Left vs right social media

Social Media has become one of the most powerful political tools in the twenty first century, that's used effectively from small scale local elections, to the largest elections in the United States, the presidential election. Both sides of the political aisle, generalized into " left and right", use social media for their own significant benefit, as an incredibly effective source for gathering supporters, volunteers and even money through fundraisers. Social media is an incredibly effective tool in politics for multiple reasons, but naturally it also has its downsides. The left and the right both use social media for their own advantage, but not necessarily in the same way, and the goal of this research is to determine who more effectively utilizes this tool.

Social media is arguably the most effective political tool of time, but before we discuss why we must figure out why social media is so effective, the cons of social media in politics and the transition from traditional marketing techniques to now. Social media is a very new form of political campaigning that has arisen in the 21st century and has become politicians best way to get a following, but before social media there where also various other marketing techniques. Before social media was tv and even before that was the radio. According to Shane Bronfield, the author of Pros and Cons of social media in politics, " Initially, politicians would physically meet with people and give speeches in front of large crowds of people. However, as new communication mediums took hold, politicians gained more power in terms of how they are able to reach people. First, it was the radio, which gave politicians who had soothing voices an edge over politicians who did not possess that quality. Then, it was the television which gave politicians who were tall, attractive, and healthy an overwhelming advantage against

opponents. Today, we have social media, which is without a doubt the most powerful communication medium to ever exist."(Bronfield, 1). Social media websites like twitter are very attractive to politicians for many reasons. According to Narelle Miragliotta, a senior lecturer in Australian politics in the department of Politics and International Relations at Monash University.

" Twitter possesses certain characteristics which enhance its attractiveness to politicians. Twitter's follower structure, link sharing, and public default setting offers political elites a direct and unmediated line of communication to the public and journalists at a negligible financial cost."(Miragliotta, 6) The interface of these social media sites are so easy to use and understand that any politician, (regardless of age) could use social media on their own or have advisors run it for them. With this easy interface and mass population of political social media users, there are many people who see their message. These politicians have amassed a huge following on social media, for example, well known conservative Ben Shapiro who very frequently uses twitter to spread political messages has a following of over 2million, additionally Donald trumps combined social media following is around 140 million. One of the biggest reasons that social media is such an effective marketing tactic is because of how many people see it. According to Rob Long, author of internet trap, " As each little insight into the day's events (what media types call a " hot take") trails through the sky like a comet, it collects " likes" and " retweets" and " shares" and " follows," and the result is that there are lots of people out there with an astonishing number of online followers—hundreds of thousands of people listening to the not-very-much-new that they have to say"(Long, 1). Not only is this source of

information very accessible, but for many Americans social media is their main source of information, according to Clara Jeffery, " Nearly 70 percent of American adults say they get the majority of their news via social media", (Jeffery, 20) and additionally according to Edward Kessler, the author of Social Media and The Movement of Ideas, " There are more than 800 million active Facebook users, of whom more than 50% log onto Facebook every day". (Kessler, 26) Now, Social media is a very effective tool as previously stated, but of course there must be some down sides. The first major problem that has arisen is fake online bots that have been used to get opposing party members removed from the site through spamming reports, but the largest problem with social media in politics in my opinion is the juvenile actions between major politicians. According to Bromfield, " Social media has caused the deterioration of political discourse. Politicians have resorted to communicating through memes and inappropriate posts on social media. In the 2016 elections, several of the candidates who were running for the highest office in the land downgraded their discourse in order to appeal to more people."(Bromfield, 1)

The generalized " liberals" use social media in a very unique yet effective way compared to their counterparts. The left has very effectively utilized social media to not only help campaign their politicians, but also use it to make the right look bad. Leftist anti fascist groups, also known as Antifa have been known to use social media to publicly shame opposing politicians. For example, the campaign staffer for a Nebraska governor was publicly shamed for anti semitic posts. According to grant Schulte, " Bressman was outed as the author of the posts by activists from " Anti-Fascist Action

Nebraska," a local chapter of the group known as " Antifa"(Schulte, 1). As previously stated another problem with social media is bots that flag spam accounts, and liberals have been known to use this strategy. According to Hayward, " An example can be found in the " flag-spamming" technique liberals have been employing to erase targeted conservatives from the social media site Twitter. Before recent changes intended to prevent this technique from working. Twitter would automatically shut down accounts flagged as spam generators by a large number of users."(Hayward, 15) While I previously considered these bots spams as a con of social media in politics, the left has used this strategy to remove opposing conservatives from social media sites, allowing only the desired information to be seen by the general public. One of the most well known tech savvy liberals, who was incredibly prominent in the political social media scene was former US president, Barrack Obama. Obama was known to be one of the best users of social media for politics ever. Many attribute his winning of the 2008 and 2012 election to him being so tech savvy. In addition to his proficiency online, he was one of the first to use analytics in social media to help him advertise. According to Ian Bogost, " It explicitly invited " students, data engineers, artists, and researchers" to contribute—just the communities likely to feel adept and engaged with the technological sphere. It reaffirmed that the Obama administration was up on the latest trends, suggesting Twitter bots, query tools, and metadata services as examples of possible submissions". (Bogost, 1)

In terms of the house and the senate, republicans have been known to dominate the field of social media. Several House Republicans are

particularly well noted for proficient use of social media, including Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Darrell Issa, Paul Ryan, and Justin Amash . they are known to have presences over many of the common social media sites, but are also known for being part of multiple social media experiments. Additionally, according to Kevin Roose, a columnist for Business Day and a writer-at-large for The New York Times Magazine, " In the week of Sept. 30, the period following Dr. Blasey's testimony when the Senate would vote to confirm Justice Kavanaugh, interactions on the Facebook pages of Republican Senate candidates shot up by 64 percent. Democratic Senate candidates saw an increase of just 30 percent."(Roose, 1) Now, the most well known tech savvy republican has to be our president, Donald trump who is known for producing an incredible twitter feed, full of surprises and is a prime example of one of my previously stated cons of social media, juvenile posts and statements. But disregarding that, trump used some of the best analytics in the game to promote himself during the 2016 election. According to Sue Halpern, " Cambridge Analytica turned this technique sideways, with messaging that exploited people's vulnerabilities and psychological proclivities. Those with authoritarian sympathies might have received messages about gun rights or Trump's desire to build a border wall. The overly anxious and insecure might have been pitched Facebook ads and emails talking about Hillary Clinton's support for sanctuary cities and how they harbor undocumented and violent immigrants"(Halpern, 16). Additionally, trump has previously stated that he probably would not have won the race had it not been for his social media presence. Conversely, the use of analytics in political campaigning is not a new idea at all. The first president to use these tactics were John F. Kennedy,

in the 1960's, who used these analytics to advertise political campaigns, over television with these micro marketing strategies.

Now, after determining why social media is so effective, the transition from old marketing techniques to new ones and comparing both conservative and liberal social media use, is time to decide who more effectively utilizes this resource. Now many may argue that the republicans are more effective as it is what many say the reason for trump winning the election was, and many predict that social media will be an essential asset for republicans in future, like Colin Delany, a digital strategy consultant and the founder and editor of Epolitics. com

who stated, " Social media will be a part of any Republican resurgence in the near future—the tools are simply too politically useful to ignore. And with the right message and the right messenger, Republicans could set social media alight if they find the proper moment."(Delany, 16) Now this may be true but in my opinion the democrats have used it more effectively, from spam botting, to analytical marketing and public shaming. In the near future it is possible that conservatives could have complete control of political social media, but as of now, they do not. According to Halpern," In 2008 and 2012, the Democrats also had more sophisticated predictive models than the Republicans did, a result of having teams of data scientists and behavioral scientists advising Barack Obama's presidential campaigns"(Halpern, 1). Liberals in the past decade have used social media more versatilely than conservatives, making them the more effective party at the moment, but in the future it is possible that conservatives could take the lead.

To summarize, social media is the most effective marketing tool to ever exist in terms of politics and this is due to how many people can see a message instantly after it was shared. The downside of the use of social media in politics is how it has led to a decline in political discourse, making the whole situation appear rather unprofessional. The liberals and conservatives both utilize this tool in many ways but overall, I have determined that liberals more effectively use this tool due to their versatility when using it.

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