

Essay on the media and political campaigns coverage

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Brief Introductory Summary

It has long been said that the media has the potential to make a candidate known as well as make a well known candidate become unpopular by giving either more media coverage or media blackout. It is interesting to see just how the media can play with people's psychology and influence their decisions to a great length. In this issue paper, the learner investigates the contribution that the media has on political campaigns. The major issue under concern in this paper is the extent of media coverage that is accorded to particular candidates. Under this topic, there will be focus on issues like the contributions that technology in media broadcast has on political campaign candidates. For example, do YouTube and High Definition Televisions play a role in boosting or destroying a political campaign candidate? This will then be followed by coverage of potential media biasness that has been recorded in the past and the level of consistency in the same. The effect of these biases on political candidates especially those vying for the post of presidency and other top seats will be discussed. The learner will introduce some personal rationale of these issues and their contribution to making or breaking a political campaign candidate.

It is inevitable that the world today is living at a time when technology is evolving at such a fast rate, such that the media as well as the politicians have to think of ways to integrate their political and personal ambitions on the same platform and rhyme to their own good. To the media houses and

giants, politics gives them the best opportunities get hype from potential advertisement customers where they earn more income from. Bernt argues that the media is more like a vehicle in which the politicians board to achieve their political ambitions “ at all costs” (473 +).

Take for example, the issue that is raised by Crupi (12, 13) on the utilization of YouTube technology in political campaigns and the use of High Definition TV on the same, there are definite winners and losers. For example, during the 2008 political campaigns, it was strongly believed that the occupant of the Oval Office in that general election would have to utilize YouTube as well as proper utilization of High Definition TV if they had to win the election (Crupi, 12). True to the media predictions, the two media technologies, backed by stronger media coverage and in-depth analysis of each clip made it possible for some candidates to succeed in their political ambitions. During the political campaigns, Sarah Palin’s image was made to appear as being tiny and flickering showing some sort of intimidation and negative publicity that eventually worked to her disadvantage (Crupi 12).

Surprisingly, Sarah Palin outdid Sen. Joe Biden on their media debate yet she had poor media coverage and was being downplayed by big media houses like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal (Crupi 12). The question that arises at this point is: was Sarah Palin as weak as demonstrated by the media given that Palin surprisingly surpassed Sen. Joe Biden in the media debate? This shows that the media was in the effort t of making Sen. Joe Biden and destroying a potentially stronger leader. Based on the leadership potential, the media made people believe that Sen. Joe Biden was the stronger politician but the debate proved the media wrong.

This negative publicity did not quite work to total disadvantage of Sarah Palin since based on that public debate; she was at a better position to show the world that despite the negative media reports, Palin was a strong woman, a force to reckon with. Just like the definition that New York Times gives to the word influence as a constant which has the potential to work brilliantly for anyone, that definition has over the ages been seen to hold (Crupi, 12, 13). It is noted that Sarah Palin had over 50, 000 YouTube clips on her life that worked to her advantage to uplift her political ambitions and at some point was seen as a real threat to other politicians (Crupi 12)

Take another example from the publicity that Sen. Barrack Obama had during the 2008 campaigns as recorded in Crupi (13) and Bernt (473, 474) and the one that was accorded to both Sen. John McCain and political guru Hillary Clinton. There was definitely a lot of biasness in the media coverage. In the comparison between Sen. Barrack Obama, currently the U. S. president, YouTube was not given as much attention as was the High Definition TV since there was much emphasis as the media houses wanted it done to each candidate (Crupi, 13).

Crupi (13) points out that despite the tear and wear that had happened on Sen. John McCain in 72 years, the HDTV depicted Sen. John McCain as a frail person, not fit to become a president on their September 26, 2008 facedown. This coupled with the Hon Lo ordeal that left enough marks all over his body even after 65 months had passed; the HDTV magnified these marks for all to see clearly the frailty that a presidential candidate should not be having (Crupi, 13).

This compared to a young and energetic, aesthetically presentable Sen.

Barrack Obama, presented in High definition was no match for Sen. McCain and Sen. McCain lost the seat all out of media coverage (Crupi, 13). While the technology worked well to the winner President Barrack Obama, it was to the disadvantage of Sen. McCain. It is all on focus: the media let the world see what they wanted the world to see and not what there was to be seen. Take on the other opinion on sexual biasness in politics. Over the years, there has been immense evidence that there have been sexual biasness when it comes to political campaigns and the coverage. Bernt makes good coverage of the events that have taken place in the political arena in the past 132 years and surprisingly, there is not a single time when there was no sexual biasness in national political campaigns (473 - 475).

Borrowing back on the 2008 political campaigns by Sen. Barrack Obama and Hillary Clinton, Sen. Barrack Obama was seen more as a novice while Hillary Clinton was seen as a veteran politician, better placed to become the next president of the United States of America, yet that did not happen (Bernt, 473). The media coverage consistently crowned the novice Sen. Barrack Obama long before the primary election in place of the well known veteran Hillary Clinton (Bernt, 473). Clinton gained lead in Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Guam and North Carolina States together with six other states, yet the media still demonstrated Barrack Obama as the most likely winning candidate (Bernt, 473, 474).

Instead of the media showing the woman as a threat to the otherwise male dominated kingdom, they discussed Clinton as a spoiler let loose to destroy Barrack Obama's votes (Bernt, 473, 474). The debate went on to a point where the media openly urged Clinton to step aside for their (the media

fraternity) preferred candidate to sail through (Bernt, 474). It is good to note here that this was happening at a time when the delegate leads of Barack Obama were continually shrinking (Bernt 474) yet the media did not want to see this or focus on the effect of change but rather preferred that they have their attention on that which they wanted to happen. This is not the only case but in the analysis, Falk as cited in Bernt (473 - 475) made a comprehensive historical research on presidential campaigns and media coverage and noted that women were generally given far less media coverage as compared to their male counterparts who were vying the same positions.

The research focuses on analysis ranging from the times of Victoria Woodhull who was vying on an Equal Rights Party candidature against James Black who was vying on a Prohibition Party candidature in the 1872 election, to Carole Moseley Braum who was competing against Bob Graham for the candidature on a Democratic nomination (Bernt 474). In all these cases in reference plus six other cases, there was a clear evidence of media biasness in campaign coverage.

For example, in the case of Barack Obama, there was noted a whopping fifty nine times' mention of the name Obama on the top headlines in the leading newspapers while only thirty six times was the name Clinton mentioned showing biasness (Bernt 474), for which even these times much was negative publicity against Clinton.

There is a consistent marginalization of the women candidates by the media fraternity while in-depth coverage of the male candidates (Bernt 474).

Benefactors of Media coverage

Out of these biased media coverage, the male candidates continuously receive far much more attention, with more stories discussing them and their achievements and their winning strategies and their effectiveness (Bernt 474). The stories that are published about men are usually longer as compared to those published for their female challengers. Here, the male candidates become the benefactors of media coverage while at the same time the media benefits since there is a likelihood of companies and individuals to make adverts at such times when such stories are running at a premium. This earns the media companies more income through those advertisements. Additionally, when these stories are running, it is expected that the candidates will have more than one slot for advertisements of their campaign slogans and next visits and thus the media houses reap from the candidates too. Since the less preferred candidate would also want media coverage, they are also expected to place advertisements during these same times and thus the media houses continues to gain on that too.

It is not a surprise that the male candidates continuously receive a lot of issue-oriented stories being covered about them and their campaigns (Bernt 474). From the research, Bernt (474) notes that ht male candidates were three times more likely to be termed and shown as the “ most viable” candidates than their women counterparts. This was in spite of the male and the female candidates having the possibility of having similar academic and other backgrounds with the male counterparts (Bernt 474). The media houses also do disregard, to a certain extent the opinion polls that are published on the women candidates even if the women as well as their male

counterparts share similar poll results standings (Bernt 474).

When the media is making coverage on the women candidates, they have the tendency to focus more on the women's attire than on what the woman is saying or stands for in their speeches (Bernt 474). This was a habit that was three times more likely to occur to women than to the male candidates as noted in Bernt (474). This is usually coupled with focus on the physical appearance of the women unlike for the male counterparts (Bernt 474).

Interestingly, when there is a woman candidate running for the Big Office, the media will more often remember to mention the age of the female candidate in most of their coverage of the campaigns (Bernt 475). However, this is not usually the case for their male counterparts since they see that as a little absurd to keep mentioning the male candidate's age (Bernt 475). The main intention for this mention is not to remind the voters of the age of the candidate but rather to influence the voters to either view the female candidate as being too young for that office or too old for the same office or thus push their point on their preference to a male candidate.

Also among these highlighted factors is the fact that in most cases, the gender of the female candidate will be highlighted during the media coverage (Bernt 475). This however is not the case when dealing with male candidates and their gender is rarely, if ever, mentioned in the media (Bernt 475).

Bernt (475) notes that when the press is making coverage of the female candidates, they like to portray them as immensely emotional beings and made more reference to their families than they do to the male candidates. This works to the disadvantage of the female candidates since the public is

made believe that the female candidates cannot reason rationally and thus the most preferred candidate would definitely be a male candidate.

It is also noted in Bernt (475) that during the press coverage of female candidates, the media was more likely to omit the professional qualifications of a female candidate while for a male candidate they make more emphasis. This is not quite the case when considering the case where the female candidate is less qualified like in some countries. When the female is less qualified, there is more negative emphasis on the female candidate's disqualification, lest the public forgets that the female candidate is less qualified for the post in pursuit.

It is also noted that the female candidates were more likely to be quoted in length when they are making their speeches unlike their male counterparts, which can be used to their advantage since the public gets to hear more about what they stand for (Bernt 475).

Personal synthesis

Based on the issues discussed above, it is more evident that the media gives emphasis to the male candidates as the most likely candidate for the presidential positions. There are several reasons that the learner would like to point out. First, as the media makes their publications, they know that they are out to benefit from the elections despite their opinions. For one, men are more likely to invest in both financial and critique of their fellow male without being accused of sexual harassment cases coming up. This means that for a male candidate, there is more financial support and since the media house is out to make profits too, they have to capitalize in areas

where they are can make more profit in the short - and long - run.

Historically, executive leadership and presidential leadership has always been a 'men-thing' and thus the media would like it to remain that way. Changing this status will cause a certain shift in status and there might be consequences that the media houses would not like to see or experience, not as of yet, until sometime later or never if possible.

Aesthetic value is also a major contributor to their support of some candidates in preference of the other. If a candidate seems more aesthetically presentable, they would like to be associated with such a candidate as a boost on their ratings as a lead media house and thus the support for younger and well acclaimed candidates in preference over their old challengers. At some times, there is more focus on candidates that have had a clear track record since association to the media house is very important that they would also try to be seen as impartial in fight against crime and other social norms.

In some cases, the candidates make deals with the media houses, either directly or indirectly, with promises to push for or against the agendas of these media houses to the floor of the House so that the media houses can remain comfortable.

In general, the greatest benefactors are not the political candidates or the winners of the elections but rather the media houses since the public tends to believe them more when the candidates they support and highlight more wins the elections with some media houses becoming as the endorsers of the rightful presidential candidates.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the media over the years has consistently given more privileges and preference to some candidates in terms of coverage in the airtime than on others. In this issue paper, it is clear that the female candidates are less publicized by the media houses unlike their male challengers especially for the presidential elections. It is also clear that the media houses are turning to technology to try to magnify the negatives physical aspects of a candidate that they do not support in favor of the one they support with the utilization of High Definition TV. When it's all been said and done, the media houses remain the greatest benefactors in all the election campaigns.

Works Cited

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