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# Analyzing the Use and Influence of Various Media in United States Presidential Campaigning

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# **Analyzing the Use and Influence of Various Media in United States Presidential Campaigning**

An Interactive Qualifying Project  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
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Degree of Bachelors of Science in Chemistry

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## **Preface**

In an era of ever improving technology and social interconnection, the way we spread and receive information has changed drastically over time and will certainly continue to do so. Although the vehicles through which information now travels have drastically improved the rate of information dissemination as compared to their predecessors, both the validity and effectiveness of the information they transmit have been doubted by many target audiences; now more often than ever. With more and more Americans becoming desensitized to traditional media outlets and dismissing what they communicate as untrue (“Fake News”), it seems that we should take a closer look at the root problem: how have mediums of information dissemination changed and how have those changes impacted the viewers’ internalization of said disseminated information.

It is no secret that modern political campaigns attempt to personally cater to a diverse range of potential voters, and now communicate news in many ways often beset with a range of differing political views and bias. Furthermore, media outlets have and continue to utilize past experiences and statistics to determine pattern analyses, whose results and conclusions are subsequently applied to the appropriate audiences as seen fit. Despite the perceived direct workflow involved in these said processes, the reward/outcome has been questioned on both ends of the medial spectrum: delivering and receiving. As a result, this script will discuss the evolution of information dissemination in political campaigning, with a focus on US presidential campaigns. Moreover, this manuscript will delve into the effectiveness and pitfalls within each method throughout the subsequently established timeline. There will be an emphasis placed upon the degree of influence of said disseminated information as per each method through which it was implemented. Finally, this paper will come to a conclusion drawn upon analysis from the introduced data and facts pertaining to the previously alluded methods.

## **Introduction/Scope**

Although people often acknowledged a certain dirtiness to politics, that many felt culminated with the 2016 US presidential election, there appeared to be a general surprise towards the way information was communicated by all involved (media, candidates, PAC's, etc.). That very degree of surprise was so severe that it now seems commonplace to find extreme bias and finger pointing on both sides, as well as an insistence that the majority of other media outlets are simply spreading nothing other than misinformation/propaganda for the purpose of pushing a skewed self-serving agenda. While this in itself is very intriguing, sorting through a gargantuan stockpile of historical documentation on multiple events in order to prove one or more viewpoints right or wrong is nigh impossible to do with a subject whose premise is a beliefs set, and certainly not the purpose of this piece. To reiterate, this analysis is not about who's right or wrong, but rather about how the different mediums through which all of that information is spread affects people personal beliefs.

With all of this to consider, the first fundamental question to ask is how we got here. If the objective is to draw connections between *how* things are spread and how people react, we first need to establish each "how". More specifically, the first section in this article will focus exclusively on the development and change in mass communication.

## **Background: The Different forms of Media**

Although paper and ink have been at the disposal of humans since 105 CE, it wasn't until as early as 900 AD that scribing and block printing had become somewhat ingrained in even the most developed of societies. On the contrary, however, the first Turing machine was built in 1936 (optimized in the mid 1940's) and yet the internet came to life only 50 years later, with the World Wide Web launching in 1990! Obviously, the differing forms of mass communication have developed at different rates and times, so it is only logical that the most important milestones will be broken down in the following section.

### **Printed Press i.e. Newspapers, Magazines, etc. (1476-Present)**

One of the best things about a newspaper is that it can represent something different to each reader.

Regardless of what, newspapers are commonly used to introduce information and continuously update its audience on just such. Oftentimes, they do so by exposing their readers to certain interpretations and viewpoints on the very information they put forward. Obviously, as a result, newspapers have served as a longstanding platform for conveying lots of information, a great portion of which is both biased and non-partisan political commentary/advertising.

Simply put, the first newspapers in the states were small in scale, similar to many town/municipality papers you would find nowadays. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the grassroots of the industry consisted of printed newsletters comprised of township happenings, both social and political. Like most local papers, the bulk of the content was focused on events within the precinct. Consequently, the vast majority of newspapers were penned in a manner appropriately summed up by Horace Greely: “the average human being is most concerned about his neighbors. [Therefore,] do not let a new church be organized, a farm be sold, nor weddings and crime [pass] without having been chronicled in your columns”.

While it would be apt to describe the first western papers, published as early as 1621, as an organized and printed form of township rumblings within the reach of each press, political sections and their subsequent involvement were ever-growing. Although the political section was consistently included, it was never prioritized. Moreover, it is important to note that political pieces were never written by someone who had primary knowledge of what was going on, as press were not allowed to attend any sort of political convention until the next century. Considering both of these factors, it should come as no surprise that this integral component would soon drive change to the way newspapers were written during the politically charged revolutionary era.

Even though local gossip is ever-present and aplenty, it failed to capture what was going on during the heat of the colonial period. Since the population of each colony began to both grow and spread, the number of newspapers skyrocketed, and soon were unable to maintain a purpose while accounting for

the millions of rumblings between each penning. As a result, the once organized gossip had regressed back to the poorly executed game of telephone it once was. During this time period, the growing desire for autonomy that came with the development and growth of the 13 colonies led to a high demand for political documentation, both legal and social. Since society was intently focused upon the happenings of parliament, politically focused papers essentially took over the industry during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was such a demand that newspapers regularly sent undercover reporters to parliamentary hearings in order to convey “a more accurate” account of what was transpiring at these conventions. After all, a total lack of faith in local representatives and what came out of their mouths had become plentiful.

Despite the success colonial papers had reasonable success with their undercover reporters, the real power rested with the editor, as secondary sourcing was the foundation of everything published. Beforehand, whatever reporters turned in was put straight to press no questions asked. In these papers, however, the reporters simply reported as the editors transformed that information into the political propaganda that helped fuel the revolution of 1776. This dramatic change in accountability even affected the structure of future parliamentary proceedings, incorporating partisan monologues to help sway reporter feedback. Although the papers, such as the *gentlemen’s journal*, originally tried to give an equal respect and representation towards all parties involved, the dependence of published information on the interpretation of those reporting and editing it became impossible to hide. The bias was so much so, that even stalwart reporter/editor Samuel Johnson’s commented on his 1741 House of Commons meeting report as such: “I saved appearances tolerably well; but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it”.

In attempt to pull citizens together (politically), newspapers shifted from the mentality of “altering and arguing freely” to a more streamlined political manifesto. Considering that the American society was growing at an unprecedented rate, political motivations could no longer realistically account for daily

events in each community; hence the newly devised manifesto. Once the parties and their respective papers bound themselves to a specific ideology that could transcend event based variability, there was no longer a need to express individualized opinions, but rather frame national happenings and their interpretations in a manner relative to the parties' standing. In the end, these newspapers became so party oriented that they knocked the political pamphlet out of existence.

If we look back, both the party press and its independent counterparts seem completely alien in comparison to what we expect from the modern press. With the expectation of "factual, impartial and eye-catching" news, it seems that at some point we greatly deviated from news that was built on the framework of expressing opinion rather than the facts. Until circa 1880, most newspapers consisted of the two forms outlined previously in this section. It was either politics or a local wedding. While all of that is important to document, much of it is a normal occurrence, and doesn't really give readers a new, "exciting" experience. In response to this conundrum, Arthur McEwen theorized that the press had it all wrong, as "News is anything that makes the reader say, "Gee Whiz!" In turn, James Scripps also felt that the frequency with which an ordinary man reads the newspaper is inversely proportional to its length. Consequently, he littered his *Detroit News* with pictures/figures in such a manner that made the reading material "more manageable", setting the evolution to the sensationalized tabloid press in motion.

Though Scripps and McEwen were some the first press owners to formulate their publications on the basis of maintaining reader interest, Morrill Goddard took his *Sunday World* to another level. Simply put, Goddard set out to publish news in a way that anyone could "read". Between incorporating the sensationalism referenced by McEwen, the muckraking of Pulitzer and the interpersonal focus (writing about celebrities and those whose lifestyles so greatly deviate from ours to a point of our resulting fascination) of Hearst, Goddard successfully made the first "tabloid"; a hybrid that would compose of a mix between magazines such as *People* and *Star* and news outlets such as Fox and CNN.

The subsequent takeoff of newspapers was no surprise to owners, as all different types of audiences were reached. Although circulation of the well-funded papers had been steadily improving/increasing, new technologies would transform the industry one last time. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, papers were primarily delivered to their respective cities and suburbs via horse driven carriages. By the mid-1800's, however, papers reached the other end of the country within a week via mailboats. This process was further expedited by the foundation of the transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869. Soon later, papers such as the *New York Times* were able to replace their dying west coast divisions (outperformed by better informed local papers) with circulation of the original copies just a few days later. Upon the invention and establishment of the telephone, as to be discussed in the next section, the content of each issue was now orally transposed to a press in as many locations as each paper could afford. With papers now able to circulate their issues within the same day of their original launch, they were less out of touch with the local happenings of potential faraway customers.

With reporters calling in local news from everywhere by the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a demand that once kept newspapers local was now being met. The biggest newspapers, aided by the foundation of the Associated Press (discussed in the next section), were now able to buy news from everywhere and circulate it everywhere. Since the best funded newspapers could outbid the smaller/local players in the industry, the monopoly we are so accustomed today was established. Obviously, as a result, newspapers came and went due to the popularity of the opinions penned by each paper, as the market was now about addressing the unaddressed since local news was no longer exclusively local. It is important to note, however, that with national circulation of papers, there was less repetitive projection among papers, and more space for filling unheard or unmet niches/demands; thus leading to the creation of newspapers/companies such as the *Wall Street Journal* and Fox News.

Although Goddard's original tabloid model, packed with politics, celebrity news, comics/cartoons and all, is rarely found in modern mainstream news (*New York Times*), it served as the foundation of what

we have today; a press that deals in absolutes, either in political or social news. Despite eventually addressing the need to separate news based on the degree of “intellectual demand”, the same basic framework for showcasing news and opinion (yellow press) has been around for years.

## **Telephone (1876-Present)**

The telephone, unlike all other communication mediums discussed and to be discussed in this manuscript, is not a vehicle that will be explored in regards to its effects on political campaigns. It is important, however, to pen a brief section on this device, as it and its developments have had a profound impact on all mediums, especially television and internet.

Before the telephone was invented, there wasn't really an effective way to nigh-immediately communicate with another over shouting distance. While visual communication did exist at the time of the invention, most prominently typography, it did require transport if not within the realms of sight. Long since the days of the Ancient Greeks have humans craved the a communication medium telephone; constructed by the Greek words tele, meaning from afar, and phone, meaning voice or voiced sound. Accompanied by the industrial revolution and the early manipulations of electrical current (Tesla/Edison), the famed Alexander Graham Bell expanded on Charles Bourseul's idea to transmit speech electrically, eventually creating the world's most revolutionary form of communication.

In 1729, Stephen Gray sent electricity through 300 meters of brass wire intertwined with wet thread. Inspired by his work, Ewald Georg von Kleist and Pieter van Musschenbroek designed the Leyden Jar, the first means to store electricity, in 1749. Once the scientific community was able to store electricity, they began to manipulate it with great success. Not surprisingly, a flurry of inventions followed. In 1800 Alessandro Volta invented the battery, which was then used in 1820 by Christian Oersted to discover electromagnetic fields. Michael Faraday then famously realized this work by designing the first electric generator, developing a newfound mastery of induction by 1831.

Because Faraday had shown that electrical current could be sent at will both in intensity and duration, Joseph Henry created a machine that could consistently and efficiently produce controlled electric current. Moreover, his machine, a steel bar wire-connected to a bell that it would chime upon induction, would set the stage for the first telegraph. Henry would help Samuel Morse build the first telegraph in 1837. Electrical signaling would then take off upon its invention, as numerous inventors, including Graham Bell and Gray, would attempt to perfect the telegraph in order to efficiently communicate over large distances. Although Bell would end up receiving full credit the feat, he would do so by using Gray's Notice of Invention which was comprised of methods that Bell did not dictate in his own patent.

Once the telephone was invented, its distribution and reengineering took over the nation. Immediately, the public saw its value and enormous potential, subsequently expediting the process to not only perfect the device, but make its incorporation into society ubiquitous. In 1877, the first two major telephone corporations launched, the Bell Company and Western Union. While Bell and his enterprise had the "original" product, Western Union, with better access to both telegraph lines and engineers, would establish itself far better. Upon their launch into the telephone industry, they were able to transform the device both in range and design. By incorporating the Edison transmitter, voice quality was immediately superior. Additionally, they used both their local telegraph lines, laid down in 1861, and transatlantic ones, laid down in 1866, to provide service to thousands (something that the Bell Company struggled with mightily). Western Union business took off so fast that by the end of that year they were able to lay down thousands of miles of additional telegraph wire (totaling to nearly 100,000) and buy out 1,730 other startup companies.

With the two company monopoly fully established, engineers had nowhere to go but these to incorporations, and as such, developments further came in great numbers. Switchboards and rotary dials were brought into play in 1878/79. Telephones were no longer two units (one for talking the other for listening), and were finally prepped for making the first long distance call. In 1885, Theo Vail bought

Western Union and renamed the telephone department AT&T. 4 years later the first payphone was installed and the telephone became available to the masses. This series of events culminated in the first coast to coast telephone call (1892).

Although the Bell Company was first to the table, they clearly struggled to compete with the leviathan that was AT&T/WU. Up to that point, telephone service would only extend as far as either AT&T or the Bell Company reached. If your phone was connected via one line, it could not reach someone connected to the other. Following the rapid expansion of WU/AT&T, the Bell Company sued for survival. Luckily, they were able to win major settlements, and in 1913 AT&T sold access to most of their lines. With government protection and nearly unlimited access to national telephone lines, the Bell Company established the network we take for granted today. Without any competition, they were able to connect all the AT&T lines with their 11,000 miles of intricately local wire, providing universal connection between all American lines.

From that point on, the individual proprietors we are so accustomed to today were formed in order to manage/take control of transmission stations, whose jobs were solely to retransmit/amplify messages traveling long distance. With a national network fully established, the dissemination of information, either by radio or via the transcription of printed press to all parts of the country, became a mainstay in American society, reaching unprecedented numbers. It was with the introduction of these lines that all other mediums to be discussed in this manuscript (Radio, TV & Internet) were made possible.

### **Radio (1895-Present)**

Although canvassing, whether door to door or through printed media and public rallies, was essential to the dissemination of information throughout the first 100 years of American history (especially in political campaigning), reaching broader numbers in a nation embarking upon Manifest Destiny was not feasible with the technology at the time. However, with the Moore's Law in full swing after the industrial revolution, there became better and more efficient ways to send and receive information.

In 1895, as telephone lines were being laid anywhere topographically possible, Guglielmo Macroni completed the first wireless message transmission. Little more than 10 years later, the first preformed sounds were transmitted in a reproducible manner that culminated in the broadcast of the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1910. A massive scramble for radio control was underway upon this achievement, concluding with the three biggest players in the industry uniting to form the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). By the time that technology had mastered the ability to broadcast voice and records phonographically, the demand for radio was skyrocketing. As a result, Westinghouse ramped up their production of Crystal<sup>®</sup> radio sets, selling thousands in anticipation of their broadcast station launch in Pittsburgh during the Harding-Cox election. Following that broadcast, the number of licensed stations boomed accordingly, from 30-556 between 1922-1925.

During the early stages of wide stream broadcasting it was frowned upon to allow advertising during air time. However, as we all know, allotting time for ads is a big money maker, and AT&T staunchly took this stance in 1922 making WEAJ (now NBC) the first advertising supported network ever. Once AT&T (following their withdrawal from RCA) incorporated advertising in all of its stations (in 1926 from NYC to Kansas), the others soon followed suit, laying the groundwork for political influence in radio. That same groundwork was then further developed by the network monopolization that was soon to follow. As referenced earlier, telephone lines were an essential means for long range transmission. Not only did a battle for broadcasting stations, telephone lines and radio set production consume the industry, but the multi-fronted competition also set the stage for a big shakeup. At the end of the day, radio networks were coming undone by the very preventative reasons they came together; territorial patent wars in all dimensions of the industry. It was the result of these wars that initiated the single dimensionality and partisanship we see in both radio and TV stations/channels today.

In 1922 ASCAP required all broadcast stations to pay royalty fees on all phonographic records, paving the way for radio to shift towards news-only programs/stations (AM). Once RCA, AT&T and

Westinghouse/GE finished working out their differences in how to address this money depleting notion, they agreed to be individually responsible for radio set distribution, leasing transmitters and broadcast stations, and set manufacturing respectively. With these newly established monopolies in place, AT&T took its own individual steps towards self preservation, all of which would further mould radio into what it has become today. Since AT&T was now losing out on radio set income (millions annually), they decided to individually pocket the money garnered from advertising and broadcasting by requiring anyone using their lines to pay air time on top of the well established annual transmitting fees.

Once air time charges became normalized, broadcasters sought the best way to make back the money lost by changing the structure of their programs. As a result of no longer being funded by other ads, they transitioned to promoting their individualized agendas in effort to make up for the costs of being practically self-funded. After all, broadcasters were paying way more the air time they were using to broadcast the programs they were getting paid for. Therefore, as a result, what started with the occasional spot ad became continuous reminders of sponsorship similar to modern NPR airings.

Although the initial efforts of these broadcasters were somewhat successful, the disparity between listeners at different times of the day became undeniable. Consequently, AT&T reaped the benefits of charging different rates per air time, entirely dependent on the average amount of listeners at any part of the day. Thus, the idea of primetime was established, and by 1929, many stations, such as CBS launched and self-sustained by only broadcasting during primetime.

Following in the footsteps of AT&T, RCA also began to double charge all those using their stations in their own uniquely disguised way. Accordingly, they allowed free air time (non-primetime) to anyone who covered the broadcast and phonographic royalty fees, further skyrocketing profitability within the entire radio industry. Following the broadcasters' and advertisers' backlash towards AT&T's new direction, accompanied with tighter government restrictions, AT&T sold out to RCA for one million dollars. With an even better industrial foothold, RCA used their newly filled war chest to launch the first

two radio networks, NBC red (now NBC) and NBC Blue (now ABC). With a firm monopoly over networks and distribution, RCA began to demand exclusivity contracts, firmly limiting radio networks to their appropriate set of advertisers.

With no lease for other political/economic interests, polarized radio stations, with which only certain type of broadcaster and advertiser associates itself with, began to air. Since the content of radio broadcast became solely focused on who paid for what and how much was put forward, news broadcasters unionized in order to provide their agenda with better financial backing. Considering that the primetime rates paid dwarfed the revenue from their programs, those involved sought to get exclusive rights of their own. Between paying for both air time and the rights to broadcast music and other talents, broadcasters raised the rates of the only thing they had dominion over, their programs. In attempt to bridge the gap between prime time rates and profit from their news/programs, the Associated Press (AP) suspended news stories in 1933, causing networks like NBC & CBS to assemble news teams that would ultimately fail. Although it set the platform for how many news stations are now, the lack of success in news gathering led to the big station buying news/stories from the AP in 1935.

Concluding this final set of developments, the way which the monopolies defined the industry was clear. The gargantuan radio networks (NBC/CBS) owned the vast majority of broadcast stations while the AP owned the bulk of the news rights. Since the AP bought most of the news from local reporters, there were limited sources for both news and means of broadcast for the existing stations, resulting in nigh universal centralization. Because most of these conditions are still set in place, the vast majority of sources report the same thing. Because everything is the same and local reporters were having issues with publishing their own news (they kept getting bought out), the government stepped in. In hopes of highlighting the only differentiating factor in national news, who original reported what, the commonplace phrases of “Exclusives” and “see your local news for more information” were born.

While the AP controlled the essence of the news, the stations still controlled who disseminates and more importantly *how*. Since the big networks owned 48/50 national range stations, they had great freedom in how exclusivity within their advertising was considered. Moreover, these networks had a plethora of potential clients to choose from, both as advertisers and broadcasters. The resulting siphoning that took place is exactly why, nowadays, you rarely see the same faces and companies across multiple networks. While certain small stations teamed up (forming MBS) in hopes of surviving independently their limited wealth left them unable to purchase from the AP. Because these maintained relatively strong influence within their broadcast areas by catering to local interest, they were able to transition from news radio to music and other forms of entertainment, launching what we have come to know as short range FM radio.

With FM and AM in place, the only thing left for stations to do was diversify themselves amongst their competition, leading to what we describe now as polarized/politically charged stations. As a consequence of soliciting air time, a streamlined agenda amongst most radio stations was cemented. In 1944, CBS had 13 people buy over \$1 million of air time, while NBC had 11 in that category and ABC 9. Additionally, three agencies bought \$30 million of total air time, equivalent to more than 25% broadcasted. These small scaffolds were dominating station output so much that in 1945, 13 agencies/sponsors bought nearly half CBS \$66 million air time and 17 for ABC (40% of \$40 million). With air time monopolized, it became that much harder to upset the established order as purchasing power began to drive political influence.

In particular, investors thought political radio was such a hot product for the same reason that advertisers first invested in the medium: Information now reached more people per broadcast than ever. Thus, political discussions and forums were launched into the radio world in 1931. By 1938, Americas Town Meeting of the Air, Peoples Platform and University of the Air were mainstays, broadcasted by ABC, CBS and NBC respectively. These talk shows continued to grow in popularity and

influence as national players such as NBC/CBS/ABC continued to buy out more and more local stations. The rise in both news and talk show popularity was astronomic. By 1944, political discussion broadcasts went from nothing to commanding at ~8% of total traffic. Not surprisingly, news broadcast popularity on all of the big networks also soared as the world approached its second war, commanding 20% on NBC and over 10% on CBS. As a result of such prominence, radio began to serve as a stepping stone to TV, with more and more famous actors beginning on radio broadcasting their talent through Music and News. Such a model had so much success that we even see it to today, from Hollywood to Hannity.

### **Motion Pictures and Television (1888/1927-Present)**

In a world where screened media is everywhere, it is hard to imagine that the Television was only invented in 1927 but yet present in the majority of American households by 1955. Like every great invention, there were many steps taken before the final product was designed. In the case of TV, the presence of both phone lines and telegraphy was necessary, as the product was a result of a high understanding in sound, electronics and light. Fittingly, is apt to think of a television as and electrical telegraph of large scale motion pictures. Furthermore, the motion picture, where this section will start, was simply a localized singular television program, hindered from expansion by the lack of technology in its early stages.

While mediums such as newspapers were very effective at conveying information, they were not able to reach the illiterates, who up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century represented over 10% of the population. Like many devices before and after it (cars, phones, TV's), radios took a while to become an established appliance. With the desire to create a nigh-universally reaching medium that allows one to escape other realities, George Eastman set the project in motion by successfully constructing the first roll-film camera. Spurred on by the desire to recreate moments and emotions for all who had missed the first take, Thomas Edison created one of his many inventions amidst a dramatically rising curve in technology, the kinetoscope. By 1888, Edison was able to organize roll film in a way similar to cartoons that progress

through a packet of Post-It® notes. Though Edison invented the kinoscope, he didn't really progress with it to intently, as he viewed this invention as a form of entertainment. After 5 years of minimal attention, the first show was presented to the public at Broadway, capturing many different moments within a few vaudeville acts and boxing fights. Despite the breakthrough, it was limited, as only one person could watch at a time. Consequently, the cylindrical lamp display followed, and by 1896, the first "movie" had shown.

With the launch of screened photos, America and Europe went into two directions, eventually leading to the invention of the Television in America (and not elsewhere!). In Europe, they had adopted Edison's mindset, using the slides to present scientific studies, most famously on the production of mass manufactured cheese. On the American side, those experimenting with film were starting to master all sorts of techniques, including on-location shooting and editing camera movement. These productions drew such large popularity, especially among immigrants, that Nickelodeon was founded in 1905 in effort to provide low-cost entertainment without a language barrier. Following the "first story picture", *The Great Train Robbery*, there were ~5000 nickelodeon shows. People were so captivated by the dawn of the film era that Broadway was paying \$15 (A lot of money in 1906) to anyone who would write the directors a story they thought had potential. Due to the influx of imagination and very colorful shows however, censorship of stories and productions soon followed, culminating with the formation of the National Board of Censorship in 1909.

Accompanying this rise shows was the rise in movie genres as the ever-growing audience was interested in many different subjects. Soon there were many different Nickelodeon-like shows, displaying, operas, dramas, action, sports, etc. By 1916, there were around 28K motion pictures in the States displaying "feature films" (long, multi-reeled films designed by Adolph Zukor) filled with close-ups, composite editing and cutbacks. This development fully blossomed with D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* being showcased in the first theater (Strand on Broadway) in 1915. This film had such success that

serials followed soon after, leading to comics, graphic laden newspapers and the first real semblance of what we know now as TV shows. With the incorporation of audio in film, these serials started to capture operas, dramas and comedians, with the first recurring comedy being shown in theatres in 1926. With the economies spiked by both World Wars, movie budgets soared, eventually leading to the investment in TV development. Assisted by the shut down in European movie production, Hollywood was now garnering talent from all over, solidifying the American dominance we see in the industry today. Theaters then drew so much traffic that massive complexes were built outside cities in the suburbs, similar to those today. To fund these theatres however, as recurring audiences were only so large, advertisements, government messages and previews were introduced. Like their radio counterparts, air time for advertisements was so successful that it is still a staple today.

Although motion pictures are the predecessor for TV, they still could not reach a large enough population in an ever growing country. Consequently, the TV was constructed to create a medium through which one could individually communicate with countless others. Following a technology and economic boom driven by the Second World War, TV had been “perfected” and mass produced.

Although TV had been on the market since 1941, it wasn't a standard household item until the 1950's for numerous reasons, primarily the great depression and WWII. By the end of 1929, only ~1/5 Americans met  $\geq$  middle-class life standards, and wart time needs whisked away all different types of materials and scientists in the multimedia industry. It got so bad that after the war the average household had grown 20% smaller, as a result of both casualties and a lack of disposable income.

Following WWII, however, things really took an upward turn. Although smaller households had become normalized, ~1/2 Americans met  $\geq$  middle-class life standards. With less people to pay for, the extra cash flow became expenditure.

By 1956, ~80% of the population was living in suburbs or metropolitan areas. Additionally, nearly 55% of families owned homes, paving the way for a mass need for TV sets. With everyone living close by,

technological limitations due to a small broadcast radium were no longer an issue. Though accessibility was present, there still lacked a reason for demand. TV's were not cheap, and more women were working than ever (due to the depression). As Edison first postulated, TV is primarily a medium for entertainment. However, up through the war, no one had even a second to spare. Like the continuing strength of the economy, Moore's law kept pace. It is known that WWII brought along numerous technologies and an even better established manufacturing culture. With that, labor-saving devices became aplenty and more accessible than ever. As the manufacturing process became more automated, the average work week became 37.5 by 1960, half of what it was a century earlier. With appliances such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and dishwashers, housewives no longer spent all day on chores, and most are far more entertained by TV than radio. Since both men and women were spending less time working and commuting (Cars/Rail >>> Horseback/Foot), they had more time for leisure. This drastic change in free time was highlighted by both restaurant and pre-made food consumption tripling over the course of the war. People were interested in maximizing their free time more than ever.

As previously mentioned, progress on TV was starting to take flight before being grounded to a screeching halt by WWII. Although the first TV was developed in 1927, the first channel (NBC) did not air until 1939. Following NBC's broadcast of the New York World Fair, CBS and 11 others launched their own TV stations, which pressured the FCC to approve commercial TV on July 1, 1941. Although the War was soon to curb TV development, 10,000 sets sold in less than 5 months, giving investors a very real taste of the industry's true potential. Once the war ended however, TV, rose to stratospheric heights just like everything else. From January-April 1949, the number of American TV sets doubled, and 1 million were manufactured that year (6x the previous year's total).

Just like Radio, TV broadcasting was most feasible for those who already had access to the lines and stations. Therefore, it is no surprise that the biggest stations in modern TV were the biggest stations in radio (CBS/NBC/ABC). Not only were these stations allowed a head start due to the accessibility that they

had and others lacked, but a 4 year “freeze” by the FCC further stunted television growth, limiting the industry to 12 channels. That alone helped establish a monopoly among stations, as the existing stations grew without competition. Although a limit of stations for both broadcast and retransmission hurt non metropolitan areas, as TV had a much shorter range than that of radio (only 60% coverage in 195), the lifting of the TV freeze caused great sales as most were still living close enough to broadcast hubs. In the 3 years after the freeze, TV went from being in 10 million homes to 32 million (37% to 67% ownership), while coverage was upped from 62% to 97%. With the help of telephone lines, stations everywhere were now connected, and by 1970 citizens everywhere were receiving dozens of channels. Due to their dependence on these lines, however, there were very few cable companies, as only so many companies (i.e. AT&T) had access to multiple lines/stations. Because of that and the freeze we only see a handful of both cable companies and big-time TV stations today. While increased fiber optics and broadcasting techniques were developed, the actual platform through which TV has had to communicate has not changed much since the 60’s.

## **Internet**

A staple in today’s society, the Internet is a world-wide broadcasting mechanism for information dissemination, allowing the collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers regardless of location. From dial-up to fiber-optics and quantum internet, the phenomena has come quite a long way. Although the first framework of the computer was invented in 1936, the first full scale model came 10 years later. Even though computer were well established by the 50’s, they were built in the scales of what we would now recognize as supercomputers, and thus could not be a household item. Once established in the American abode (1977), the internet soon followed with the launch of the World Wide Web in 1991. Shortly thereafter, the WWW was molded into the life-essential medium we so take for granted today.

Although the computer is vital both to society and this paper, the scope of this paper is focused on mediums for information dissemination. In abiding by that definition, the focus of this section will be on the formation of the internet, not so much on that of the computer. Obviously, enough historical information will be given on the foundation of the computer in order to provide the proper frame of reference for the internet.

Interesting enough, it wasn't the essence of possible the greatest widespread technological phenomena in human society that caused its users to be a little more informed of its history, but rather that of pop culture. While most still do not know the history of the computer, knowledge went from zero to nonzero following the release of *The Imitation Game* (2014). In the film, the plot follows the earliest steps in the journey from mechanical algorithmic computation to that of full automation. In 1936, Alan Turing invented the first Turing machine in order to show that a machine could interpret algorithmic instructions no matter the input or direction. Soon later, the British mathematician spent the duration of WWII working on a new prototype of his machine designed to crack the Enigma, a German encryption machine.

Upon his successful decryption leading the Allies to victory, Western nations then continued to invest heavily in the research and development of these machines, as Turing had proved that machines, at a minimum, could be designed to simulate any algorithm inputted. Soon later, resuming a project suspended during the war, the Atanasoff-Berry Computer (ABC) (an electronic computer capable of solving linear algebraic systems, with up to 30 variables), the United States military designed the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC) in late 1945. The ENIAC, like its Turing ancestors, was capable of performing any singular function. What separated from its predecessors, however, was its ability to be reprogrammed. Put into public use and UPenn in February of 1946, ENIAC could do in 30 seconds what humans could in 20 hours.

As incredible as the ENIAC was, reprogramming 18,000 vacuum tubes for every different use was quite the hassle. Additionally, trying to reschedule employee hours in such a manner that placed staff on sight for each use in order to prevent lights from repeatedly dimming in Philadelphia. Thus, operating systems (OS) came into play, setting in motion what would become the second generation of computers. Upon the invention of the transistor in 1947, power/current could be amplified like never before, and smaller electronic devices arrived in all forms as a result. In the case of the computer, entire systems no longer had to weigh 30 tons. In 1953, the International Business Machine (IBM) launched a line of computers equipped with over 100 computer programming languages, random access memory (RAM) and operating systems. Through the use of tape and discs as storage mediums, computers no longer had to be reprogrammed. Instead, OS's managed computer function, dictating when, where and how to do a desired task. As a result, the OS would direct the computer to the appropriate storage location, where the necessary programming information would be accessed in order to carry out the desired function. From that point on, computers didn't really change too much in their design/layout. What did change drastically, and continues to, to this day, is hardware. Although computers had scaled down considerably, the IBM 650 and 700 series models were still gargantuan compared to those used today. Following the invention of the integrated circuit and the optimization/standardization of operating systems (all found in one disc at this point), the personal computer (PC) was born (1981). From then on, maturity with this technology has only produced changes designed for easier and more efficient use. The only thing main things that separate the first PC models and what we have today are smaller and more conductive transistors, enhanced displays and integrated operating systems and hard drives (rather than actual pieces of hardware).

Although the personal computer has been around since 1981, internet was not mainstream until the mid-90's, and really took until the late 2000's to look like what it is now. Until the internet was invented, numerous of technological developments were required to get to the point where the internet was

feasible. Despite lots of technological boundaries/hurdles, the robust investment and development of computers had everyone thinking about future optimization and implementation. In August 1962, J.C.R. Licklider of MIT came up with the idea of a “Galactic Network”, something eerily similar to that of our internet today. In his concept, he “envisioned a globally interconnected set of computers through which everyone could quickly access data and programs from any site.” Therefore, it comes as no surprise that once those necessary advancements were undertaken (along with the first PC), the transition from the individual unit to the internet was nearly seamless.

Inspired by the potential of computers and his colleagues’ “Galactic Network”, Leonard Kleinrock invested heavily in the concept of packet switching (invented in 1960 by Paul Baran), writing a paper on it in 1961 and the subjects’ first book three years later. Although the galactic network was able to portray the end goal, it did not specify the specific process’ by which data was able to travel.

Consequently, Packet switching was designed as a way to transport groups of data by using a header and a payload. With those two elements, the receiver could identify the transport and separate the cargo based on its content. Convinced by the staunch belief of his colleague Kleinrock, Lawrence Roberts followed his mentor Licklider to DARPA and began to work on top secret Packet Switching designs.

While designing a transport system for the cargo (data) was critical, it was not possible without a means of transport/infrastructure. To transport data, computers needed to talk to one another and have somewhere to send what they wanted to. Appropriately, Roberts, teamed up with Thomas Merrill, connected a computer in Massachusetts to a counterpart in California via low speed dial-up telephone lines. In doing so he created the first wide-area computer network, something that would serve as the foundation of the internet we know and love. Although this design was earthshattering, it was still remarkably slow, having multiple issues with moving large sums of data. In effort to enhance and further develop this new idea, Roberts brought up this concern at DARPA, seeking input from his colleagues.

Funny enough, it turned out that similar research had been transpiring between multiple groups (RAND

& NPL), causing Roberts to switch his network to packet switching in such a way that would enhance line speed from 2.4 to 50 kb/s and eventually culminate in ARPANET (1969).

Once the first computers in ARPANET were connected, modifications were made to allow for the host computers to act as traffic centers. Soon after, ARPANET was shown to the world by a demonstration of text transmission, something we have come to know as email (1972). With the establishment of ARPANET, messages could be transmitted from computer to computer, but were limited by the requirement of circuit connection between start point and destination. Additionally, the host computers served as an interface, and as a result every message sent through ARPANET had to go through the host computer. Obviously, the limitations on the capacity of the host were soon exposed. In effort to overcome this hurdle, DARPA started to look for ways to connect different networks, each with their own host computer (interface). In attempting to connect these computers, DARPA realized that they needed to overcome individual failures of what they called "Internetting", the process of interconnecting local area networks (where the name internet came from). First, computers could not differentiate from who they were receiving information; they simply received data when it came. Additionally, any blackout or interference would cause data to be lost, as messages were only transmitted once. As a consequence of these parameters, DARPA began to work on what would become the first successful multi-host system, one that could differentiate between systems (through the use of IP addresses) and ensure that transported data was sent and stored multiple times (TCP/IP). Fittingly, this is the design that led to what we know today as "the cloud".

Once the desire for multiple networks took a stranglehold of the scientific community, a series of critical developments followed, shaping the internet. First, TCP was reconstructed to control the flow of information, allowing for these hosts to more efficiently process information, using less power. Once flow control was established, Interior and Exterior Gateway protocol soon followed (IGP/EIGP), establishing a universally defined way for data to travel. Data was now sent to regional hosts and then

retransmitted to local ones, effectively eradicating the need for egregiously large computers. By 1985, numerous variants of ARPANET were used by most government R&D programs and university communities/researchers. With the entire data transmission process reengineered trans-oceanic circuits were quickly established (overseen by the Federal Networking Council), as intelligence communities around the world could transmit and receive data as long as the proper, individualized traffic control protocols were in place.

In 1992 the FCC sought to have internet provided commercially instead of limiting it to its previous niche. Because of that, they launched a national internet initiative that prevented national networks, as they wanted the private sector to compete in hopes of one making the future national network. Soon afterward, the WWW launched (1996) as a byproduct of many browsers, as there were now 50,000 networks, 29,000 of which were in the US. By 1998, hosts and receivers had been optimized and the WWW became public; the Dot-Com boom immediately followed. With many corporations enhancing their presence through the internet, an unprecedented amount of web traffic (and revenue) ensued. It was from this point on that most major corporations had websites, and in our case, the replacement of newspapers with online news. Because companies had so much new interest in their offerings, the internet community modified the structure of websites to allow for user-generated content. From that point on, anyone could make a website and post content. Although internet has been modified from that point on (the introduction of fiber-optics/WiFi (wireless LAN's), underground wires, better processing/code, mature graphic design/integration of all types, etc.), its structure has not changed.

### **Targeted Advertising**

Obviously, a major component of any political campaign is advertising. In the context of the internet, many individual components have changed but no major concepts. This changed, however, when algorithms were developed to gather, analyze and make conclusions on internet data/traffic.

Advertising, as we know, allows politicians to extend their message, argue for their views, and persuade

voters. In most cases, campaigns choose to target certain advertisements to certain groups or individuals. With the introduction of new technology, the process by which this is done has improved dramatically. Although campaigns try to reach as many potential voters as possible, this can be done for several reasons, the most significant being financial limitations and appeal. Usually it is not financially viable to advertise to all groups on all mediums, and thus forces a campaign to determine which groups/sects require the most attention. Additionally, certain groups may warrant different messages based on their concerns, beliefs, and other factors, prompting a campaign to analyze the public, determining classifications, trends, and patterns that allow for more effective advertising.

Content analysis and direct feedback are two primary methods used to ascertain general patterns in public behavior. In content analysis, general published content is reviewed to make inferences concerning the public's views, current issues, and how perspectives are expressed. The selected content ranges from news publications and television discussions to online articles and blogs. Campaigns use this information as a general method to determine the frequency and severity of which certain issues or points of view are discussed. The more frequently an issue is discussed, the more the campaign pushes advertisements regarding that issue. Campaigns also make use of direct feedback in the form of surveys and polls. Although these views are certainly vulnerable to bias, either from exposure or tampering, polls and surveys allow for a more detailed and quantifiable view of public opinion and trends.

Campaigns have even gone as far as to utilize focus groups in effort to acquire an even more fine-grained and detailed analysis at the cost of introducing significant personal bias with a low data size.

These elements similarly allow a campaign to determine what issue it must address in advertising as well as what groups should be considered most when targeting advertisements.

The most recent significant leap in targeted advertising has come in the form of machine learning algorithms, specifically neural networks. A neural network is a data structure that can be used to learn patterns, make classifications, and determine relationships between input and output variables.

Although the idea was conceived in the mid twentieth century, the effectiveness of neural networks was severely restricted due to the amount of computational power required to obtain any useful results.

However, this has changed due to the exponential development of computer processors and specialized hardware. A neural network is comprised of several layers of *neurons*, structures meant to represent a physical neuron. These neurons each have their own activation bias and are joined by weighted connections. Together, these neurons produce a set of outputs based on a number of general inputs. Given a large dataset of input/output pairs, a neural network can learn patterns needed to correlate generalized inputs with outputs. In many cases, neural networks are able to perform complex classification and regression tasks more accurately than any other algorithm.

Neural networks thrive on the availability of data. The massive migration of all personal information to publicly hosted social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, has allowed companies to train neural networks to determine the best advertisements to serve to an individual based on the information they have online: their friends, gender, political preferences, post history, education, etc. The more information, the more accurately the algorithm can suggest advertisements and content. This all happens on an individual level; there is no need to artificially group people together. Both the granularity and the growing accessibility of this method has led to extensive usage in advertising analytics, including political campaigns.

Perhaps the most notable and possible concerning aspect of the proliferation of neural networks is the empirical difficulty in determining why a trained network functions correctly. Although the process for training a network is governed by mathematics, it is very difficult to determine why a trained network produces correct results or recognizes patterns with such accuracy. This element has led to some pushback from groups concerned that this lack of understanding could lead to unexpected and harmful results.

# **Methodology: Accounting media influence in Presidential Campaigns**

## **The Printed Press**

While there is evidence that says advertisements influence the choices of voters, it is not entirely convincing; studies are mixed. More importantly, the manner in which the media delivers such a narrative (the advertisements in our case) is the likely to be the single most important factor in influencing its voters. The principal of this paper is that the news media has historically chosen to turn what was supposed to be news coverage to news interpretation, as early as the 1600's. Hence, as per the preface, the following sections will explore such implementation (per medium) during their peak time periods.

As articulated in the introduction, the American people got frustrated with parliament, and used the dissemination of information, and lack of in some instances, to unite the colonies into one of the most pivotal revolutions in western history. Without representation, the American press, as referenced earlier, sent undercover spies to garner as much information on proceedings as possible. With a lack of recording technology (visual/audial), the word of mouth had to be trusted. Furthermore, whatever the editors published (which included some due editing) was taken as truth for quite some time. Obviously, as a result, the printed press had a high level of influence in what information was received for multiple centuries, with that influence only changing in form as new mediums and outlets came into existence. Although scholarly literature has never really indicated that attack advertisements work best, those who implement them have done so for hundreds of years, leading to the conclusion that these practitioners apparently believe in their superiority. With Washington's presidency uncontested, the first election to study is therefore that of Jefferson and Adams. It is very important to remember that for the majority of the history explored in this section the instances sited and conclusions drawn mainly come from secondary accounts, as most papers, magazines and journals have not been saved or preserved from

that era. As such, the content of this section will be broader and less statistically oriented, as there really is no metric to prove influence; only the ability to cite observation and result (cause & effect).

Thomas Jefferson, who made his name in the American political echelon for many reasons, was the first presidential candidate to fall victim to attack advertisement. Until this election, most in politics simply followed Washington's lead (Federalist), and consequently no further parties were established; the only norm was to shame the Whigs. Adams, who was also a Federalist, had the benefit of being supported by the majority party at the time of the campaign/election. By the time of the election, however, there was enough disdain against the Washington regime that the Democratic-Republican Party was established as a counter party to the Federalists. Though they had strong numbers and notable influence, they were not yet fully established and hence were unable to disrupt the Federalist Domination amongst the press. Accordingly, there were 120 Federalist papers and only 30 Democratic-Republican issues during the campaign.

Concurrent with the background, the vast majority of existing papers were politically charged.

Moreover, they were almost exclusively in the most developed areas (17, all of which were based in port cities), and as such they aligned with the Federalist desire to trade with England focus on developing the American financial system. Therefore, all of the elections in which Jefferson ran 1792, 1800 & 1804, he did so against the majority of the press. Not surprisingly, the attacks came in heavy and fast. *The Advertiser* led the charge, labelling Jefferson "a mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father." The insults then stockpiled, branding Jefferson a cowardly atheist, leading papers to label him the "anti-Christ". Even Martha Washington was quoted saying that Jefferson was "one of the most detestable of mankind". Such political pressure and negative public perception, Jefferson's first campaign faltered just enough to give Adams the win, with his rumored affair with mulatto slave Sally Hemings extremely influential.

Following both preparation and response to the incoming onslaught, Jefferson became the first man to hire a campaign manager, doing so during the 1800 campaign. At that point in time, it was considered an honor to be selected as president, not something that one sought to win. Therefore, Jefferson needed to find a way to stay in his house while still influencing the campaign; he did so by hiring smear specialist James Callendar, the very man who leaked the story of his fruitful affair with mulatto slave Sally Hemings. While Jefferson let Callendar operate on his own, the future president also took time during his vice-presidential term to further spread Adams propaganda, laying the foundations for a full on media blitz. When Adams signed the Alien and Sedition Acts, Jefferson and James Madison wrote the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, describing the laws as an unconstitutional attempt to stifle legislative opposition from passing foreign policy.

With Jefferson building pressure from within, Callendar main focus was to influence the growing contingents of Democratic Republican papers, whose numbers increased with territorial expansion as Jefferson's party was more sympathetic to the agrarian cause. During that election, Callendar published a private letter in which Hamilton wrote that Adams had "great and intrinsic defects in his character". Jefferson supplemented that campaign smear by revealing Adams "plans" to create an American dynasty by marrying his son to the daughter of King George III, and that death threats from George Washington were the only thing that stopped Adams's scheme. From then on President Adams was depicted as a foolish criminal in the shape of a tyrant. In addition to oppositional pressure, the Federalists were split under Adams leadership, as many Federalists were frustrated by his refusal to war with the French culminating with Adams diplomatically ending the brief naval conflict initiated by the Federalist legislation. Such disdain was highlighted when Alexander Hamilton, the maverick Federalist leader, decided to endorse Thomas Jefferson.

When everything is considered together, it is no surprise that the aggregate sum was enough to topple Adams even though his one term tenure was relatively strong. The political press, funnily enough, got so

carried away that an article was published outlining the head of state as a "hideous hermaphroditical character, which has neither the force, the firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." There was just enough false information spread by the press that people forgot about Jefferson's previous misgivings and transformed a 53% to 47% loss to a resounding 61% to 39% victory. Following Alexander Hamilton's death and the rise in Democratic-Republican favorability during of Jefferson's tenure, the next few elections weren't too heavily contested, as the federalists, for all intents and purposes, collapsed. With party papers taking over political papers, the absence of the Federalist contingent was felt, as Democratic-Republican Madison had ~55% of the papers behind him and party mate Monroe had 66~ backing of the 375 papers by 1816. With such domination, Monroe won in 1820 essentially uncontested, and the 1824 election only featured Democratic-Republican candidates. Following the original presidential ideology, the 1824 campaign exemplified some of the greatest flaws with the 1-party system. Since there was no formal opposition, the Democratic-Republicans ended up dividing amongst themselves, and in turn producing 4 candidates. With no campaign as per the established political norm, party members only paid attention to the men they put forward, and as a result each candidate would win at least 30 electoral votes. Although Jackson would take both the popular and electoral vote, there was no majority winner in either category. As per the 12<sup>th</sup> amendment, the House of Representatives would hold a vote that would elect the politically ingrained John Quincy Adams. Outraged by the result, Jackson went on to turn 1828 into one of the dirtiest campaigns in US history.

After 4 uneventful years under J. Q. Adams, the general American mood was not great, setting the stage for Jackson's blazing campaign. At first, he branded the man as the "Minority President" who was only serving office due to a "corrupt bargain". Swayed by the overwhelming feedback the press gave to Jackson's claims, Quincy Adams decided to pass lots of taxation legislation in order to prove such authority. Party members would then turn against Quincy Adams, as the president's policies severely

diverged from the Jeffersonian manifesto. The rift was so prominent that even Vice President John Calhoun decided to run with Jackson against Quincy Adams. Following such party ridicule secretary of state and former nominee Henry Clay would create the Whig/National Republican party, the predecessor to the modern Democrats, to better align to J. Q. Adams views.

During the campaign of 1828 Jackson used newspapers to publish that Quincy Adams credentials had been confirmed as nonexistent, further fueling his status as a "Minority President [via] Corrupt Bargain". With such "substantiated" dismissal of Quincy Adams, the previous candidates got behind Jackson, and thus there was no need for a caucus. To reiterate, J. Q. Adams couldn't stand those mocking his credentials, and in response he cited his opponent as a "military chieftain" who lacked the qualifications for the presidency; he contrarily described himself as a tried and tested president whose history in politics was unparalleled. He then used the press to further elaborate, warning that Jackson's bloodthirsty character would likely result in a Caesar or Napoleon spelling death to the republic. Seeing that Andrew Jackson felt he had enough reason to be bitter towards Quincy Adams and the campaign process, he only increased the onslaught once Quincy Adams started to fight back. Since Jacksonians countered every insult by touting his battlefield history, the Adams campaign decided to dig up some of his most brutal orders. Notably, a newspaper advertisement featuring a picture of 6 coffins and a description of 6 soldiers that Jackson had court-martialed and executed was published. To Jackson's credit, however, his constituents responded by citing undeniable patriotism and opposition to aristocracy and corruption, promoting that his desire for justice was incorruptible even by close ones. By the end of the campaign there was such a mistrust towards the government that Jackson won with ease. The cry to clean out the corrupt and restore purity to the government easily outweighed attempts by the Adams campaign to cite Jackson's political inconsistencies (such as voting to raise tariffs). Once again the newspaper's had created an image of John Quincy Adams that he just couldn't shake.

Although William Henry Harrison had the shortest term of any president, he also had an unprecedented campaign in 1840. After a Whig experiment in 1936, where the Whigs ran many local candidates hoping to oust Jackson's successor Martin Van Buren, the party discovered that W. H. Harrison had the best draw/appeal of any of the other candidates they ran. Following a difficult 4 years Martin Van Buren had to deal with the Banking fallout that had been spearheaded by the Jacksonian Democrats. Using the failing economy as a platform to support a change in power, the Whig campaign highlighted Van Buren's white collar looks and comportment, taking issue with its stark contrast to the average man who suffered from high unemployment and inflation rates. The corresponding attack advertisements followed in accordance with preceding campaigns.

Harrison, noticing a great distance between the aristocrats and the common man, changed many elements of the presidential campaign. First and foremost, he was the first candidate to actively participate along the campaign trail. Unlike his political forbearers, Harrison used the newspaper not so much for attack advertisements but rather to organize and spread the word about political rallies.

Although Harrison was brought up an upperclassmen, the Whigs used the paper to misportray him as a down-to-earth war hero. Following an attack advertisement where the Jacksonian papers said "Give him a barrel of hard cider and a pension of two thousand a year and he will [spend] the remainder of his days in his log cabin", the Whigs decided to hold rallies at log cabins, providing those who came free whiskey. In a time where the people felt ignored by those who governed them came this hero of Tippecanoe who wished to pass time with his people. As shown by his forthcoming victory, the public took to this with great enthusiasm, in contrast to Van Buren approach of staying in the White House. Throughout the 1840 campaign Harrison's team hosted meetings, barbecues/bonfires and numerous other rallies, all advertised in the newspaper; over 60,000 people came to his rally in Tippecanoe! For once, the people felt involved, and the fact that Van Buren minded his own business only further cemented the perception that he viewed himself above the general populous. While MVB's campaign

dwindled, members of the Whig party members were pushing a ten foot, paper and tin ball covered with pro-Harrison propaganda for miles. Never before had so many people gotten to know a rival candidate. Newspaper were flooded with advertisements against "Martin Van Ruin: A First-Rate Second-Rate Man" and soliciting cups, flags, and sewing boxes embroidered with the first famous campaign slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too". Although Vice President Johnson was a hero alongside Harrison, the people only read/heard about the man of fornicated with African-American women from the newspapers and their advertised rallies. By supplementing attack advertisements with citizen involvement through newspapers, Harrison roared to a victory he would only celebrate for a month. From that point on campaigns were in full mimic of W. H. Harrison, and the modern campaign trail we are so familiar with today was established. Shortly thereafter, the irreparable divide between the north and the south formed. With the federal government being run mostly by northerners who had the nations industry in mind, the agrarian south championed by Jackson was not only left behind, but smothered with tariffs. Consequently, the Jacksonian Democrats split into northern and southern branches, and were not nearly as organized in their campaigning. During this time period almost all the southern papers published the same content, with their northern counterparts putting forward something near opposite in nature. Seeing that one either worked in industry, as a merchant or in agriculture, the paper/region that suited that individual was most likely irrespective of the severity in attack content. While controlling the information given to the public had previous influence, what was being put out was repetitive citations of public knowledge, and thus this paper will not explore that era. Naturally, desensitization became the norm during the Civil War Era as the attack advertisements got worse as tensions were higher than ever. Northerners didn't care that Abraham Lincoln was "a liar, an ignoramus, and a butcher", as he was most importantly not a "treasonous" Confederate. Following the war, the Republicans had full control as the southern states were left with their tail between their legs following their defeat. It was not until the Cleveland-Blaine election of 1884 that the bitterness started

to settle and the campaign regressed to the norm under Harrison. Finally, the election campaign was no longer focused on reuniting the nation but rather on policy, allowing, for once, a Democrat to be favored in the election. Like in previous elections, the control of information was providing its best banter, as Republicans were "waving the bloody shirt" (a reference to the flag), while the north touted that while "Not every Democrat was a rebel, every rebel was a Democrat." Although Grover Cleveland would win the 1884 contest against Blaine "the continental liar from Maine", he would then go on to lose the following battle as the southern media would reveal his many affairs with African American women, reiterating the presence of his bastards with "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?" campaign slogans. As relayed in the previous, nothing much has changed in the press' influence as both political hypocrisies and personal miscues served as the biggest tools to an opponent's downfall. That remains so today, and it was this precedent – A win-at-all-costs mentality that gives nominees reason to publish content in a way that does not reflect the actual happenings but rather those that can taint someone hailing from an agenda different to that of the publisher – that simply took its form in future communication mediums, something to be explored in the following sections. The newspapers were officially no longer describing news, much less equally, but rather interpreting events in whichever way most conveniently suited their agenda.

## **The Radio**

As the United States progressed into the 20<sup>th</sup> century radio emerged as a valuable vehicle for communication among many of the country's citizens. Politicians, particularly Franklin Delano Roosevelt, eventually came to recognize great value of this medium: the ability to reach millions of Americans without even moving. As time went on, radio continued to stand out as a popular medium through which politicians would communicate with the public and thereby garner support.

Frankly speaking, radio was the first established household electronic medium in America. Available in 1920, it was first notably used in the 1924 and 1928 elections. At this point, however, it was still an

underdeveloped industry as illustrated in the background section, lacking both networks and broadcast range. Regardless, the Republicans (who had a significantly bigger budget), aired shows such as 'Midnight Theatrical Revue' to spread their message to a broader audience. Fittingly, the first presidential radio broadcast came from Republican President Calvin Coolidge on March 4, 1925 (Inauguration Day), reaching over 23 million Americans. At that time, there were about 500 stations and three million daily receivers. Compared to what had been used previously, this medium undoubtedly took mass information dissemination further than the phonograph, the only other somewhat established medium at the time.

Although these broadcasts served as a major breakthrough, the industry's biggest problems persisted: the uneven distribution of radio stations and the lack of a cohesive national network. Consequently, users were taken advantage of, with broadcasters charging \$4000 for an hour of coast-to-coast broadcasting, causing receiver set costs to jump as well. Consequently, Republicans spent ~\$120,000 on radio campaigns during that election cycle, while Democrats spent ~40,000. Moreover, the Democrats only broadcasted their national convention in 1924 (the first political convention to be on radio), while the Republicans broadcasted from their own station every day from October 21 up to Election Day, culminating in the biggest national broadcast ever (that election night). With such heralded success, another sizable political broadcast soon followed in the form of the State of the Union on December 6, 1923. While the medium had certainly established itself in previously foreign waters, these developments were incomplete, bringing to light the clumsy and hindered aspects of the new communication medium. As a result, the medium, for quite a while, was simply used by those in politics to broadcast news, with more efforts being put forward by the party which had presidential representation during that term.

With air time monopolized by the two political stalwarts, the 1927 radio act was established in order to have broadcasters provide equal time to all "legally qualified candidates. Initially this went over well, as

offering free air time was considered a valuable yet necessary public service and a convenient form of legal self-protection by serving public interest. In 1928, numerous local networks teamed up with CBS and NBC in effort to lead the industry in a new direction featuring daily broadcasts from a wide variety of candidates. By the end of that year political entertainment shows (hosted/funded by Democrats) became a commonality. In contrast, Republicans appealed to local interests by broadcasting localized five-minute speeches delivered by "Minute Men" over 170 stations. In retrospect, these shorter versions of the speeches proved most effective for securing listener attention. By 1928, politicians, citing a correlation between increased air time and two consecutive Republican victories, were paying up to \$10,000 per hour for national broadcasts. Aided by recognizing the immense value from the publicity, election night in 1928 had 40 million listeners, all eager for the instant gratification that the newspaper couldn't provide.

Until the 1930s, political radio was still trying to establish itself, as varied broadcasts included conventions, speeches, and the occasional entertainment show. During such experimentation, Franklin Roosevelt, Huey Long, Father Charles Coughlin, and the *March of Time* radio shows broke the previously monotonous use of political radio to instead reflect national sentiments of Americans during the Great Depression. Such a new approach went over exceptionally, as relative to other industries, broadcasting survived the Depression very well by providing citizens the attention they craved from a federal government so many believed to have failed them and left them behind. Consequently, FDR, Long, and Coughlin continued to use the radio in the 1930's to successfully rally the American people to their causes by providing dramatizations of both political and nonpolitical news running from 1931-1945. For the first time millions were consistently hearing consistent war updates elaborately staged with high-production sound effects and music, offering citizens a delicate balance of both emotional impact and informational accuracy. With a greater mastery of radio broadcasting, it comes as no surprise that the number of radio listeners soared throughout the latter stages of the Depression and the War.

Looking more closely at how radio was used in presidential campaigns, we first jump to its first major electoral use, the 1932 campaign. The network policy, at the time, required broadcasters to provide free political airtime during the 1932 pre-convention period. Hoover, however, didn't take advantage of this; he only gave two political talks in that period. In hindsight however, it was clearly a missed opportunity for free publicity. During the Republican convention, Hoover, shy to address much of the depression, had a blurry recording of his voice played. Obviously, this didn't go down well with his party members, further pushing him to the landslide that would come that November. In comparison, Democratic candidate FDR welcomed radio exposure as a way to reach the public directly and circumvent the hostile press. He therefore went about addressing all areas of the country while still insisting on a national tour, building upon the "Whistle-Stop" foundation laid by William Jennings Bryan. With the exhausting amount of long speeches, 4 to 14 hours of straight coverage, FDR sought to alleviate such negative feedback to great effect by making his broadcasts no more than an hour long. Hoover's speeches soon followed suit, despite generally scheduling most of his campaign activities with little regard to radio. While both parties made mistakes (lacking knowledge in audience psychology and radio scheduling), it is important to note the Republicans ran a more extensive and organized radio campaign independent of Hoover, fueled by a 'radio staff' and schedule with economical spot choices.

Despite gaining notoriety for using radio as a means to avoid campaigning nationally amid his declining health, Roosevelt was more vigorous and harsh over the radio in 1932 than in his later years. At first, the Democratic strategy was to reach the largest possible audience at prime evening hours by scheduling fewer but longer speeches. Republicans purchased 70 network hours to broadcast 138 programs, while Democrats countered with 49 network hours and 71 programs. Despite the initial interest, radio listeners grew tired of politics, as politicians gave plain, dry, boring speeches; the *New York Times* confirmed the biggest listener complaint was that "political candidates talk too long." During that campaign both Hoover and Roosevelt regularly exceeded 45 minutes per broadcast. Since the Great

Depression brought about a popular need for escapist entertainment, Americans were only further angered when political speeches ran off and cut into funny shows. Following this rejection from the people, the party's broadcasting programs found themselves to be their own competition. After all, the last thing the American people wanted to here was "lies" from the struggling government. Since politicians neglected to add the element of entertainment or showmanship that's required, the radio boom was put on hold until the end of that decade.

As a consequence of the great depression, politically charged papers always seemed to be castigated for their incorrect predictions as to when the depression would end. Due to such a blatant mistrust in newspapers, American families sought out a different news source. Radio, which was quickly coming onto the scene, was seen as less biased than that of the newspapers, as there were only a few big (new) stations, signifying that news basically came from one source, which couldn't possibly be wrong.

Fittingly enough, ~50% of American families owned a radio by 1932. With such a feeling of betrayal by both the government and the printed press, broadcasting became ineffably valuable. By the end of the great depression, 1939, 70% of all news was received via private radio corporations, with 58% of the population feeling it was more factual and trustworthy than the printed press. These numbers only continued to grow throughout the War, as people were getting "live" broadcasts of what was going on. In FDR's tenure, he put lots of effort into increasing presidential control over the broadcasting industry, revealing his recognition of its potency and importance. With the 'Fireside Chats', his toned-down, mature form of politics was very effective, speaking with a confident voice that sounded aware of proper broadcasting technique. Citizens even felt that his comportment was made *specifically* for the radio audience—crafted for the medium. Unsurprisingly, it got overwhelming public approval. This style was used even in front of live audiences. It set an example for other politicians to follow with even non-political broadcasts bringing Roosevelt good publicity. Not surprisingly, Roosevelt won overwhelming

victories in both 1932 and 1936. From that point on, radio remained an established powerhouse in the election process, setting the standard for both news and debates.

Politicians gradually proceeded to adapt their political material to the radio medium after witnessing FDR “connect” to the people. In the late 1930’s, radio emerged as an essential political tool with both parties forming their campaign strategies accordingly. The Republicans determined early on to use an aggressive, all-out campaign with frequent and innovative use of radio. They quickly assembled their radio staff with a number of radio experts and specialized positions who gave their candidate Alfred Landon voice coaching to improve his previously lacking radio personality. Soon after it was customary for politicians to hire radio professionals (media experts) to manage their presidential campaign, bringing their own new styles of political media usage and applied radio showmanship/salesmanship techniques to the political domain.

Though 72.6% of American homes had at least one radio, only 46.4% of the radio audience preferred hearing politics on the air, clearly indicating that the art of political radio had yet to be mastered.

Although the Democrats ran a more limited radio campaign, many people claimed it was more effective because of Roosevelt's superior radio personality. Like previously demonstrated in newspapers, delivery, not content, was the prize. The disparities between each candidate’s voice – FDR’s “a well-trained instrument: sincere and good-natured, even in attack,” while Hoover's voice was “a little heavy in quality and reveals strain” and “The voice of a man who does not like to talk” – further demonstrated the immense relevance of a presidential candidate’s radio presence to his perception by the citizens and eventual success.

As stated earlier, different radio techniques were tested throughout that campaign, some more successful than others. In order to counteract Roosevelt’s controversial ‘Annual Message’ of January 1936, which FDR tricked audiences into listening to his 47 minute campaign speech, the Republicans wrote up a radio skit to depict the financial and social struggle for the average American under the

proposed New Deal. NBC and CBS refused to air the program with CBS claiming that "the turn of national issues might well depend on the skill of warring dramatists rather than on the merits of the issues debated." Republicans criticized the stations for being biased and betraying the people, and aired it on an independent station in Chicago instead. They continued to sponsor programs on these stations throughout the pre-convention period, bringing independent radio into the political radio campaign. From then on, each station had its own agenda, and radio was turning into its newspaper predecessors. The Republican convention in the following June was staged with acute awareness of the radio audience with all sounds set up for the radio, including a number of ethnically diverse singers to reach minorities. Democrats followed suit, airing broadcasts aimed at women and relating their lives to the government's actions. At the Democratic convention, the party also introduced recorded cheering throughout Roosevelt's speech, rising and ending abruptly so that citizens would feel inclined to believe that they were hearing the right plan of action from that candidate, while making sure that no word would be lost. Although FDR's early campaigns were spurred on by radio, Thomas Dewey's 1944 campaign bucked the trend. Although he embarked on many speaking tours and had an extensive use of radio speeches, he still lost to FDR; largely because of the country's reluctance to change leadership after a perceived successful end to World War II. So although the medium had great influence, the overarching influence of the day-to-day environment was still greater.

Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, was acknowledged as effective on radio, yet his re-election campaign was limited financially and as a result only managed to national broadcast a few of his major speeches. Strategies for using radio to reach voters were minimal, as his campaign ran on slogans like "I'm just wild about Harry" and "Pour it on em, Harry!," with the latter taken from a popular song title. Although Truman's individual campaign was lack luster in terms of the radio, the republicans took radio campaigning to the next level. In May of 1948, the first-ever radio debate between primary candidates was held between Thomas Dewey and Harrold Stassen. Up to that point Stassen had pulled surprising

upsets in Nebraska and Wisconsin, but was soon to see his charge halted by the influence of the radio. Dewey, who was able to prove his superiority to millions (40) on air, was so effective on radio that he proceeded to crush Stassen and even lead radio commentators to believe (all the way up to election night) that he would beat out Truman. Although Truman emerged the victor, public perception of what was going on was highly influenced by the media, similarly to that of the 2016 election.

In 1960, the next big radio milestone occurred. On September 26, 1960, 115 million people attended—through radio and television—the Kennedy-Nixon debates. They were nationally televised for the first time and the average audience was 71 million people. Although radio was an effective way to disseminate information, things such as appearance, facial expressions, body language and other social cues were lost. Throughout that debate, Nixon had fallen guilty to the monologues that had derailed his predecessors. Although his orations, like Jimmy Carter's in 1980, were full of facts and great political insight, viewers were not interested, as they were enticed by JFK's smooth appearance and delivery. Radio listeners, however, could not see Nixon, ridden with apparent discomfort, and were more focused on the actual content of his responses. Though many radio listeners thought that Nixon had won the debate, Kennedy's superior television performance was a turning point in the campaign, as larger and larger crowds began to appear at his rallies wanting to see the "movie-star" himself. From this point onward, radio's influence in campaigns stagnated, if not dwindled.

Even as television grew in popularity, more political campaigns used radio, since it provided the opportunity for "narrowcasting," which allows candidates to key in on very particular portions of their electorate. In 1975, Gerald Ford embarked on what would be the last major radio campaign led by a candidate, as TV became more and more established. In his campaign, Ford implemented 30-second advertising spots that were considered better than 60-second spots, given the "tune-out" factor. With new technology, radio spots could be "cross-talked" to provide space for the announcer, identification of the cause, and so on. Ford's radio campaign took advantage of this, as his narration started out faded

under, then the announcer identified and made the pitch for the candidate, with Ford narration rising up. Cross-talk spots, with back-and-forth commentary, were used for radio, but never for television. They were in good taste and low-keyed to fit the natural style of the medium. Radio spots were done in narration by the president, as film spots had general announcer narration testimonials by leaders in industry like labor leaders, movie stars, and educational types. Through the cross-talked spots, the president gave personal reflections on what the presidency meant to him, what he was trying to accomplish both in the present and the future, as well as what he was doing for the people. Narration was in a natural, conversational tone of voice, speaking about the job as if speaking to a close friend. He would talk about the presidency, the office, and his feelings about it to appeal to the voter. Though Ford reasonably conveyed all of these emotions, they were better portrayed through television, the medium he chose not to use.

Despite Ford's efforts, political strategists at the time figured that many voters, when actually behind the curtain at the polling place, are not thinking of policy or programs or specific campaign platforms, but rather "Do I like the guy," and "Can he be trusted?" Such questions had really hurt prior Democratic nominee Al Smith via his regional New York accent and occasional poor grammar. Although Ford tried to incorporate such advice in the 1976 election, hoping to portray of himself as a trustworthy, friendly, and likeable person via a candid tone, he was unsuccessful due to a failing medium. As a result, many social scientists proceeded to look back at previous uses of radio, incorporating their subsequent conclusions in future broadcasts, mainly radio political shows and all that was TV (at the time).

Despite the fact that radio campaigning by candidates had died down, political talk radio became huge in the late 1980's. A recent law (at that time) put in place, known as the Fairness Doctrine, kept political biases balanced, regulating broadcast outlets from 1949 to 1987 by requiring broadcasters to air opposing perspectives when discussing controversial issues. The policy was repealed, however, in 1987, after broadcasters complained that it created bureaucratic tasks and infringed on First Amendment

rights. After the Fairness Doctrine was repealed in 1987, listening to talk radio was found to increase the belief that political participation could have positive impacts, contrary to what social critics feared about political apathy. Obviously, these emotions could explain greater political activity such as voting in elections and civic participation at public forums. Fittingly, political talk-shows were reestablished with an even heavier bias than before.

Although TV was taking over, these political talk shows survived as they were more cost-efficient. Since all of these shows had some sort of biased agenda, they only chose to invest in their potential audience. For example, to appeal to rural voters with conservative opinions on laws, a candidate might air their advertisements on radio stations that play in those regions alone, and not in urban areas. Many conservative shows followed suit, as it was cheaper to air in these rural areas than in urban ones, in both, or on television. Between 1987 and 1994, political talk stations grew from 300 to 1000 while radio and television “talk shows” played a major role in election campaigns, with candidates appearing regularly on various programs for interviews given the free opportunity to reach out directly to the voter (provided the appropriate funding through either advertisements or individual entities). Even in the late 80’s, more campaigns used radio than television due to financial restrictions, both theirs and their potential listeners.

Finally, these statistics found that political talk radio audiences tend to be better educated, have higher incomes, and possess more political efficacy. Reaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century, radio advertisements/programs (in the form of podcasts) continue to affect campaigns because of their ability to reach niche audiences of specific use to political candidates. That being said, in terms of functionality, radio advertisements mirror the contents of other types of political speech. It is highly likely that narrowcasting with highly targeted radio advertisements uses different campaign messages than those that were broadcasted over the television airwaves. Influential factors were exposure to radio advertisements, the public’s

perceptions of the importance of these advertisements, and the impacts of exposure on the public's perceptions of the quality of the democratic process in the United States.

There is no doubt radio was a major influence on the average American citizen's perception of presidential candidates, especially as the technology became more affordable and widespread throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Republicans and Democrats both learned of the value of this medium and invested in it heavily. Radio was effective in bringing politics to the living room and engaging a variety of new voters, making the candidates bigger than their party's traditional limitations. Once television emerged as a dominating leader in communications in the latter half of the century, radio went under the radar for the most part, but still maintained significant influence in reaching base voters using less mainstream messages. It became increasingly used to target particular demographics.

Election	Turnout	%	Election	Turnout	%
1828		57.6%	1932	75,788,000	52.6%
1832		55.4%	1936	80,174,000	56.9%
1836		57.8%	1940	84,728,000	58.8%
1840		80.2%	1944	85,654,000	56.1%
1844		78.9%	1948	95,573,000	51.1%
1848		72.7%	1952	99,929,000	61.6%
1852		69.6%	1956	104,515,000	59.3%
1856		78.9%	1960	109,672,000	62.8%
1860		81.2%	1964	114,090,000	61.4%
1864		73.8%	1968	120,285,000	60.7%
1868		78.1%	1972	140,777,000	55.1%
1872		71.3%	1976	152,308,000	53.6%
1876		81.8%	1980	163,945,000	52.8%
1880		79.4%	1984	173,995,000	53.3%
1884		77.5%	1988	181,956,000	50.3%
1888		79.3%	1992	189,493,000	55.2%
1892		74.7%	1996	196,789,000	49.0%
1896		79.3%	2000	209,787,000	50.3%
1900		73.2%	2004	219,553,000	55.7%
1904		65.2%	2008	229,945,000	58.2%
1908		65.4%	2012	235,248,000	54.9%
1912		58.8%	2016	250,056,000 (	55.5%
1916		61.6%			
1920		49.2%			
1924		48.9%			
1928		56.9%			

**Figure 1: U.S. Presidential Election Voter Turnout**

## The Television

Obviously, the midpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a transitional period in United States communication when the rate at which television ownership swept the country's population and its sensory ability to connect with viewers on a level previously unseen in the media ushered in a new age of information dissemination. Over time, this ability to connect with viewers has allowed news groups, politician's and interest groups with an all-encompassing myriad of agendas to reach essentially every ounce of the voting populous, thus establishing itself as a keystone for news coverage and political advertising. Although information of every regard (but for our purposes that information which pertains to the political field) is able to reach a greater breadth of people for significantly larger amounts of time, the quality of information ideal for television viewership is not necessarily the quality ideally suitable for press responsible for providing detailed and unbiased news coverage to its audience.

As previously detailed, TV ownership increased tenfold between 1950-60, with ownership per household increasing drastically from 9% - 87.1%; Despite such a meteoric rise in use, the decade was still young when political campaigns first took advantage this medium's salience. In 1952, however, Dwight D. Eisenhower set in motion one of the biggest campaign culture/process changes with the inaugural use of television for political advertisement. This ad spot depicted the candidate answering questions from citizens on the street, effectively lending integrity and charm to the man many considered stoic—either due to his reverence as a war hero or as “singularly inept speaker”, as coined by commercial creator Rosser Reeves. By focusing on main issues such as the Korean War, Ike garnered influential awareness and support for his ticket's prospective goals.

While Eisenhower certainly set many things in motion, the thing that truly made his advertisements revolutionary was the innovation of purchasing shorter spans of air time—in between popular prime time shows—in which to ever so essentially place the political promotion. This tactic, followed closely by the redistribution of air time costs relative to the time of broadcast, successfully captured the attention

of prime-time television viewers in a substantially more cost effective manner than any previous program-length political informational, both in radio and TV. The structure of the aptly titled 'Eisenhower Answers America' advertisement became the foundation for the subsequent campaign advertisements. By the following election, the role of television in political information dissemination had grown notably: Eisenhower actively experimented with television as a means of communicating information to citizens, and instituted the regular admittance of TV cameras in White House news meetings on January 19, 1955. The public perception of Eisenhower's likeability molded by his pioneering use of the new technology to converse sincerely, 'face-to-face' with his citizens helped secure his victory in the 1956 election, where he was once again pitted against Stevenson. While all the other established media were very effective at conveying information, they were not able to appear universally reaching. With TV, people could now see *and* hear, taking in a great amount of unwritten information regarding what they were witnessing. As a result, people began to "make more informed conclusions" with respect to choosing their candidates, established through perceived intimate relationships established by this new technology.

As the medium's societal influence continued to skyrocket, the 1960 election marked another notable shift in television's role in information dissemination by highlighting its ability to influence voters with assets apart from substance. On September 26, 1960, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon squared off for what was the first ever debate to air on national television. Considering that this debate was the vast majority of American's first opportunity to see two presidential candidates debate with their own two eyes, the program had a massive, enthralled audience. Bob Mead summarizes the scope of this viewership in a 1975 memorandum to Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, comparing the "ten million people saw in person Richard Nixon during his 50-state campaign tour" to the "average television [debate] audience [of] 71 million people." Clearly, the awareness garnered through grass-roots campaigns and earlier methods of information dissemination seems paltry compared to the potential

influence of this new media on potential voters. Furthermore, the most notable disparity between the televised version of the debate and other media sources was not its sizable viewership—there were about 41 million radio listeners as well, but rather the difference in each audience’s opinions regarding who triumphed in the debate. The radio listeners widely considered Nixon victorious, as he was well versed on the issues, and spoke to them well. Alternately, the television audience found Nixon an unappealing, shifty figure under the camera lenses, particularly when adjacent to the charming, handsome J.F.K.; and, so considered Kennedy superior in the debate. This disagreement displays that while TV media has a broader reach than media that came before it, its most salient (and at the time, novel) features tend to influence voter opinion in perception of favorability and electability, rather than political acumen or agreement on issues. If the vast majority of listeners concurred that Kennedy was inferior to Nixon in the debate, it stands to reason that those watching were moved to their belief by something other than the quality of the candidate’s arguments.

Although the first negative advertisement debuted during the 1956 presidential race (Stevenson), the first true attack ad—which changed the face of political advertising on television—came from Lyndon B. Johnson in his 1964 campaign. A sixty second spot referred to as “Daisy,” features a young girl picking petals off a daisy, until her countdown is replaced by that of mission-control, followed by a mushroom cloud shape, implied nuclear explosion. This advertisement, aimed at Barry Goldwater, deftly juxtaposed the pathos of a young girl to the visceral images of a nuclear explosion in order to emotionally connect to the audience and subsequently tap into the fearful imagination of the U.S. in the Cold War era. The advertisement, despite what some would argue, was not however, vital to LBJ’s victory, as he was already considered the favorite (Goldwater was already trailing heavily in the polls).

Though not vital to the election, this new type of advertising’s effects were broader than that of a single campaign. Moreover, the grip the political advertisement took on the nation inspired a future of political advertising emulating its root principal: to connect with the citizenship not on a rational basis, but on a

more primal level through emotion and most prevalently fear. These advertisements target the aspect of voting that is not logical, the aspect that journalist Joe McGinnis refers to as a “psychological purchase”. The fear-based attack advertisement aims to sow distrust, dislike, or fear of its political target into its viewership, subsequently influencing voting behavior based on these qualities rather than rational argument for a candidate and/or his beliefs. This system of political ads—and similarly charged news media—has persisted and arguably worsened throughout elections to the present day is partially responsible for a national population deeply distrustful of the political system as a whole, a distrust that extends in the present day to the media itself.

In 1968, deeper issues regarding distrust and polarization in both politics and the media were realized, with the nation embroiled in discord over the war in Vietnam, Robert Kennedy’s assassination, Olympic protests and race riots, all of which were brought into the average household by the evening news.

Following the coverage of the JFK assassination, Americans were invested in television news with an attentive vigor; a mentality encompassed by ABC news correspondent Ted Koppel’s “sense of, ‘if I want to know what’s going on I have to turn on my TV set.’” Viewers relied on correspondents and journalists such as Walter Cronkite for information dissemination, a reliance that grew heavier when the reports given by the media contradicted information coming directly from the White House, particularly when regarding the Vietnam war. When Cronkite revealed to the public in no uncertain terms that the nation’s citizenry was being misled to expect victory, its effect was two-fold: one, it shifted the public’s trust away from Washington and towards the media, and two, it marked a respected journalist’s digression from objectivity, a trend that other journalists followed. Subsequently, the bias that quickly spread throughout the TV media detracted from the sense of reliability the public had developed toward it.

1968 was also notable for featuring presidential interaction with the media. In this time of tumult, LBJ developed a negative relationship with the press, in which he monitored their stories and attempted to

influence them through phone calls or personal meetings with news correspondents. Unhealthy, direct relationships of this sort between president and press persist, and contribute to a damaging environment of uncertain information that will be discussed later in this manuscript. On the other hand, presidential candidate Nixon and his campaign team successfully 'sold' Nixon to the people through the television. Inspired by the belief that his loss to Kennedy in 1960 hinged on their televised debate, he hired the man responsible for the success of George H.W. Bush's media campaign in winning Texas' 7<sup>th</sup> congressional districts 1966 election, doing so with 58 percent of the vote in a district that had never before gone Republican. The campaign to sell Nixon was also a success, through a focus on casting Nixon in a light that generated favorability among voters, in accordance with television's tendency to have a greater impact on viewers emotionally than it does relaying information.

Nixon's reelection in 1972 reaffirmed the effectiveness of political advertisement campaigns on television, while his subsequent impeachment altered the dynamic of information dissemination throughout the media. The impact of political advertisements in this campaign, and a number of others, was analyzed statistically in Darell West's article *Television Advertising in Election Campaigns*, for which data was gathered from several sources. Specifically, it draws from both panel and cross-sectional public opinion surveys, utilizing a method developed by Patterson and McClure which measures exposure to advertisements based on the programming logs from prime-time television. Additionally, data is taken from major news outlet polls from the times of each respective elections. Significantly, the data from these surveys and logs is then controlled for a variety of characteristics such as race, gender, political background, etc. to ensure with all possible precision that the results are valid. A regression analysis of political advertisement exposure on perceptions of election candidates, then displays results, which in the case of the 1972 election (Nixon vs. McGovern) are in keeping not only with Nixon's history of successful packaging, but also the results of the election.

Specifically, the survey questions used were in regard to each candidate's top platform issues, with honoring foreign commitments and electability being in question for Nixon while withdrawal from Vietnam and agenda-setting foreign affairs dictated those for McGovern. In the categories concerning Nixon, a direct, positive relationship can be observed between viewing political advertisement and both perceiving Nixon as likely to honor his commitments to other nations (with a coefficient of .10) and as more electable (.13). To the contrary, the impact of McGovern's advertisements was lackluster, with coefficients of only .06 and .07 in his respective areas of interest. These results convey that political advertisements had a hand in Nixon's win, even if they weren't integral (i.e. Watergate), while McGovern's candidacy leaves its legacy in information dissemination by exemplifying how in the national arena a personal issue, such as his running mate's history of shock therapy, can quickly and suddenly become widespread knowledge and almost immediately eat away at a campaign.

Although there is no doubt Nixon's presidency was remarkable in the dynamic history of political information dissemination through campaign advertising, it reached an unprecedented level due to his relationship with the public affairs program and the fact that the Watergate/impeachment hearings were publicly televised. Prior to the scandal, public affairs programs had a reputation for being unengaging; under the federal thumb. This was due in no small part to the leash kept on the programming by Nixon, who in 1972 had appointees controlling the vast majority of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He also made repeated attempts to hamstring and/or eradicate the broadcasting under the claims that the broadcasting networks were subjective, with liberal bias, establishing control by vetoing bills for increased funding and/or trying to cut funding altogether. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, his administration were also attempting to control the shows aired. Luckily for the press, light began to shine on the Watergate scandal, giving public broadcasting the opportunity it needed to demonstrate its ability to provide complete coverage of an extremely significant story regarding government corruption while simultaneously establishing clear independence from government

influence. In doing so, it achieved information dissemination of a type and quality yet unreached in television, or any other medium. The complete coverage of the senate Watergate and House impeachment hearings granted viewers a novel intimacy with national news, portraying the darkest and most transcendent sides of the democratic system, in which despite the leader of the free world being entangled in corruption and cover-ups, our senate and house functioned so that even he was held to the same standard of responsibility as every citizen. The report forewent the established style of sensationalism and flash in television news to ensure that information be passed down rationally and directly, allowing citizens to observe every part of the proceedings and form their own conclusions. Such engaged coverage maintained interest from the citizenry, whose pressure in turn ensured the case was prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Coverage of the scandal marked the inception of a new method of reporting, one that lends itself to accuracy and rationality, as opposed to feeding off of people's emotions and fears. It implicitly inspires sensibility and unbiasedness, as opposed to the political extremism and distrust that stems from emotionally charged media—a phenomenon that is more relevant in today's society than ever before.

In the election of 1976, the merits of television advertising and media for information dissemination are exhibited in the Democratic primary. At the onset of the nomination race, there were nine other competitors in James Carter's district, the majority of whom were better known and deemed more electable. However, a successful campaign that illustrated him as an outsider who would clean up Washington in the wake of the Nixon scandal ("Drain the Swamp"), along with a determined effort which won him early support, propelled Carter's numbers. In the span of several months, his perceived electability skyrocketed from 8 to 52% between February and April, and by June public confidence had been solidified with his electability now polled at 74%. This dramatic shift demonstrates the preeminent ability of television to separate a formerly anonymous face among a batch of ten candidates, and promote him to national recognition with alacrity. One would be remiss though, if he did not mention

the news media when attributing Carter's sharp uptick in electability to the dissemination of information through television.

The causal link between television advertisements and electability is not as distinct or convincing as that between advertisements and favorability. The latter follows logically, as advertisement campaigns 'sell' candidates to the public by displaying the personal qualities voters find desirable in a president; hence, if they succeed, the favorability of that president will improve, simply because voters like him more.

However, these political advertisements can't specifically speak to one's likelihood of being elected, try as they might. Through the analysis of CBS stories between 1972 and 1988, it was found that that classification draws heavily from televised news. Specifically, CBS concluded that when a news station discusses a political advertisement—often running part of the advertisement as a reference point and thus bolstering a candidate through free publicity—the focus of the discussion is remarkably different than that of the commercial. On average, the political advertisements themselves primarily stressed specific policy matters, at a rate of 43%, while discussing the state of the campaign the least, at 14%.

It is important to note that the news shows themselves, however, center their discussion overwhelmingly about the campaign itself, devoting 69% of the discussion to considering how specific advertisements fit into campaign strategies and how each advertisement affects a candidate's electoral prospects. With news outlets discussing the status of the race in such depth, and referring to political advertisements primarily in their relation to electoral prospects and likelihood of election, it is evident that consuming said media will markedly impact one's perception of a candidate's likelihood to win, revealed to all in the 2018 election. The connection of these media stats to public opinions can be made when results are derived from program log (as news media is included in those logs) with the assumption that those who view a substantial number of political advertisements are likely to watch the news as well, due to placement of advertisements and viewer preferences. This phenomenon once again illuminates television's ability to influence the opinions of voters, but also its propensity to

disseminate the most exciting, crowd-pleasing information, and often eschew the content that substantively informs voters.

In both of his presidential campaigns, Ronald Reagan used the television masterfully to help win the support of the nation. In 1980, Reagan and Carter were polling closely throughout the race, until a televised debate a few days before the election. Reagan shared many advantages in televised debate with J.F.K. before him—he was handsome and self-assured, and people liked him just by looking at him. Additionally, he possessed a gifted ability to communicate comfortably not only in front of the camera, but seemingly through the camera to the audience, surely a byproduct of his successful Hollywood career. Carter, to the contrary, did not share these qualities, instead relying on his superior knowledge of the office and facts to win the debate. When he attempted to bury Reagan in statistical information, he was rebutted with a simple “there you go again,” a comment that served to halt the dry—albeit content-full—data flow that was meant to throw him off balance in a way that made him appear more likeable for the presidency, and subtly drew attention to the belief that Carter manipulated statistics. He solidified his victory by looking directly to the camera, to America, and asked, “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” The result of his expert performance was immediately evident, as the polls leaned definitively in his favor, and when asked why they support Reagan, the majority of survey respondents, 38% said that it was “time for a change,” which has a direct relation to his now famous remark. Meanwhile, this impact was further accentuated as only 12% responded that it was due to party affiliation, and even lower numbers reported for personal qualities or government experience. Once again voting had been influenced most by TV quotes rather than opinions on policy and statistics. Reagan demonstrated his screen prowess once more in the 1984 election cycle, not on the podium, but with his “Morning in America” commercial, which essentially answered the question he had posed four years prior: “are you better off?” The answer was yes. The political spot was shrewdly constructed to be both a positive and negative advertisement, bringing to light a sensation of hope through the positive

steps the country had taken during his presidency, while condemning the missteps of the administration proceeding his, in which his opponent in the 1984 race had been the vice president. By associating himself with the economic upturn the country was experiencing, and his enemy with the economic turmoil it had suffered previously, his advertisement campaign availed him in securing the electoral votes of 49 states, with Walter Mondale winning only his home state and Washington, D.C.

The election cycle in 1988 reaffirms television advertisement's ability to sway public opinion. In the area of favorability, both H.W. Bush and Al Gore received notable boons in the primary, with advertisements coefficients of .11 and .09 respectively. They achieved these gains by constructing public images to share with voters through the media. Bush portrayed himself as a straight shooter whose political independence allowed him freedom from the potential corruption of the presidency, and Gore projected himself successfully as the champion of the "little guy". Additionally in the primary, Dukakis experienced an unprecedented jump in perceived electability stemming from his advertisements, with a coefficient of .17, even greater than Carter's in the '76 nomination. These three candidates also managed to use their advertisements to sway the public toward support of their top issue; a direct, positive relationship can be established between Bush's political advertisements during the general election and support for his goal of deficit reduction (with a coefficient of .07), while a similar phenomenon can be observed in a distinct correlation between support for Gore's and Dukakis' top issues during the primary election and exposure toward their advertisements. Ultimately, H.W. Bush also developed the "Revolving Door" attack advertisement, which referred to a prison program by Dukakis that Bush claimed gave "weekend furloughs to...murderers." The advertisement had a widespread effect, particularly in women, who polled as believing Bush was "stronger on crime", and would keep them safer. The ability to influence voters' perceptions only expanded as television role in media continued to grow, with these statistics over years demonstrating a slight intensification of the relationship between advertisements and voter preferences.

The last truly memorable, effective, and devastatingly strategic attack ad was developed by George W. Bush's media team in the 2004 election, and targeted opponent John Kerry's decorated history in the US Navy. The advertisement was driven by the political advocacy organization the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which consisted of former Navy members who disputed Kerry's honorable war record and saw him "unfit for command." The commercials were simple in execution—former navy colleagues of Kerry were featured deriding his character with accusations of dishonesty on his Vietnam War record. While relatively simple, the advertisement had impeccable timing. Following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the country was in a state of uncertainty and fear over national security, and in this context Bush's advertisements were able to draw from the deep well of bitterness and distrust still present in the public from Vietnam, weaving such deep disdain with present public fear into a dishonest perception of Kerry in the advertisement with the hope to establish a view that the country would be less secure with him in command.

In addition to playing into public fears, this attack was so effective because it turned what was seen as one of Kerry's greatest assets in an anxious time, his honorable service in Vietnam, into a point of contention, marring his reputation notably. The advertisement landed a deleterious blow on Kerry's polling numbers, particularly among veterans, and is often credited with pulling the race back into extremely close contention, and ultimately a victory for Bush. However, it is also a low point in the history of political advertising, as it spread potential misinformation in order to generate doubt and dismay among voters toward Kerry, not inspiring voters to cast their ballot for Bush because of his strategies or character, but instead opting to rob support for Kerry through fearful suspicion. A stark contrast to the fear-mongering advertisement campaign of George W. Bush was seen in 2008, in Obama's "Yes We Can" advertisement. The advertisement aired at a divisive time in the country, when apathy and anger towards Washington had remained a constant throughout Bush's presidency. Instead of connecting to his potential voters through unease, as many had done before him, he emulated

Reagan's ability to associate his message and candidacy with the hope of self-determination through coordinated action between the president and people, while depicting his opponent as a continuation of the former precedent. Obviously, many different types of political advertising can influence voter opinion by emphasizing on either negativity or potential outcomes, rather than statistics and citations. James Baughman argues that in the last century, the United States has witnessed the fall of partisan journalism, and the reemergence of it as well. Looking around at the current political state of affairs, there is no doubt that at least the latter part of his statement is accurate; and, given the history of television media and political advertisements laid out in this manuscript, it seems clear that information dissemination through television was vital to this level of resurgence. An abundance of connections can be drawn between the current state of affairs in the country—defined by intense division and partisanship, disdain and distrust of the media, and cynical apathy toward our democratic system—and the nature of televised political advertisements and media. Donald Trump's public derision of the media shares parallels with first LBJ, who frequently picked up his telephone (rather than open up twitter) in an attempt to influence news reports, or gripe with their content. It also emulates Nixon, who attempted to declaw and subvert the political broadcast system, who in turn ensured his downfall with constant coverage of the senate Watergate and house impeachment hearings. Additionally, media distrust could not have rooted itself so firmly in public perception without the subjectivity of journalism that was revitalized during the Vietnam War, and developed (or regressed) into a media where many news pieces are almost indistinguishable from editorials.

Television is unquestionably an effective medium for information dissemination: it reaches a broader audience with more potential to catch and maintain viewer interest than any method that preceded it. However, it suffers—or rather the citizenship suffers—from its inclination to disseminate the type of information that is seemingly not constructive to the democratic system. Rather than spread rational awareness, television shines in its ability to guide public perception through emotion. This is evident

through a steady correlation between one viewing a political advertisement or news show, and one being influenced in regard to likeability or perceived electability of a candidate. This understanding, in turn, urges media coordinators to play to these factors, worsening the divide between substantive information and voting habits, as well as the general health of the political and media environment. Attacks on authenticity and trustworthiness only serve to further drive voters toward voting based on favorability, and increasingly on electability, with many voters for Hillary in the 2016 positing that they voted for the “lesser of two evils.” Rampant demonization by the media encourages voters to disavow the candidate that political advertisements and mainstream news stations depict as untrustworthy, or unsafe, and propels polarization on the political spectrum. Additionally, this staunch opposition of the alternate party’s candidate increases the importance of electability as a factor when voting, resulting in a tendency to vote for the candidate one perceives as more electable, in order to prevent the catastrophe of the other parties’ victory. These voting habits—inspired, at least in part, by sensationalist and fear based media and political campaigns—are deleterious to the proper functioning of the democratic system, leaving many citizens unrepresented on the national stage, deciding their next leader through favorability and fear rather than representation of beliefs.

## **The Internet**

It is no secret that all media through which information is passed pale in comparison to the internet. Moreover, none have reached ubiquity in America as quickly or completely as the internet. The internet has taken a hold on the daily lives of most Americans, aggregating news, entertainment, and personal connection under one system. The influence and power of the internet in the modern world cannot be ignored, as billions can basically access the same news irrespective of location. Over the past decades, the internet has become a powerful tool for information dissemination in politics, solving many problems while introducing new challenges to mass media and popular belief.

In 1996, the internet and World Wide Web were still cutting-edge technologies, largely untested and underdeveloped for commercial and political use. However, considering its undeniable potential, many political campaigns began to take part, establishing an online presence. It is important to note that at this stage, a large majority of websites were static, providing little to no user interactivity, something that is completely foreign to the modern user. Back in the early stages of internet development, a lack of internet bandwidth and basic web development know-how (both in tools and infrastructure) led to a growth rate that is dwarfed by that of today's. As a result, presidential campaign websites served mainly as detailed flyers, communicating a candidate's policies, biography, and campaign information. Although these websites attracted a significant number of viewers, their simple nature prevented visitors from contacting the campaign or communicating with other supporters through the internet<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the true potential of the internet was not reached at this stage.

Due to the drawbacks of a relatively immature technology, campaign websites served mainly to collect and display static information. Additionally, campaign websites collected little to no information concerning the volume of visitors, visitors' demographics, and other metrics. Without knowing who was actually visiting the website, commonplace tactics such as targeted advertising were impossible. At this point, social networking websites were nowhere close to what they are today. The Dole/Kemp 1996 campaign website was perhaps the most advanced in this time frame, allowing users to send emails to other's concerning the campaign and providing campaign wallpaper downloads. However, despite this clear advantage online, this was not enough to propel Dole to the presidency, as both Clintons' prior term success and Dole's poor debate performances. Throughout this election, the most talked about points were debates and policies, all of which were just as effectively illustrated by newspapers, radio and TV. Clearly, as of 1996, the internet as a whole was a not yet a driving force in the US presidential election domain.

Entering the Bush era, the internet began to expand and mature. Websites became more functional, with a focus on design and interactivity. In the 2000 election, candidates began hosting dynamic content, including daily articles and discussions, spurred on by both investment and recent advances in technology. Powered by Bill Bradley and John McCain's fundraising, with Bradley raised over \$1 million by November 1999, citizens began to revisit candidates' websites daily. Websites began garnering so much traffic that McCain, who also kickstarted the use of pop-up advertisements for donations to great effect, ended up raising \$5.6 million. As the 2000 campaign progressed, the Bush website added the ability to chat with individuals from the campaign, provide feedback, and sign up as campaign volunteers. For the first time, a large number of citizens who couldn't directly contact the president were being personally addressed. This increased interactivity resulted in more mobilization of supporters. However, despite the gargantuan advancements in internet campaigning at this stage, the use of advertisements and persuasive outreach on the internet was still low, especially compared to today.

Although the advertisements were designed and primed for use, the infrastructure for serving such advertisements had not been developed enough to prove that providing advertisements to the population would be beneficial compared to the cost. As the 2004 election neared, Howard Dean (Democratic Primary), was able to utilize the internet to great success, raising a significant amount of money from online donations. Stemming from the public's growing usage of the internet for politics, the internet allowed an enormous number of people to make donations easily, resulting in massive financial success with very little overhead. Although donations per individual were relatively low, the funding added up to quite the aggregate sum. Now, more than ever, candidates were getting mass funds from the people, and no longer had to solely depend on PAC's.

With 52% of internet users (approximately 63 million individuals) using the internet to get information about the 2004 election, McCain's pop-up advertisements were taken to the next level. As a

consequence of higher viewership, widespread use of clickable advertisements on websites promoting campaigns emerged. These advertisements not only led voters to candidates' websites, but they also showed information concerning competitors, hoping to sway voters with each impression. This proved to be significant, as many of the advertisements had one common theme: Information retention. From this point onwards, the words and actions of candidates were perfectly preserved and could be used at will; whether for further study, comparison, and/or criticism. In particular, the Kerry campaign was marred like never before, as many of his views concerning tax cuts and war were identified as contradictory compared to previous statements, leading to distrust from the voters. The Bush campaign took advantage of this, exaggerating Kerry's lack of credibility to the masses, ultimately leading to a decisive victory. Although the internet was still not the ultimate medium for targeted information dissemination, it was certainly gaining a presence as a way to gather information, persuade voters, and facilitate some amount of political exchange and discussion.

By the 2008 election, the modern internet began to materialize in full. News and political websites were well established, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter were on the rise. Moreover, the permanence of the internet had grown to its full potential, as every single word a candidate spoke was recorded and discussed in numerous journals and blogs. Simply put, it was known to many that the internet was a force to be reckoned with, having infinite potential to both help and destroy a candidate. During the 2008 campaign, the Obama camp made arguably its most notable stride by taking advantage of YouTube. By uploading a large number of videos to a campaign channel, the Obama campaign successfully created free advertising that could be watched at any time, at the discretion of the individual. No longer were people perturbed by pop-up advertisements, but rather they could now seek out information however they wanted, to whatever depth they saw fit. Fittingly, the campaign's videos were watched for a total of 14.5 million hours, worth about \$47 million in broadcast TV.

In addition to the massive financial benefits of freely hosted online videos, the permanence of these videos was again paramount. Speeches could be watched again to cross-reference with attacking information from other candidates. In many cases, this made attack advertisements and smear campaigns less effective for the time being, as inconsistencies were held accountable. As a result of the Obama campaign's forward thinking and clever use of YouTube, advertisements became ubiquitous. Nearly every website from blogs to social networks hosted advertisements, further supplementing whatever was broadcasted. There is no doubt this allowed political campaigns to reach more people than ever before, allowing Obama to win the votes of numerous citizens who previously did not have access to his campaign. Although targeted and specialized advertisements were still relatively underdeveloped, the sheer amount of political content on the internet, which no doubt included advertisements, allowed for vast debate and discussion. As a result, most websites now allowed very dynamic content, facilitating user interactions, polls, and communication that gave campaigns an insight into who was visiting their websites. This allowed them to more effectively serve advertisements to the general audience.

Unsurprisingly, these trends continued to the 2012 election, in which social media began playing a much more significant role in communicating news and persuading voters. However, this culminated in the 2016 election, an election rich with conflict, misinformation, and the internet. Although the internet became even more present in everyday life, a new issue became very significant: "Fake News". Both Trump and Clinton claimed to be victims of the massive spread of misinformation and the public's seemingly unprecedented belief of said misinformation. This can largely be attributed to the echo-chambers created by social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, a result of the development advanced suggestion algorithms and data collection. In previous elections, the ability for campaigns to target certain internet users was limited. However, this became different in the 2016 election for two reasons. First, social media sites gathered large amount of data concerning individuals, their preferences, their

beliefs, and their connections. Since more people than ever were voicing their beliefs, algorithms (easily) devised better and more efficient ways to reach people.

With data analyzation reaching unprecedented heights, companies like Cambridge Analytica then used the newfound information at their disposal to granularly target persuasive advertisements to certain groups on an individual level. Although lots of people were seeing the same thing, they still felt personally catered to. This unprecedented power allowed smear campaigns and misinformation proliferate once more. This time, however, information was spread selectively, and each individual was now served a different advertisement based on their psychological and political profile. This enhanced flexibility reduced the requirements of consistency previously enforced by the internet. With these appropriated advertisements, people rarely felt that they were receiving unjust information.

For the first time, candidates could emphasize certain aspects of their campaign to selected groups while downplaying the same information to others. Although many tried to address these inconsistencies, the public responded by dismissing these accusations for the same reason they were created: Online information was created exclusively to influence people. Anyone could create a webpage that wasn't .gov. As a result of everyone trying to push their own agenda, popular sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter all employed adaptive recommendation algorithms to provide users suggested content that aligned with their "determined" interests. Although such algorithms had previously been used to great success, this election brought out a different light. Instead of being presented with news and opinions of varying perspectives, voters were exposed to content that only aligned with their views. This created an echo-chamber that severely damaged the public's ability to identify misinformation and extreme journalism. This was further compounded in sites such as Facebook, which uses friends' profiles to suggest content to an individual. In many cases, an individual's close friends will share beliefs, further strengthening the echo-chamber of extreme and false information<sup>8</sup>. Although this may have worked in favor for some candidates, the spread of truthful

information and varied opinions was greatly decreased. Suddenly, the idea of “Fake News” and misleading online content became a public issue.

The transparency that once defined the internet had now vanished. Coupled with aggressive recommendation algorithms, the 2016 election showed how easily individuals and groups could be persuaded to believe – and defend – false information. Tech giants such as Google and Facebook have publicly identified this trend as concerning, stating plans to reduce the occurrence of fake news in their products and recommendations. It is important, however, to differentiate “fake news” from conflicting opinions. Previously, campaigns and the media had provided various ways to view certain issues. These views rarely claimed to be unbiased and mainly focused on perspective. However, the 2016 election saw a massive increase in potentially incorrect or unverifiable information published as proven truth, as campaigns were paying numerous supporters to create websites and news feeds that supported their campaign as per the aforementioned win-at-all-costs mentality. It has been theorized that such misinformation was only able to successfully proliferate because of the widespread use of aforementioned aggressive recommendation algorithms.

The internet has matured rapidly over the past decades, evolving into forms never predicted. The immense user base and dramatic improvements made to infrastructure allowed the internet to become *the* method for conveying and disseminating information. However, this may come at a price; the spread and acceptance of misinformation – aided by suggestion algorithms – cannot be overlooked. The future of the internet, regulation, and misinformation is still unclear. However, action must surely be taken to prevent the creation of extreme groups, fed misleading information by recommendation algorithms. In the words of Daron Shaw, a political marketing researcher, “There are, however, doubters. One could easily argue, for example, that in the short run the Internet exaggerates information disparities between rich and poor, black and white, old and young.

## Conclusion

Like all things in history, many things have changed while some have not. In the case of voters and their ability to be influenced, I find that this paper has scrutinized the following: How have the changes in media (over time) influenced the macroscopic voting process. In the context of this manuscript this process includes campaigning and voter influence as quantified by electoral results. While this paper has certainly addressed the following through the use of numerous historical analyses, it sets the stage for the one big underlying question in this document: Have these changes improved the electoral experience for the voter in such a way that is “beneficial” to a democratic process?

Without going into too much detail regarding what a “democratic process” is, I do think it is fair enough to suggest that there is an understood expectation that both the media and the federal government are to provide as much information (honest and truthful) as possible in order to allow the voter to be in the best position to vote in a manner that most logically supports both their best interest and perceived best interest of the nation. While each individual votes with some weighted mixture of those two considerations as their reasoning, it is impossible to say which is more relevant. Moreover, a founding father may tell you that it is the duty of man to vote in the best interest of all the people, while others may believe that “the people” is made up by a common interest among the individuals of which it comprises, therefore, to vote in the nations’ best interest is the same as voting for oneself. Regardless of the previous considerations, whose conclusions vary from person to person, I feel that to for a citizen to be in the best position to make an informed vote is irrespective of idealism or selfishness but rather dependent on the knowledge base he or she has available to him/her As long as you have the ability to make an extremely informed choice when pursuing either selfishness or national ideals, then the process is properly staged.

This text has undoubtedly shown that the changes in technological and consequently media have provided an infinitely greater access to information. Accordingly, it is reasonable to think that regardless

of how much inaccurate content is out there, something that becomes more prominent by the day, every citizen will be able to discern the truth for themselves, and thus provide themselves a fact based reasoning when making such decisions. Obviously this is enormously idealistic, and is certainly not the case presently. In media today we see more citizens involved and voicing their opinions than ever. With this increase in accessibility has also allowed for numerous networks to broadcast such a wide variety of programs that the majority of Americans are able to find some sort of news/political program that satisfies their preference in delivery and material, though often for the sole purpose of pursuing conformation bias.

While there is a degree of humanity that guarantees differing interpretations of the same phenomena, the drastic increase in media outlets has accentuated both the number and degree of differing opinions pertaining to the same event. After all, people do watch the same recordings/witness the same events and still internalize them differently, so when considering that news is a second hand source at best, it is only logical to see why such opinions have further segregated. Because people are getting lots of information on the regular, the strength of conformation bias has only increased. Due to the echo-chamber, people now hear or reiterate the same thing again and again, regardless of its validity.

Nowadays people are so sure of their opinions' factuality that they do not make a conscious effort to fact check what they hear. After all, why would the same story continuously resurface *if it wasn't true?*

Although media has changed in ways that we now can't imagine living without, the dichotomy that exists between its benefits and impacts still permeates through American society. Politically charged news undoubtedly leads to staunch conformation bias. At the same time, however, people have more opportunities to receive information than ever. If done "appropriately", every citizen is capable of sorting through the abundance in information in a way that most accurately presents the actual happenings. Now, we can have people make conclusions based on what they see and hear, rather than

by what they were told. Clips of interviews and speeches are no longer summarized, every citizen has the chance to hear/see it for themselves.

Despite the lack of trust and the sea of lies and misinformation, I do believe that the media we have now better serves us than before. Not necessarily that it does, but that it undoubtedly can. Tools are only useful if they are used properly. Therefore, it is my opinion that a lack of desire and effort by the average individual is to blame, not the mediums themselves. So while people may be upset at the extra work they must undertake if they are to ascertain a more accurate picture of things, they still can, whereas before one only had so much information to work with. Sure, all media outlets can do a better job better of presenting information in a non-partisan manner, but their existence is for the sole purpose of making money, whether that be through viewer ship or political backing. In conclusion yes, it is more difficult to construct opinions for the purpose of voting but the job is still there and can still be done, just by the individual instead of the media doing it for the individual. It is undeniable that we now have the potential to construct our voting paradigm in a better way than ever before. Even if it is also more painstaking than ever, I prefer that the individual has the chance rather than not. In the end, if it really is a lack of desire that holds the average citizen back from being informed, then they don't really have the right to get too frustrated by the government being conducted in a way that doesn't please him/herself. If that's the case, and one is really just not willing to put in the time, then the depth of that individual's true investment is called into question.

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