

MEDIA USE IN THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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BY

KARA MILLIKEN

DR. DANIEL REAGAN - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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The evolution of media use by presidential candidates has come a long way from its inception years ago. What began as the use of newspapers or flyers eventually expanded into radio and then television. Recently, with the rapid growth of the internet, social media may be emerging as a part of campaigns that is just as important as the more traditional forms of media that have been utilized in the past.

The use of online campaigning has grown rapidly. This growth will probably continue and will eventually lead to the use of the internet becoming the most important element of campaigning. In order to trace this trend toward online campaigning and to compare it with campaigning by using traditional media forms, in this study I follow four of the candidates that are running in the 2012 presidential election: Michele Bachman, Ron Paul, Mitt Romney, and President Obama. I track the candidates' use of various social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube and look at how they are utilizing each of those sites. In addition, I observe the candidates use of the traditional media forms. Newspapers are still an important forum for candidates and endorsements of major papers are coveted. However, the main form of traditional media that I will be looking at is television, because it is the most used and the most publicized method of campaigning. Candidates make numerous appearances on news and talk shows. The different uses of campaign commercials have been the subject of political debates for years.

When comparing the different forms of media that candidates use, I look at what the target audience appears to be for the different venues. I believe that we will see that the target audience will be quite different, depending on which type of media that a candidate is using. One of the main advantages that has occurred through use of new media forms has been its effect on fundraising. I look at how online campaigning has changed the way that candidates are able to conduct fundraising initiatives and how this has encouraged more people to get involved in this way. There are also different objectives that are able to be reached through the different types of media. I examine those objectives and explore how the specific candidates that I study are trying to achieve those objectives.

The emergence of new types of media has greatly changed how political candidates must conduct their campaigns. I believe that President Obama has very adeptly navigated the plethora of media avenues available, and that was very beneficial to him during his successful run for president in 2008. The candidate that accomplishes that feat during the current election will have a clear advantage in gaining his parties' nomination and in his or her ultimate quest for the presidency.

Newspapers have been endorsing candidates for president for more than a century. They have been one of the most traditional forms of media that candidates have used, because they have been around for such a great length of time. While other types of media have arisen and have taken some of the spotlight away from newspapers, they have remained important to campaigns. Every candidate always

prefers to be the one receiving the endorsements from a newspaper. While they may not carry the same weight that they used to, the major newspapers are still read, and what they say is taken into account by powerful people and decision makers. One of the most influential newspapers for more than a century has been the *New York Times*. Anyone can go back and read their endorsements of various presidential candidates, starting with Abraham Lincoln in 1860.<sup>1</sup> The candidates that they have endorsed have gone on to win the election twenty-three times in thirty-eight elections.<sup>2</sup> In a study conducted by Brown University economics students, they found that newspaper endorsements can be influential to voters.<sup>3</sup> However, the amount of influence that voters place on these endorsements has to do with the amount of credibility that the voters assign to the newspaper's political views and whether or not they perceive those views to be overly biased or not. An endorsement would hold greater credibility with voters and would be more beneficial to a candidate if that endorsement was out of the norm for that particular newspaper. For instance, if a paper that typically endorses a Democratic candidate endorses the Republican in the race, voters would tend to place more credibility on that endorsement, and it would have more influence on their decision.<sup>4</sup> However, in order for the endorsements from a newspaper to matter, voters

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, "New York Times Endorsements Through the Ages," November 1, 2010 (Accessed September 25, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Chun-Fang Chiang and Brian Knight, "Media Bias and Influence: Evidence from Newspaper Endorsements," *The Review of Economic Studies* Volume 78, Issue 3 pp. 795-820, September 1, 2010 <http://restud.oxfordjournals.org/content/78/3/795.full>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

must pay attention to the newspapers, and it is no secret that the number of people who regularly read newspapers is declining.

Other studies that have been conducted on the persuasiveness of newspaper endorsements have found that much of the time, voters are unaware of which candidate a newspaper has endorsed.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the only way that people are aware of a certain endorsement from a newspaper is when one of the candidates goes to great lengths to publicize it. Nonetheless, most newspapers have kept up the practice of endorsing candidates, if only to generate conversations and debates about the candidates and the issues involved in the election.

Not all newspapers believe that they ought to make political endorsements. The *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* do not endorse candidates.<sup>6</sup> Both of these papers say that one reason for their decision was that they find values or specific policies more important than one candidate over another. Both papers also believe that when a newspaper makes such an endorsement, they are automatically creating suspicion in their readers. Depending on which candidate they endorse, their readers may start to think that all of their coverage is biased toward one side or another.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, candidate endorsements are not the only way that newspapers are involved in presidential campaigns. They also write numerous stories about the

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<sup>5</sup> Tim Porter, "What's the Point?," *American Journalism Review*, October/November 2004, <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=3750>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

candidates and their policies. However, the amount of influence that these stories have on voters is much less than it used to be. Obviously, when newspapers were the main source of information for people, they had more influence with voters. Now, that influence has declined as newer forms of media have continued to develop. Because of television and the emergence of social media on the internet, the audience for newspapers continues to lessen. Interestingly, stories about the candidates and their policies that have been written in newspapers have gotten some added publicity and notoriety, thanks to the candidates' websites. Republican candidates, Romney, Bachmann, and Paul, have a section on their websites that is dedicated to positive news stories that have been written about them and their ideas. Thus, newspapers, whether major or minor, can gain some more exposure through this avenue. Supporters of a candidate may read the newspaper stories while on his website. However, in all reality, it is not very likely that the reader would be any more interested in the newspaper, than he was previously.

The fact remains that the newspaper, as a form of media in presidential elections, continues to decline. This is based on the emergence of new media and the continued decline of newspaper readers. Newspaper circulation is at its lowest point in decades, with most of them losing readers.<sup>8</sup> It is more convenient for readers to get their news online, so that is what many people are moving toward.<sup>9</sup> In turn, that cuts

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<sup>8</sup> Frank Ahrens, "The accelerating decline of newspapers" *Washington Post*, October 27, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/26/AR2009102603272.html>

<sup>9</sup> Leon Lazaroff, "Newspaper Weekday Circulation Falls 3.6%, ABC Reports (Update2)," *Bloomberg*, April 28, 2008, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aFNWbYB1E.iw>

down on subscriptions for newspapers. In reality, if people are not reading newspapers than how can they be considered an influential form of media in presidential elections today? There was a time when the news industry consisted basically of newspapers, and they ran the show and controlled the information. Candidates had to rely on newspapers to spread the word about their beliefs and ideas. That has obviously not been the case for decades now. As information becomes more readily accessible on the internet, in all likelihood, the newspaper audience will continue to decrease. The power has shifted to faster, more convenient and up-to-date forms of media, which we will turn our attention to now.

The invention of television greatly changed the way that politics as a whole has been conducted, and it has had a profound impact on the race to win our nations' highest office, the presidency. Unlike newspapers, television is still an enormously important aspect for candidates running for public office, despite the recent rise of new media forms, which have taken some of the power away from the television industry. The effective use of television media still seems to be absolutely critical to the success of a presidential run. The candidates that are currently running recognize this fact and are trying to gain an advantage over the other candidates by maximizing their opportunities for television time.

Of course, there are different ways that candidates can use the television media. The use of television has its own ways of managing to influence the race, whether the candidates like it or not. One of the ways that candidates get their message out to

possible voters is through appearances and interviews on various television shows. The current candidates for president have been busy doing just that.

I studied videos of the candidates from various websites, mainly YouTube and the candidate's own campaign websites. While going through many of these videos, I noticed some interesting trends about each of the candidates. All of the candidates have made appearances on various talk or news programs, but their styles are definitely different from one another. I think that this might have something to do with each candidate's strategy and with his target audience. Ron Paul is a particularly interesting candidate to study when looking at the use of television media during his campaign for the presidency. While looking at interviews that he has given, I was struck by his frankness and his willingness to delve into specifics. He does that a lot more than the other candidates do. The lack of actually answering questions during an interview has been something that interviewers have complained about politicians for years. Specifically, during this campaign, that has been a complaint about Michelle Bachmann.<sup>10</sup> So, one would think that since Paul is better known for being willing to answer their questions and unabashedly spell out his beliefs, the media would be flocking to interview him and to cover what he is doing in the race. However, it is interesting to note that Paul receives less news coverage than most of the other candidates in the race. Even those that have never really been a major factor in the race have seemed to get more airtime and coverage than Paul, who has consistently been a

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<sup>10</sup> Bob Scheifert, *Face The Nation CBS News*, Interview  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etZWhJGAI34&feature=related>

viable candidate.<sup>11</sup> Paul has had to face the challenge of trying to get out his message through a television news media that does not appear to want to cover him or his policies. He has made appearances on several different cable news shows. However, those shows are not the top news programs on cable. Nonetheless, when watching these interviews, there were several key points that I noticed about him. One of those was that he makes sure to mention his strong support from young people. The energy of his young supporters brings a great deal to his campaign, and it is clear that even though he is in his seventies, many young people are inspired to fight for him.<sup>12</sup> Another thing that I noticed was that Paul gets into more specifics than the other candidates typically do. This is interesting because of the fact that his views are considered a bit radical by some and that he risks alienating potential voters, who might be turned off by exactly what he plans to do.<sup>13</sup> One might think that his more radical views, such as legalization of drugs, would make good stories and that the news media would jump to cover him as a candidate. However, that does not seem to be the case. Also, while Paul is not the frontrunner in the presidential campaign, he is ahead of Bachmann in most polls, and she gets a lot more coverage than he does.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matt Chereotype, "Jon Stewart: Why Is the Media Ignoring Ron Paul?," Gawker, August 15, 2011, <http://gawker.com/5831167/jon-stewart-why-is-the-media-ignoring-ron-paul>

<sup>12</sup> Robert Smith, "Ron Paul: Why The Young Flock To An Old Idealist," *NPR*, May 16, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/16/135990053/ron-paul-why-the-young-flock-to-an-old-idealist>

<sup>13</sup> Abby Rapoport, "How Ron Paul Sparked a Movement-Only to Lose His District," *The New Republic*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/95226/ron-paul-gop-republican-primaries-libertarian-texas>

<sup>14</sup> *Real Clear Politics*, "2012 Republican Presidential Nomination," [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/republican\\_presidential\\_nomination-1452.html#polls](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/republican_presidential_nomination-1452.html#polls)

One reason that Paul may have more trouble getting coverage from the television news media is that he does not have a lot of friends in the Republican Party. Paul has not made a big effort to endear himself to the party leaders, and he has never shied away from criticizing other party members and their stances on issues.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it should not be too surprising if Paul does not get a lot of help or support from the party during his campaign. The lack of support among influential Republican leaders could be one of the reasons that he is not getting much media attention. In effect, Paul seems to be more like a third party candidate, and we all know that third party candidates do not win presidential races in the United States. Major party backing is very important in a campaign, because the party organization can do so much for a candidate through the vast resources that they possess. While Paul has not received the amount of television media coverage that other candidates have, he has managed to remain in the race, while others have been forced to drop out. Later in this paper, I will discuss how I think that social media has played a huge part in Paul's success.

Michelle Bachmann and Mitt Romney have definitely received more television media coverage than Paul has. Bachmann benefitted from her win in the Iowa straw poll, which generated a lot of coverage for her, even though in most polls, she trails behind Romney and the more recent entry Governor Rick Perry. Bachmann has made appearances on the mainstream news shows such as "Meet the Press" and "Face the

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<sup>15</sup> Abby Rapoport, "How Ron Paul Sparked a Movement-Only to Lose His District," *The New Republic*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/95226/ron-paul-gop-republican-primaries-libertarian-texas>

Nation,” as well as popular cable shows such as “The O’Reilly Factor.” She has faced some tough criticism from her interviews on these shows, because she seemed to sidestep some questions.<sup>16</sup> Her appearances on many of these shows have not been as successful as her campaign managers would probably have liked them to be. We can see from her experiences that gaining access to or attention from the media is a good thing for candidates, but once they have those opportunities, it is important for them to make a good impression on potential voters. It does not seem that this has happened with Bachmann. She received increased media attention after the Iowa straw poll, but since then, her poll numbers have been less than positive. That decrease could be seen as an indicator of her performance in the media or as increased scrutiny from the media.<sup>17</sup> How candidates use the media and the kinds of impressions that they generate there will probably have a great influence on voters. When watching Bachmann’s appearances on numerous television news shows, the criticisms that she doesn't really answer a lot of questions rang true. Compared to Paul’s interviews, she offered a lot less in the way of specific ideas. Lately, when following the television news, it appears that the flux of attention that Bachmann received following the win in Iowa has begun to wane. Her recent polling numbers have been unimpressive, and she recently came in last in the

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<sup>16</sup> *Meet the Press*, “Meet the Press transcript for August 14, 2011,” [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44136028/ns/meet\\_the\\_press-transcripts/t/meet-press-transcript-august/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44136028/ns/meet_the_press-transcripts/t/meet-press-transcript-august/)

<sup>17</sup> Real Clear Politics, “2012 Republican Presidential Nomination,” [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/republican\\_presidential\\_nomination-1452.html#polls](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/us/republican_presidential_nomination-1452.html#polls)

Florida straw poll.<sup>18</sup> Once Rick Perry entered the race and started garnering a lot of media attention, Bachmann was overshadowed by him, and it appears that the trend may continue. Bachman has managed to get some attention for her attacks on Governor Perry during recent debates, but that attention only lasts so long.

Mitt Romney is an interesting candidate to pay attention to, because he is in a different position from the others that we have talked about. After all, Romney ran for the Republican nomination in 2008. He was considered a frontrunner at times during that campaign, and he was the last remaining challenger, before eventually losing out to John McCain. Thus, he is already somewhat familiar to voters. He was also immediately seen as a viable candidate by the media, which makes them more likely to devote more coverage to his campaign. When Romney entered the presidential race, he had already overcome the struggle that some candidates have of getting the media to pay attention to them and to allow them to communicate their messages. However, Romney has been facing the same issue that Bachman has dealt with lately. He has lost some of his media time, since Perry burst onto the scene. It has been pointed out by some that this loss of media coverage may not be as damaging to Romney because of the fact that he ran as one of the frontrunners in 2008, so he is already familiar to many voters. The media may not feel the need to introduce him to the American public, since they already scrutinized

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<sup>18</sup> Kevin Diaz, "Cain is first in Florida; Bachmann last," *Star Tribune*, September 24, 2011, <http://www.startribune.com/politics/national/130505468.html>

him during the previous election. For now, the media seems to be focusing more intently on the other candidates.<sup>19</sup>

Romney's experience as a previous presidential candidate has also probably helped him with his media dealings during this current campaign. He is familiar with the television media, and he seems to know how to handle them. In watching him in television interviews, he appears to be extremely comfortable, while others have wavered.<sup>20</sup> Media management is a crucial part of running a campaign, because the candidate's team needs to be able to control their message as much as they can. Their goal is to circulate the candidates' message and positive stories about that candidate. They want the media to focus on the strengths of their candidate and the weaknesses of his opponents. Recent research has shown that Romney's campaign managers have been effective in their management of the media and in their communication of their message and their problems with opponents.<sup>21</sup> One could argue that they may have learned some lessons from losing to John McCain and that the knowledge they gained has propelled their media campaign ahead this time around. According to that same study, Romney's poll numbers have also been improving, which some attribute to his superior media campaign management, as opposed to Perry, who has been stumbling,

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<sup>19</sup>Danielle Kurtzleben, "Bachmann, Romney Losing Media Battle to Perry," *US News*, September 2011, [http://www.usnews.com/mobile/articles\\_mobile/bachmann-romney-losin-media-battle-to-perry](http://www.usnews.com/mobile/articles_mobile/bachmann-romney-losin-media-battle-to-perry)

<sup>20</sup>Beth Reinhard, "GOP's September Face-offs: Advantage Romney," *National Journal*, September 23, 2011, <http://nationaljournal.com/politics/gop-s-september-face-offs-advantage-romney-20110923>

<sup>21</sup>*PR Newswire*, October 4, 2011, "Romney's Increasingly Effective Media Message Management Coincides With Campaign Moving Closer to Perry in GOP Polls, New Report Shows," <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/romneys-increasingly-effective-media-message-management-coincides-with-campaign-moving-closer-to-perry-in-gop-polls-new-report-shows-131101813.html>

after a very strong start.<sup>22</sup> Others have noticed some differences in Romney's campaign strategy from his previous run for the presidency. Things have been different since the beginning, when he officially declared himself a candidate. A *Washington Post* article pointed out some differences that do suggest that Romney has learned from what people said and thought about him during the previous election. It does seem like he has been trying to avoid those same opinions this time around.<sup>23</sup>

Another benefit from Romney's previous run is that it led the media to consider him as a viable candidate for the current election, even before he was officially in the race. Because of his familiarity, the media began talking about him early on, which meant voters were focusing on him and getting the most information about him, especially compared to the other candidates.<sup>24</sup>

The Pew Research Center conducted a poll about the public's familiarity with the candidates or possible candidates, and the results were very good for the Romney campaign. He was not only considered one of the most familiar candidates to the public, but he also received pretty decent numbers when respondents were asked who they were likely to vote for.<sup>25</sup> However, it should be noted that this poll was conducted before Perry entered the race or was even on the radar. A more recent survey done by

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Philip Rucker, "Mitt Romney announces 2012 presidential bid," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mitt-romney-announces-2012-presidential-bid/2011/06/02/AG05iJHH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mitt-romney-announces-2012-presidential-bid/2011/06/02/AG05iJHH_story.html)

<sup>24</sup> Burgess Everett, "Poll: Palin, Romney secure media buzz," *POLITICO*, June 8, 2011, [http://www.politico.com/blogs/onmedia/0611/Poll\\_Palin\\_Romney\\_secure\\_media\\_buzz.html](http://www.politico.com/blogs/onmedia/0611/Poll_Palin_Romney_secure_media_buzz.html)

<sup>25</sup> Steven Shepard, "Pew Poll: Majority Of Voters Already Familiar With Romney," *National Journal*, June 3, 2011, <http://hotlineoncall.nationaljournal.com/archives/2011/06/pew-poll-majori.php>

Gallup revealed that Perry has edged out Romney in the favorability rating. However, Romney has made substantial gains in this area during the past few weeks.<sup>26</sup> Romney is still better known than Perry is. In fact, Romney is the most well-known of any of the Republican candidates that have declared themselves to be in the race.<sup>27</sup> This familiarity on the part of the voters and his experience in running a campaign are key points that may spur Romney on to the Republican nomination.

There is no lack of media coverage when it comes to President Obama. He does not face the problem that some candidates have had of trying to get the media to pay attention to them. As the incumbent President, Obama doesn't have to make a lot of appearances on news shows. He can basically host his own show by making a national address or holding a press conference. However, he has done several appearances that seemed to be aimed at specific audiences he wanted to target.<sup>28</sup> He has also begun to make some appearances on daytime television shows, but he has received criticism for doing that. Some people believe that these types of appearances demean the Office of the President.<sup>29</sup> Currently, President Obama seems to face the problem of trying to gain more positive news coverage. With his approval ratings slipping and the poor economy a major topic right now, Obama has been making all of these appearances to try and

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<sup>26</sup> Lydia Saad, "Perry Leads but Romney Gaining in GOP Favorability," *Gallup*, September 13, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149423/Perry-Leads-Romney-Gaining-GOP-Favorability.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> David Zurawik, "There he goes again: Obama in full TV campaign mode on BET, mtvU, NBC ...," *Baltimore Sun*, September 28, 2011, [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-09-28/entertainment/bal-obama-bet-mtvu-nbc-brian-williams-jobs-20110927\\_1\\_david-plouffe-mtvu-president-obama](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-09-28/entertainment/bal-obama-bet-mtvu-nbc-brian-williams-jobs-20110927_1_david-plouffe-mtvu-president-obama)

<sup>29</sup> Robert Winnett, "Barack Obama criticised over daytime TV appearance," *The Guardian*, October 10, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/7917111/Barack-Obama-criticised-over-daytime-TV-appearance.html>

right the ship, so to say. However, he is being criticized for making too many appearances, and some say that he is being overexposed.<sup>30</sup> What Obama really needs is for some positive news to come out about the economy, in order to turn around some of his bad press. Whether it is fair or not, he will get most of the credit or blame for the economy, and right now he is suffering because of it. The public believes that the president should be able to solve the country's economic problems, so when things don't go well, the president will often be held responsible.<sup>31</sup> Because of the recent criticism, I would expect that he will cut back on those television appearances in the near future.

News shows are not the only way that candidates use television to reach potential voters and to communicate their message. Politics changed when political debates first began to be broadcast on television. When voters were able to see Kennedy and Nixon during their debates, Kennedy scored big. Many people believe that was because of appearances. Kennedy had prepared very well for the debate and had thought through every detail, whereas Nixon was not well prepared at all. Political debates continue to be an important stage for candidates, and making a good impression or being declared the so-called "winner" can give a boost to their campaign. In reality, the debates that are held during the general election are typically more important and receive more attention than those held during the primary campaign.

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<sup>30</sup> Brian Hughes, "Obama's TV blitz risks overexposure, experts say," *Washington Examiner*, July 26, 2011, <http://washingtonexaminer.com/node/1569511>

<sup>31</sup> Lee Sigelman and Kathleen Knight, "Public Opinion and Presidential Responsibility for the Economy: Understanding Personalization," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1985, pp. 167-191, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.bsu.edu/stable/pdfplus/586206.pdf>

However, since we are still in the primary phase of the campaign, we will look at the debates that have been held so far.

In every debate, the media declares winners and losers and then proceeds to talk about what went right and what went wrong for the participants. Obviously, candidates prefer to receive positive coverage following these performances. During a debate, candidates have the opportunity, in front of many viewers, to do a number of important things. These include answering questions confidently, displaying good knowledge on significant issues, and appearing presidential. It is important that potential voters are able to envision candidates as president and to feel that they conduct themselves in a presidential way. The recent Republican primary debates have drawn large numbers of viewers, which makes them even more important for candidates. The debate that was held in Florida provided strong ratings for FOX News. During the debate, Fox recorded more than six-million viewers, which is significantly more than the number of people that are usually watching Fox News during that time slot.<sup>32</sup> That was also a substantial increase from the numbers that were recorded for the Republican debates in November of 2007.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Don Surber, "Republican debates setting records," *Charleston Daily Mail*, September 24, 2011, <http://blogs.dailymail.com/donsurber/archives/42945>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

So far, there have been nine debates in this race for the 2012 presidential nomination, and Romney has been declared to be one of the winners after each one.<sup>34</sup> Some of the reasons why commentators felt that he has been a winner were that he was “steady” and “presidential” in his answers and that he avoided answering the tough questions, which can be important, if you don’t want to upset people.<sup>35</sup> The debates also provide an opportunity for candidates to attack each other’s previous records or statements and their plans, if they were to become president. The frontrunner usually becomes the target of the rest of the candidates, in an attempt for the rest of them to gain ground. That was something that Bachmann and Romney did well during the Florida debate.<sup>36</sup> In all likelihood, the constant attacks on Perry by the other candidates will end up benefiting Romney, more than they will help anyone else. Sitting in second place may be where Romney wants to be right now, in order to avoid all of the attacks from the other candidates and a lot of scrutiny from the media. In fact, that seems to have been part of his strategy since early in this race. Romney’s issue is the economy, which is where he is the strongest. Since the economy is what the American people are the most worried about, that is what he wants to focus his, as well as potential voters,’ attention on. His more liberal record on social issues is a negative in the minds of many

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<sup>34</sup> Chris Cillizza, “GOP Debate: Winners and Losers,” *Washington Post*, September 22, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/gop-debate-winners-and-losers/2011/09/22/gIQAS1xJpK\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/gop-debate-winners-and-losers/2011/09/22/gIQAS1xJpK_blog.html)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Doyle McManus, “GOP debate: The night's winner, loser, survivor and comeback,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 2011, <http://opinion.latimes.com/opinionla/2011/09/gop-debate-the-nights-winner-loser-survivor-and-comeback.html>

conservatives, so he tries to avoid talking about those issues too much.<sup>37</sup> Romney's campaign strategists think that when it comes down to the time to vote, the majority of voters will be doing so with the economy in mind. Thus, they haven't been concerned about their candidate being thought of as boring. They have also strongly resisted attempts to pull Romney into discussions about his stand on controversial social issues.<sup>38</sup> Their goal seems to be for him not to hurt himself. During this campaign, Romney has been asked many times about his loss to McCain in 2008, and he has been quick to point out that the major issue in that race was the surge in Iraq. Romney complements McCain on his ability to focus his campaign on that issue and says that he was not as strong in that area, which is why he feels that he lost. But this time, the major issue is Romney's strongest area, and he is taking a page out of McCain's book and making that his focal point.<sup>39</sup>

Bachmann came out of the gates firing in the debates and scored some big points early in the campaign. She surprised many by coming out with a very strong performance in the New Hampshire debate, where she showed that she was a real contender.<sup>40</sup> In the Iowa debate, Bachmann was not necessarily as strong or as forceful,

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<sup>37</sup> Howard Kurtz, "Mitt Romney, Boring Genius?," *The Daily Beast*, June 26, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/06/26/mitt-romney-for-president-2012-boring-campaign-may-be-genius.html>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Scott, Conroy, "What Romney Says He Learned From '08 Campaign," *CBS News*, March 25, 2010, [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544\\_162-20001146-503544.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20001146-503544.html)

<sup>40</sup> E.J. Dionne Jr "GOP debate winner: Michelle Bachmann," ., *Washington Post*, June 13, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/gop-debate-winner-michele-bachmann/2011/06/13/AGhMYwTH\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/gop-debate-winner-michele-bachmann/2011/06/13/AGhMYwTH_blog.html)

but she still managed to hold her own, which was another win for her.<sup>41</sup> Of course, following that debate, she won the Iowa straw poll several days later. However, more recently, her debate performances have fallen short, and she has appeared to be fading into the background as her campaign falters. Bachmann barely factored into the more recent Republican debates, where her pointed attacks, which had been successful for her in the previous debates, were missing.<sup>42</sup> She actually hurt herself, when she got off point by attacking Perry on the HPV vaccine. Her attacks had been very successful and were helping her campaign, until she took it a step further and suggested that the vaccine causes mental retardation, which has not been supported by research evidence.<sup>43</sup> Had she just stuck to her message that forcing young girls to have this vaccine was a horrendous government intrusion, she would probably have been in better shape. Instead, she seemed to get carried away, and once she said something that was ill thought out, it was repeated over and over. In this case, Bachmann's gaffe has now overshadowed Perry's decisions in Texas, and her poll numbers continue to fall.

During the debates, I saw much of the same ideas from Paul that I have seen in interviews that he has given. He was not afraid to answer the questions, and he continued to communicate his message.<sup>44</sup> He got a lot of applause. There is no doubt

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<sup>41</sup> Chris Cillizza, "Ames presidential debate: Winners and losers," *Washington Post*, August 11, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/ames-presidential-debate-winners-and-losers/2011/08/11/gIQAlhrw9I\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/ames-presidential-debate-winners-and-losers/2011/08/11/gIQAlhrw9I_blog.html)

<sup>42</sup> Molly Ball, "GOP debate shows Michele Bachmann's star continues to fizzle," *POLITICO*, September 23, 2011, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0911/64244.html>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> *YouTube*, June 13, 2011, "Ron Paul in 6/13/2011 Presidential Debate," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsZfSJ3V4bc>

that he has a lot of followers and that they are fervent in their support. However, Paul's views are considered to be radical by many, and he is at odds with many Republicans on some of the biggest staple issues in the Republican Party, such as social issues and the role of the military. Some candidates make a concerted effort to be somewhat vague in their views so that they do not alienate potential voters. Paul is not such a candidate, and in espousing his views so publically, he gains a lot of young followers, who like what he has to say about personal freedom. But, he also turns off a lot of strong voting blocs in the party, whose nomination he is seeking. Social conservatives may really like some of what he has been saying, but I believe that the areas mentioned earlier and his stance on those issues will keep them from really getting excited about him and getting on board with his campaign.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Paul continues to perform well in straw polls held by conservatives, including winning the Value's Voters straw poll and receiving far more support than any of the leading candidates in the race.<sup>46</sup> For the second year in a row, Paul also won the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) straw poll, which frustrated some people, who tried to focus media attention away from Paul's win and onto Romney's strong second place finish.<sup>47</sup> Apparently, social conservatives are not too inspired by the other candidates either.

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<sup>45</sup> Matt Corley, "Ron Paul's CPAC Win Highlights Raging Rift Between Libertarians And Social Conservatives," *Think Progress*, February 23, 2010, <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2010/02/23/83446/cpac-paul-rift/>

<sup>46</sup> Peter Hamby and Ashley Killough, "Ron Paul wins Values Voter straw poll," *CNN*, October 8, 2011, [http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/08/ron-paul-wins-values-voter-straw-poll/?hpt=hp\\_t1](http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/08/ron-paul-wins-values-voter-straw-poll/?hpt=hp_t1)

<sup>47</sup> Jake Gibson, "Ron Paul Wins Presidential Straw Poll at CPAC—Again," *FOX News*, February 12, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/02/12/ron-paul-wins-presidential-straw-poll-cpac/>

The debates can be a very important part of a candidate's campaign. A good performance can propel a campaign forward, at least for a little while, as we have witnessed with Bachmann. The debates have been essential for presidential candidates in the past, and campaigns must carefully plan their debate strategies, in order to effectively showcase their candidate. Having a good debate is part of an effective media effort, because not only will people watch the debates, but the media will continue to cover them for days and even weeks after they have taken place. Strategists want their candidate on the receiving end of positive coverage about how well he performed. The debate is one more example of the way that candidates can reach voters through the use of television media.

Finally, I will discuss television commercials as another media avenue that candidates use to reach and influence potential voters. These ads have been utilized for decades, and there are different ways to use them as part of an effective campaign. Even people that are not particularly interested in following the race will see some political ads while watching their favorite television shows. You never know if something that someone sees in an ad will stick with them, and whether they will remember it when it comes time to vote. There is a website called, "The Living Room Candidate" where anyone can watch political commercials from presidential elections going all the way back to the 1952 election between Eisenhower and Stevenson.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to look at some of those ads to see how they have evolved over time but also to see that

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<sup>48</sup> *The Living Room Candidate*, "Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2008," <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952>

they are still used in basically the same way. In a commercial, there are thirty seconds in which to influence a voter, so everyone usually goes about it in one of two ways. They will highlight key things that their candidate has accomplished or positive things that have been said about him or her. They will also usually use feel good images of them with their family or interacting with everyday people, in order to make them more relatable. Or, they will use a commercial to attack an opponent with scary music and a doomsday voice to strike worry or fear into potential voters about the horrible things could happen if that person were to win. Campaign commercials are not as prominent in a primary campaign as they are during the general election. These commercials do not run nationally very early in the campaign except in the early primary states. For instance, residents of Indiana have probably not seen a Bachmann commercial on television, but someone living in Iowa has probably already seen a few. In the days leading up to an election, campaigns will usually do a media blitz, which includes running a lot of political commercials, with hopes that their message will stick out on Election Day. It should be mentioned that candidates are not the only ones that run these types of commercials; numerous organizations or political action committees also run their own commercials in favor of their candidate of choice. The two political parties also pay to run ads as an attempt to help their candidate, and they also participate in the media blitz. Interestingly, the amount of money spent for commercial ads increased substantially in each of the final three weeks of the midterm election races in 2010.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> T.W. Farnam and Nathaniel Vaughn Kelso, "Campaign Finance," *Washington Post*, 2010,

When we look at the candidates that are presently running in this election, we see that they have been running campaign ads for a while, but many people probably don't realize this, because the ads are targeted ads. It doesn't make much sense for a candidate to spend a lot of money to run an ad in Indiana, when voters in Indiana will not go to the polls until late in the primary process, and most of the candidates will probably be eliminated by that time. Therefore, the candidates only run ads in the states that matter right now, and they try to use their money as wisely as possible.

One of the most important states for the candidates to work hard in from the beginning is Iowa. Bachmann was the first candidate in this presidential race to run a television ad there, and that was in July.<sup>50</sup> Her first ads emphasized her Iowa roots and family persona and talked about small businesses and fixing the economy.<sup>51</sup> Since then, Bachmann has not broadcast too many more campaign commercials. This could be due to the financial cost of producing ads. Lately, it seems like her campaign either does not have the money for campaign ads or they have decided to spend their money in other ways. The first commercials she released were well-done, professional ads. Since then, she has put together some videos that were poorly shot with bad sound quality as well. These ads may have brought her more negative reactions than positive ones, simply

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/campaign/2010/spending/index.html>

<sup>50</sup> *Iowa Caucus*, July 7, 2011, "Bachmann runs first campaign ad in Iowa,"

<http://iowacaucus.com/2011/07/07/bachmann-runs-first-campaign-ad-in-iowa/>

<sup>51</sup> Alana Horowitz, "Michele Bachmann Iowa Campaign Releases First Ad," *The Huffington Post*, July 7, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/07/michele-bachmann-iowa-campaign-ad\\_n\\_892725.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/07/michele-bachmann-iowa-campaign-ad_n_892725.html)

because people recognize the poor quality and are now speculating that her campaign must be out of money.<sup>52</sup>

Other candidates soon joined in the advertising game and began rolling out the political ads as well. Paul started running campaign ads in July in both New Hampshire and in Iowa, and he has continued to roll out professional ads since then. His first ad focused on the debt issues and talked about Paul wanting to “cut spending, balance the budget, no deals.”<sup>53</sup> Paul’s campaign has spent a lot of money keeping these ads running in the key states. He has been showing them in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Nevada, which has not been cheap. Paul’s campaign people have talked about spending six figures on a recent ad, which challenges Perry’s support of Al Gore’s presidential run when Perry was a Democrat.<sup>54</sup> During late September and early October alone, Paul’s campaign spent \$2.5 million on advertising.<sup>55</sup> Paul seems to be the third place candidate right now, partly because he seems to have staying power. If he is spending millions of dollars on campaign ads, he obviously has the funding and the intention of remaining in the race. One of the reasons for Paul’s high spending may be that he wants to prove to supporters that he has the means to remain in the race and that he wants to be looked at as a serious candidate. In fact, Paul’s fundraising has been

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<sup>52</sup> Mike Mullen, “Michelle Bachman’s five most regrettable expenses,” *City Pages*, October 4, 2011, [http://blogs.citypages.com/blotter/2011/10/michele\\_bachmann\\_campaign\\_fundraising\\_worst\\_expenses.php](http://blogs.citypages.com/blotter/2011/10/michele_bachmann_campaign_fundraising_worst_expenses.php)

<sup>53</sup> Catalina Camia, “Ron Paul warns of debt and deals in TV ad,” *USA Today*, July 14, 2011, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2011/07/ron-paul-tv-ad-presidential-campaign-1>

<sup>54</sup> Paul Steinhauser, “Ron Paul Going Back Up On Airwaves,” *CNN*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.wmtw.com/r/29266536/detail.html>

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Burns, “Ron Paul 2012 TV ad: 'Start protecting America's borders',” *Politico*, October 7, 2011, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1011/65417.html>

on the rise in the last quarter, and he said that this will allow him to continue the television ads.<sup>56</sup> One effective way for Paul's campaign to circumvent the lack of coverage that the media has given him is by creating his own media. One thing that is interesting to note about Paul's commercial campaign is that the candidates ahead of him are not rolling out the television ads like Paul is, even though they have more money to do so. I would suspect that this is because Romney and Perry both feel pretty good about where they are in the race right now. They would not want to spend money unnecessarily at this point. I think that Romney and Perry probably want to wait until the primaries and caucuses are closer. Even though they haven't won the straw polls to this point, they are still near the top in the polls. Romney and Perry are conceded to be the front runners, along with Herman Cain, who has had a recent surge in the polls. Paul, on the other hand, seems to have pretty well shored up the third place spot in the race, but he can't just keep hanging around in that spot. He needs to make a move to put himself into a better position for those early votes, because third place is not what he is seeking.

I have talked about lessons that Romney learned from his previous run for president in 2008, and campaign advertising may be another one of those areas. In the previous campaign, he outspent the other Republican candidates by millions of dollars. In fact, by November of 2007, Romney had spent over ten million on television ads. John

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<sup>56</sup> Danny Yadron, "Ron Paul Raises \$8 Million-Plus in Quarter." *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2011/10/05/ron-paul-raises-8-million-plus-in-quarter/>

McCain, the next Republican as far as spending, had only spent about \$300, 000.<sup>57</sup>

Barack Obama had spent \$3.9 million at the same point. Romney was mainly targeting the three states that held early votes, but he was also looking ahead and targeting Florida. His commercials had already run 14,500 times at that point in the race.<sup>58</sup> As we now know, the millions that Romney spent early in the race did not benefit him in the long run. He did not even win the early primaries or caucus and went on to lose the nomination to McCain.

In contrast to four years ago, Romney is saving his advertising budget and has not really begun running any political ads. I think he realized that he came on too early last time and wasted a lot of money without getting anything for it. Romney is not lacking in money, so I expect that once we get a little closer to the first votes, he will begin to roll out the commercials. In fact, he already has a number of ads made, but he has released them only on the internet. His campaign has tested these ads online for several months and will probably release the ones on television that they feel have received the most positive reactions, when it gets closer to voting day.

The Democratic candidate in the race for 2012 will obviously be President Obama. Since Obama does not have to face opponents in his party, and he doesn't yet know who the Republican opponent will be, he doesn't have to spend too much time or money right now rolling out ads. His campaign will most likely wait until they have a set

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<sup>57</sup> Mark Preston, "Romney spending \$85,000-plus a day on TV ads," *CNN*, November 13, 2007, [http://articles.cnn.com/2007-11-13/politics/romney.ads\\_1\\_evan-tracey-campaign-ads-early-voting-states?s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2007-11-13/politics/romney.ads_1_evan-tracey-campaign-ads-early-voting-states?s=PM:POLITICS)

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

opponent or at least until it is closer to the early primary voting. Right now, the Republicans are focused on attacking each other, so President Obama can focus on other aspects of his re-election campaign. However, in order to get an idea of what he might do when he does start a more aggressive media campaign, we can look back at what his campaign managers did in 2008, when he beat out John McCain.

Obama is a necessary candidate to include in this discussion, not only because he is the incumbent President and will be running in 2012, but also because in 2008, he shattered the records for money spent on campaign advertising. Obama ran an unprecedented number of ads, day and night, and he easily broke George W. Bush's records in this area.<sup>59</sup> By October, 2008, Obama was spending thirty million dollars a week and surpassed the \$188 million spent by Bush in 2004.<sup>60</sup> Obama was running more ads than McCain at a four to one margin and was even running his ads during the expensive time slot of nationally televised NFL games. He actually spent \$6.5 million in television advertising on one Sunday alone.<sup>61</sup> About a week before the election, Obama did something unusual in a political campaign: he bought a primetime time-slot on three of the major networks and ran a half-hour commercial.<sup>62</sup> The ad cost over three-million dollars but was a big success in terms of the number of people that it reached. More than twenty-six million people watched the half-hour commercial, which was double the

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<sup>59</sup> Jim Rutenberg, "Nearing Record, Obama's Ad Effort Swamps McCain," *New York Times*, October 17, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/us/politics/18ads.html?pagewanted=1>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Meg James, "ABC is only network not airing Obama ad," *New York Times*, October 28, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/oct/29/business/fi-abc29>

amount that the World Series was drawing at that time.<sup>63</sup> This was part of Obama's media strategy - to consume the market. He wanted to be the candidate that was controlling the news cycle. It worked, because clips of the ad were replayed by the news shows, so its effects went well beyond that half-hour.<sup>64</sup>

President Obama's media strategy seemed to work well for him during the last election, so it will be interesting to see if he sticks to the same approach during the upcoming race. Some of his success may depend upon how well-funded his opponent is. Obama had much more funding than McCain did, so he was basically able to suffocate McCain's media exposure. Obama may face more of a challenge in that area this time, if the Republican candidate is able to raise a lot more money than McCain was able to in 2008.

Political advertisements during campaigns have been a part of the process for many years now, even though people continue to debate about how effective they actually are. A recent article in the *New York Times* tackled this subject and came to some interesting conclusions on the success of these advertisements. The first one was that if a candidate is unfamiliar to voters, ads about that candidate will be more effective than ads about a person that most voters already know.<sup>65</sup> Another conclusion was that the volume of an ad may be more important than the content, so the

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<sup>63</sup> Alexander Mooney, "Obama ad a ratings success," *CNN*, October 30, 2008, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2008/10/30/obama-ad-a-ratings-success/>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> John Sides, "The Moneyball of Campaign Advertising," *New York Times*, October 5, 2011, <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/05/the-moneyball-of-campaign-advertising-part-1/>

candidate that can afford to run his ads more times may receive more benefits from them.<sup>66</sup> That means that the candidate with more money has quite an advantage. Third, and most interesting in relation to our previous discussion of Romney, they found that “campaign ads can matter, but not for long.” Their conclusion was that the results obtained from advertisements did not last much over a week, so any benefits gained through early advertising will most likely be gone by Election Day.<sup>67</sup> I believe Romney found this out in 2008,, and that is the reason he has waited this time around to begin a strong media campaign. It is unlikely that when voters go into the voting booth in January and February, they will be voting based on some commercials that they saw in October. These results also suggest that the media blitz that candidates engage in during the weeks leading up to the election could have a big impact. If these ads do have such a short lived effect, the candidates had better be ready to keep rolling out new ones to maintain the benefits.

I have spent a lot of time looking at the use of traditional media forums by candidates during an election and have followed how four of the current candidates are using traditional media. Newspapers and television have been important parts of political campaigns for many decades, and they are still important in today’s political climate. However, over the past several years, a new media force has been developing and has begun to play an important role in our political culture, including political campaigns. This new media force is the internet and the numerous opportunities that it

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

provides for the candidates. From social media sites to their own campaign websites, the opportunities that exist are vast, and they have only recently begun to be tapped by political candidates and their campaign teams. So, I will look at this new form of media and at some of the benefits that it offers that traditional media may not. There are a few statistics from the 2008 campaign that show the growing role that the internet played in those political campaigns. The *Pew Research Center* conducted a study that provided the following statistics: 46% of people had used the internet to get information about the campaign, 35% had watched political videos online, and 39% had used the internet to access “unfiltered” campaign materials.<sup>68</sup> These numbers represent large increases over previous election years and show the increasing importance of the internet to political candidates.

As I prepare to move on to the use of the internet, I should first take a look at one of the differences between the old and the new forms of media that the campaigns need to take into consideration. The issue of target audience is one of enormous importance and should play a part in the media strategy of any political campaign. There are differences in the average age of those that are on social media sites and of those watching cable news shows on television, but perhaps not as much as one would expect. A *Pew Research* study found that of people in their 30s, nearly sixty percent got their news from a digital media source compared with nearly fifty percent, who were in

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<sup>68</sup> Lee Rainie and Aaron Smith, “The Internet and the 2008 Election,” *Pew Research Center*, June 15, 2008, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2008/The-Internet-and-the-2008-Election.aspx>

their 40s, and forty-four percent of those ages 50-64.<sup>69</sup> This could come as quite a surprise to some, who assume that people in their twenties and thirties are the main ones using digital media. From these results, it is clear that the older audience is definitely growing in their use of the internet. The sharpest drop occurs when looking at the over 65 range, where the numbers drop to just 23%.<sup>70</sup> Cable news channels do continue to be a source of information for nearly 40% of people. However, only Fox News Channel has maintained its audience size, with the other major channels losing ground.<sup>71</sup> I think that statistics such as these are important to keep in mind when considering how the candidates are using the different forms of media and for understanding what type of audience they are trying to reach with each form.

When candidates use the internet and social media to campaign or disseminate their message, they are able to bypass the filters or possible bias of traditional media.<sup>72</sup> They can be in complete control of what they release and can take their ideas straight to potential voters. Candidates do not have to worry about how a video will be edited or how a statement might be taken out of context. These issues still occur in the traditional media, but through social media, the candidates have a way to communicate with voters in a more efficient and direct way. President Obama released the news that he would be seeking re-election via YouTube, and Romney was able to post a retort to that

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<sup>69</sup> *Pew Research Center For The People And The Press*, September 12, 2010, "Americans Spending More Time Following the News," <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1725/where-people-get-news-print-online-readership-cable-news-viewers>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Glen Johnson, "Social media let candidates bypass traditional media," *Boston Globe*, April 5, 2011, [http://www.boston.com/news/politics/politicalintelligence/2011/04/youtube\\_facebook.html](http://www.boston.com/news/politics/politicalintelligence/2011/04/youtube_facebook.html)

news shortly after, via Twitter.<sup>73</sup> The internet has created a more level playing field, when it comes to political communication, because all of the candidates, frontrunners or not, basically have equal access to the resources that the internet provides. This is quite a contrast from the more limited access to traditional media forms.<sup>74</sup> In addition to helping candidates communicate their message directly to the voters, the internet has allowed voters to go directly to the source for their political information, rather than receiving it through the news media's filter.

The social media phenomenon has changed a lot of things in American life. The way that politics is conducted is one of the areas that has seen a significant change, since the introduction of that media. The way that politicians interact with their constituents, run campaigns, and go about fundraising has been heavily impacted as the capabilities of internet use have increased. These new media forms are fast evolving, so one can expect that the way that politicians use them will continue to evolve as well. Currently, a presidential candidate certainly cannot conduct a national campaign without using the internet to a great extent. In 2008, Obama displayed an extremely adept online media strategy, and it paid huge dividends in his win over McCain. In the following pages, I will look back at some of the things that Obama did four years ago and how he is using online media to jumpstart his campaign for re-election. I will also look at

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Steven Davy, "Politicians Use Social Media to Bypass the Press Corps," *PBS*, November 2, 2009, <http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2009/11/politicians-use-social-media-to-bypass-the-press-corps306.html>

how some of the other candidates that are currently in the race are using it to benefit their campaign for the Republican nomination.

Obama was not the first candidate to ever use the internet or social media in his political campaign. However, I think that it is safe to say that he was the first candidate to use it to such an extent and to use it so effectively. The way that he was able to engage potential voters, reach out to young people, and conduct fundraising on the internet was unprecedented.

Obama had a vision for how he wanted to use the web, and he deserves a lot of credit, because he recognized the possibilities much better than any other candidate. Other candidates had used the web before in campaigns. For instance, Howard Dean used it to raise funds effectively, but Obama saw that there was so much more that could be done.<sup>75</sup> He recognized that, in addition to fundraising, a candidate could use the web to build a network of valuable information, mobilize voter support, and engage young people.<sup>76</sup> Obama's campaign personnel created a database of voter information that they could use to ask for financial support, get-out-the-vote, and send mass emails. In the past, getting this information was a time consuming and sometimes difficult task, because people were not always thrilled about giving someone their personal information. However, Obama's campaign had people giving their information readily, in order to sign up for an insider email alert when he made his choice for vice president

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<sup>75</sup> David Carr, "The Media Equation-How Obama Tapped Into Social Networks' Power," *The New York Times*, November 9, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/10/business/media/10carr.html>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

or in order to attend an event.<sup>77</sup> Campaigns need this information to spread the word to potential voters. They usually would use this information to create phone banks or direct mail lists. However, Obama's campaign got all of those people to give them their email address or to "Like" them on Facebook, and in an instant, a mass email could go out to all of those millions of people.<sup>78</sup> People signed up to receive text messages from the campaign, and Obama's people sent out text messages giving them news, asking them to donate, and reminding them to vote on Election Day.<sup>79</sup> This was an incredible feat and one that delivered a huge payoff for Obama. During the campaign, Obama made the statement, "One of my fundamental beliefs from my days as a community organizer is that real change comes from the bottom up. And there's no more powerful tool for grass-roots organizing than the internet."<sup>80</sup>

Obama's use of social media allowed his campaign to engage voters and to get them involved in the actual campaign. He did not just ask people to donate money or to show up and vote, although he did that as well. Obama created feedback, the opportunity to share ideas and be heard, and the feeling that everyone was an important part of something big. This was a tremendous boost to Obama's campaign, because when people become involved in actually working toward a certain goal, they are more likely to take ownership of it and feel passionate about what they are working

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Jose Antonio Vargas, "Obama Raised Half a Billion Online," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2008, <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama-raised-half-a-billion-on.html>

<sup>80</sup> Brian Stelter, "The Facebooker Who Friendened Obama," *New York Times*, July 7, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/07/technology/07hughes.html?pagewanted=1>

for. There was a quote in a *New York Times Article* by a popular political blogger that I think did a good job of capturing the history of what Obama did in 2008,

“Thomas Jefferson used newspapers to win the presidency, F.D.R. used radio to change the way he governed, J.F.K. was the first president to understand television, and Howard Dean saw the value of the Web for raising money, but Senator Barack Obama understood that you could use the Web to lower the cost of building a political brand, create a sense of connection and engagement, and dispense with the command and control method of governing to allow people to self-organize to do the work.”<sup>81</sup>

Another article called Obama the “first customer relationship management president,” because of the multiple ways that he utilized different aspects of the web, in order to keep in almost constant communication with his supporters.<sup>82</sup> President Obama got it, but he did not just utilize a part of the internet. Instead, he took over the web and every aspect of it. Wherever Obama could make a mark, he put a stamp on it.

There are websites on the internet for every group imaginable, and Obama had a presence on many of those sites, as part of his strategy for reaching different target groups.<sup>83</sup> In addition to reaching different target groups, Obama’s online media strategy was designed to get volunteers involved and to make it as easy as possible for them to help. His official campaign website was more like its own social networking site, because it allowed people to join groups and connect with other people around them. While other candidates also connected with their supporters via the internet, it was Obama’s

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Janell Hazelwood, “Decoding Barack Obama’s Social Media Campaign Strategies,” *Black Enterprise*, October 12, 2011, <http://www.blackenterprise.com/2011/07/07/barack-obamas-social-media-campaign-strategies/>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

team that used it to connect his supporters to their candidate and also to each other.<sup>84</sup> Obama's site also encouraged and helped people become involved from wherever they were located. It encouraged them to make phone calls and engage in grassroots fundraising by simply talking to people they knew and helping raise support for Obama.<sup>85</sup> Through this type of fundraising, supporters, who started groups through the website, raised thirty million dollars.<sup>86</sup> The activities done by each registrant were kept track of by the website, and then the volunteers received recognition for their amount of work.<sup>87</sup>

"Volunteers used Obama's website to organize a thousand phone-banking events in the last week of the race — and 150,000 other campaign-related events over the course of the campaign. Supporters created more than 35,000 groups clumped by affinities like geographical proximity and shared pop-cultural interests. By the end of the campaign, myBarackObama.com chalked up some 1.5 million accounts. And Obama raised a record-breaking \$600 million in contributions from more than three million people, many of whom donated through the web."<sup>88</sup>

Supporters of Obama could participate in mobile phone banks by signing in and receiving a list of phone numbers.<sup>89</sup> Then they could sit in their homes and make some phone calls for the campaign. That was much more convenient than the conventional way of having a set time at which a person must show up at another location to take part in a phone bank.

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<sup>84</sup> Brian Stelter, "The Facebooker Who Friendened Obama," *New York Times*, July 7, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/07/technology/07hughes.html?pagewanted=1>

<sup>85</sup> *The Global Human Capital Journal*, December 29, 2008, "Web 2.0 Case Study: Barack Obama's Use of Social Media," <http://globalhumancapital.org/web-20-case-study-barack-obamas-use-of-social-media/>

<sup>86</sup> Jose Antonio Vargas, "Obama Raised Half a Billion Online," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2008, [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama\\_raised\\_half\\_a\\_billion\\_on.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html)

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Sarah Lai Stirland, "Propelled by Internet, Barack Obama Wins Presidency," *Wired*, November 4, 2008, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2008/11/propelled-by-in/>

<sup>89</sup> Brian Stelter, "The Facebooker Who Friendened Obama," *New York Times*, July 7, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/07/technology/07hughes.html?pagewanted=1>

During a political campaign, there are a lot of rumors that are spread. Often, that is done through email. The Obama campaign asked supporters to send out emails countering those rumors. In this way, they gave their supporters a specific way to get involved, but it was on their own time.<sup>90</sup> I think that this was a key component for gaining volunteers and getting a lot accomplished through them. Allowing people to fit it in to their own schedules encourages more people to get involved, and more people are likely to participate that way.

When you look at the statistics from the different social media sites on Election Day, it is clear that Obama was much more successful at drumming up supporters online than McCain was. Obama had 380% more supporters on Facebook, 380% more friends on MySpace, 905% more viewers on YouTube, and 240 times more followers on Twitter.<sup>91</sup> There is little doubt that, across the board, Obama's online campaign dominated McCain's. One of the statistics that was also interesting was that the number of videos that the Obama campaign uploaded to YouTube was also way above McCain's.<sup>92</sup> The platform that YouTube provided was essentially free advertising. The campaigns could upload these videos, which were basically commercials, but they didn't have to pay to put them on television. For the amount of time that people spent watching the videos on the web, each campaign would have had to have spent millions

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Jeremiah Owyang, "Snapshot of Presidential Candidate Social Networking Stats: Nov 3, 2008," *Web Strategy*, November 3, 2008, <http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/11/03/snapshot-of-presidential-candidate-social-networking-stats-nov-2-2008/>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

of dollars for advertising time on television.<sup>93</sup> Some people believe that the videos on YouTube may even be more effective than television ads, because people usually watch them on recommendation from their friends, instead of having them interrupt their shows.<sup>94</sup>

Another way that Obama used the internet effectively in his 2008 campaign was by using it to conduct fundraising. During that one campaign for the presidency, Obama raised more than half-a-billion dollars online, alone. Over six million donations were made online, and the great majority of them were for amounts of less than \$100.<sup>95</sup> One of the unique things that Obama's campaign did was to allow people to sign up to give a monthly amount, rather than having to give a large sum all at once. They were still able to max out on many donors, because they could budget for this kind of giving.<sup>96</sup> Receiving all of these small donations also allowed the campaign to collect the contributor's information, to include them in their emails or texts, and to encourage them to get involved in other ways as well.<sup>97</sup> Thus, even these small online donations served a purpose beyond just raising money.

It should be noted that Obama did not face an easy road to the White House, because he was a relatively newcomer to the political scene, since he was still in his first term in Congress. In fact, before he faced McCain, he was locked in a tough primary with

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<sup>93</sup> Claire Cain Miller, "How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics," *New York Times*, November 7, 2008, <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Jose Antonio Vargas, "Obama Raised Half a Billion Online," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2008, [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama\\_raised\\_half\\_a\\_billion\\_on.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Michael Luo, "Small Online Contributions Add Up to Huge Fund-Raising Edge for Obama," *New York Times*, February 20, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/20/us/politics/20obama.html>

more established candidates like John Edwards and Hillary Clinton. His successful use of the internet in his campaign was also tremendously helpful during the primary race.

During the current election race, Obama has already raised more than he did four years ago, even though he started earlier that year.<sup>98</sup> He is again receiving a lot of small donations and will soon have received donations from one million people. Coming off of his record fundraising effort in 2008, some speculate that Obama could receive a new record of over one billion dollars by the time the election is done in 2012.<sup>99</sup> Since he is the only presidential candidate raising money as a Democrat, his numbers will be quite a bit better than any of the Republican candidates, who are fighting each other for Republican donors right now. Nonetheless, with Obama's fundraising prowess, even when there is only one Republican candidate left standing, Obama may continue to hold the edge.

The communication between the candidate and the potential voters that Obama's campaign opened up through its use of the internet absolutely changed the way that campaigning is being conducted for the 2012 campaign. The current candidates are all using the internet to a large extent in their campaign, but they are not all using it in the same manner.

One of the things that has benefited Paul during the campaign is his support from young people, and they are the audience that is typically the most active online.

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<sup>98</sup> John McCormick and Jonathan D. Salant, "Obama Re-Election Campaign Ahead of 2007-08 Fundraising Totals," *Business Week*, October 13, 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-10-13/obama-re-election-campaign-ahead-of-2007-08-fundraising-totals.html>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Like other candidates, Paul has a definite presence on the internet with profiles on different social networking sites, a Twitter account, and a campaign website. For someone who has never really been considered a viable candidate by the mainstream media, he does pretty well in terms of support on those websites. On Facebook, Paul has garnered nearly 550,000 followers or “likes” and has more than 83,000 followers on Twitter.<sup>100</sup> As I have followed these different candidates over the past few months, I have been most impressed with Paul’s online media strategy and execution of his campaign. In particular, there are several things that I have noticed that seemed reminiscent of what the Obama campaign did successfully in the 2008 campaign. His campaign website, [www.ronpaul2012.com](http://www.ronpaul2012.com), contains the most information of any candidate, and it was constructed exceptionally well, because you can access so much from that one page. His website contains more information than the others websites, and you can view videos directly on his site, whereas with the other candidates you have to go to another site. Anyone can get information on what Paul’s plans are on all the different issues from healthcare to immigration, and they can also get a list of events and appearances that he has scheduled. Of course, located in a prominent spot is the bright red button that supporters can click on, in order to donate to the campaign. When comparing Paul’s website with the websites of Romney and Bachmann, one area that really stood out was his media section. There were more than 50 videos, which were comparable to the number on Romney’s site, but Paul’s videos were from more

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<sup>100</sup> *Ron Paul Facebook Profile, Ron Paul Twitter Profile* <https://www.facebook.com/#!/ronpaul>, <http://twitter.com/#!/ronpaul>

sources than Romney's were. Whereas Romney's were mostly internet campaign commercials, the videos on Paul's site were videos of all different types. Paul's videos ranged from his commercials, to his television appearances, to press conferences, and to other speeches. Paul's site has a lot more of his media interviews, in which he plainly lays out his somewhat controversial views. There is not a feeling on Paul's website that the campaign is trying to be vague, in order to not offend anyone. I think that openness is what has won him the support of a lot of young people, who are hungry for a politician that will tell it like it is. They also believe that Paul has the record to prove that he will follow through on fighting for his views.

Of course, there is a place on Paul's website for people to sign up to volunteer, as well as a store where one can choose from an assortment of Ron Paul items, including t-shirts, wristbands, and even balloons. People can also sign up to receive updates from the campaign by submitting their email address, zip code, and phone number. This serves the dual purpose of getting information to these people and also of using the information in their database, in order to track Paul's supporters.

One of the most unique portions of Paul's website is his coalitions section. A person can click on this portion from Paul's main page, and see a list of all kinds of different groups or coalitions that support him. Examples of some of these groups are "Catholics for Ron Paul," "Gun Owners for Ron Paul," "Homeschoolers for Ron Paul," "Greek-Americans for Ron Paul," and "Food and Beverage Servers for Ron Paul." There is a page for almost every kind of group that one could imagine and probably even some that most people would never think of. Having all of these different coalitions listed on

the website allows people to find a group that they identify with and then find out why those people are supporting Paul. A person can just click onto one of those listed coalitions and be redirected to a Facebook page for that specific group. For instance, the “Protestants for Ron Paul” Facebook page has campaign stories and information that would appeal more to religious voters and is not necessarily included on other pages.<sup>101</sup>

The idea of having all of these different coalitions listed serves the purpose of at least appearing that Paul has support from a wide range of voters and allows his message to be tailored to those specific audiences. This is a way for supporters to feel a sense of common ground with other Paul supporters and to connect with other people that like him for the same reasons that they do. If these supporters would band together and reach out to others, then it could be a useful tool for Paul’s campaign. It would be a lot like Obama had with his supporter’s start groups in 2008 that reached out to try and get their other friends involved. I think that this is a good idea. However, in order for this method to be the most effective, people have to know about it. By looking at the number of followers on Paul’s different coalition sites, it doesn’t appear that a lot of people have caught onto that idea. One reason for this may be that the coalition listing page on Ron Paul’s campaign website is relatively new. I have followed the candidates’ websites from the beginning of September, 2011, through the end of October, 2011, and this page did not appear until the middle of October. This could have been a more useful idea earlier on in the race, although it could still be useful, if it catches on.

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<sup>101</sup> *Protestants for Ron Paul Facebook Profile Page*  
<https://www.facebook.com/ProtestantsForRonPaul#!/ProtestantsForRonPaul?sk=wall>

Apart from a candidate's website, the other site that is probably the most important is *Facebook*. It is the most popular social networking site online, and it continues to grow. This has been one of the more recent developments, as far as online campaign tools. President Obama used it quite effectively in 2008 to propel his campaign forward and to reach out to younger voters. As its popularity grows, so does the number of people joining the site that are older than most of us would expect. The older age groups are seeing much more growth on the site, and they are actually outpacing the younger age groups, which were originally *Facebook's* main participants.<sup>102</sup> This growth means that the importance of *Facebook* to political campaigns will only continue to grow, as well as the possibilities of the potential voters that can be reached through the use of online campaigns, specifically through social networking sites. Candidates have to use social media sites more than ever, and they must continue to try to expand into new ways of using them.<sup>103</sup>

Ron Paul uses his *Facebook* site in several ways. A person can get on and see pictures that his campaign has posted of him at different rallies, meeting with various supporters, and even eating at a particular restaurant while taking a "break" from the campaign trail. He posts press releases, upcoming television appearances, newspaper stories that are either favorable to him or go after an opponent, and links to campaign videos. Of course, the whole idea of *Facebook* is that it is interactive. People can

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<sup>102</sup> Stan Schroeder, "Facebook Users Are Getting Older. Much Older," *Mashable*, July 7, 2009, <http://mashable.com/2009/07/07/facebook-users-older/>

<sup>103</sup> Amy Bingham, "The 140-Character Campaign: Which GOP Candidate Is Winning at Social Media?," *ABC News*, October 17, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/10/the-140-character-campaign-which-gop-candidate-is-winning-the-social-media-war/>

comment on all of these posts, and they certainly do. These comment sections often turn into a debate between fellow *Facebook* users about the candidates' policies, views, and sometimes issues like the candidates' campaign donors. There are a lot of debates that takes place on these sites, and that is one way that candidates use their supporters to publicize their views and to attempt to get others interested in voting for them.

One of the main things that Paul's campaign uses his Facebook page for is fundraising purposes. Paul will post requests for supporters to donate to the campaign and will let them know different reasons for the importance of them donating at that time. For instance, he will post a reminder on the last day of the third quarter fundraising. Paul also advertises his campaigns' "moneybombs," which have seemed to be an effective way for him to raise money. They conduct these "moneybombs" and encourage supporters to donate as a way of sending a message on a certain day or about a certain event. They did one on Constitution Day and raised nearly a million dollars within a twenty-four hour period. *Facebook* is beneficial for this kind of fundraising, because the campaign managers can post reminders and updates throughout the day to let supporters know how close they are to reaching their goal. There was another "moneybomb" on October 19, 2011, and it was termed "Black This Out."<sup>104</sup> There was also a rally planned for the same day at Rockefeller Plaza for supporters to gather in protest of the lack of mainstream media coverage of Paul.<sup>105</sup> His campaign wanted to use this issue to motivate supporters and to drive them to give as

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<sup>104</sup> *Black This Out*, <http://www.blackthisout.com/>

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*

much money as they could, as a way of sending the media a strong message that they want their candidate to be heard. This type of fundraising has been pretty successful. So far, he has managed to raise more money than he had by this time four years ago. He has also shown an increase in the percentage of money raised in the third quarter over the amount raised during the second quarter.<sup>106</sup> This particular fundraising effort brought in nearly two million in one day, so apparently the issue did motivate people to get involved.<sup>107</sup> The “Black This Out,” rally and “moneybomb” was mostly organized at the grassroots level, like other events of this kind have been. Supporters created a site, promoted the event, and encouraged Paul supporters to get involved. The organizers usually offer incentives for supporter’s involvement. With the “Black This Out” fundraiser, the three people with the highest number of pledges were rewarded with a prize pack, as well as the distinction of being recognized as one of the top promoters of the event.<sup>108</sup> The candidates and their campaign managers still play a role in these events because of the promotion that they provide. The best way to find out about any fundraisers or rallies is to go to the candidate’s *Facebook* wall.

Michelle Bachmann and Mitt Romney’s *Facebook* pages are quite similar to Ron Paul’s.<sup>109</sup> Of course, they are both touting their own agendas, but the way that they are going about it is fundamentally the same. They both use their page to post short

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<sup>106</sup> Michael Beckel, “Ron Paul’s Moneybomb Success, Mitt Romney Finds Support from the Big Apple and More in Capital Eye Opener: Oct. 3,” *Center for Responsive Politics*, October 3, 2011, <http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2011/10/ron-paul-moneybomb-success.html>

<sup>107</sup> Ron Paul Facebook Profile Page, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/ronpaul>

<sup>108</sup> Black This Out, <http://www.blackthisout.com/>

<sup>109</sup> Michele Bachmann Facebook Profile Page, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/teambachmann>; Mitt Romney Facebook Profile Page, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/mittromney?sk=wall>

comments concerning articles written about them or things that have been posted on their websites. This is a large part of what Romney's page does. He gives people teasers with his posts and then directs them to his website to find out more information or to watch a video on the subject. The one glaring difference between Bachman and Romney's pages and that of Ron Paul is the fundraising aspect. Both Romney and Bachmann have a link that you can click to donate money, but it is not a prominent part of either of their pages.

One of the ways that candidates can get their message out through *Facebook* is by people "liking" them. Then, the updates that they post to their own page shows up on the news feed that those people see when they log on to their accounts. I "liked" those three Republican candidates, as well as President Obama so that I would be able to follow exactly what each candidate was promoting on his pages. Not once did I ever see a post from Romney or Bachmann talking about a fundraiser or asking supporters to donate money. There could be a number of reasons why they have not chosen to make this a prominent part of their pages. One reason could be that they don't believe that asking for money on Facebook is an effective way to reach their particular supporters. From everything that I have seen and read over the course of the past few months, I believe that Paul's fans are more active and more fervent in their support at this time. He has a very passionate group of followers, who are extremely dedicated and have been dedicated from the beginning. They are putting groups together, they are organizing, and they are trying to spread the word wherever they can. This was a point that I kept coming back to, no matter which particular candidate I happened to be

researching at that time. It seemed that Ron Paul fans were everywhere. He may not have the most supporters, but I think he does have the most vocal supporters. I went through a lot of videos to get a sense of the candidates, and I watched their campaign ads, debates, and television appearances. On almost every comment section on the video page, I found Paul supporters talking about his plans and his record. They were pointing out inconsistencies in the other candidates, and they were promoting their candidate as much as they could. I think this has all been beneficial for Paul, but even with his supporters being so organized in this way, he has never really been considered to have any legitimate shot at the nomination. Still, his supporters remain active, and his fight for media coverage has fired them up even more and has become a good rallying cry for support from his campaign.

When comparing the three candidates' use of *Facebook*, there are similarities, but each does have their own way of using the site in their campaigns. In terms of followers, Romney is way ahead, with Paul and Bachmann falling behind him. Just by scrolling on their pages, one can notice the differences and see what each campaign is focused on at the moment and what each one wants potential supporters to focus on. Bachmann has been making a lot of media appearances lately, and she promotes them on her page. She also uses some of her space to attack President Obama and his time in office. Romney has been encouraging supporters to volunteer and help out by making phone calls for his campaign. He has also been attacking Obama's policies on certain issues and directing people to his website, in order to find out more about his solutions to those issues. It has been clear for the last several months that Paul is focused on

fundraising. He has been pushing this on his Facebook page quite profusely. He has also been promoting media appearances, which have not been on mainstream news shows, but they are exposure nonetheless. Just by following the candidates over the past several months on their *Facebook* pages, one should be able to discern that the campaigns of Romney and Paul are moving forward at a more positive rate than that of Bachmann. There is simply not much going on with Bachman's campaign, while Romney continues to push forward, perform well in the debates, and his organization does not seem to be lacking in money. Paul and his supporters are making a big push for fundraising right now, and it is clear that he still has a great deal of support. Bachmann has not fared too well since winning the Iowa straw poll, and the excitement that surrounded her in the beginning has seemed to have worn off. Bachman appears to be running low on funding, but in contrast to Paul, she is not making a big push for donations. I think that if she wants to remain in the race much longer, she will have to regain some of that enthusiasm from voters and translate it into fundraising. If that does not happen soon, she will be out of the race and will fade rather quickly. I think that some of the blame for her downfall can be put on her campaign's media strategy and execution. When it came to television appearances, she got her shot on national news shows but she just did not perform very well. I think she could be using the internet more effectively, but she hasn't done much of anything different with it. She has not used either the traditional media or the newest means of media efficiently, in order to make herself stand out in the race. Right now, standing out is extremely important, especially for a candidate like Bachman that may be less familiar to voters.

Media plays an extremely important role in political elections, because it serves as the primary way in which candidates are able to get their message out to potential voters. The types of media may change, but their significance remains. In this study, I have discussed the way that four of the presidential candidates are using traditional and new media forums and the opportunities that are provided by both types. The emergence of new media, particularly social media, has allowed candidates to do things differently, which has been a great advantage to those who have understood how beneficial these new methods can be and how to use them effectively. The ability to communicate directly with the voters via the internet and the ability to do so instantly provides candidates with the advantage of having more control over their message and being able to communicate without the filter of traditional media venues. It is up to the candidates and their campaign teams to manage their use of media in an effective way.

During the past several months of the 2012 presidential campaign, I have followed three Republican candidates and President Obama as they have worked to reach voters with their message and to build up support for the primaries that will be held early next year. As I have focused on their use of traditional, as well as new media forms, I have been able to track the effectiveness of their campaigns from the viewpoint of media use. It became very clear that certain candidates have been more successful in their media campaigns. In my opinion, of the three Republican candidates, Ron Paul has made the best use of new media forms, especially given the lack of coverage that he has received from traditional sources. His campaign team has understood the vast opportunities that social media affords a candidate, and they have taken full advantage

of those opportunities. Paul's online fundraising efforts should be taken into consideration by other candidates, because they have been quite successful. In terms of traditional media, Mitt Romney is the most polished. His experiences from four years ago have given him an edge when it comes to television appearances and familiarity in using traditional media in a presidential campaign.

On the Democratic side, President Obama is still in a league of his own, when it comes to the use of social media. His online campaign continues to grow exponentially. His access to traditional media is basically unlimited, but he will have to be careful that he doesn't use it to such an extent that voters feel that he has become too focused on campaigning, instead of actually being president.

Over the course of the past few months, we have seen campaigns rise and fall. I believe that one of the most important aspects of a major political campaign is media use, and it is absolutely crucial to a candidate that they have a successful media strategy. As media forms continue to evolve, candidates must take full advantage of the new opportunities that arise, in order to reach and mobilize the greatest number of voters. President Obama displayed the ability to do this with social media in 2008 and going forward in 2012, it will be up to the candidate who receives the Republican nomination to see if they can manage the different media forms as effectively and win over enough voters. Over the years media has played such an important role in presidential elections, and as the forms of media progress, so does the enormity of its role.

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