How Various Groups Followed Media in Search of Identity in 2016

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The 2016 election was an election that was difficult to comprehend because new electoral variables were factors in 2016. Choices in news media in 2016 were substantially greater than in 2012. Various electronic media now reached out almost specifically to various demographic groups in the electorate. Selecting one media in preference to another was a high intensity choice in 2016. Media choices had cognitive dissonance significance with implications for eventual voting decisions. Pundits and pollsters alike had difficulty accepting that the choice of media would eventually be almost determinant of how the vote would be cast. Media was linked to social networks, and social networks were incalculably important reference groups in voting choice.

The opportunity that the 2016 election allowed people was scarcely missed by the electorate. The preceding eight years had seen significant transformation in America. The millennial generation was reaching the ballot box. Growing up digital was for the first time having electoral significance. The promise of globalism had substantially been realized. There was among the voters a significant realization that change had occurred and that there was no turning back. Electronic media of substantial variety was in the hands of everyone. The choices in electronic devices that were economic reality in 2016 were great.

The ICT media environment was no longer dominated by Windows in 2016. Android was already claiming to have pushed Windows out of their dominant position as operating system (OS) leader. The change happening in OS was both symbolic and real as to sources of election information. The
preceding four years had seen a proliferation of sophisticated smart devices. The computing strength
the electorate held in their hands now rivaled the sophisticated desk tops of a short five years
preceding. Political events did not happen in the 2016 election that were not mediated by this
ubiquitous technological achievement. The amount of technological sophistication in the electorate's
hand almost could not have been imagined in 2012.

To say that electronic media was redefining elections in 2016 is likely an overstatement of the truth.
The perceptible adjustment in the election concept is authentic, however. With smart devices in
everyone's hands, the message the election sent was vastly more personal. Self-interest, always a
significant factor in elections, took on new meaning. Candidates, now, were explaining the meaning of
the contest to individuals through their personal devices. The logic of voting choice was much more
imaginable as decisions consolidated self-interest personal gains.

The popularity of the outgoing president was a factor. Voters perceived social issue gains that were to
be theirs whoever the successor president was to be. The various choices in media offered voters
tremendous possibilities for effectively keeping their personal development together through the
election cycle and into the new administration. How one chose media in 2016 was about gainful
possibilities. Voters in 2016 literally had the opportunity to themselves redefine election media so as to
make the political process benefit them directly.

The analysis in this paper presents the 2016 election using social science methodology to improve a
few concepts that are deemed important in comprehending 2016. The paper uses some mixed methods
perspectives. Quantitative data from other sources including the Pew election studies is included.
Qualitative techniques are, also, included that intended to follow how media choices reasoned in the
2016 election. The conclusions this analysis develops are about how media and elections are different with voters defining their issues and identities with their media choices.

The Rise of Social Networking and Identity Politics

Social networking defined the change from web 1.0 to web 2.0. In a few years the social-media phenomenon had taken over. Social media had a more powerful reach into personality then anything proceeding. As with other computer phenomena, the number of people who interested in social media was astoundingly large.

Social media was a natural for politics because politicians quickly learned the power from this innovation. Campaign relevant information could be distributed through social media. Those who accessed social media then contributed a second level of influence as they discussed campaign happenings. The skillful politician could manipulate social media and create a momentum effect difficult for rivals to defeat.

Figure One presents the "new news cycle." Campaign news happens from conventional sources and finds its way into an interactive process with news consumers. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many other social networks combined to create a tremendous amount of interactive reasoning. The effect presented in Figure One created the momentum that gives effective politicians significant advantage.
A second Factor that was unstoppable in building social media importance to politics was the free
media generated for politicians by this phenomena. The more social media there was, the greater
economic gain for a candidate happened. As social media proliferated, the economic gains for
candidates similarly increased geometrically. The economic significance of free media was so great the
connection between politics and social media became firmly established.

**Media Choice in Quantitative and Qualitative Data**

In many ways the analysis of media and identity politics in the 2016 campaign is best explained as
about methodological issues. Identifying data to research media and identity locates an excellent
amount of what could be called exemplary data. Both the qualitative and quantitative data available for
this research subject are useful and plentiful.

For qualitative data I chose various image graphics about social media and the 2016 campaign. There
are examples of these graphics in Table Two. Choosing graphics to include in this simple is an excellent example of theoretical sampling. There is an abundance a secondary quantitative data useful in discussing media and identity.

**Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data found in Table Two creates a narrative about the 2016 election and media. Collections of images have substantial ability to create a story like explanation about a phenomenon. The narrative these images create allows interpretivism to reach some conclusions useful in adding to knowledge about the phenomenon.

The gains realized from qualitative methods are often thought of in terms of sharpening concepts. The qualitative data this study identified is excellent for that purpose. Another advantage of this data is that ideas the researcher had not previously thought of are clearly present in the theoretical sample.

Undeniably, this qualitative data does move the researcher’s ideas in new directions. Problems with the researcher simply following his own preconceived ideas are greatly lessened by this qualitative data.
Table Two
Images Creating a Narrative about Media and Identity
Qualitative data such as found in Figure Two allows constant comparative analysis. Those methodologists who claimed that qualitative methods is about discovering faint patterns in data would like Table Two. Following narrative emerging from this qualitative data about media choices and identity in 2016 can be done many times. Possibilities for better understanding the phenomena being studied from this qualitative data are excellent.

**Quantitative Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image 1</th>
<th>Image 2</th>
<th>Image 3</th>
<th>Image 4</th>
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<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image 2" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image 3" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image 4" /></td>
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Quantitative data about identity formation and media choice is plentiful. Secondary data is often included in mixed methods analysis of a phenomenon. ICT always appears to produce large amounts of data, and the election of 2016 has produced an abundance of data. This secondary data of provides an excellent opportunity to contrast the usefulness of qualitative and quantitative data.

The methodological reasons in this paper are substantially influence by this contrast between quantitative and qualitative data. There are many exact findings about media choice and the 2016 election supported by the quantitative data. The qualitative data is substantially more perceptive about what is really happening politically in media choice in 2016.

The secondary quantitative data presented in Figures Three through Eighteen is exemplary of the extensive quantitative data about the phenomenon being studied produced in 2016. This data is, of course, significant because of the importance of data itself. The confidence one has in the eventual conclusions of this analysis are much stronger as a result of this quantitative data.

Validity issues in social science research may be improved by mixed methods research using qualitative and quantitative data together. While this idea is widely discussed, there are those who still uphold The unusual strengths of qualitative methods and deplore affecting the mechanisms that make qualitative techniques successful. The quantitative and qualitative data useful in discussing media choice and identity in 2016 allow reasoning with the relative value of the two types of data. The examples of quantitative and qualitative data found in Figures Three through Figure Eighteen are included for this reason.

Figure Three
2016 Presidential Election Media Choice by Age
Figure Three presents the Pew Research Center's exploration of one of the main issues of this analysis. Specifically, Figure Three explains difference in media preference in 2016 for different age groups. The important conclusion from this data is that over one-third of the 19-29 age group chose social media as their source of news about presidential elections.

Figure Four
2016 Candidates Involvement with Social Media
Figure Four contrasts the success of the various 2016 candidates in attracting Twitter followers and Facebook Friends. Not surprisingly, the two candidates who competed in the general election did better than those who lost in the primaries. The eventual winner in 2016 did better than his opponent with both Twitter and Facebook.

Figure Five compares the various brands of social media in use in the 2016 election campaign. The
leading three social media are found to be Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While the most popular social media, Facebook, has 25% of the population following, eleventh reported in this data, Kik, has only a 1% following. There are many social media that reach an even more selective audience than Kik.

**Figure Six**

*How 2016 Candidates Followers Increased as the Campaign Progressed*

Source: Demographics Pro

Figure Six examines how candidates gained Twitter followers as the campaign progressed. The candidate who eventually won had the advantage pre-campaign, early campaign, and mid-campaign. Trump's advantage in social media in all phases of the campaign is indicative of the importance of social media in 2016.

**Figure Seven**

*Who Leading Candidates Retweeted in 2016*
Figure Seven presents the Twitter retweeting habits of three leading candidates. Trump retreated to the general public in 78% of his retweets. Clinton reacted to her campaign account, predominately. Sanders retweeted to the news media. Figure Seven presents how each of the three analyzed candidates had a distinctive retweeting strategy.

Figure Eight presents the Twitter hashtags for leading candidates and looks at how frequently they were used with daily averages. From this data Sanders had the greatest success with participatory democracy than other candidates. More Sanders supporters sought to get involved with campaign. Trump ranked
third behind Sanders and Cruz in getting followers to actively involve themselves with Twitter.

Figure Nine
Demographic Map Presenting Who is Following Trump on Twitter through the Campaign

Source: Demographics Pro

Figure Nine is a thorough analysis of Trump's success with Twitter followers, Twitter hashtags, and Instagram follower. The data presented follows three phases of the campaign. Group analysis deemed important includes age groups, family status, ethnicity, and personal income.
Figure Ten
Demographic Map Presenting Who is Following Clinton on Twitter through the Campaign

Source: Demographics Pro

Figure Ten presents Clinton's success with Twitter Followers, Twitter Hashtags, and Instagram followers. The same demographic and time in the campaign categories found in the preceding Figure are found in Figure Eleven. Issues related to how a female candidate fared in group politics can be followed from this table.

Figure Eleven
Demographic Map Presenting Who is Following Candidates on Twitter
Figure Eleven is devoted to Twitter followers. This Figure breaks down the Twitter Follower percentages by demographic groups. Trump is presented as having more followers as in preceding figures, but now the groups who were most supportive can be followed.
Figure Twelve
Demographic Map Presenting Who is Following Candidates on Instagram

Source: Demographics Pro

Figure Twelve is about Instagram followers. Trump is presented as having more Instagram followers.
The data in Figure Twelve explains which demographic groups had the most interest in following the
candidates on Instagram.

Figure Thirteen
Female Twitter Followers Added by Candidates as the Campaign Happens
Figure Thirteen examines female Twitter Followers of the major 2016 candidates. The data for female Twitter followers is broken down as to how followers began with the candidates at three phases of the campaign. This data is useful in better understanding how the first female candidate for president succeeded with women in 2016.

**Figure Fourteen**

**Twitter Followers with below $30K/Year Income Added by Candidates as the Campaign Happens**

Figure Fourteen analyzed Twitter followers on the basis of income. Specifically, Figure Fourteen
analyzed Twitter Followers who earned less than $30K per year. The data in this figure goes directly at the paper's concern with media choice and identity formation.

**Figure Fifteen**

*Caucasian Twitter Followers Added by Candidates as the Campaign Happens*

Source: Demographics Pro

Figure Fifteen presents various candidates success in attracting Caucasian followers on Twitter. From a demographic perspective the Caucasian group is among the most mainstream of voters. How candidates succeed with this group is undeniably important for any plan for electoral success.

**Figure Sixteen**
Twitter Followers with above $75K/Year Income Added by Candidates as the Campaign Happens

Figure Sixteen analyzes Twitter followers who have incomes that exceed $75K per year. The extensive use of Twitter throughout society can be comprehended from this data. Claims that influential Americans are involved with Twitter and the campaign can be substantiated from Figure Sixteen.

Figure Seventeen
Percent of Female Instagram Followers for the Candidates

Figure Seventeen focuses on Instagram and female followers of the major candidates. The expected
result is found in the data. More women followed Clinton on Instagram in 2016 than followed other candidates.

**Figure Eighteen**

Percent of Hispanic Instagram Followers for the Candidates

source: Demographics Pro

Figure Eighteen presents Hispanic Instagram followers of the major candidates. Not surprisingly, more Hispanics followed Rubio on Instagram than followed other candidates. Several candidates did about as well with Hispanics who followed Instagram. Cruz appears from the data to have under performed in persuading Hispanics to follow his campaign on Instagram.

Each of the Figures Three through Eighteen present data that is informative about media choices in the 2016 election. That the Trump campaign did well with social media is clearly presented in this data. Candidates appear to have attracted social media following from demographic groups similar to themselves. The importance of social media appears to have been great among both the affluent and less affluent in 2016.
Implications for Electoral Politics from 2016

The identity issues in the 2016 election campaign are issues that have great salience to voter choice. The qualitative data about how the 2016 campaign understood social media is effective in conceptualizing the identity phenomenon that happened in 2016. Undeniably, the prominence of social media in election politics has been well recognized.

The graphics about media in 2016 form a narrative that emphasizes the immediacy of social media. Between Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram a virtual reality was created in 2016. As the graphics convey this virtual reality was substantially where the campaign happened to many people. That the outcome of the election appears to have gone to the candidate that had the most reach in social media reinforces this conclusion.

The choice of media in 2016 was more substantial among more people than in proceeding elections. Being able to decide how to follow the campaign was a statement about identity. The identity people established for themselves had significant include in election outcome as turn out on election day favored Trump. The politics of the last weeks of the 2016 election followed the identity issues voters had created in their media choices. The outcome was affected by Clinton's difficulty in following voter identity issues with the same dedication as Trump.

The narrative from 2016 images of social media is convincing that the personalism and intensity of interest is social media will only increase. The increasing presence of smart devices is only going to increase and the acceptability of the virtual election reality to similarly gain in importance. Politics in 2016 accepted that the campaign was occurring in virtual reality to a greater extent than people had at one time believed would ever happen. This acceptance of virtual reality is a phenomenon likely to
substantially shape future presidential campaigns.

A second implication of 2016 is that the cost of electronic advertising is undeniably on the increase. Recognizing the importance of the new virtual reality in identity politics acknowledges a power force in American politics. Political advertising cannot be expected to ignore this reality. Figure Nineteen presents the cost of electronic advertising including projections through 2020. The analysis in Figure Nineteen presents that a substantial increase in electronic advertising will occur.

The effect of this increasing commercialization of virtual campaign reality will have some affect. If you accept the conclusions this paper has drawn from the narrative about social media in 2016, anticipating that advertising will change virtual campaign reality is probably wrong. 2016 established virtual campaign reality. Voters have personally participated in the campaign following their own explanations for their identity into choice of campaign media. The personally expressive nature of these media choices has become an identity issue. Advertising will not transform virtual campaign reality. The ICT that supports virtual campaign reality is personally oriented and as with other ICT developments in the past ICT users tend to follow innovations that are personally to their liking. Technology reinforces the identity politics that support virtual campaign reality.
Figure Nineteen
Projected Cost of Electronic Advertising in Future Campaigns

Conclusion

The 2016 Election campaign produced much data both qualitative and quantitative. When voters' efforts at maintaining and establishing identity become reality through choice of media for campaign coverage, a virtual campaign reality is created. Reinforced by the authentic personalism of identity politics, the virtual campaign reality becomes a powerful influence. Candidates who have more ability with the virtual campaign reality appear to win.

Methodologically, the amount of data allows some meaningful comparisons between the ability of qualitative and quantitative data. Narrative derived from images of social media in 2016 are valuable data for analyzing the transformation in virtual campaign reality that is occurring. Concepts to discuss this phenomenon are more reasonable as a result of the narrative data that is available about 2016. Quantitative data makes some useful observations possible. For example the campaign information choice of one-third of the 19 to 29 age group is known to be social media from quantitative data. The
mixed methods strengths of qualitative and quantitative data in analyzing identity politics and media in 2016 is excellent.

The acceptance of virtual campaign reality is probably the most important artifact of the 2016 election. More political reality happened out of virtual campaign reality in 2016 than people had imagined possible. Both types of data analyzed in this paper support that acceptance of virtual campaign reality is transforming American elections. Because of the connection between winning politics and social media being again established, future politics almost inevitably will follow an increased respect for social media. Reinforced by identity politics choices in media, virtual campaign reality has proven to have a more personal and complex influence than had been reasoned before 2016.
Bibliography


