Facebook and the Iowa Caucuses:

Analysis of Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s Facebook Campaign

Dixie State University

Dr. Erin Ortiz

Abstract
Facebook has cemented a place in the political landscape; facilitating the discourse and rhetoric of American politics. Due to a wide user base and the ability for users to engage with one another, Facebook has become one of the most important tools in politicians’ campaigns. The Facebook pages of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were the two largest pages represented in the GOP and Democratic parties - before the Iowa Caucus. Their pages are as diverse as their rhetoric. Using the Social Marketing Theory, along with comparing average posts performances of each page, the 2016 USA election opposition, as well as social media use of current world leaders, this paper explores what tactics created meaningful engagement and which tactics failed to hold their own weight from January 1, 2016 - February 5, 2016. The end result shows that despite the many tools available to political candidates, the perception of honesty is the most valuable tool in any social media campaign.

Introduction
The 2016 presidential race is a tale of two opposites. The GOP started with over seventeen major candidates vying for office while the Democrats’ common sentiment assumed Hillary Clinton would win the nomination in a one horse race. As the GOP united over the wariness of Hillary, the Democrats united trying to gather support for the clear front runner for the nomination. Party lines have been drawn with more vengeance than ever before as the divide between our nation’s two dominate parties seems to only grow. Facebook has become particularly important, adding to the traditional media of television, radio and print. With the number of influential social media pages and platforms increasing, Facebook stands alone in the ubiquitous number of users, and in the expansive amount of public discourse taking place daily on the site. Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and SnapChat remain valuable, but they do not provide the in-depth rhetoric of politics that Facebook has become a cornerstone for. With Facebook providing the largest numbers of interactions across all social media, the rationale for analyzing Facebook corresponds with every major political candidate running for president in 2016. Each candidate has maintained a Facebook page while running for office; some candidates have yet to venture further into any other social media.

Trump and Clinton were the two favorites in the polls before heading into the primaries (Whalen 2016). Both were ahead in the polls before the Iowa Caucus began and ahead on social media. “Donald Trump has dominated the conversation in Iowa and across the U.S… Hillary Clinton on Facebook, across 366,400 interactions. But Bernie Sanders was in hot pursuit with 86,900 unique people discussing him” (Kaplan, 2016). The two front runners also had well over a million more likes than the other candidates at the start of the campaign. Trump and Clinton have also created more engagement with the public, compared to other presidential hopefuls, before the voting started in Iowa. With thousands of comments and many times over 10 posts per
day on any given political page, tools such as CrowdTangle and Facebook metrics were used to observe top performing posts, worst preforming posts, and measurements of likes, comments, and shares. By using the Social Marketing Theory, I will explore how the candidates attempted to influence the behavior of the voters by looking at the tactics used, as well as what created both successes and failures. This paper will discuss tactics used by the two front runners in the Iowa Caucus, Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump. Specifically, what made their Facebook campaigns successful and what fell short of their expectations. Quotes taken from third party where chosen based on popularity.

**Literature Review**

**Influence of Social Media**

Social media gained notoriety as a powerful campaigning tool during the Obama campaign in 2008. Social media has since become one of the most powerful tools in a politician’s tool box. “[Facebook] is necessary to disseminate ideas” (Kakachia, 2014). Not only does Facebook dispatch ideas, but the social network creates hubs of political conversations. Before the Iowa Caucus the top issues discussed by Iowa Facebook users were, “Wall Street and financial regulation, crime and criminal justice, abortion, taxes and the Affordable Care Act” (Kaplan, 2016, para. 12). In contrast, the national social conversation gravitated toward the topics of “religion, racism and discrimination, jobs, Wall Street and financial regulation, and Benghazi” (Kaplan, 2016, para. 13). Social media is not only a place to disseminate ideas but also a place where different geographical, economic, racial and ideological demographics come together to openly discuss issues from a national perspective. Facebook has become a place where opinions are constantly shared; influencing voter behavior. “Online mobilization works
because it primarily spreads through strong-tie networks that probably exists offline, but have an online representation” (Bond, 2012). Bond’s study suggests that messages sent on Facebook tend to navigate toward users who know each other; finding that closer friends influence users more often than distant friends. In his study, Bond found social media to directly increase voter turnout by approximately 60,000 voters. Facebook and other social media venues has become a staple for politics across the world - even in places where the political landscape can be extremely volatile. “Here [Georgia] we have propaganda channels. The [traditional] mass media is controlled by either the government, or an oligarch. Thus, social media is especially important for others, which helps them to share their views and propagate ideas” (Kakachia, 2014). The Iowa Caucus is the first time voters can share their voice at the polls; it has become a vacuum. The primary goal for each candidate is to gather engagement and interactions while gaining likes on Facebook in order to turn likes into votes at the polls.

**Social Media Marketing Tactics**

With the interactive nature and the amount of information shared, social media is a true two way model of communication. This model creates a unique place where honesty is the most valuable currency a person possesses. “In an age of corporate secrets, a little honesty and transparency goes a long way toward building trust with your prospects and long-term commitment from your customers” (Kerpen, 2011). The openness and honesty of social media has rabidly increased the growth of social networks. “Since 2012, Facebook has doubled its government and politics team” (Parker, 2015, para.7). The increased team has built tools that allow only politically active users to see political post; along with tools that target traditional demographics of location and political affiliation. “Geo-target your support base of potential voters by congressional district and more…Tap into the political conversation on Facebook by
targeting the most likely people to spread political information” (www.facebook.com/business/a/politics-industry). The Facebook political experience is different for virtually every user. “Those who are more likely to stop and watch a video will be shown one, while those inclined to click a link to sign a petition or donate will receive a link” (Parker, 2015, para. 18). While a few users have concerns about privacy on the site as well as transparency, this seems to be a non-issue for most users on Facebook due to the lack of knowledge and empathy to the situation. This allows Facebook to grow into a more powerful tool to influence voter behavior.

Hillary Clinton’s Facebook page has gained national attention by looking clean cut and professional as her social media team creates and curates information. “The Democratic front-runner has a staff of dozens, producing original content - including bylined news stories and professional video - all managed by an audience development team” (Przybyla, 2016, para. 2). Clinton’s posts can look as if they came from a neutral party because they feature someone other than the presidential hopeful. “Many readers are probably unaware that some posts are from the campaign, since a number feature people other than the candidate” (Przybyla, 2016, para. 27). The ability to manipulate is a key concern, but honesty is rewarded. “The candidates who are willing to be more authentic and show who they are as a person get a lot more engagement” (as cited is Przybyla, 2016, para. 29). Through honesty and speaking his mind, Donald Trump has moved to the forefront of the political realm because users perceive him as sharing the similar values.

Donald Trump started and maintains a campaign based on the emotion of distrust for the current government. His emotion and politically incorrect speech has allowed for social media users to see him as being open and honest. “Mr. Trump has mastered Twitter in a way no
candidate for president ever has, unleashing and redefining its power as a tool of political promotion, distraction, score-settling and attack” (Barbaro, 2015, para. 6). By maintaining his personal voice on Twitter, Donald Trump has shown what power the social media platform can generate. He has over 6.3 million conversations - eight times as many as: Marco Rubio, Carly Fiorina and Ben Carson. Trump was retweeted more than twice as often as Mrs. Clinton. Mr. Trump has also established an “online SWAT team” (Barbaro, 2015, para. 19). This SWAT team is made up of social media followers who spring into action and defend someone that they do not personally know. This creates a robust social media presence which nearly runs itself by followers who are defending their presidential hopeful.

**Social Marketing Theory**

Social media has created a culture were honesty is the best policy. When users feel a candidate is open with them, users tend to develop an emotional connection with the page. Emotional connections can drive user behavior on social media. The online viral video, *This Video will Make you Angry*, YouTube personality CGP Grey explains that creating an emotional reaction to internet posts, fosters greater dialogue as users from both viewpoints debate a given topic. Just as the internet has changed how we buy and sell music, the internet has also changed political discourse. Social media has become a central part of politics; “Social media in politics is no longer just a fad, or an added extra in a campaign. It is central to any campaign” (Goyal, 2014). One of the key points of social media success on the campaign trail is the virtue of authenticity. People do not want to just re-hear what is being said over party lines and traditional media; the public wants inside, personal information. Users of Facebook want to see politicians as distinctive and local; social media gives the ability to communicate directly as a politician to the voter. While social media can be an influence bubble (not everyone has Twitter), social
media still influences what the mainstream media is discussing. Social media is controlling key conversations. What a candidate posts becomes news and gives more power to the people, in the election process, than ever before as they are finally allowed to give instant feedback. “‘We the people’ can now compete against the near deafening influence of unlimited campaign contributes” (as cited Clemmitt, 2012).

Politicians’ are making a switch from selling the product of politics to attempting to influence user voter behavior. By using the Social Marketing Theory we are able to explore how a product is sold and what ways candidates are trying to influence voter behavior and ideology. Social marketing focuses on: 1. Creating Audience Awareness; 2. Targeting the Right Audience; 3. Reinforcing the Message; 4. Cultivating Images or Impressions; 5. Stimulating Interest; 6. Inducing Desired Results. Social Marketing Theory explains how gatekeepers attempt to promote or discourage behaviors by using each step as a means to an end. Despite differences in the way the top two candidates run their Facebook campaigns, the end result is that both parties endeavor to use these steps on social media to influence an election. Each step within the Social Marketing Theory can be implemented with different strategies based on media platforms and desired results. Social Marketing Theory provides the framework for the campaigns; creating a successful profile and engaging the public. Along with the framework of analysis for this paper, I am applying each step of the Social Marketing Theory to Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s social media campaigns. By using these steps of the Social Marketing Theory, to explore the steps of the social political process, we can better understand how candidates are trying to influence voter behavior online while gaining a better understanding of the current state of the American political process.

Table 1: World Leaders Available for Private Contact on Facebook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Leader</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashraf Ghani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/ashrafghani.af/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/ashrafghani.af/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelaziz Bouteflika</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/Abdelazizbouteflikaofficielle/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/Abdelazizbouteflikaofficielle/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francois Hollande</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/francoishollande.fr/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/francoishollande.fr/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His Majesty King, Jigme Khesar</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/KingJigmeKhesar/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/KingJigmeKhesar/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismail Omar Guelleh</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/PAGEOFFICIELLEIOG/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/PAGEOFFICIELLEIOG/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raimonds Vejonis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Lativa</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/rvejonis">https://www.facebook.com/rvejonis</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Kagame</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/PresidentPaulKagame/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/PresidentPaulKagame/?fref=ts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas Maduro Moros</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/NicolasMaduro/?fref=ts&amp;rf=106420906061940">https://www.facebook.com/NicolasMaduro/?fref=ts&amp;rf=106420906061940</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis
1. Creating Audience Awareness

The first step in influencing audience behavior is making the audience aware of one’s presence. Once a candidate has declared intent for the presidency, the real work begins. Many times a social media campaign starts before the formal campaign because of the need to increase likes, create a perception of popularity and build a loyal following before heated rhetoric takes place. The page layout on social media is important. It gives an in-depth look into the candidate, while highlighting an ideal image of the candidate. The page layout directs users to information about the candidate and can create the first impression for the participant on social media. With the advent of the Timeline on Facebook pages, the personalized page has become as much of a memoir as it is a way to communicate and create awareness of the presidential candidate.

Page Layout - Hillary Clinton

In 2011 Facebook introduced a radical change in the user experience by changing profiles into a “Timeline.” What makes the Facebook Timeline so powerful is the idea that users can share their life story. Hillary Clinton’s Timeline is filled out from the day she was born - sharing her life story. Her Facebook highlights events throughout her childhood, beginning with a family move at age three, touching on her high school graduation, and includes her Grammy award in 1997. Clinton’s Timeline is very personal. One scrolling through the depths of her page may feel as if they know her personally. Her early years only provide major highlights - with one or two posts every few years - keeping viewers from feeling inundated with information, yet designed to keep viewers connected, amused and informed with information.

Clinton’s Timeline layout is very generic; the only tabs are the default settings. She has completed filling out her entire profile; with the About section filled out with both professional
and personal information intertwined. Items listed, such as favorite TV shows included:

“Downton Abbey, HGTV shows, Blue Bloods, Madame Secretary, The Good Wife, Castle, House of Cards, Borgen, The Three Stooges (from childhood) and lots more” (Clinton).

Clinton’s bio is very informal, yet extremely detailed. She lists educational information to favorite television shows. Clinton’s page makes you feel like you are reading a friend’s profile, allowing the viewer to feel like they know the candidate. Providing personal details (Downton Abby, Yoga and Wizard of OZ) makes Clinton seem like a real person and not just a politician. Many of her interests mentioned are common American pastimes and activities anyone could enjoy, making her relatable to a majority of Americans. In an election where the political outsiders have an edge, Clinton’s Facebook page attempts to portray her as a regular person, rather than a political insider.

Five of Clinton’s fourteen posts listed in her About section make direct mention of her political life. A few of her favorite quotes, movies and television shows have an indirect political reference. Political documentaries such as, Pray the Devil Back to Hell and a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt are meant to give the reader an indirect political reference. If identifying information were taken out, anyone reading the page would come to the conclusion the person they are reading about is a loving, active, successful grandma. Clinton’s profile is designed to bring people closer together - distancing herself from politics. This section clearly indicates who runs the page - the page is run by Hillary for America - stating any posts made by Mrs. Clinton are signed “–H.” Mirrored from the successful Obama tactic of informing users that the page is professionally managed but will be updated by the figure on occasion, is both ethical and creates a natural buzz around any post signed –H.

Photos and Video
With a little over 700 total photos on Clinton’s page (as of 1/26/2016), one could easily view all of her photos in one sitting. This not only makes a visitor feel like they are getting to know Clinton, but also gives each photo a specific story. Aside from the Timeline album - which hosts over 500 photos - the remaining albums average much fewer photos per album. The largest album belongs to the Profile album with 30 photos; the other albums range from 5-11 photos each. Each album has a clear message; but with each small, organized album users are enticed to continue browsing other photos.

**Profile Picture**

Hillary Clinton had 11 profile pictures leading up to Iowa. During her political career she changed her basic logo during holidays, major political events, and other important times to show support. Iowa is no exception. With five days from the Iowa Caucuses, Clinton started a profile picture count down with a text overlay, on an image - as with a meme - concluding with “Today is the Day” (Clinton, 2016). It was changed again upon the completion of the caucus that said, “Thank you Iowa” (Clinton, 2016). While changing a profile picture seems spontaneous and harmless, the tactic goes against traditional social media practices. “A good rule of thumb is to limit yourself to changing your profile only when you have a really good reason. A holiday or new mission both qualifies as great reasons…” (Lawrence, 2014).

Changing profile pictures too often goes against traditional logic; changing for each individual caucus and primary is justifiable. However, a five day count down was overbearing and did not allow viewers to feel like they knew the person. Many of the countdown photos have half the likes and comments of other profile pictures. The aspect of changing pictures so often diminishes the impact of changing a profile picture over time. When averaging over ten posts a day, another update - due to a profile photo change - on users’ Newsfeeds could overwhelm
users and be seen as pointless information. Changing her picture on big events like Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and select primaries is a much stronger tactic than a countdown. Clinton’s team realized this during the primary, and following the Iowa Caucus only featured a three day countdown with each successive primary, removing a day.

Clinton’s profile is clearly professionally created. Her information is easily accessible to a mass audience; while her page has been created to tell a story that is meant to unite Americans.

**Page Layout - Donald Trump**

Donald J. Trump’s Timeline layout lacks any extra features or posts. His Timeline starts in 2009 - when he first opened a Facebook account, for promotional purposes. Posts throughout his Timeline follow his personal branding mantra. Trump uses the fact that audiences are already familiar with who he is and leverages his popularity. As a public figure who has not engaged heavily in politics before, many people already feel they know Trump (from watching his television shows, reading his books or seeing his appearances on WWE). Trump has already built a successful social media platform, giving little need to explain who he is. Trump used traditional media, over a period of years, to build his social profile. He has built audiences across vast demographics, which have developed awareness of who he is over time. This makes the need for background information a moot point because people already feel like they know him simply because he has remained in public light for so long.

Despite Trump’s unorganized approach and lack of historical context on his Timeline, supporters and haters have been commenting on many older posts - which are not easily accessible; showing that Trump has stuck a nerve and polarized the political landscape, by connecting to the emotion of anger. Trump has facilitated an environment where people spend time navigating an unorganized page, posting a variety of comments and fostering lively debate.
Comments include questions, attempts to belittle Trump and name calling, as well as pointing out his personal and political flaws; but also include comments showing dedication to the candidate. While some of the posts are very negative, Trump has not censored any of his posts (minus the profanity filter). Negative comments are easily found on his old and new posts alike, creating open arguments and increasing his page’s engagement. This allows all his post to be seen by more people as user’s debate about Trump. The Timeline does not provide much historical content, but has become an actively running page from past promotions of the Trump brand and an open forum taking place on virtually any posts regardless of the posted message.

Profile Picture

Donald Trump has one profile picture, consistent throughout all his social media. This follows traditional logic, allowing people to know where the post comes from quickly. Trump has also only had six cover photos; half are related to his presidential campaign while the others are from past branding attempts.

Photos and Video

Trump has nearly 800 photos on his page (as of 1/26/2016). They do not have any real sorting guidelines other than the default Facebook sorting (Campaign photos, Instagram photos and Timeline photos, etc.). While possible to go through the photos in a day, the unorganized format gives a more daunting feel than when viewing more organized Timelines. Trump’s photos culminate as an archive of a public figure that uses Facebook to keep up his popularity and public influence. Due in part to his unorganized photos, Trump appears to run the page himself; the photo albums feel natural and uninhibited - much like his campaigns model.
The nearly 130 Facebook videos (most under a minute long) fit under the fifteen second Instagram mark and keep the Facebook audience entertained watching the whole video. Trump uses Facebook and Instagram as a way to share the same message. The similarity between his social pages could be seen as a negative since users who follow him on Instagram may want something different than users on Facebook. The argument could also be made that Trump has kept his political and social message the same across all platforms, which helps keep his message unified across platforms. It also gives his page a more organic appearance and that he has a hand in running the page(s) himself. While not every post is sent directly by Trump (on Facebook), the presidential hopeful uses first person more than any other candidate. This indicates that he plays a pivotal role in the message broadcast on Facebook. Trump’s public engagement rates were much higher than any other candidate. Showing the same message can be successful across different platforms. Users expect to see posts from the person running for office and not a professional campaign team.

Trump’s posts on Facebook are mismatched, heterogeneous and unprofessional. Some posts do not include pictures, which is becoming increasingly uncommon for social media posts. The order of his left side bar is even suspect. The first side bar link includes pages Trump himself has liked (his children and Daniel Scavino Jr., Senior Advisor of the campaign). The next side bars are photos and videos, followed by upcoming events. The strength of his Facebook page is his persona. He uses his popularity to discuss how nearly half of America feels. Trump’s mantra during the campaign is a blatant lack of political correctness, a straight shooter who speaks his mind; his social media functions the same way. Trump has accomplished what Facebook set out to do - personify him electronically to the masses.
While not prominently featured on the page, Trump has five Notes - the oldest being from 2011 - two years after his Facebook startup. In the first published Note, Trump announced he will not run for president in 2012. The next note was posted in 2012 with a letter to Mr. Trump talking about the failing of Obama Care (written by someone in a real life situation). The next two posts are announcements of Trump entering the WWE Hall of Fame, along with a post with Dr. Ben Carson. The next is an article written by Robert Kiyosaki, about Trump and is very difficult to read because of its poor formatting.

Trump uses Notes on Facebook to keep himself in the political realm and as a highlight real, allowing his thoughts and major events to be easily assessable. Posting his thoughts in Notes is an easily accessible format because it is not constrained to word counts; it is formatted to keep the reader from getting buried in information. Trump has been able to show that he has kept a pulse with current issues for several years, but remained an outsider.

**Comparison**

Neither Clinton nor Trump is available to contact via a Facebook Message. When compared to a random sample of ten world leaders who have verifiable Facebook accounts, 50% of those world leaders are available for contact via a private message on Facebook. Of the candidates involved in the Iowa Caucus - across both parties - only two allowed private contact via Facebook - Mike Huckabee (www.facebook.com/mikehuckabee) and Rick Santorum (www.facebook.com/RickSantorum). Former presidents Jimmy Carter (www.facebook.com/presidentjimmycarter), Bill Clinton (www.facebook.com/billclinton) George W. Bush (www.facebook.com/georgewbush) and Barack Obama (www.facebook.com/barackobama) have verifiable Facebook pages, but they do not allow
contact via Message on Facebook. This is a stark contrast from other leaders from around the world (See Table 1).

The lack of ability to contact a candidate during a campaign is understandable; but answering the voters’ questions should be a high priority. Because of the heated nature of politics, along with the trolls running around the web, government officials remove the ability to message via Facebook. This keeps a hold on the unneeded remarks and comments through Facebook. Since each of the candidates can be contacted through other means, Facebook becomes an unnecessary burden that would need to be monitored if users were able to send private messages. This lack of true two-way communication shows American politics have yet to capture the full power of social media. The difficulty in trying to contact an official representative within either campaign shows that Americans have not truly demanded transparency within politics. Facebook provides an easy and convenient way to contact a political party, this under underutilized feature shows that American politicians would rather continue to target specific demographics without fully capturing the micro graphics that social media allows.

2. **Targeting the Right Audience**

Targeting the right audience is vital. If a message sent to a group does not capture the audience’s attention, time and energy is wasted. A message designed for supporters in Iowa may not be the best message for supporters in California. Social media provides the ability to target users based on interest, gender, location, etc. Facebook allows you to scale your ‘get out the vote’ effort as needed in each demographic. “You can rally your supporters by reaching them on their desktop and mobile devices with a reminder to cast their ballot” (facebook.com/politics).
Both Clinton and Trump have managed to bring in more engagement than other candidates’ pages. In a political campaign, targeting loyal voters and bringing in new support is a balancing act.

Hillary Clinton has traditional media advantage; followers of her page knew what to expect upon hitting the like button. They know that when liking her page they have entered into a political arena. Donald Trump’s page does not follow the same “advantage.” Many people could have liked Trump from his television show, WWE, books, investments or the Miss America Pageants; their political interests may be different. The result is noticed in more active discussion because of the sundry following built across diverse interests on social media.

The advantage to having a wider following - like Trump - is that the message will be seen by more people with a wide range of opinions. This creates discussion - increasing a post’s exposer - with greater engagement of different ideas and thought germs.

Thought germs [posts], can burn out because once everyone agrees, it’s hard to keep talking and thus thinking about them. But if there’s an opposing thought germ, an argument, then the thinking never stops…the more visible an argument gets the more bystanders it draws in which makes it more visible which is why every group from the most innocuous internet forum to The National Conversation can turn into a double rage storm across the sky in no time. (CGP Grey, 2015)

Donald Trump’s posts have a greater chance of going viral because they have more people from opposing viewpoints discussing them. Candidates must be able to use social media to inspire a core fan base and still create converts to the posted message. To
succeed, one needs a lot of people talking about you - and your posts - so that more people see the intended message.

**Hillary Clinton**

Hillary Clinton had many more posts per day. Clinton averaged 12.79 posts per day while Donald Trump averaged 6.67 posts a day; yet her post either underperformed or over preformed. This means Clinton’s post either resonated with followers or fell on deaf ears. Trump’s engagement and interaction rate seems to stay around the same plateau, while Clinton’s created much greater peaks and valleys. From 1/01/2016 to 2/03/2016, Clinton nearly doubled the amount of posts per day; yet, Trump more than doubled the interaction rates per post.

Facebook algorithms push more popular posts and pages to the top of users’ Newsfeeds. This makes the peaks and valleys problematic for Clinton, with a few unsuccessful posts in a row, the response from the algorithm could hurt her page engagement; people could stop viewing her page causing her page to stop appearing in supporters’ Newsfeeds. Facebook continues to mold an experience unique to a person’s likes, dislikes and what they pay attention to. The posts that feed into a person’s Newsfeed do not necessarily require engagement but must fit into the algorithm’s predictions for success.

[The algorithm] doesn’t just predict whether you’ll actually hit the like button on a post based on your past behavior. It also predicts whether you’ll click, comment, share, or hide it, or even mark it as spam. It will predict each of these outcomes, and others, with a certain degree of confidence, then combine them all to produce a single relevancy score that’s specific to both you and that post. Once every possible post in your feed has received its relevancy score, the sorting algorithm
can put them in the order that you’ll see them on the screen. The post you see at
the top of your feed, then, has been chosen over thousands of others as the one
most likely to make you laugh, cry, smile, click, like, share, or comment.
(Oremus, 2016, para. 18)

Hillary Clinton’s posts appear during all times of the day - in an attempt to reach a wider
range of supporters. Clinton’s tactics are hampering her success because the majority of
Facebook users are logged in during a set time each day. “The three biggest usage spikes tend to
occur on weekdays at 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. ET” (Warren, 2010, para. 3). Posting
large amounts of content when users are not logged onto to Facebook will result in posts that
followers do not have a chance to view. This limits Clinton’s ability to appear at the top of
Newsfeeds; due to an algorithm perceiving that her page is performing poorly.

Clinton has attempted to appeal to the younger crowd - a group Bernie Sanders has vast
leads in. By using posts which resembles a meme (picture with text overlade), Clinton’s posts are
easy to share. Growing a following is important to win an election, but the post’s style could
hinder engagement with her more supportive older voters. Clinton could be hindering the support
of older democrats because the quality of her post do not seem to be engaging an older
demographic. Trying to reach a specific audience may not be the best strategy because she could
be isolating her core demographic. Clinton isolates her devoted followers with posts they are less
likely to share (meme style, flashy gifs and videos), yet the posts are very sharable to the
younger generation. The real issue is that they lack substance; quarantining more devoted older
followers.

Donald Trump
Donald Trump’s posts, while sporadic, are posted between 4:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Trump averages 6.67 post a day; his followers are given the opportunity to interact with the page in real time and are not inundated with content. The majority of Trump’s posts appear when most people have access to Facebook. Facebook’s algorithm rewards Trump’s posting behavior with the added benefit of engaged followers. Posting less than half the time as Clinton, Trump gains more interactions quicker because he mainly posts during prime posting hours. His content has the ability to create emotional reactions among followers and disinters. Trump’s page is placed in a priority spot; resulting in more engagement with the posts. This results in a circle of popularity and increases exposer.

Another positive is that Trump’s page does not have a uniform style of posting - aside from his short video updates designed to fit on Instagram. Ununiformed posts may seem unprofessional, but the unprofessionalism style posts do not seem to be hindering his engagement. The simpler posts focus on a message which does not sacrifice the content of the presentation. Posting in a vast range of styles, Trump does not cater to one demographic. This helps him to keep followers engaged throughout a wide demographic range. Uniformed pictures look great, but does one really need to post a graphic about how much money he raised for veterans in lieu of attending a debate? Keeping the public engaged is the key factor; engaged followers mean that more people are seeing a post.

Comparison

Trump’s posts are preforming well due to their content. Many of Clinton’s graphics do not have any substance to them, which seems to be making them fall flat. Social Media users and
Facebook’s algorithms have started to value content over anything else. Quality content can lead to a stronger commitment of support. Trump’s supporters are loyal. “I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters” (as cited in Diamond, 2016). Skilled social media tactics cannot replace the candidates’ abilities to connect with people and build a brand which fosters loyalty. Trump posts clear messages consistent with his campaign. Clinton’s post - while professional - do not evoke any emotion, failing to reach her core supporters.

3. Reinforce the Message

Social media demands an open and honest communication platform; “a little honesty and transparency goes a long way building trust with your prospects and long-term commitment from your customers” (Kerpen, 2011). When politics began utilizing social media, the goal became to reinforce the same agenda portrayed on traditional media. Social media has not yet developed to the point that an election could be won primarily by utilizing the power of social media, but remains a powerful tool. It is a great possibility that elections could certainly be lost by the nonuse of the social media; errant posts and/or not addressing the wide spread attacks which happen on the internet could damage a campaign. As a tool, social media should reinforce the message each person gives in order to create a complete campaign. Building a community and having voters back up a candidate’s claims while showing one has the best interests of the people in mind gives social media users an advantage because people want to feel a part of the community.

Reinforce the Message - Clinton

Clinton’s campaign, “I’m With Her,” naturally runs on a more positive tone than her adversaries on both sides of the aisle. Her positive tone is the natural progression as a democrat
and a former Secretary of State under the current president. Clinton needs to be positive and supportive of the current president, and the direction he has pointed our country in order to validate her own position. Clinton’s highest interacted post came during the State of the Union Address. Using the meme style of posting she said, “Thank you, President Obama” - with an added text - “From a stronger economy to affordable health care to commonsense gun measures, we’ve accomplished so much under President Obama’s leadership. We need to build on that progress—not go backwards” (Clinton, 2016). Clinton’s top preforming posts are positive in content and style, utilizing an easily sharable meme style post. Her traditional campaign and social media campaign have attempted to stay positive and promote the better change within topics, such as woman’s rights. Clinton actively attempts to build a community on the positive and continued progress.

Clinton tags the page, “President Obama” (https://www.facebook.com/potus) not the more popular page, “Barack Obama” (https://www.facebook.com/barackobama) which boasts over 40 million likes. The new, “President Obama” page has 40 million less likes than Barack Obama’s main page - used during his election campaign. Clinton did not always tag the President in a post relating to Obama and/or using his name, but she never used the name Barack Obama - the page with the greatest amount of likes of any American politician. Tagging a page with millions of less likes makes little numerical sense. From the standpoint of building a community, tagging President Obama’s page makes social media sense. The President Obama page appears to be managed by the president. The posts are written in first person. The page does not post every day and all indications are that the President manages the page and will continue managing the page after he leaves office. The Barack Obama page is a professionally managed page with multiple postings per day. Since the majority of people who would see the tag are following
Hillary Clinton already, Clinton is not trying to gain likes by tagging the page, but to build a more devoted social media community. If a user clicked on the link, they would see a personal account compared to that of a professionally managed one - which has garnished millions of likes and now sells paraphernalia promoting social change. Tagging the President’s personal page helps engagement; users see a page influenced heavily by the person it represents and not a mass marketed machine.

Clinton also does not monitor negative comments but allows her community to come to her defense creating an open discussion platform, even when the posts have little to do with Clinton.

Y’all are delusional... he has been by far the worst president to date. He has destroyed our health care system, depleted our military to a point that Russia is now the one who is calling the shots. The worst is that he has turned this nation into a powder keg waiting to explode. You’d think with an African American president we would be seeing a decline in race issues, but no they are at an all time high.... smh im sorry you all have blinders on to what our country has become in just 8 years with Obama as our leader and chief…” (Breeden, 2016).

With 2,525 likes, this comment received more likes than many of the posts of praise from Clinton. This is suspect because a few negative posts have abnormally high likes for the time of posting. While no one can be certain if the likes are legitimate, Facebook - by default - posts the most popular post to the top of the Newsfeed. If a post has gained a significant amount of likes very suddenly, the post popularity would continue.

**Reinforce the Message - Trump**
Trump’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” instantly brings a feeling of antagonism to the campaign. Donald Trump is known to the country as the candidate who speaks his mind; and his Facebook page is no different. The page makes no direct mention if Trump is sending all the posts. Most of the posts are presented in first person and his personality comes out with post clearly influenced by Trump. By commenting on current events, through social media (some of his most engaged post), he increases followers - supporting his lack of political correctness as the best option for the country.

I’m very angry. Because our country is being run horribly. I will gladly accept the mantle of anger. Our military is a disaster. Our healthcare is a horror show. Obamacare, we’re going to repeal it and replace it. We have no borders. Our vets are being treated horribly. Illegal immigration is beyond belief! Our country is being run by incompetent people and yes, I am angry. I’m angry because our country is a mess! (Trump, 2016)

This post more than doubled the amount of comments, compared to the next highest commented post. Reading through the comments one can see why Trump is successful in his presidential bid; his supporters feel the same way. “The USA citizens (The not so silent majority) are ANGRY too, watching the US slide into the crapper, while Obama does everything he can to make sure the USA is in the worst state possible. I believe he is in with ISIS” (Anderson, 2016)

Trump is angry, and has hit a nerve with many of his supporters who share the same sentiment. Trump’s campaign and social media community runs on emotion. Many of Trump’s posts feel like an open venting; with Americans responding in the same fashion. The Trump page appears to have no filter - as modeled after the candidate - and his comments seem to run the same way. While he does have a profanity filter in place, a few creative spellings make the
appearance into the thread. With attacks and name calling pointed at the billionaire, Trump has little need to respond because his followers are just as passionate and happy to defend him.

4. Cultivate Images or Impressions

Creating awareness allows users to get to know the candidate personally - the purpose of social media. This allows the candidate to cultivate an image he/she feels is valuable. Social media is perceived as informal, providing the candidates the ability to share information making them seem more human, while also creating a connection with their audience. Facebook provides instant feedback of a message, and whether it should continue to be broadcast, stopped or reworded. Maintaining a consistent impression is one of the most elusive aspects in social media; along with a public interaction rate, gaining proper engagement is crucial to sending a message.

Interaction Rate

Interaction rate is historically low on social media - across all types of pages - despite the millions of people who like both Clinton and Trump. The interaction rate of the top posts for the month of January (until the Iowa Caucus) came from Clinton. Clinton’s post of a picture of President Obama at the State of the Union address had an interaction rate of 11.29%. The post said, “Thank you President Obama” (Clinton, 2016), in Clinton’s meme style post. The next most interacted post was a picture of Clinton and her husband sharing a moment during a New Year’s Day celebration. The status with the picture simply said, “Happy New Year” (Clinton, 2016)! This had an interaction rate of 9.63%. Neither post was overtly directed to the campaign, but invited users to be a part of the celebration of major events. Happy New Year is something that transcends political party lines. The thank you to President Obama came during the State of the Union address; which could have been shared by people who don’t support Clinton but
support Obama. Social media users not only want to see quality content, but also desire to feel included.

Posts with a neutral nature will transcend party lines. These types of posts evoke a human element rather than a heated campaign. Neutral posts did better for every candidate, except for the notable exception of Donald Trump. Showing heated rhetoric will only get a candidate so far on social media. When the posts bring out the humanity, the ability to reach a mass audience becomes much greater. When Jeb Bush posted, “Praying for the family of the young Ben Carson volunteer, Braden Joplin, who was killed in a tragic car crash in Iowa. A life taken too soon” (Bush 2016), the interaction rate was at 1.80% - one of his highest. Jeb Bush not only received a much higher interaction rate but also showed that the human aspect can transcend politics - something many people across any campaign will support. Social media is creating a culture where the posts that are going viral are on the polar extremes (attacking, condensing posts to the compassionate human side), but both can unite the internet.

Although Jeb Bush (www.facebook.com/jebbush), along with other candidates, was able to statically compete with Clinton and Trump at times, the reality is that Bush (and many of the other candidates) got swallowed up in the popularity storm. Jeb Bush’s 1.80% interaction rate brings in approximately 5000 likes, 270 comments and 180 shares. A post from Clinton with only 1.46% engagement brings in over 25,000 likes, 2000 comments and 2500 shares. Even Marco Rubio (www.facebook.com/Marco Rubio) who has just over 1.2 million likes with an interaction rate of .63%, gets over 7000 likes, 300 comments and 300 shares. Statistically, candidates can appear to be on the same playing field, but in reality the influence of a person who has millions of likes is far greater when compared to someone with only hundreds of thousands of likes. Political candidates must build a brand outside social media before they can
become a major player. Social media success does not directly correlate to high poll numbers. Dr. Ben Carson (www.facebook.com/realbencarson) despite coming only second to Trump in Facebook likes finished fourth in Iowa.

The next six most interacted posts belong to Donald Trump. While other candidates’ posts bring people closer together, Trump’s top posts divide. Of the top six posts, four are merely a status update which goes against the increasingly true adage; a picture is worth a thousand words. Trump’s pithy side comes out during the status updates as a methodology of his campaign. His divisive words bring the internet and supporters together. There were no fancy pictures, just clear messages regarding his campaign. This goes against traditional engagement practices of pictures doing better than words alone; but would fit the stereotypical Trump supporter who does not care as much about the visual, only a clear message. What makes Trump such a prolific candidate is that he has struck a nerve with a large percentage of the public who feel the same way he does. These followers may not feel they have the voice to articulate grievousness that they believe the government has cultivated, but believe that Trump does.

“I’m very angry. Because our country is being run horribly. I will gladly accept the mantle of anger…. Our country is being run by incompetent people and yes, I am angry. I’m angry because our country is a mess” (Trump, 2016)!

“Hillary said that guns don't keep you safe. If she really believes that she should demand that her heavily armed bodyguards quickly disarm” (Trump, 2016)!

“Remember, I am self-funding my campaign, the only one in either party. I'm not controlled by lobbyists or special interests-only the U.S.A.” (Trump, 2016)!
These three posts received 8.61%, 6.95% and 6.42% interaction rate, respectively. With some of Trump’s most engaging posts coming from simple status updates, Trump shows that if one can hit an emotional chord you can create social media success. After a heated debate with a Fox News moderator, Trump decided to skip the next debate broadcasted on Fox. “An unbelievable night in Iowa with our great Veterans! We raised $6,000,000.00 while the politicians talked” (Trump, 2016)! This post had a 5.82% interaction rate; dispelling the notion that posts must be accompanied with some kind of graphic content. Trump shows that one does not always need a picture to make an engaging status update. A provocative and well timed post can garnish engagement because of the person behind the post.

Coming at the heels of Trump skipping out on the Fox News GOP debate, Trump supporters showed loyalty to the brand and also shook the notion that one must appear on the debate stage to stay relevant. Harnessing the power of social media, Trump was successfully able to bypass one of the nation’s largest news organizations. Social media can level the playing field between news organizations and political candidates; allowing politicians to bypass traditional media and send out an unfiltered message. Trump and Clinton have more likes on Facebook than MSNBC (www.facebook.com/msnbc). Trump also has more likes than CBS News (www.facebook.com/CBSNews), and PBS (www.facebook.com/pbs). The impact of the candidates being able to broadcast a message with the same reach as the news organizations creates a culture where the candidates can send out a clear and unfiltered message to a key audience without having to use traditional media. As little as four years ago, skipping a debate would be a path to destruction for many; yet, Trump skipping the GOP debate for his own fundraiser was seen by many as a good move and a positive to the overall election campaign for Trump. “Why should he enter a debate in which he’ll get attacked from all sides and potentially
lose support in Iowa when he can try to freeze the race exactly where it is?” (as cited in Druke, 2016). With a few simple status updates, Trump showed that if you build a strong enough brand you can control the discussion. The power of social media is allowing one to send specific messages to supporters or opposition. Sending out a specific message to people creates a unique place where each person can target a key group of people - in hopes of creating a thriving message.

**Under Performance - Clinton**

Even with the ability to reach a mass audience because something is posted online does not guarantee the message will go viral. Despite a strong social media presence and engaged followers, posts still manage to underperform. One of Clinton’s worst performing post was deleted after the post failed to gather virtually any engagement, “When it comes to reproductive rights, there’s more on the line than ever before. That’s why it’s so important to elect a candidate who has always fought for women—and always will” (Clinton, 2016).

The video has since been taken down (only receiving 15 likes 0 comments and 0 shares when the post was accessible to everyone). While the vast majority of Clinton supporters have strong feelings about reproductive rights, the video must have proved too confrontational for her social media landscape; possibly awaking the dogmatic supporters of Trump. This video received a -39.5x on CrowdTangle - which the lowest score seen throughout my research. Because of the nature of the video, the assumption can be made that there would be some backlash due to the emotional nature of reproductive rights, and the current public unease with Planned Parenthood. Another post underperforming is a post on the former Secretary of State’s page that was posted at least four times. Every one of those posts ended up on the top 10 under preforming posts statistics. The post targeted specific followers within a state to vote for Clinton,
“Caucusing for Hillary? Ask a friend to come with you on February 20! Tag them in the comments below and join thousands of Nevadans in committing to support Hillary for Nevada: http://hrc.io/1RPNxMv” (Clinton, 2016) the other variation read “Caucusing for Hillary? Don’t forget to ask a friend to come with you on March 5! Tag a friend and join thousands of Nebraskans in committing to support Hillary:http://hrc.io/23kQrw8” (Clinton, 2016).

These posts asked for commitments from the people of Iowa, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, and Kansas. All of these posts did worse than one would expect. Of these, 14 similar postings, the most engaging post - asking the people from New Hampshire to commit - had 7,776 comments less than normal, 671 comments less than normal and 0 shares - for 662 less shares than normal. In New Hampshire, the most engaged state, this tactic did not pay off compared to other posts. Social media provides the ability to reach a specific audience; if the audience is too select, the tactic may not work on a national campaign.

Under Performance - Trump

Donald Trump has a much more engaged followers than Clinton. This is due to posts creating thought germs as well as those creating more provocative posts throughout his campaign. Over the month of January, leading and up to the Iowa Caucus, using the same scale comparing results of Clinton’s posts, Trump’s worst post came in 37th place compared to Clinton. While the link to the Donald Trump’s post is no longer active, the post received 2,489 likes 291 comments and 216 shares less than normal. The post was a re-post from his son’s Instagram page that said, “Great lesson from a great American hero - John Wayne Walding: ‘every American needs to say 2 simple words to every Vet they meet: THANK YOU!’ In
addition - thank you to John, Jake Schick, & Jeff…” (Trump, 2016).

The next post of Trump’s to appear on the underperformance list came in 85th place.

In the top 100 worst post from January 1 - February 3, Donald Trump only appeared three times.

This success of virtually no underperforming posts show the power emotion (pathos) has to project a campaign forward. “…pathos is the appeal to our human emotions. We're more often moved by our emotions than by logic or common sense, so pathos is a powerful mode of persuasion” (Modes of Persuasion). Trump has utilized the best way to keep an idea going through the internet by allowing users to flame, become emotionally involved and create thought germs. Keeping his ideas visible creates a long shelf life for any posts sent by the candidate.

5. Stimulate Interest

One way to stimulate interest is through endorsements. Endorsements have been a part of politics since the inception of campaigns. “Celebrity endorsers can have an even more profound impact on a brand because their followers are influencers in the social media domain, which is where word of mouth is increasingly playing out” (Kramer, 2011, para. 3). While endorsement posted on social media may seem to be a great way to stimulate interest, because the ability for an endorsement to go viral is high, the 2016 campaign has showed that endorsements do not mean instant success.

Endorsements - Clinton

Demi Lovato (https://www.facebook.com/DemiLovato) endorsed Clinton in Iowa, but when the post went to social media the effect was flat. While a post mentioning Demi did receive nearly 6,000 more likes compared to normal, it under performed with 66 less comments and 779
less shares than normal. Clinton’s meme post announcing Demi greatly underperformed, with only 394 likes, 427 comments and 0 shares. The post designed to be shared did not even get shared once. Demi also posted about Hillary Clinton on her own page and received a similar cold shoulder. Her post about joining Clinton received over 41,000 less likes, 1,000 less comments, and 400 less shares with a CrowdTangle Score of -5.0. This compared to her average post endorsements, which are meant to stimulate interest, had an adverse result instead.

**Endorsements - Trump**

Willie Robertson's endorsement of Trump did prove to gain attention on Trump’s page, yet it still under performed with respect to the number of times the post was shared. Robertson's endorsement was liked over 200,000 more times than average and had over 4,783 the normal amount of comments; however, the post received only 24 shares - 5,481 short of Trump’s average. This demonstrated its failing to harness the most elusive and powerful button on Facebook. Other endorsements on Trump’s page do not look near as professional in the quality of the pictures’ perspectives. The lighting is suspect, and often times the photo looks like the two people just happened to cross paths and take a photo. Many of the endorsements look hastily posted and too often the endorser does not reciprocate the post. Because of the hasty nature, many of the endorsements are placed on a page and spoil the functionality of the page, ultimately underperforming.

**Comparison**

When analyzing endorsements between the two candidates’ posts, only five endorsements over preformed; leaving eleven to under preformed. Six of the underperforming posts belonged to Trump and five were Clinton’s. CrowdTangle only gave a high score of 3.4
(20 is considered the viral threshold) to the top over performing endorsement. One reason the posts do not go viral is that many of the posts do not look professional. Many photos were underexposed, awkwardly posed or cropped and clearly thrown together. Social media users are becoming savvy and more critical of postings on each site, especially when they come from political candidates.

Common knowledge would suggest that an endorsement from a celebrity to a public figure would result in a more popular post because of the increasing fan base. But this is not the case, even when supporters were tagged - which virtual connects the two pages - they still managed to underperform both the celebrity and the politician. Many people feel social media is reserved for cat photos and other pointless information. Having serious communication is typically frowned upon, especially in the area of politics. While politics is a widely discussed topic, the Kardashians still rule the web. Social media is a place people go to validate their own viewpoints. When a person likes a political page they expect to see political posts on Facebook. If the user never likes a politician, a celebrity showing support on their page would only be viewed as spam. Something out of the normal from the celebrity page would only result in less engagement because people are surprised to find the post when it appears on their feed. Another possible reason political posts perform worse on social media is due to Facebook’s algorithm. People who don’t like seeing political posts are not being shown political post regardless of who posted.

Whether or not the person was a politician seemed to have little impact the post’s chances of success. Two posts about Sarah Palin's endorsements appeared on Trump’s Timeline. One over performed while the other underperformed. The difference was the picture and quality of the posts. The over preforming picture was a good quality picture of the two at a rally. The
underperforming post was a picture of Palin and her husband walking into the Trump plane. The picture was taken from behind and has no value. Without the text, the viewer may not even know what was happening or who is in the picture. Most of the other political endorsements have a low quality feel to their posts as well. Clinton and Trump supporters are already seeing a plethora of posts per day from each of these candidates. Endorsement posts only add to the number; but when they look cheap, the results indicate endorsements are not appreciated on social media. The balance between providing quality information and being considered spam is a fine line. If the endorsement content is hastily created and posted, then interrupts the normal flow of posting intervals - while one side of the potential viewers will not appreciate the content anyway - it should not be a surprise that users become underwhelmed by the content leading to an undesirable result.

6. **Induce Desired Result**

In the current political climate, the esteem of being a Washington outsider is of high demand. Being able to distinguish ones’ self from the other politicians is at a premium. Trump and Clinton are two polar opposites in political viewpoints as well as the way they handle their campaigns. Clinton has tried to highlight her progressive views and work over the past two decades, attempting to break the glass ceiling; to present herself as an outsider, the viscosity of her campaign tells a different tale. The social media world places high values on open and honest communication. Clinton’s social media campaign looks and acts professional. Every detail of her page is filled out and the quality of her production is ranked among the best. Her profile pictures and cover photos seemingly changing daily, showing her level of interest appears high.

On Donald Trump’s Facebook, the posts resemble an everyday user’s Timeline. Posts are put together, seemingly, on the fly. A simple status update to high quality videos sit next to one
another. Trump has benefited from being a Washington outsider in the present political climate, 
and embraces the friendliness of the novelty of being outside the system. Trump’s Facebook 
page continues to show content on a page that is still influenced by the overall popularity of the 
candidate. His page does not look professionally managed; someone viewing the page for the 
first time may think Trump solely manages his page. Videos on the page look like they were 
taken from a smartphone. But, his honest and open format is what social media users demand. 
The benefit to social media is that we can bypass the third party of traditional media, which is 
exactly how Trump uses his page.

Discussion

Social media is a powerful tool aiding political campaigns. The results of the Iowa 
Caucus showed America that the tool of social media is not merely the catch tool of 
communication. The Iowa Caucus is based on interpersonal communication and social media is 
unable to replace face to face communication. What the Iowa Caucus showed is that the 
emerging power of social media is controlling the discussion, nationally and locally. Clinton and 
Trump were able to control the discussion online and continued to control the discussion going 
into Iowa through traditional media. Because of the unique Iowa Primary system, neither 
candidate did as well as expected; however, both have moved to other states and continued their 
campaign, winning the majority of the delegates as well as continuing to dominate most of the 
discussions. Social media has contributed to political polarization. Trump has shown that by 
dividing the social ideologies, the conflict creates a wide social reach and gives momentum. 
While the desired outcome was not achieved by either Clinton or Trump in Iowa, both have 
managed to continue progressing toward the general election by gaining control of the 
conversation through the implementation of strong social media campaigns. Social media is
definitely a powerful tool for political candidates, but has yet to evolve to the point of exclusivity.

Social Marketing Theory is limited by the pace of technology. While Social media is mentioned within the confines of the theory, Social media is a broad term ranging from email, Twitter, and SnapChat, etc. Because of the constant evolving nature, Social Marketing Theory is limited to a more broad perspective of the influence of behavior, especially when dealing with the rapid change of social media. Social Marketing Theory views each process as a step, while the candidates may use each step to create a campaign. The ongoing nature of social media causes some users first contact with a candidate to join mid-process. Social media does not happen in a vacuum. Social media affects the world and the world affects social media as users interact and engage in real time.

Conclusion

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump exemplified that while steps may be taken to influence audience behavior are the same, the techniques used must match the personality of the poster. Both candidates continue to run successful social media campaigns alongside their traditional campaigns. If the two candidates were to switch their posting styles, the results would not be as successful. Donald Trump is a businessman turned politician and his online persona must reflect his role. Likewise, if Hillary Clinton’s posts were mismatched, heterogeneous and unprofessional, America would question the ability of a lifelong political figure.

What separates the two, in terms of engagement, is that Trump is targeting his core demographic while facilitating post to capture the attention of people who already support him. He is sending what is perceived as a clear and precise message. Clinton uses her Facebook page
as an attempt to attract young liberals who support her rival, Bernie Sanders. By marketing to the wrong demographic, she only isolates her audience and diminishes their engagement. The most successful way to build a social media brand is to create an open and honest dialogue resulting in meaningful interactions which are targeted to a core demographic brand.
References

Anderson, A. [Aleta.] (2016, January 14) The USA citizens (The not so silent majority) are ANGRY too, watching the US slide into the crapper, while Obama does everything he can to make sure the USA is in the worst state possible. [Facebook comment]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156531060205725?comment_id=10156531068680725&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D


Breeden, J. [Josh.] (2016, January 12) Y’all are delusional... he has been by far the worst president to date. He has destroyed our health care system, depleted our military to a point that Russia is now the one who is calling the shots. The worst is [Facebook comment]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/photos/a.889773484412515.1073741828.889307941125736/1050592708330591/?type=3&comment_id=1050648571658338&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R9%22%7D
Clemmitt, M. (2012, October 12) Social Media and Politics: Do Facebook and Twitter influence voters? CQ Researcher, 22-36


Clinton, H. [Hillary]. (2016, January 12) From a stronger economy to affordable health care to commonsense gun measures, we’ve accomplished so much under President Obama’s leadership. We need to build on that progress—not go backwards. #SOTU [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/posts/1050592708330591

Clinton, H. [Hillary]. (2016, January 12) The New Hampshire primary is coming up!

Follow Hillary for New Hampshire to stay updated as Hillary (and Chelsea Clinton) visit the Granite State. [Status update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/posts/1050496121673583


Clinton, H. [Hillary]. (2016, January 24) When it comes to reproductive rights, there’s more on the line than ever before. That’s why it’s so important to elect a candidate who has
always fought for women—and always will [Status update]. Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/posts/1051056058284256

Clinton, H. [Hillary]. (2016, February 1) [Facebook profile picture]. Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/photos/a.891727570883773.1073741830.88930
7941125736/1063850090338186/?type=3&theater

Clinton, H. [Hillary]. (2016, February 1) Today’s the day! Ready to stand with Hillary? Say
#ImWithHer now: http://hrc.io/1NLKRHG [Facebook profile picture]. Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/photos/a.891727570883773.1073741830.88930
7941125736/1063850090338186/?type=3&theater

Diamond, J. (2016, January 24). Donald Trump could 'shoot somebody and not lose voters'
shoot-somebody-support/

Retrieved March 1, 2016, from http://www.wpr.org/trump-debate-boycott-could-be-
good-move-says-analyst

Facebook for Politics: Ads & Marketing Solutions. (n.d.). Retrieved February 29, 2016, from
https://www.facebook.com/business/a/politics-industry/

Retrieved February 1, 2016, from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-04-
06/news/48908479_1_social-media-mainstream-media-indian-democracy


Maxey, T. [Tommy]. (2016, January 14). Our military is fine, in fact, just got a raise.. our health care system is now just fine, more people have insurance, our foreign relations are better than ever, we are not at war with anyone, and we are not [Facebook comment]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156531060205725?comment_id=964903516903124&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22%3A%22R9%22%7D


Trump, D. [Donald]. (2016, January 2) Remember, I am self-funding my campaign, the only one in either party. I'm not controlled by lobbyists or special interests-only the U.S.A.! [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156488262015725

Trump, D. [Donald]. (2016, January 14) I’m very angry. Because our country is being run horribly. I will gladly accept the mantle of anger. Our military is a disaster. Our healthcare is a horror show. Obamacare, we’re going to repeal it and replace it. We Have [Facebook statues update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156531060205725

Trump, D. [Donald]. (2016, January 28) An unbelievable night in Iowa with our great Veterans! We raised $6,000,000.00 while the politicians talked! [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156582013730725

Trump D. [Donald]. (2016, January 1) Hillary said that guns don't keep you safe. If she really believes that she should demand that her heavily armed bodyguards quickly disarm! [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/posts/10156490246225725