphere was originally theorized by Jurgen Habermans, who refers to the public sphere as "a realm of our social life, in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Papacharissi 2009: 231). The public sphere is space where problems, ideas and opinions are formed, transformed and exchanged between citizens.(Robertson et al. 2010: 183) The main goal of the public sphere is to increase public decision and public accord (Papacharissi 2009: 231). This means that the public sphere should lead to deliberative organization of society as well as engagement. Citizens engaged in political and cultural discourse do not only obtain their information from each other, but also from various media. The public sphere concept has always

been one in which multiple modes of information dissemination and discourse take place. That media play a role in the concept of public sphere is clear from Habermans' critic of mass media. Habermans argues that "mass media have turned the public sphere into a space where the rhetoric and objectives of public relations and advertising are prioritized" (Papacharissi 2009: 232). This leads to a decisive engagement of people in politics, but also mass media coverage of public affairs and their politicizing results in skepticism and cynicism. This produces public, which is detached from public sphere (ibid.).

In its early form of Web 1.0, the internet was a new challenge for the research studying public sphere. The potential of the internet was seen mostly by scholars as dystopian or utopian. However most of the scholarship concurs that the internet provides a public space, but it doesn't necessarily provide a public sphere. Through the internet, citizens can access a great amount of information, but these don't' have to lead to an increase in political participation [Bimber, 2001; Kaid, 2002](ibid. 234).

However, the emergence of Web 2.0 and social media changed the view on the position of the internet and its role in public sphere. Benkler founded a new network public sphere, which is based on Habermans' model of the public sphere. He argues that the characteristics of Web 2.0, which were described above, allows "a very large number of actors to see themselves as potential contributors to public discourse and as potential actors in political arenas, rather than mostly passive recipients of mediated information who occasionally can vote their preferences"(Benkler 2006: 220). According to Benkler, a network public sphere is deliberative and increasing political participation and political discourse. In comparison with Habermans, Benkler sees the public space as a place where a collective action can be organized (Roberts 2009).

Not everyone agrees with Benkler's theory. For example Papacharissi argues instead that Web 2.0 creates some kind of hybrid commercial space, which cannot replace the public sphere. However Papacharissi admits that this commercial space helps enlarge political discourse and also might increase political participation in some restrictive ways (Papacharissi 2009: 244).

3.2 Engagement

As suggested above, social media should help increase political engagement. However most of the recent scholars are skeptical of that. A lot of scholars argue that on the internet and Web 2.0 "information rich will get richer while the information poor

will remain relatively poorer" (Brundidge & Rice 2009: 145). In other words, these people who were politically active before the internet are more likely to be politically active on Web 2.0 and the internet. On the other hand, people who are information poor will stay poor as they will not have skills to process the information and they also do not have the interest in politics, therefore they will not use Web 2.0 to search for information or engage in campaign. Furthermore according to Brundidge and Rice, the internet is a chaotic environment with a vast amount of information, which makes it even harder for information poor people to orientate in it (Ibid.). This might be true about the internet in its early form; however some scholars today argue that Web 2.0 is actually quite an organized place (Benkler 2006; Chadwick 2009).

The other critics of the role of Web 2.0 in political participation question what leads to political participation. Web 2.0 lowered costs for the participation, but they argue that participation is stimulated by other factors specific to an individual's experience rather than a lowering cost of participation (Roberts 2009). Also Allison Orr claims that based on the existing research on political participation, it does not seems that Web 2.0 will increase political participation, because the characteristic which predicts user engagement seems to be same for the real world and the internet (Orr, 2007: 14).

Despite relative skepticism about the role of internet and Web 2.0 in increasing political participation, some recent studies show surprising findings. For example, the PEW Study from 2011 shows that Facebook users are more likely to be politically engaged (Hampton, Goulet, & Rainie, 2011). Moreover Skoric and Kwan found that members of a Facebook political site or group are more likely to engage in other political activities (2011: 76). Also Sang-Hee,Wi-Geun and Whang conclude in their study that social media encourages online political participation (2010: 189-190).

It is necessarily to understand that neither the internet nor Web 2.0 automatically turn every user into an active participant. When we examine political participation, other variables have to be taken in an account as well. However it seems from recent studies that Web 2.0 can have some restrictively positive effects on political participation.

3.3 Organization

Howard Dean's 2003-4 presidential campaign was not only unique for the use of the social media, but furthermore for a new way of organizing campaigns. Dean's

campaign was the first that used bottom up organization. This was something quite innovative as most of the campaigns were run as strictly top bottom, because candidates wanted to have control over the campaign message. Dean's failure was considered by most as end of this bottom top organization experiment.

As it is suggested above, social media makes a new way of collaboration and organizing possible. The bottom top campaign, which based on these new ways of collaboration and organization, bring several benefits. Through this new organization a campaign can mobilize thousands of supporters, who participate in campaigns or even over take some campaign functions and all of this without spending any money. Moreover it is also a great possibility to raise large amounts of money with small donations. Howard Dean's campaign is the best example of that. By the time he dropped his candidacy he had over 600 000 registered supporters on his page. Dean raised about $52 million, approximately 40% of this sum online. Dean has roughly 190000 supporters at the Meetup.com (an online social networking portal which facilitates offline group meetings). About 40 % of these supporters attended a meeting. Most of the Dean's supporters found out about the first gathering on Dean's website, the local pro-Dean site, or the Meetup.com homepage. This is surprising as normally about 80 % of recruitment in the campaign comes from personal relationships. M. Hindman said that Dean would not have raised such an amount of money and his supporter's network would be way smaller and geographically coherent, if he did not use social media (Hindman 2005: 126).

Vaccari therefore argues that organization based on hierarchy and bureaucracy will be challenged by more fluid and informational-based networks, which are able to harness the power of the crowd (Vaccari2008: 320).

Bottom top organization also comes with some costs. As the "low-cost information technologies can create various types of "labors"—such as overcommunication, miscommunication, and communicative overload" (Vaccari 2010: 321). Furthermore a candidate has to give up a part of his control over the message. However grassroots moves can emerge independently on the official campaign of candidates. The problem of these grassroots is the possibility of misleading a campaign message. Therefore the campaign should provide these groups with coaching, shared values and the campaign's goals. This will not solve the problem completely, but it will reduce heterogeneity of the campaign and lower the possibility of misleading the campaign message. Moreover it could show the candidate's supporters the best

measures to engage in the campaign. Justine Lam, one of the staff from Ron Paul 2008 presidential campaign, which was even more bottom top than Dean's campaign notes, said that one of the problems of Ron Paul campaign was his lack of giving enough direction to supporters. The supporters then did not know what to do. This suggests that some couching is necessary to get full benefit of online organization. (Ibid.: 321)

As Sellers and Ansley notes, it still depends on the candidate. Some candidates will be more likely to use decentralized campaigns than others. This may depend on various factors such as characteristic of the candidate or his party. Furthermore outsider candidates will probably be more likely to create more decentralized campaigns, as the benefits are bigger than the cost of losing control over the campaign message (2010: 89).

4. Social media in Barack Obama campaign

4.1 Media in 2008 campaign

In the U.S. there are now around 245 million people online – almost 80 % of the U.S. population.[3] According to Harris' study, which polled 2,062 adults in July and October of 2007, 79% (approximately 178 million) are spending an average of 11 hours online per week (Haynes, 2008: 4). Three-quarters of these users went online to participate in the election or look up for the news. 60 % of users went online for news, subsequently 38% then talked about politics online over the period of campaign and 59 % used specific tools as text messaging, e-mail, twitter or instant messaging to send or receive political messages (Smith, 2009). This can be juxtaposed against the gradual decline in the use of television as a major source of political news. The number of the population using TV as major source for their news dropped from 68 % in 2004 to 60 % in 2008. Comparatively, the Internet as main source of news has risen from 6% in 2004 to 15% in 2008. Additionally the use of newspapers as a major source is falling significantly (Pew, 2008).

In addition to this drop in the use of TV and newspaper as major sources if news, people who go online for their news are using a broader range of sources.[4] U.S. Internet users cite cnn.com (64% of respondents), Google news and yahoo news (54%) as major sources of news, but also use local online news or alternative organization news

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[3]Internet World Stats, available at http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[4]This is a example of the long tail effect

websites (12%). Many also use Twitter or blogs (26%) and social networks to get the news (Smith, 2009: 62). However according to Johnston et al. (2007), more politically inclined Internet users tend to rely more heavily on blogs than any other news source. Blogs are more likely to be used as a source for four reasons: community, convenience, fact-checking, and information seeking (Haynes, 2008: 8). For example, The Huffington Post was a popular source of political news. Huffington is now the top blog according to social measurement site Technorati and was 5th at the time of the campaign. On the other side, less politically inclined users preferred social networking sites to share political news (33%), to know who friends voted for (41%), to show support (26 %), to join or create a political group (16%) or become a 'friend' of a candidate (12%). Social networking sites were also used to receive news by 26% of users (Smith, 2009: 43), however this implies that the news obtained would have had to have been originally shared by friends rather than information generated by the social network itself. An important part of the election was also watching political videos online. Of all political Internet users (representing 54% of all American internet users) 60% watched a politically related video online. Half of these users watched an official campaign or news organization video. However, user generated videos had nearly the same popularity amongst other users. (Smith, 2009: 30)

4.1.1 NetGeneration, media and campaign

It is believed that the only people who were active online during the election were young people. However among all age groups, with the exception of the age group of over 65 years, the proportion of online political users was almost the same. Nevertheless, it is true that younger users were more intense in using the Internet for political purposes. Younger users (18-29) were the most heavily involved users as 72% of the political Internet users from this group were engaged in the campaign. Almost 50% of them engaged politically on social networks sites, 40% posted original content relating to the campaign and 32% customized political or election news. In comparison, the group of people aged between 30 and 49 was approximately 50% less engaged in these same activities. The creation of content by users was significant for the 2008 election. A PEW study noted that content creation was tightly linked with the use of social media (PEW 2009 3-17).

Interestingly, Republicans in the 2008 election were actually more likely to be online political users than Democrats; however in regard to active online engagement

they were behind the Democrats (Smith, 2009: 74). In an interview given a few days before the end of the campaign, Joey Tripp said that the McCain campaign did not really utilize the Internet extensively. Instead they mostly used the Internet in the same they would traditional media, which was a major contributing factor to why they failed at engaging people through social media.[5]

Don Tapscott explains this increasing engagement of young people as being a result of the environment in which these people grew up. They are not just passively sitting at the TV receiving the message they are accustomed to engaging in two way communication (2009: 261) Some people argue that the NetGeneration[6] does not care about politics[7]. In reality, since the NetGeneration hit the polls (2000), the turnout of young people has increased. In 2004 young voters outnumbered voters older than 65 years. Even more interesting is the fact that their turnout increased by 11 % (Tapscott, 2009: 247). This trend continued in the 2008 election, where turnout of people under the age of 30 increased by 2 million.[8] The main problem of engaging this generation was that the political system failed to engage them "in a manner that fits their digital and ethical upbringing." (Tapscott 2009: 246) Tapscott argued that social media played an important role in recruiting the interest of the younger generations.

4.2 Official website of Barack Obama

4.2.1 Features of MyBO

Official websites for candidates have recently become a standard part of political campaigning, however the Obama campaign raised these sites to new dimension. Mybarrackobama.com or MyBO as it was called, was the official website of Barack Obama. Obama and his team were aware of the importance of utilizing new technology from the beginning of their campaign. Obama's campaign manager David Plouffe stated: "I saw how important the burgeoning online world was to our overall success; new media would touch just about every aspect of our campaign" (Plouffe, 2009: 46).

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[5]Interview Joe Trippi for Beet.tv: Joe Trippi on Viral Video Usage in Obama's Campaign, Available at http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfyp9r_joe-trippi-on-viral-video-usage-in-obama-s-campaign_tech, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

[6]NetGenration(Also called the Millennials or Generation Y) is according to Tapscott generation born between January 1977 to December 1997—21 years. Don Tapscott did a broader research on this generation including interviews with almost 10 000 people from that 7,685 were Net Gen. The results are summarized in his book Grown Up Digitaly (2009)

[7]For example Mark Bauerlein *The Dumbest Generation* (2008) or Jean Twenge *Generation Me (*2007)

[8] CIRCLE: New Census Data Confirm Increase in Youth Voter Turnout In 2008 Election, Available at

This was also strengthened by the fact that the new media director for the campaign was Joe Raspar; a veteran from Howard Dean's campaign and also one of the founding partners of Blue State Digital. Blue State Digital was a company pioneering in Internet campaigning. MyBO was based on a platform created by this Blue State. However, the most important figure involved in the online campaigning was Chris Hughes, the 24 year old co-founder of Facebook, who decided to quit his executive position at Facebook and join Obama's campaign. It was Hughes who created MyBO - the first candidate social network site in the history of political campaigning.

The experience Hughes gained from Facebook allowed him to apply this knowledge on MyBO which is why MyBO was more like Facebook than regular candidate sites. Similar to Facebook, registered users could create groups, events and also customize their profiles. MyBO also had a messaging system and moreover a blog system, allowing anyone to easily start a blog. MyBO was also connected with the other social networking websites that Obama used. For example, Facebook was connected to MyBO by applications, which automatically updated a user's Facebook profiles with every activity they performed on MyBO. Another feature was a scoring system that was later on changed to an index system[9]. Each activity, such as making a donation, knocking on someone's door, creating an event or joining a group provided a number of points which were then automatically added to the user's profile once the activity was completed. Anyone could than see how others had contributed to support the Obama campaign (Harfoush, 2009: 1071). Another important part of MyBO was the action centre where Obama's supporters could quickly take an action such as making a call or finding an event.

During the time of campaign, two million profiles were created. There were approximately 400,000 blog posts written, 200,000 events and 35,000 volunteers groups were created.[10] Moreover, during the course of the campaign, 70,000 MyBO personal fundraising pages collected more than $35 million for the campaign (Harfoush, 2009: 1071).

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http://www.civicyouth.org/new-census-data-confirm-increase-in-youth-voter-turnout-in-2008-election/, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[9] Scoring systems lead to hunting points. Therefore it was later changed to the index system that indicates user's activity on a scale of 1-10.
[10] MyBO Chris Hughe's blog: Moving Forward on My.BarackObama, available at http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/chrishughesatthecampaign/gGxZvh/commentary#comments, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

4.2.2 Organization and MyBO

Candidate's websites were formerly the main source for news, issue positions, biographies of candidates, and as a source for journalists and bloggers. They are also tools for the mobilization and organization of grassroots movements. Ansley and Seller articulated how qualified features of a candidate's website contain two categories. They are centralized or decentralized depending on what control exists over them by the campaign. They recognize 15 decentralized features of a candidate's website. In the 2006 senate election the average number of decentralized tools used by candidate's websites was 3.7. (Sellers & Ansley, 2010: 86-88) MyBO had all of them. This shows us how decentralized MyBO was; MyBO's first goal was not only to connect with the voter, but to connect Obama's supporters together (Harfoush, 2009: 1006).

Connectivity between supporters was relatively simple due to the social networks where supporters could locate people, groups and events close to their geographic location or of particular interest to them. However, this connection was just the first phase of the process; Howard Dean's online campaign in 2004 generated a large grassroots following but failed to provide its supporters with adequate guidance in how to effectively channel their support. Therefore, the next important part of a candidate's campaign website must be to provide supporters with sufficient guidance material. This material should explain how to use the online tools or how to create a perfect event. An effective strategy used by MyBO was that members of the campaign contacted MyBO members weekly to exchange tips on how to use online tools (Harfoush, 2009: 1025).

The importance of MyBO as a platform for connection between supporters and their organization became clear after the New Hampshire primary in which Obama lost to Hillary. As described above, Obama focused mainly on Iowa and New Hampshire, therefore official campaign activities in other states were low. When Marcia Carlyn, co-administrator of Loudoun County, Virginia[11] asked the Obama campaign for resources, her request was declined with the words: "Forget it everything is going to Iowa" (McGirt, 2009: 4), but thanks to the MyBO supporters in Loudoun County, as well as elsewhere, people collaborated with one another, and other supporters of Obama were able to set up the campaign by themselves.

Barack Obama already had around 60 supporting groups in Kansas before the official campaign team moved there. When Jeremy Bird, the official state director, came to

Maryland to set up campaigning in this state, he was stunned. "They had the entire thing set up -- an office with seven computers, phone lines, a state structure, county chairs, and meetings every other Saturday. They had even picked their own state director" (McGirt, 2009: 4). Joey Bristol encountered a similar situation when he arrived to officially organize the campaign in Bristol. He was greeted by members of 'Idaho for Obama', who were already aggressively campaigning across the entire state. (Harfoush, 2009: 472) These are just examples of what was going on across the whole country.

4.2.3 Neighbour to Neighbour

There were many possibilities regarding how supporters could become engaged in the campaign. One of the primary methods, utilized in this campaign was the program Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N). N2N, which launched in September 2007, was a tool that helped Obama's supporters reach undecided voters. Supporters who wanted to participate in N2N could either call undecided voters or knock on their door in person. The campaign targeted a specific location (Ohio for Obama), constituencies (Women for Obama) or specific goals (Recruit Volunteers). Obama's team also listed which of these targets were important for the campaign at the time. N2N used the zip codes of registered users to generate a list of addresses and phone numbers. This allowed a list to be generated that was relevant to users of N2N. A list of neighbours was generated for the knocking supporters. N2N also took into account time differences, so the supporters wouldn't call potential voters in the early morning or late evening (Harfoush 1231-1307). Moreover, N2N also matched by age, profession, language or military service, so the supporters would match as much as possible with the potential voters (McGirt, 2009: 7). This was possible thanks to data that supporters on MyBO provided about themselves[12], the data that had been accumulated from previous elections, as well as from users of N2N. Steve Rosenthal explains that the difference with N2N was that people who were asking you to go vote or volunteer were not just 'some people', but "people working in these neighbourhoods who live in those neighbourhoods and are of those neighbourhoods, who are saying: 'Get out and vote for this guy'(MacGillis, 2008)

After Obama's supporters finished with their knocking and calling, they reported their results to the system. This created a powerful database. N2N was a perfect

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[11] County is a subdivision of the state. Loundon county is subdivision of th Virginia state

[12] This is one of the characteristic of social networks. Users are willing to reveal on social network information about their tastes and preferences and often also many personal information. (Chadwick 2009:6)

example of crowd sourcing, where some of the campaign's activities were passed on to its supporters. N2N lowered the degree of the campaign's autonomy. The campaign still told supporters what its important goals were, but otherwise let the supporters act freely.

4.3 Youtube

YouTube was originally founded in 2005. However, it wasn't the first platform for publishing videos as Metacafe.com had been founded two years earlier in 2003. Nevertheless, YouTube rapidly gained popularity. By 2006 YouTube was listed as one of the top ten most viewed sites on the Internet and was later bought by Google for $1.65 billion. Today YouTube is the second largest search engine after Google.[13] Every minute 24 hours of video is uploaded onto YouTube and more than 2 billion videos are watched every day.[14] This alone shows how important a role YouTube has on the Internet today.

YouTube has most of the same features as those found on social networking sites. Users can add friends, as well as add, rate and make comments on videos. Users can also create their own channel where people with similar interests can gather. Moreover, users can subscribe to these channels and receive news about new videos and updates. During the 2008 Presidential elections YouTube created a channel called YouChoose08. On this special channel politicians could create their own channel, which was marked as an official candidate channel and moreover had more upgrades in comparison with the normal user channels. For the 2012 election, YouTube has updated this channel and candidates can also use new statistic tools, which are expected to be a big benefit for campaign.[15]

YouTube videos have several benefits in comparison to traditional media. First of all creating content, for example user-generated videos, can be done for little to no cost. The video messages on YouTube go straight to the user. Hence, YouTube is able to bypass traditional media and, as opposed to traditional media, anyone can watch any video on YouTube at any time. An example of this is Obama's speech in reaction to the Jeremiah Wright controversy. This speech was delivered on a Tuesday morning while many people were at work, which resulted in many people watching it on YouTube (Plouffe 2009: 4068). Furthermore, content is not only available nonstop but is also

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[13]Social media revolution based 3 on the Socialnomics (Qualman 2011) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0EnhXn5boM, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[14] http://www.youtube.com/t/press_timeline, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[15] http://www.youtube.com/youchoose2010, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

stored in a database and can therefore be repeatedly accessed, (with the exception of videos deleted by the copyright owner). This is normally not possible for content available through traditional media sources. Politicians can therefore be confronted with their past at anytime, much like Republican candidate for president Mitt Romney experienced during one of his early campaigns. During the campaign he was presented with an earlier video of himself stating his pro-abortion and gun control position, even though these were issues in which he had changed his opinion about. YouTube, however, served as a reminder of these changes (Richard Davids: 22).

4.3.1 Official Obama channel

YouTube also served as an important tool in the Obama campaign. This is documented by the fact that Obama outlined his intention to run as a candidate for the Presidential election in a YouTube video shot at the house of one of his supporters. The video shows how YouTube can be used to bypass the traditional media. Normally a candidate would outline their possibility of candidacy during an appearance on a television talk show (Plouffe 2009: 634). Obama, however, had already started speculation about his candidacy by creating a video for Monday football night.[16] The entire video gives the impression that Obama is going to announce his candidacy for the presidency. However, at the end of the video it is revealed that Obama was speaking about the Bears[17] in the Superbowl during the entire video. Video became quick popular with more than 400,000 views and we can say that it was first viral video created by Obama's team.[18] Before the primaries Obama generated 6,230,691 individual views of his video on YouTube. That's far way more than any other democratic candidate. However interesting fact is that Republican Ron Paul generated even more 8,517,624 individual views of his videos on YouTube, but he still stayed with single digit in the national polls (Haynes, 2008: 29).

The Obama Campaign used Obama's official YouTube channel to great effect. During the campaign over 1800 videos were uploaded on the channel, the channel had almost 163 000 subscriptions (Harfoush 2009: 2009). Videos from this channel were 110 hours according to the Steven Grove, head of news and politics at YouTube (Vargas 2008b). And just the content created by the official Obama channel for

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[16] Monday Night Football (MNF) is a live broadcast of the National Football League on ESPN.
[17] Chicago Bears is American football team from the Chicago.
[18] Barack Obama on MNF: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WJsuM19-8c&feature=player_embedded, Retrieved December 12, 2011

YouTube was cumulatively watched for 14,5 million hours. The same amount of the time on broadcast TV would cost $47 million. (Miller 2008) The advantage of official channel was the relative control of it by Obama's campaign, as each of the videos was uploaded by the campaign. YouTube videos were also display on MyBO and Obama's official blog and even used through an email campaign. They provided constant content that could be shared by Obama supporters. There were three types of videos on this channel: live streams, official campaign videos and user-generated content. Many of Obama's speeches became popular and were watch many times, including Obama's now famous "Yes We Can" speech in New Hampshire. Additionally, a lot of videos created by the Obama campaign went viral, such as the documentary song "Sign of Hope". This video captured Obama supporters across the country. Harfoush (2009) explained in her book that Obama didn't use YouTube just to send his message, but to engage his supporters in the campaign. Sign of Hope is perfect example of this.

4.3.2 Vote different

The Obama campaign created vast amount of videos during the campaign; however, this amount was dwarfed by the videos were generated by ordinary Internet users. YouTube truly unleashed the power of passionate amateurs in the campaign and it clearly demonstrated how average people can influence elections through social media. One of the first successful videos of this type was 'Vote different', uploaded to YouTube in March 2007 by ParkRidge47. 'Vote different' is mash-up of Apple's famous 1984 Super Bowl commercial.[19][20] Instead of Big Brother on the big screen in front of Orwell's crowd, instead it shows Obama's main Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton giving a speech. In one moment a woman with sledgehammer appears. She has Obama's famous 'O' symbol on her T-shirt. The video ends with a woman throwing the sledgehammer into the screen and smashing it. The video went viral and eventually hit over 6 million views;[21] in addition to these views, the video repeatedly featured on every major US television network and often discussed by bloggers.[22] Due to the video's strong pro-Obama message, many people presumed it was created by the Obama campaign. Two weeks after the video was uploaded to YouTube, ParkRidge47

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[19] Super Bowl is traditional known by commercial time in which are often introduce new commercial by famous brands.

[20] Official Vote different video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6h3G-lMZxjo, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

[21] Ibid.

[22] http://www.phildevellis.com/, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

was identified as Phil de Vellis, who had no connection to Obama's campaign and who said: "I made the "Vote Different" ad because I wanted to express my feelings about the Democratic primary, and because I wanted to show that an individual citizen can affect the process." (Vellis 2007)

4.3.3 Viral videos

Perhaps the most famous election video is the 'Yes we can' mash-up song by Will.i.am, a rapper from pop group Black Eyed Peas. Will.i.am had no connection to campaign and created the video after he saw Obama's 'Yes We Can' speech in Nashua, New Hampshire (Will.i.am, 2008). The video combines footage of this speech with a song featuring lyrics from the speech, sung by Will.i.am and other celebrities. While the original speech by Obama, uploaded to YouTube by his campaign, has around 4, 5 million views,[23] this mash-up has over 23 million views and won an Emmy award for 'Best New Approach in Daytime Entertainment'. The campaign took this video positively; Barack Obama's wife Michelle sent an e-mail to her supporters with a link to the video and the message: "Sharing this video, which was created by supporters, is one more way to help start a conversation with your friends, family, coworkers, and anyone else who will be voting soon about the issues important to them in this election."(Wallsten 2010: 170). This is an example of how authenticity of video can personalize the viewer's entire experience. It isn't a video created by marketing companies and campaigns to make you vote. It is video made by one of "us", who created just from his enthusiasm – it democratises the election process.

K. Wallsten researched how 'Yes We Can' became viral and he found that the most important role in establishing the video's popularity was played by bloggers. In addition, the Obama campaign seems to play an important role in spreading the word about this video. However, others have noted that the campaign only publicly mentioned the video for a short period before it completely disappeared from the official campaign (Wallsten 2010: 175).

4.3.4 Negative videos on YouTube

Another popular Obama-related YouTube video further demonstrated that the campaign didn't play as big a role as bloggers. The video 'I got a Crush… on Obama'

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[23]BarackObama.com:http://www.youtube.com/user/BarackObamadotcom?blend=1&ob=4#p/search/0/Fe751kMBwms, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

by Obama girl (a.k.a. Amber Lee Ettinger) became an online hit, receiving 23 million views. In the video, 'Obama girl' sings about her love for Barack Obama; the candidate wasn't particularly keen on the video, saying: "You do wish people would think about what impact their actions have on kids and families." (CNN, 2007) Despite this reaction, it became a hit and inspired many other videos such as 'McCain Girl' and 'Hot 4 Hillary'. Even Ron Paul is reportedly looking for 'Paul girl' for the upcoming 2012 election.

And another case was case of the rapper Ludacris, who created the song "Politics (Obama is Here)". The song received over 160 000 views on YouTube. Even though the song was meant to be a support Obama, it had a rather negative impact on the campaign. Ludacris called Hillary an "irrelevant b**ch" in the song; he also suggested that John McCain, the 72 year-old Republican presidential nominee, belonged in a wheelchair instead of in White house. He also made similarly offensive comments on George W. Bush.[24] Obama distanced himself immediately from the song. However it shows that even actions meant to support a candidate can end up causing more harm than good to a political campaign.

YouTube can also be used to negatively portray a candidate, and this was certainly done in the 2008 election. There were a number of televised attacks ads from the McCain campaign, which were also posted online. Arguably the best known of these is the 'celeb'[25] video, an attack against Obama's cult of personality that was watched over 2 million times on YouTube. However, while the video has 3700 likes, it also has almost 8500 dislikes.[26] This is indicative of both the video's unpopularity and, conversely, the online presence of Obama supporters. There weren't any user-generated videos attacking Obama that were anywhere near as successful as the ones praising him. The most important negative content about Obama on YouTube paled in comparison to the high volume of positive content about him.

Another user-generated video was remake of classical Budweiser commercial 'Whassup?' The video hit over 9 million views and later won an award for "Favourite User Generated Video". The video was created by Charlie stone III, the original producer of the video and an actor playing one of the video's characters. The video is

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[24] Ludacris – Obama is here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RL-oUX2rCqc Retrieved December 12, 2011.

[25] Celeb was McCain negative add which shows that Obama is more considerate about his image than the real politics problems

[26] Celeb: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHXYsw_ZDXg Retrieved December 12, 2011.

set eight years later in the future. In the video, all the characters outline all the main criticisms of the Bush presidency. The video ends with one character ask 'Whassup?' and another responding by watching Obama on the TV.[27]

4.3.5 Role and consequences of YouTube in Obama Campaign

The role of YouTube in the Obama campaign was probably the most visible example of social media in the 2008 Presidential election, with the possible exception of MyBO. It gave the campaign another avenue to distribute its message and allowed this message to reach major broadcast networks for free. This occurred because many of Obama's videos that were successful online were later broadcast on TV news, meaning that the campaign did not need to pay the networks to screen the advertisement. The Obama campaign used the possibility of free medium to its full potential. However, campaign didn't relay only on campaign videos and live streaming events; they also utilised the potential of user-created videos. These videos weren't good only due to diverse campaign production and filling up the blind spots, but also thanks to their grass-roots authenticity. The American public been overwhelmed in recent history with politicians whose campaigns are slick and impersonal; authenticity is therefore something that the American public was looking for in politics (Dagnes, 2010: XXIV). Moreover, individuals such as Joe Trippi argue that YouTube videos are actually even more effective than TV ads because viewers choose to watch an ad on the Internet, whilst TV ads were just thrust upon them (Jarboe, 2012: 384).

YouTube also increase the speed of campaigns responding to statements from their opponents or the media as a candidate no longer to call a press conference or wait until the nightly news. With YouTube, candidates could be the first to comment on negative attacks again him or her, rather than others, letting the campaign better control their message. Overall, YouTube provides candidates with the possibility to bring their message straight to users and therefore bypass broadcast TV networks. However, despite this advantage to the online medium, candidates are exposed to new challenges on YouTube. Firstly, candidates cannot control all the content on YouTube. Even Obama had to deal with content that weren't exactly in the direction of campaign. One of the examples was the Ludacris video. Secondly, even the content from candidates can be misinterpreted or poorly received by Internet users. This was the case with Hillary Clinton's controversial '3A.M.' video (Cillizza, 2008), which end up mocked not just

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[27] Wassup 2008: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq8Uc5BFogE, Retrieved December 12, 2011

by other candidates, but also by users. The third and final problem, outlined earlier, is the constant scrutiny on a candidate's actions and words. Even Obama didn't escape this new reality; in one interview he accidentally said that he is Muslim and this part of the interview went viral around the Internet. Other candidates were similarly challenged by this scrutiny, including John McCain.

YouTube became a new battleground of political campaigning. However, due to the interactive nature of the Internet, the users (voters) are more powerful than in the other battlegrounds of TV and print media. YouTube is a platform where it matters not just what candidates say, but also how users react. It is more about having a conversation with voters than only simply sending them a message as it is with TV and print media. Obama understood this, while Hillary Clinton tried to control her message as with old media; this is one of the reasons why her campaign failed (Davisson, 2009: 85). YouTube is, like other social media, predominantly used by younger people – YouTube's user age mostly ranges between 18-54 years,[28] however the main demographic group that uses YouTube is between 18-35 years (Deepak & Buch, 2007). YouTube is just one of the examples how social media increases the role and influence of young people in political campaigning.

In addition to the activities aimed at supporting or attacking different candidates, YouTube was also used for other political projects. For example, the project '5 Friends' was a joint project of several celebrities and companies such as YouTube, Google and others, which focused on increasing voter turnout. The best-known video of this project is 'Don't Vote', which tried to bring people to the polls using satire to demonstrate the importance of voting.[29]

4.4 Facebook

4.4.1 History and possibilities of Facebook

Facebook was launched in 2004 and was at the first accessible only to students from select universities. However, due to its rapidly growing popularity it soon became accessible to anyone. At the beginning of presidential campaign cycle in 2007, Facebook had over 12 million registered users; this number grew rapidly to 100 million registered users in August 2008, three months before Election Day. Today, Facebook is

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[28] http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[29] http://www.youtube.com/user/5friendsvote, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

the world's biggest social network with over 800 million registered users,[30] and the website tops the weekly Google traffic in the U.S.[31]

Facebook allowed users to engage in various political activities such as joining an online political group, become a 'fan' of a candidate, and having political conversations related to elections with online friends. Also important is the Facebook Wall, a place where users can update their profile status and post multimedia content. It's also possible to post comments on this content if the owner permits you to do so; the Wall is a versatile tool for discussing politics, and rallying support for a candidate.

Facebook was used for a U.S. election for the first time during 2006 midterm's elections. For this election, Facebook created a feature called 'Election Pulse', which allowed candidates to create their own official Facebook profile (Williams & Gulati, 2007, str. 6). In 2008 these profiles were transferred to fan pages that allow candidates to post various campaign materials. As much as creating a profile can be beneficial to a campaign, its interactivity can be a risk for the campaigns. An example of this is the campaign of Emanuel Pleitez in 2009 for California's 32nd District House seat. Pleitez promoted his Facebook page as a place where voters can learn about him and his candidacy; however, apart from this information, the page also included photos of him drinking and partying, which were later used against him by his opponents (Michael & Daniel, 2010, str. 70). This demonstrates how careful Politian has to be when using social networks sites.

Facebook offers many opportunities to be utilised in political campaigning; creating a page for a candidate is only one of them. Facebook is an ideal place for individuals to create and join different groups that connect specific groups of supporters. Candidates can also use Facebook itself to promote these groups. Moreover, even people under 18, who are not eligible to vote in the U.S., can indicate their support for a candidate on Facebook.

Even though MySpace was at the time a bigger social network, Facebook was more relevant to the political campaigns. This could be probably attributed to the fact that each site has different demographics; Facebook started as a college network, while MySpace is aimed more at entertainment.

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[30] http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?timeline, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[31] Social media revolution based 2011 on the Socialnomics (Qualman 2011) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SuNx0UrnEo, Retrieved December 12, 2011.

4.4.2 Friends and supporters and walls on Facebook

When Barack Obama announced his presidency, he had already around 30000 Facebook friends (Vargas, 2007) and his "Barack Obama for president in 2008" group had more 50000 members. The group "One Million Strong for Barack" got 200,000 members in less than three weeks (Westling 2010: 9) and later actually cross the frontier of 1 million members (Kos, 2011). It is important to note that friend status does not necessarily mean that a person will support or vote for a certain candidate. For example, Hillary Clinton had same amount of Facebook friends as Obama during the Democratic primaries; however it is likely that most of her "friends" did not actually support or vote for her. Over the course of the campaign, Obama generated 5,1 million supporters on Facebook. To put this number in context, John McCain generated less than 1 million supporters (Qualman, 2011: 71). Today, Obama's page has over 24 million likes.[32] Of course there were also groups against Obama; they were however comparatively small, with the biggest group having only 30000 members,[33] (Tapscott, 2009, str. 252). Besides these groups, there were also many Facebook events such as "Barack Obama in Cleveland"; this event was created by users and contains important information relating to the event, including location and date about the event (Westling 2010: 9)

What do these friends means? It has been recognized that intensity of support on Facebook for a candidate has to been taken in account when it comes to predicting the ultimate voting patterns of individuals [Dahl, 1956] (Williams & Gulati, 2007:18). Williams and Gulati found in their study of Facebook's role in 2006 U.S. midterms that there is a correlation between the number of supporters for a candidate on Facebook and that candidate's share of the popular vote. For every 1% increase in the number of Facebook friends a candidate has, that candidate's final vote percentage increased by an average of 0,11% (2007:15). Moreover, Williams also found similar patterns for the 2008 primary elections; Obama performed better in comparison to other candidates in states where he had greater support on Facebook. For these elections, the correlation between Facebook support and voting share was even stronger – each relative percentage increase Facebook support resulted in an increased vote share of 0,4 %. Similar results were also found for Hillary Clinton. However, the study also shows that Facebook support is not sufficient to secure electoral victory (Williams & Gulati, 2008: 15). This is demonstrated in the case of Republican candidate Ron Paul who was

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[32] http://www.facebook.com/barackobama, Retrieved December 12, 2011.
[33] This number was receive, when the One million for Obama had 500000 members

arguably more active on Internet than Obama during the primaries,[34] but still easily lost the race for the Republican nomination to John McCain.

A study from Robertson et al. (2010) examined how is Facebook connected to YouTube. From the wall post on Facebook, 42% (23% of all links) of the top ten links in post linked to YouTube and 10% linked to various blogs and 3% linked to Huffington Post – the most popular blog. A similar pattern was also found on the walls of the candidates. During the period from September 1, 2006 through September 30, 2008, 687,626 posts were made on the Facebook walls of candidates McCain, Hillary and Obama. Almost 40000 of the posts included a hyperlink (a link to another site). From all link-containing posts, 24% linked to YouTube(188). This demonstrates the complexities in the social media environment.

4.4.3 Role of Facebook in Obama's campaign

As mentioned earlier, Barack Obama created a Facebook page in 2006 on Election Pulse. Obama's Facebook profile included campaign information and contained some personal information such as what kind of music he likes and his favourite baseball team. However, Obama's page was also a place where his campaign connected with supporters, instead of only offering information about the campaign. Besides that, Obama's campaign created pages for his wife Michelle and Joe Raspar, the social media director of the campaign. Obama's campaign team also created several pages for specific voting demographics, such as Veterans for Obama or Women for Obama (Harfoush, 2009: 1906). These examples show the potential of Facebook in political campaigns as candidates can easily target a specific group of voters and deliver a message that specifically caters to this group. Moreover, Facebook was mostly used to help to campaign connect with younger voters, the main users of Facebook.

Obama's campaign used a widget (a web-based application) to connect their Facebook profile with their MyBO profile. The widget would also find all the contacts of the supporter who lived in one of the early primary/caucus states and urged them to remind their friends to vote (Harfoush, 2009: 1908). The widget also added the possibility for people to donate to the campaign through Facebook. Obama's campaign spent over $467,000 on Facebook advertisements, which was far more than any other candidate (Kaye, 2008).

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[34] For example Ron Paul had on the end of 2007 more than 2 million views on Youtube than Obama. Ron Paul also dominated page views of his campaign website (Haynes, 2008:17,29).

Furthermore, Facebook became a platform were Obama's supporters discussed and engaged in the campaign. Many groups and events were created on Facebook – usually by Obama's supporters, often independently from Obama's official campaign – are an example of that. There was also a Facebook application created that allowed Facebook users to 'donate' their profile to a candidate. This application would automatically set updates on the user's Facebook profile to "get out the vote" at 12:01 a.m. local time on Election Day. By the afternoon of 3rd November (the day before Election Day), 567,765 users had donated their status to remind them friend to vote. Almost 70% of this number donated their profile to Obama. Another application page also included links for users to find polling stations close to their home and told them how many of their friends on Facebook had voted (Montalbano, 2008).

4.4.4 Other social networking site in Obama campaign

Barack Obama used other social networking sites besides Facebook in his campaign, including the BlackPlanet network for African-Americans and the AsiaAve network for Asian-Americans. These networks were used to target the specific groups and minorities using these social networking sites. Obama was also on MySpace, the biggest social networked at the time. However, MySpace showed not to be as relevant for the campaign as Facebook. That can be also seen from the fact that Obama's campaign spent only $11,500 on advertising on MySpace in early 2008, with MySpace expenditure later vanishing from Obama's FEC reports (Kaye, 2008).

There was one moment on MySpace however which typified the challenges that social networking can cause to political campaigns. In November 2004, Joe Anthony created Obama's fan page on MySpace. By the time Obama announced his candidacy in February 2007, the group had grown to 30000 members and was the biggest Obama group at the time. The group was mistakenly taken as Obama's official page by MySpace management, and the group grew to over 160000 users (Vargas, 2007). Anthony was cooperating with campaign, but after sometimes his work grew to an unmanageable level and he asked Obama's campaign for compensation. Nevertheless, the campaign and Anthony could not find any compromise. Anthony changed the group's login password so the campaign wasn't able to access the account. In response, the campaign contacted MySpace, who gave Obama the URL address of the group and let Anthony transfer his supporters to a new group (Harfoush, 2009, 1937). This example shows how a campaign can clash with its supporters through social media.

4.5 Blogs

There currently are no comprehensive studies about blogging and its role in the 2008 elections. It is known, however, that growing numbers of people are getting their political news from blogs. One third of Internet users (the equivalent of 24% of all adults) say they read blogs, with 11% of Internet users doing so on a daily basis(Smith, 2008). Furthermore, blogs are becoming a part of every political campaign. This paper will firstly discuss the role of blogging in politics and political campaigning in general, and then secondly analyse the use of blogs in Obama's campaign.

Blogs are currently enjoying growing popularity. It does not take a long time for a blog to start covering a political issue. Even thought politics are not the primary topic in most blogs, many national blogs are reaching hundreds of thousands of readers, like Daily Kos, which has approximately a half million viewers a day, in comparison to the Los Angeles Time's daily circulation of 775 000 editions (Davis et al. 2009: 20). It is argued that there are two types of blogs: common and influential; the first type refers to a group of blogs, which do not last very long or are only read by a small audience. However, influential blogs are gaining audiences of up to hundreds of thousands of viewers per day as exemplified by the Daily Kos and the Huffington post. They are often written by paid professionals, such as Andrew Sullivan, a former columnist for the Sunday magazine of the New York Times and an editor, later columnist at the New Republic, or Michelle Malkin, a reporter for the Los Angeles Daily News and the Seattle Times (Davis, 2009: 40). They meet prominent politicians and often get a journalist pass, which give them special status to visit political events and party conventions (ibid.: 26). As one U.S. Senator said, "Several pretty significant blogs are becoming a direct line between elected officials here in Washington and the American people (ibid.: 241).

Bloggers also have different relations with campaigns than journalists do, as some of them eventually join campaigns as consultants. For example, Hillary Clinton hired prominent blogger Peter Daou to blunt attacks on her campaign during the Democratic primary season (ibid. 26), and other candidates, including Obama, did the same during the 2008 elections.

However, there is still an ongoing debate about role of blogs in politics and political campaigns. There are two main questions: do blogs help diversify the political discourse? And secondly, what is their influence on politics? Putman and others have argued that blogs "are dramatically increasing people's ability to hear echoes of their

own voices, and to wall themselves off from others" (Drezner & Farrell, 2008: 6). However, more recent studies show that blogs actually support diversity of discussion, rather than limit it. Yale law professor Jack M. Balkin similarly argues that political bloggers are devoted to scrutinising and criticising what other say and therefore are often publishing links to the websites of those they disagree with (ibid. 7).

While there has recently been a growing consensus that blogs influence politics, it is still not clear what the extent of this influence is. For example, Davis (2009: 26) shows that blogger can write stories, which are later undertaken by the mass media. Moreover, Wallsten (2011:174) found that bloggers, together with the political campaigns, are playing a crucial role in helping videos 'go viral'. Also, Howard Dean's 2004 campaign shows how much campaign blogging can affect the outcomes of a political campaign. Furthermore, Drezner and Farrell (2008) present more examples how blogging affect politics and political campaigning. Bloggers often go beyond simply informing people; as Antoinette Pole found, other bloggers often encourage their readers to be politically active (Davis, 2009: 80), although this mainly applies to the official blogs of campaigners. This mobilization encouraged by bloggers can result in actions in the real world; Barack Obama, Ron Paul and Howard Dean are best examples how blogging can be used to encourage supporters to donate or take action.

4.5.1 „Gotcha Journalism",

Journalists have always tried to capture politicians in embarrassing or inappropriate situations. Possible examples are Ronald Reagan's 1984 jokes about bombing the Soviet Union in fifteen minutes, which caught by an open microphone or George Bush's mistake in calling September 7th the day of Pearl Harbor (Davis, Baumgartner, Morris, & Francia, 2009: 21). However with the rise of blogs and the other publishing platforms, such as Youtube, politicians have to be even more careful of what they say. The Blogosphere includes thousands of people, who write or comment on blogs. These people are present at almost any event that politicians visit. Therefore is now more likely than ever that some offhand comment by a candidate, which was meant only for a small group of people, can become a widespread event (Davis, 2009: 26).

These moments are often called macaca effects. The name comes from the case of the former senator George Allen. During his Senate reelection campaign in 2006 he called one of the visitors at his meeting macaca (a pejorative term used by people in high tech to refer to East Indians). Unfortunately for him, this was captured on a mobile

camera by another visitor and posted on Youtube. This eventually cost him his George reelection to the Senate. A similar thing happened to Barack Obama during his presidential campaign. During his meeting with potential donors in San Francisco he told donors that Pennsylvania people voting in an upcoming primary were "bitter" and "cling to guns and religion" (Davis, 2009: 27). This was not broadcast by the mass media as the meeting was not open to the press. Nevertheless one blogger captured audiotape of the meeting. She posted this audio tape on The Huffington Post and it became immediate news. Interestingly, the blogger was Obama supporter and had considered whether the role of journalist or supporter was more important (Ibid. 87). It seems that Plouff is right, when he says "Don't say anything you don't want posted on YouTube and whipped around the Internet at warp speed" (Plouffe, 2009: 4131). While Plouff only mentions YouTube, his point stands just as well for blogs

Almost every candidate running for president or even for a Senate or Congress office experiences moment such as those described above. The impacts of these causes are different case to case. However, the number of these macaca moments is increasing with blogs.

4.5.2 Obama's official blog(s)

The blogs have become a popular feature of campaigns after their successful use in Howard Dean's campaign. Nowdays, blog is a regular marketing tool of any political campaign. Blogs played a big role in Barrack Obama's campaign. Besides Obama main national blog there were also blogs for every state and blogs for the single specific groups such as Obama for Student or Obama for Woman. The main function of bloging campaign was to get people involved in the campaign. They often promote highly active MyBO users and users who contributed with videos. The main blog often re-posted the best articles from other Obama blogs. Blogs also served as the place where campaign engaged supporters to comments in the discussion section under the blogs. These discussions were from the biggest part self-moderated and campaign lets Obama's supporters to deal with offensive comments. Furthermore blogs were a channel to other social media. Over the course of campaign more then 400 000 blogs post were sent on MyBO blogs (Harfoush 2009: 1735-1820).

Conlusion

This paper analyzed the role of social media in the U.S presidential election. Before evaluating the results of this paper, I have to acknowledge some key limitations.

First of all, the elections which took place in 2008 were obviously a deviant case, which could not be objectively compared to any of the previous elections. As pointed out in the introduction, they were the first presidential elections, in which the full potential of social media could be employed. This was also reflected in the amount of existing literature examining the topic at hand. Furthermore methodology of this paper, that is, a case study of single elections, is restricted by itself. Consequently the findings of this paper could not be easily generalized. We would have to wait for the 2012 election in order to be able to develop a better understanding for the role of social media in the presidential campaigns.

Social media create a new public space, which is called "virtual public sphere or "network public sphere by some. The important fact is that this public space has significantly reduced costs of creating, posting and sharing context. It is easy to send a message to a vast amount of users almost instantly. Furthermore thanks to social networks it is easy to organize and collaborate in this public space. Although it might seem that this virtual sphere is fragmented, interlink patterns between YouTube, blogs and Facebook testifies the opposite. This also shows that we can no longer see public discussion as primarily textual.

In this public space the importance of unique user content is growing. This can be documented by many videos on YouTube, which were created by users and were far more popular than official campaign videos. The amount of videos with a connection to the campaign created by users was several times bigger than the official production itself. Furthermore bloggers emerged as new players in this campaign. They played an important role in deciding which content will became widespread on the Internet. There is also a source of news about the campaign becoming available for increasing amounts of people. YouTube and blogs have increased gotcha journalism. Therefore candidates have to be more careful than ever about what they say and do, as bloggers and people with mobile camera are virtually everywhere.

This new public space has also created a new way of participation in the campaign. One can now become a friend of a candidate, create or join an event, create, join or discuss a campaign issue in these groups. Furthermore research shows that people participating politically online often participate offline also. It has not yet become clear exactly how this new online participation affects the result of the election exactly, however the correlation between the candidate's amount of online friends and the candidate's share of the popular vote has been revealed.

From the campaign's perspective the social media brings several benefits. At the beginning of the Internet many politicians complained that the Internet is a chaotic place; but now thanks to social networks, it is particularly easy for a campaign to target and reach potential voters. Moreover the campaign can use its supporters to reach their networks, which makes whole recruitment more personal. It is more likely that people, who are potential voters and volunteers, will accept advice from their friends, family or neighbors.

Most importantly the social media makes possible a new organization for the campaign. Obama's campaign was an excellent example of using social media in this way. It turned millions of Obama's supporters into the semi-campaign staff. The most important role played was MyBO, which created a place for Obama's supporters to connect with each other. MyBO application also turns every computer to the campaign office. Obama's supporters literally overtook some of the campaign work. An example could be self organized Obama's groups in primaries, which had set the campaign before the official campaign arrived. A lot of scholars and experts point Obama's ability to raise money. However, perhaps more important is how much money he did not have to spend, because of the free labor he was able to generate. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this type of organization comes along with a partial loss of control over the message of the campaign. An example could be the video of rapper Ludacris. However, it still seems that the costs of this bottom-top organization are being outweighed by the benefits. Therefore it is probable that we will see more bottom-top campaign in the future.

Summary

This thesis examines role of social media in U.S. presidential election campaign. The arguments in this thesis can be summarized as follows: The introduction chapter outlines the importance of this topic and the research question. The first chapter describes social media and points out the most important aspects of social media. This is followed by providing a theoretical background of social media in politics. The most emphasis is put on aspects that are relevant to the role of social media in the campaign. These aspects are a new public sphere which these media produce, engagement of voters and organization of the campaign.

Theoretical chapters are followed by a case study of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. The first part provides data about the overall use of media in the 2008 presidential campaign, with special attention to young people, who played a big role in Obama's campaign. The second part is devoted to Obama's official social networking site – barackobama.com. How Obama used this new campaign feature is analyzed in this section. The next part analyzes YouTube and his use of it in the campaign. The YouTube analysis is mainly focused on user-generated videos, because YouTube was the best example of raising the importance of user-generated content. The following part deals with the use of social networks in the campaign, mainly Facebook, as Facebook was the most important social network in the campaign. The last subchapter analyzes the role of blogs in the campaign.

The last chapter provides an answer to the question asked in the title of this thesis: "What is the role of social media in the U.S. presidential campaign?"

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- Facebook: http://www.facebook.com
- BarackObama.com: http://www.barackobama.com/
- Phil de Vellis: http://www.phildevellis.com/
- Internet World stats: http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm

List of annexes

Annex: Table 1 The growth of published scholarly articles on political communication 1995-2006
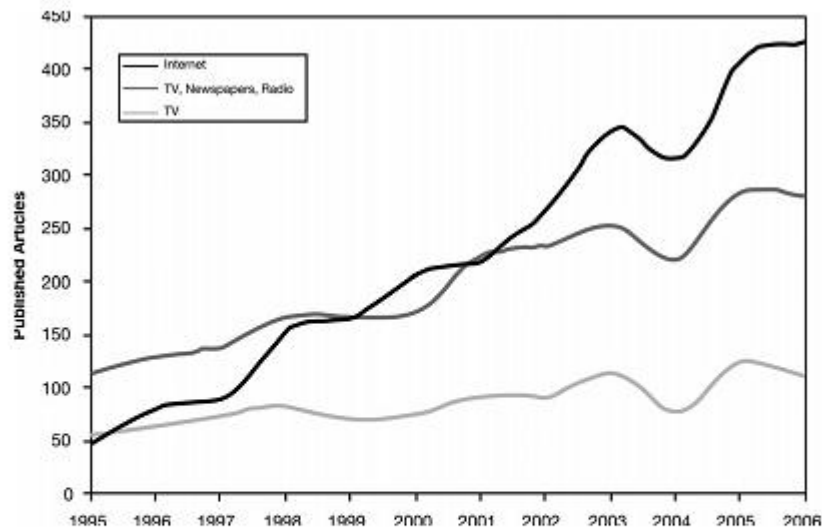

Figure 1.1 Published scholarly articles on political communication, 1995–2006.

Source: Authors' calculations from Boolean searches of article title, abstract and keywords: TS = (Internet OR web) AND TS = (politic* OR govern*); TS = (television OR newspaper* OR radio) AND TS = (politic* OR govern*); TS = (television) AND TS = (politic* OR govern*) in ISI Web of Science scholarly article database 1995–2006, November 8, 2007.

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